

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES, PRECARITY, AND BELONGING OF
IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN HALIFAX

by

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ABSTRACT

Employment is a crucial part of the integration of immigrants and young people ages (18-30) are an integral part of the migrant population as they account for more than 50% of the total immigrant population in Canada. Given the tendency to separate social and economic integration within the literature, this thesis interrogates the relationship between employment and a sense of belonging in / to Nova Scotia. Within a qualitative approach with individual interviews, this research explores employment conditions and workplace dynamics and the extent to which these are seen as fostering or limiting a sense of belonging. The concepts of precarious employment, social capital, emotional labor, and solidarity are used to analyze the research data to better understand the complexities of the experiences of the youth participants. The findings from this study reveal that work and workplaces are essential sites where immigrants could develop a feeling of inclusion and acceptance that facilitate their participation in the community. However, precarious labour conditions, unfair treatment, and the resulting emotional labour often stifle this possibility for many immigrant youths.

List of Abbreviations Used

ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
PNP	Provincial Nominee Program
IPW	Index of Precarious Work
CAP	Canada Assistance Plan
CHST	Canada Health & Social Transfer
IRY	Immigrant and Refugee Youth
CLB	Canadian Language Benchmarks

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

With rare exceptions, Canadian immigration policy at both the national and sub-national levels focuses primarily on meeting labor market needs and strengthening local and regional economies through the recruitment and integration of newcomers (Green & Green, 1999). As a consequence, and despite different purported objectives, immigration policies ranging from the explicitly economic-focused provincial nominee programs to the various refugee resettlement programs of the federal government all include employment, training, and skills-based criteria. Moreover, given the framing of immigration in terms of economic rationality (Dobrowolsky, 2011), integration success is often measured by employment outcomes.

An integral part of the migrant population, Immigrant youth, make up a substantial percentage of the total immigrant population in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, young people ages 18 – 29 account for more than 50% of the total immigrant population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017). These young people are often favored by immigration programs, which aim to fill labor shortages in particular regions over extended periods of time. As such, this migrant cohort is increasingly a vital strategy for redressing Canada's aging workforce. The state funds a range of youth employability programs that support youth to develop skills and gain paid work experience necessary to transition into the labour market. Though varied in their approach, these services tend to focus on the logistics of securing paid work, as opposed to the more social and interpersonal aspects of employment. Also reflecting the state's economic priorities, these programs are evaluated using employment earnings and the rate at which youth maintain employment as outcomes (Employment and Social Development Canada [ESDC], 2018). This thesis draws on the

employment experiences of immigrant youth in Halifax, Nova Scotia—an understudied city and province in the Canadian migration scholarship—to consider the social and relational impacts of employment often configured according to the logic of neoliberal capitalism on newcomer youth who are frequently racialized and often compelled to take jobs below their skill level and training. Taking “sense of belonging” as a central organizing concept, I engage several critical bodies of literature to elaborate on the experiences of these young people as they attempt to secure viable employment and forge new, meaningful social connections in Halifax. In this way, I challenge the tendency in both the literature and in settlement services to bifurcate the social from the economic.

The Commodification of Work and Changing Demographics in Nova Scotia

While work is often described in terms of the 'monetization' and 'quantification' of labour (Harrison et al., 2019; Walton, 2016), its commodification follows from social and economic changes during the industrial revolution of the late 19th century and early 20th century (Taylor, 2004). In pre-industrial society, the connection between work and income was tenuous. Work was not simply defined by gain or material reward but was part of the general social framework (Walton, 2016). It was embedded in cultural practices and defined by the social relations within which it is situated. The emergence of industrial production systems led to many changes (Walton, 2016), including, the primacy accorded to waged work and the separation of “productive” and “reproductive” life purposes (Bryan, 2012; Oksala, 2016). Reflected in the language of “market economy”, these changes transformed social and economic life, organizing society around work and values specific kinds of work-based contributions. This is mirrored in and duplicated by immigration

policy, which, as discussed, prioritizes young, able-bodied adults who are able to fill specific gaps in the labour market.

Nova Scotia has one of the highest proportions of older adults in Canada, with those aged 65 and above, making up about 22% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2021). This is due to lower fertility and to interprovincial migratory losses, which until recently, have stunted population growth (Ramos & Yoshida, 2015). In the past 15 years, however, the provincial government pursued a variety of immigration schemes, via the Nova Scotia Provincial Nominee Program (NSPNP) to recruit and integrate immigrants with particular skill sets, high levels capital, and work experience (Dobrowolsky, Bryan, & Barber, 2015). Through its various initiatives, the NSPNP enabled the province to attract and nominate potential immigrants to fill labour shortages and redress population decline (Bryan, 2012).

Given the ongoing efforts of the state, both at the federal and provincial levels, to recruit "economically viable" newcomers, the literature has similarly tended to differentiate between the economic and social needs of newcomers (Li, 2004; Raza et al., 2013). While providing valuable insight into state objectives vis-à-vis immigration and their consequence for immigrants, this scholarship has overlooked, with some notable exceptions (Friesen, 2011; Valenta, 2008), how work and workplaces foster or hinder the social integration of immigrants. Given the tendency to separate social and economic integration within the literature, this thesis interrogates the relationship between employment and social integration. To this end, I pay close attention to workplace dynamics and employment conditions as experienced and described by newcomer youth, and the extent to which these are seen as fostering or limiting a sense of belonging for them. Through this research, I seek to better understand the extent to which workplace

experiences inform and shape a newcomer's sense of belonging in and to Nova Scotia through an anti-oppressive and structural lens.

Research Questions and Methodology

Qualitative in its methods, this work is guided by two related questions. The first focuses on the first how employment, and more precisely the labour conditions present in the workplace. The second aims to elaborate on how employment, and specifically, the conditions of precarious employment, inform “sense of belonging” for immigrant youth in Halifax. A sense of belonging is a feeling of inclusion, acceptance, and recognition in a space or social relationship (Fuks et al., 2018) More specifically, I ask and answer: 1) What are immigrant youths’ experiences of labour and employment in Halifax? 2) How does employment inform sense of belonging for immigrant youths? And more precisely, how is this impacted by labour conditions in their workplaces.

To answer these questions, and to ground my conclusions in the lived experiences of immigrant youth in Halifax, this study applied a qualitative exploratory research design to investigate the experiences and perspectives of eleven immigrant youths in Nova Scotia. Central to the data analysis is how the requirement of “Canadian experience” excludes newcomer youth from stable forms employment, producing and reproducing their dependency on precarious labour markets. Canadian experience is defined as a combination of hard skills, soft skills, and competence in an unwritten Canadian workplace norms (Bhuyan et al., 2017; Sakamoto et al., 2010).

In addition to sense of belonging, other concepts are used to analyze the complexities of the experiences of youth participants, which are largely gendered and have

several racial implications. The concepts of social capital and solidarity help to understand how the youth in this study develop trusting relationships amid discrimination and unfair practices in the workplace. The concept of emotional labour is also used as part of the analysis to discuss the interlocking nature of race and gender and how it influences the way newcomer youth manages their emotion as they participate in affective economy. Drawing on the experiences of a Black female newcomer youth working in a retail store, I discuss the implication of emotional labour on immigrant youth belonging in chapter 6.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter Two reviews the literature on contemporary immigration policy in Canada, and specifically on the state of immigration policy in Nova Scotia. Scholarship on immigrant youth integration in Canada is reviewed more broadly. It concludes with a brief overview of the Nova Scotian context. Chapter Three offers the theoretical grounding of the thesis as a whole. Reflective of social work's transformative potential, the thesis is oriented toward an understanding that is anti-oppressive in orientation and structural in objective. The overarching conceptual framework—sense of belonging—to which the various findings respond is discussed. In addition, other concepts—social capital, solidarity, emotional labour and integration—used to explain the complexities of the possibilities and barriers to youth participants' sense of belonging are discussed. This chapter also explains the study's methodology with respect to its design, data collection instruments, procedures, analysis, challenges, limitations to and factors that enhanced the study, and the characteristics of the participants in the study.

Chapters Four through Six present the findings of the research. Chapter Four focuses on the extent to which precarity and “non-standard” labour conditions inform the ability of newcomer youth to form meaningful social connections in their workplaces, and in turn, impact their sense of belonging to Halifax more broadly. Of relevance, within the sample, at the time of the interview, despite their efforts to secure more permanent and stable forms of employment, seven of the eleven remained in insecure, part-time, or temporary positions. This chapter also offers a critique of the “Canadian Experience” as an organizing principle of Canadian racial capitalism that is reinforced (if unintentionally) by employment-oriented settlement services. Here, despite significant training and education—of the eleven participants, seven had university degrees, and two of those held advanced graduate-level degrees—all the youth were encouraged to pursue low-waged, low-status work. Here, the contributions of critical political economy vis-à-vis work and labour since the 1960s are drawn on to make sense of these experiences and their implications for sense of belonging.

Chapter Five explores the prevalence of discrimination and racially charged micro-aggressions in these workplaces, and it elaborates on the extent to which these experiences and encounters impede the development of meaningful attachment for youth, not only in the workplace but in relation to the place of Nova Scotia. Here, I draw on and expand the concept of “social capital” to consider the non-economic value of “social capital”, as well as what happens for youth who are denied access to social capital. The lack of meaningful social interactions that is based on trust and respect in the workplace results in social isolation with negative implication for sense of belonging. Finally, in an attempt to challenge some of the assumptions of the academic literature on immigrant integration, the

latter part of the chapter offers important insight into how the youth build solidarity in their workplaces. Here, I expand “sense of belonging” to include the efforts of newcomer youth to connect across differences to forge important relationships and solidarities with other immigrant youth.

Chapter Six discusses the existence and persistence of racism, and other forms of structural violence in the workplace, given the often public-facing nature of their jobs, many of the youth were compelled to engage in challenging emotional labour and affective self-management to guarantee positive customer and client experiences. This chapter argues that the emotional labour performed by newcomer youth in retail and service (N=4), health care (N=2), and other public-facing sectors (N=5) is compounded by their status as newcomers, often racialized, and, in turn, by their experiences of racism in Nova Scotia. In the spirit of this scholarship and its close and detailed attention to gendered life, this chapter presents a case study of one participant as she navigates the hardship of employment in Halifax, where the emotional and affective labour so often required in precarious labour markets represents yet another barrier to the youth developing a sense of belonging vis-à-vis Nova Scotia or Canada. In conclusion, Chapter Seven provides a summation of the study; it offers a series of policy recommendations and recommendations for meaningful social work practice with this diverse population of young adults, and it pinpoints direction for future research.

CHAPTER 2: POLICY CONTEXT and LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter offers a discussion of the social and economic landscape of immigration to Canada and more precisely, to Nova Scotia. It begins with a review of the academic literature on migration at both the national and sub-national level, and it concludes with an overview of the scholarship on the integration of immigrants into precarious employment in both contexts.

2.1 Contextualizing Immigration and Integration in Canada and Nova Scotia

Historically, Canadian immigration policies have been tailored to meet several goals including the establishment of settler colonies, development of white British society, growing the population, and meeting labour market demands. Prior to the 20th century, immigration policy was rudimentary and admission largely based on national origin, with Britain considered the preferred source country for immigration. However, at the turn of the 20th century, the supply of British immigrants became insufficient. Canada's economy was growing rapidly and the building of the transcontinental railway, the settlement of the prairies, and expanding industrial production heightened the demand for labour and subsequently, population (Boyd & Vickers, 2000; Green & Green, 1999).

This increasing demand for workers necessitated the government's need to intensify recruitment efforts to boost immigration and admit immigrants, not only from Britain but from other European countries. In the same vein, economic downturn and pressures due to, for instance, an outbreak of war invariably led to tighter regulations that restrict immigration to Canada. As a result, nationality/ ethnicity was the primary criteria in selecting immigrants until the 1960s when labor market rationales superseded the desire to

keep Canada white (Boyd & Vickers, 2000; Dobrowolsky, 2011; Wiseman, 2011). The policy changes in the 1960s made it easier for nationals outside Europe and the USA to immigrate to Canada, affirmed the right of immigrants to sponsor family members, and included humanitarian-based admission. In particular, the 1967 legislation set new standards for assessing and admitting potential immigrants and brought about a recast in the composition of the immigration population as more immigrants came from different countries and diverse cultural backgrounds (Boyd & Vickers, 2000).

With the goal of eliminating the discriminatory elements based on nationality, the legislation led to the removal of national origin as a criterion and ushered in the point-based system. Nonetheless, some scholars of migration have argued that discrimination based on race and gender continues to inform immigration policies and procedures (Dobrowolsky, 2011; Wiseman, 2011). The new system established suitability criteria based on age, education, and occupational skills, thereby broadening the intake of immigrants while ensuring their economic viability (Boyd & Vickers, 2000). Although it has been modified and adapted over the decades, the point system allows Canada to attract and accept ideal candidates who are highly trained, can support their own settlement, and can, in essence, "hit the ground running." As a result, since the 1980s, Canadian immigration policy continues to commodify immigrants as it prioritizes their contribution to Canada's economic prosperity in light of global trends and neo-liberal priorities. The marketization of the policy dictates the kinds of immigrants sought, the programs that are magnified, and how settlement programs are implemented (Dobrowolsky, 2011; Green & Green, 1999).

The appetite for the "ideal migrant" is also reflected in the recent immigration policy under the Trudeau Liberal government, which emphasizes the recruitment and

retention of international students. These young people are encouraged to stay and work in Canada because of their “Canadian Experience”, which includes Canadian postsecondary credentials, proficiency in at least one official language, and their relevant Canadian work experience. The rationale underlying the recent policy is that international students are believed to integrate with less difficulty into the Canadian labour market (CIC, 2013; Government of Canada, 2014). This assumption has been contested by studies that suggest a disconnect between policy makers’ assumptions and the lived experiences of International students in Canada (Colin et al., 2015; Dobrowolsky, 2017). International students’ integration into the labour market is found to be hindered by adjustment difficulties pertaining to language abilities, poor connectedness to host communities, and perceived employer discrimination (Colin et al., 2015).

2.2 Immigration in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia is the most populated province in the Atlantic region of Canada, with over nine hundred thousand residents, and yet it faces a number of significant demographic challenges. It has one of the most rapidly aging populations in the country and has a history of persistent decline in population growth, which was partly due to out-of-province migration (Statistics Canada, 2017). The relocation of youth to larger provinces to pursue better employment opportunities and the low fertility rate has contributed to the province's marginal economic and population growth (Akbari, 2005; Dobrowolsky, 2011). These realities prompted the government to engage in immigration policies that focused on meeting its unique labour market and demographic needs (Dobrowolsky, 2011).

Historically, immigration was almost entirely under the jurisdiction of the federal government. This persisted until the mid- 1990s when some immigration authority was devolved to provinces. This decentralization was to offset the trend of the disproportionate number of immigrants choosing to settle in the three major cities (Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto). In addition, the federal-provincial partnership became necessary as smaller cities could not meet labour demands in certain sectors (Dobrowolsky, Bryan, & Barber, 2015). The Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs) allowed provincial governments to design and establish the program requirements, recruit and assign potential migrants to specific occupational fields and geographical areas. For its part, the federal government is responsible for admissibility screening and the final selection of nominees. The overarching objective of the PNPs was to distribute the benefits of immigration across all provinces and to admit immigrants who have the skills, education, and work experience to contribute to the economy of a specific province or territory (Dobrowolsky, Bryan, & Barber, 2015). Hence, provinces place a premium on those who have the desired skill sets, training, and work experience.

2.3 Integration of Newcomers into Precarious Employment

Labor market participation among immigrants is an integral part of their integration into Canadian society and a prerequisite for other types of inclusion (Ager & Strang, 2008). However, previous research demonstrates the prevalence of immigrants in Canada's growing precarious employment landscape (Hira – Friesen, 2018). This precarious situation raises the question of how well immigrants are integrated into the social fabric of Canadian society. Immigration, through programs such as the economic and the temporary workers' program, has long served as a mechanism to recruit people to fill labor shortages

in Canada. As a result of the implementation of the point system, incoming workers are categorized into high skill and low skill. Permanent residents are more likely to be categorized as high-skill, whereas temporary work is generally classified as low-skill based on education, skills, work experience, and English language proficiency (CIC, 2020). Canada's immigration that separates high-skilled workers from low-skills contributes to the deliberate production of vulnerable workers who have no citizenship rights (Bauder, 2012).

Temporary foreign workers are viewed as cheap commodities that can be used and disposed of at will. In short, they are considered suitable for work but not for residence. Scholars have drawn attention to the experiences of immigrants without permanent legal status (Barber, 2008; Choudry & Smith, 2016; Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Davies, 2019). Bauder (2012) asserts that temporary foreign workers who do not have citizenship rights are more vulnerable to low-wage jobs and experience exploitations and labor violations. For example, they cannot freely change their employer or occupation and often have to leave employment and residence when their work permits expire. Existing studies, however, show that workers' exploitation is not unique to temporary foreign workers, and indeed, workers with permanent residence are not immune to the plight of low-wage, low-skill, and exploitative workplaces (Goldring & Landolt, 2011; Hande et al., 2020; Syed, 2016).

The Canadian immigration policies privilege highly skilled workers with the belief that they could easily integrate into society because of their education, skills, and English language proficiency (Li, 2003). In practice, most credentials and skills acquired outside of Canada are devalued, and many skilled immigrants experience deskilling in the labor

market (Man, 2004). Deskilling occurs when immigrants lose access to their previously held occupations because their foreign credentials are not recognized in Canada (Man, 2004). For individual immigrants, deskilling is often captured as new reality of being unable to use mental skills acquired from education and professional experience. Instead, they defer to using ‘hands’ rather than ‘minds’ in an effort to make a living (Creese & Wiebe, 2012).

Regardless of immigration status, research shows that immigrant workers are more vulnerable to precarious work that undermine their successful integration into society (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Davies, 2019; MacKenzie & Forde, 2009; Syed, 2016). Unfortunately, this situation seems common among workers from the global south whom Syed (2016) refers to as ‘market migrants.’ According to Syed, the creation of market migrants is not by accident; it is “a result of intentional labor market-based recruitment and exploitation” sustained by globalization and market liberalism” (p. 450). Other scholars have pointed to discrimination and racism in Canadian policies and labor markets as the cause of the devaluation and exploitation of immigrant workers’ labor. In addition, discriminatory hiring practices that limit access to employment opportunities, financial challenges, and lack of awareness of labor rights are some identified factors that make workers remain in work despite the deplorable conditions.

The undervaluing of immigrants’ skills, education, and experience results in significant disadvantages in the Canadian labor market. Bannerjee’s (2009) study using the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics reveals the economic disadvantage faced by Canadian immigrants and their inability to ever catch up to the earnings of their Canadian-born counterparts. As such, many immigrants are forced into involuntary part-time work,

multiple menial jobs, and precarious working conditions in order to meet their economic needs. Man (2004) shows in their research with skilled Chinese women that the downward trajectory of immigrant incomes in Canada is partly due to the reluctance of employers to recognize qualifications and experience from immigrants' home countries. As a result, some of the women in the study went on to take up menial jobs as cleaners and babysitters. Apart from low-skill, low-wage jobs, immigrant workers are also streamed into jobs that lack control and certainties of schedules (Goldring & Landolt, 2011), infiltrated with labor rights violations (Syed, 2016). In a study with immigrants in Ontario, Hande et al. (2020) reported that many juggle multiple menial works full of employment standards violations despite workers' high- level of formal education and citizenship status. Some of the violations include unpaid work, working long hours with no overtime payment, and exposure to workplace hazards.

While previous studies have looked at the experiences of immigrant workers generally (Cranford et al., 2003; Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Gottfried et al., 2016; Man, 2004), only a few have focused on the immigrant youth population despite that they account for more than 50% of the total immigrant population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017). Moreover, these young people are often favored by immigration programs, which aim to fill labor shortages in particular regions over extended periods of time. As such, this migrant cohort is increasingly a vital strategy for redressing Canada's aging workforce. Few studies focus on immigrant youth workers' earnings and employment terms and status (Kunz, 2003; Lauer et al., 2012; Yan et al., 2008). What is missing is the labor conditions under which the youth perform their job duties.

For instance, based on an analysis of the LSIC and findings of in-depth interviews of immigrant youth in four cities in Canada, Lauer and colleagues (2012) found that newcomer youth tend to work in lower-skilled employment and have difficulties with foreign credentials recognition. For many of the youth, the low-end jobs are good to ‘get by,’ provide income for their households, meet people and gain experience. However, for others, menial jobs are long-term, leading to considerable downward trajectories in their careers. In order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of precarious work among immigrant youth, all other indicators of precarious work (such as exploitation, lack of benefits, the unpredictability of schedules/control) must be considered (Goldring & Landolt, 2011).

Investigating the experiences of immigrants youth in the labour market is crucial. Research shows that precariousness in early work has lasting and negative effects on the labour outcomes of immigrants. For instance, in a study carried out by Goldring and Landolt (2011), they found that participants’ early work has a lasting effect on their current work that is not reversed even with longer residence in Canada. Instead, it was difficult for participants to move away from precarious jobs. Furthermore, they argued that the length of time in Canada did not guarantee access to decent work. This finding supports what has been widely reported among immigrants in anecdotes: a person’s early work in Canada lays the foundation for later work opportunities. This is possibly due to the limited opportunity to form social networks and gain meaningful ‘Canadian work experience’ relevant to future employment.

The widely – reported downward social mobility trend among immigrants due to precarious employment has prompted some concerted efforts from the government,

settlement organizations, and employers. Studies of the role of government policies and programs in the integration of immigrants suggest that Canada actively promotes successful integration through an array of initiatives and institutionalized multicultural policies (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; May, 2019; Shalileh, 2017). Some government initiatives include the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy and the federal internship for newcomers program (Government of Canada, 2020). The government also funds settlement agencies across Canada as part of the institutional intervention to ease immigrant integration into the labour force. However, some scholars have questioned the effectiveness of multiculturalism embedded in labor practices in nurturing the successful integration of immigrants into the Canadian labour market (Ho & Bauder, 2012). Similarly, findings in research have pointed to the crucial yet complex and contradictory role settlement agencies play in the economic integration of immigrants (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Shalileh, 2017).

CHAPTER 3: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the theory and methodology of the thesis. The first section presents the primary theoretical framework used in this thesis – sense of belonging. Also, similar to the main contribution of this thesis which critiques the absolute econometric understanding of integration, this chapter presents the concept of social capital as a resource that produces more than just an economic good but one that has the potential to provide non-material resources, including a sense of personal safety and a feeling of acceptance into a community. In addition, and in reference to the analytical work of chapters five and six I elaborate the concept of solidarity to describe how newcomer youth develop a positive sense of belonging with other immigrants, and of emotional labour to understand the work involved in adjusting to inequality, racial injustice, and contingent employment. Finally, I discuss the integration of immigrant youth in Canada. The latter part of this chapter presents the research design and methods for data analysis of this thesis. Research challenges, limitations, factors that affected or enhanced the study, and research participant characteristics are also discussed. Prior to the recruitment of research participants, Dalhousie University's Research Ethics Board (Human Ethics) approved the study, its data collection tools, methods, and procedures.

3.1 Theoretical Framework: Social Work and Transformative Research

Underpinning the study's methodology is social work's anti-oppressive and transformational paradigm, and the discipline's commitment to structural analysis, social justice, and social change (Mullaly, 2010). Research within a transformational paradigm seeks to connect personal experiences with public issues (Sakamoto and Pitner, 2005). In

other words, transformative researchers understand social issues within a socio-economic, cultural, and historical context. A structural perspective is part of critical social theory that focuses on broad socio-economic and political dimensions of the society, and how these external forces create unequal human relations among people. The structural theory also addresses the false dichotomy between individual agency and structural changes, rather, it attempts to explain the complex interplay between individuals and the social world (Mullaly, 2010). This perspective is applied in this thesis to understand the relationship between sense of belonging to a community and the experiences of marginalization and precarity within the labour market and in workplaces. It is also applied to help to understand the complex relationship between economic integration and feelings of acceptance, safety, and value of immigrant youth. Power-sharing and egalitarian relationships based on shared values are the tenets of the anti-oppressive perspective. Hence, listening to the voices of individuals with experiences of marginalization, for example, through personal interviews may uncover mechanisms of oppression.

According to Mullaly (2010), oppression is a relational and dynamic concept that refers to the concentration of power, privilege, influence, and resources in certain groups in relation to others. Oppression is a social construction that takes place in everyday relationships, is enacted in a myriad of ways, and serves several functions (Mullaly, 2010). It may happen in form of worker exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Mullaly, 2010). Drawing on social work's transformational paradigm, this thesis understands the experiences of the youth within historical, socio-economic, and cultural contexts. The perspective also provides the opportunity to investigate employment and workplace experiences and their influence on the sense of

belonging of the youth. In so doing, this thesis seeks to generate knowledge that is meaningful and creates value for the newcomer youth in Nova Scotia.

3.2 Sense of Belonging

A sense of belonging, as it is used in the analysis presented by this thesis, can be understood as a deep-rooted feature of one's identity (Hou et al., 2018a), a feeling of inclusion, acceptance, and recognition in a space or social relationship (Fuks, Smith, Peláez, De Stefano, & Brown, 2018). According to Banting and Soroka (2012), a sense of belonging captures two related feelings: it reflects an individual's sense of attachment to the country and refers to the extent to which a person feels accepted by other members of a given community. To describe the inter-subjective notion of belonging that is formed at the intersection of self and collective agency, Vasta (2013) describes sense of belonging as "the relationship between self and others, and self and society" (p. 198). Many authors attest to the complexity of the term and its multiple uses depending on context and situations. For example, a sense of belonging could be used as a dimension of a broader citizenship theory (Banting & Soroka, 2012; Bauder, 2012) and/or as an empirical indicator of such concepts (Berry & Hou, 2016; Hou et al., 2018a). As such, and according to (Hou et al., 2018a), a sense of belonging transcends ethnicity, hence, a useful tool in measuring the integration of a diverse group of newcomers.

In an extensive study of 7000 immigrants across Canada, Hou et al. (2018) examine patterns of immigrants' sense of belonging to Canada and their country of origin. They reported that immigrants with a strong sense of belonging to their home country tend to have a secure attachment and participation in Canadian society. In a similar vein, Berry and Hou (2016) (using the same data as Hou et al., 2018) claim that immigrants with a

higher sense of belonging to Canada integrate better into society and have higher levels of satisfaction than those with a lower sense of belonging to Canada. Finally, a sense of belonging has been linked to various positive health outcomes among immigrant populations. Caxaj and Gill's (2017) research with the Indian-Canadian diaspora in British Columbia reveals that a sense of belonging to both the ethnic community and larger society is important to participants' wellbeing. This supports Berry & Hou's (2016) finding that a personal sense of identity and strong identification with Canada contribute to optimal levels of psychological wellbeing of immigrants.

Immigration entry status and post-migration experiences may influence immigrants' sense of belonging to the receiving society (Burton & Phipps, 2010; Hou et al., 2018a; Painter, 2013). Age and length of time in Canada are the strongest predictors of social participation and engagement. Immigrant children and youth are considered to have a stronger sense of identification with the host society than adults because of their flexibility and ability to learn the new language faster (Hou et al., 2018; Schwartz et al., 2010). Regarding the effect of language, Schwartz et al. (2010) submit that low proficiency in English or French language affects newcomers' ability to form connections and participate in social activities within the broader community. Further, Soroka et al. (2007) posit that the length of stay in the receiving society has a positive correlation with immigrants' sense of belonging. The longer they have been exposed to the host society, the stronger their identification and attachment to it.

Aspects of post-migration experiences that influence immigrants' sense of belonging include receptivity to the receiving society, economic outcomes, and social capital (Banting & Soroka, 2012; Hou et al., 2018a; McCoy et al., 2016). Host society

receptivity refers to how newcomers are welcomed and treated by the local members of the community. One commonly used indicator of this experience is discrimination experienced or perceived by immigrants. Returning to Hou et al.'s study (2018) discrimination discourages a sense of belonging to the country and might invoke "reactive ethnicity," such that immigrants become more attached to their ethnic group.

The feature of immigrants' social networks may also influence their sense of belonging to the receiving society. Three forms of social connection have been recognized for immigrant integration: Bonding, Bridging (Pearce, 2008), and Linking Social Capital (Ager &Strang, 2008). Bridging social capital is the connection with other communities based on common interests. In contrast, bonding social capital refers to an exclusive social tie with members of the same immigrant or ethnic group (Pearce, 2008). Linking social capital refers to the vertical relations with structures of the state that help individuals gain access to resources for social and economic development. (Ager &Strang, 2008). Contrary to expectations, Hou et al., 2018 found out from their study that neither bridging nor bonding social networks has a significant correlation with immigrants' sense of belonging to Canada.

Finally, education is a possible determinant of immigrants' social integration. Berry and Hou (2016) assert that post-secondary education may improve labor market outcomes and promote the social participation of immigrants. However, many authors have talked about how highly-trained immigrants are pushed into underemployment and low-skilled occupations. This phenomenon of deskilling is a reality with strong implications for social integration (Major et al., 2014; Valenta, 2008).

Returning to Hou et al. (2018), to evaluate the social integration of immigrants, the researchers submit that two dimensions underline the integration of immigrants to the new society: cultural maintenance and participation in the receiving society. This conceptualization is supported by Banting et al.'s (2007) assertion that the multiculturalism policy focuses on the need to build a sense of belonging and attachment to a country that incorporates distinct identities. In this way, sense of belonging is used both as an outcome of, and a barometer to measure, social integration.

In sum, research has shown that immigrants construct the meaning of belonging in a variety of ways. They may identify with a gendered identity (Fuks et al., 2018), ethnic culture (Byers & Tastsoglou, 2010), local, and community (Banting & Soroka, 2012; Caxaj & Gill, 2017). Further, they may express a feeling of attachment to a religion (Mccoy et al., 2016), country of origin, as well as the receiving country (Hou et al., 2018a). They may also exhibit a larger transnational or cosmopolitan idea of belonging (Vasta, 2013). Also, newcomers may 'feel at home' with social institutions, such as the school and workplace, and its central practices (Erwin & Daniel, 2017; Taylor, 2019). Further, research by Mccoy and his colleagues (2016) suggests that in a globalized world, identities and sense of belonging are multi-layered and fluid; individuals often feel a sense of belonging to multiple entities at the same time. In the chapters that follow, I respond to these diverse, yet compatible, understandings of sense of belonging with an eye to the implications of employment and workplace experiences for newcomer youth in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In each, I draw on additional critical scholarship to consider the potential for obstacles to sense of belonging for the youths whose experiences are at the centre of my analysis. In what follows, I elaborate several key theoretical concepts that I draw on in

subsequent chapters. These are social capital, solidarity, emotional and affective labour, and integration.

3.3 Social Capital

Robert Putnam, author and research professor of Public Policy at Harvard defines social capital as social relations based on shared norms, trust, and reciprocity that produce good outcomes(2002). Migration scholars have documented the benefit of social capital in the successful integration of immigrants in host societies (Ager & Strang, 2008; Nawyn et al., 2012) with the majority of research focused predominantly on the economic return of social capital (Li, 2004; Raza et al., 2013). While social capital may be exchanged for human capital (Sobel, 2002), it is important to note that social capital provided by social networks and trust also benefits non-economic elements of integration. This understanding is critical in the context of immigrant youth who work in precarious employment, where the chance of converting social capital to human capital is slim and, in many cases, non-existent.

Social capital theory, particularly those inspired by Putman's collective perspective and its importance in civil society, is constructed from three main elements: social connection, trust, and participation (Ahn & Davis, 2020). These components are presumed to contribute to a safe, effective, and inclusive society (Ahn & Davis, 2020; Pearce, 2006). Trust is an essential element needed to develop meaningful relationships and facilitate cooperation among members of a society (Pearce, 2006). Scholars have shown a strong association between trust and involvement in social networks (Nawyn et al.,2012). They argue that networks act as vehicles for trust and can generate civic participation

Two forms of the social network have been widely recognized for immigrant integration: bonding and bridging (Pearce, 2008). Bridging social capital is the connection with other communities based on common interests. In contrast, bonding social capital refers to an exclusive social tie with the same immigrant or ethnic group members. While bonding social capital identified as strong ties allows immigrants to develop a strong sense of identity within tight-knit ethnic communities (Pearce, 2008), bridging social capital, referred to as weak ties, is better for connecting and accessing external assets and various ranges of resources. Bridging social capital may provide links to mainstream society and access to various information and services unavailable in ethnic communities. Lancee (2010) submits that networking within ethnic groups provides information, which is largely limited but might be helpful in the early years of settlement, while networking with cross-ethnic communities may provide new, diverse and useful information that may produce better outcomes. Both networking with similar people (bonding) and other diverse groups (bridging) could foster psychological safety and a feeling of acceptance (Hou et al., 2018a; Mccoy et al., 2016).

3.4 Solidarity

Solidarity is a community of interests and goals whereby members of a group have a strong sense of identity and allegiance and recognize that their objective of a better outcome is best pursued through collective action and a feeling of responsibility (D'Art & Turner, 2002; Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020). Most of the academic work on solidarity in the workplace has focused on how im/migrant workers and their allies form solidarity for social action in the workplace (Choudry & Thomas, 2013; Robinson & Santos, 2014). According to Choudry & Thomas (2013), social action can be described as the coming

together of a group of people with the aim of altering existing social structures and relationships, achieving social change, and improving lives. It involves people giving their time and resources to a common good and goal in a variety of forms, including community organizing and community-owned services.

Workers' solidarity is often conceptualized as the basis from which dimensions of collective action within and beyond the workplace can develop (Soroka et al., 2013; Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020). Soroka et al (2013) distinguish between three dimensions of social solidarity- Democratic, Redistributive, and Civic solidarity. Democratic solidarity is characterized by the support for human rights and the inclusion of all people regardless of background in democratic decision-making. Redistributive solidarity is characterized by the support for the redistribution and access of resources to the poor, vulnerable, and historically marginalized communities. The third category of solidarity is civic solidarity which is characterized by openness and acceptance of newcomers, regardless of ethnic diversities and otherwise, as legitimate members of the community that is worthy of belonging. Aside the dominant framework of solidarity that centers collective action, other expressions of solidarity that support the social inclusion of marginalized populations, including newcomers have been highlighted by a few authors (Lee, 2015; Rader, 2008)

Researchers and scholars have described solidarity as a combination of emancipatory learning and social action for the transformation of both individuals' consciousness and social structures (Soroka et al., 2013). Most conceptions of solidarity tend to position transformation in opposition to reproduction where learning tends to maintain the status quo and assimilate workers to exploitative and inequitable structures

(Fenwick, 2008). In other words, if workers do not critically question the existing structures and work to change it, they become complicit in reproducing the practices that oppress them.

Some authors, however, cautioned that it is important to note the complexity and different manifestations of solidarity (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2020), especially among vulnerable workers who may lack the social, political, and cultural capital required to engage in effective social action. Other expressions of solidarity other than collective action include low-key, day-to-day forms of conflict, resistance and mutual support (Mulholland, 2004), and social interactions (Lee, 2015). These forms of solidarity are not restricted to workers engaging in social action to challenge their status, nonetheless, solidaristic networks, where workers developed a collective identity and shared experiences and develop strategies to deal with workplace injustices could result in liberatory potential. (Lee, 2015; Fenwick, 2008).

Notwithstanding the different possible forms, social learning and interaction (interpersonal and collective) are at the core of solidarity (Fenwick, 2008). Social interactions among immigrant workers in work are helpful to develop strategies to negotiate the workplace, reshape how they define themselves, and ultimately form a solidarity of collective identity. Lee (2006) asserts that workers' sociality is a site for solidaristic interconnections and identities and suggests that collective learning may lead to resistance depending on the nature of the social ties and individuals' positions within them.

3. 5 Emotional / Affective Labour

While at times used interchangeably, there is an important conceptual distinction between affective and emotional labour. Hochschild (2012) defines emotional labour as the ‘management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display’. This form of labour is central to customer service roles, including flight attendants, retail sales associates, and akin to suppression of one’s feelings and emotions. Subsequent to Hochschild’s work on ‘emotional labour’, the concept has since evolved into a broader concept of ‘affective labour’ (Hardt, 1999)

Affective labour is a broad description of the kind of embodied work demanded of workers in late capitalism (Veldstra, 2020). It refers to immaterial labour in which workers are expected to facilitate human interaction and create feelings of ease and satisfaction in customers (Hardt, 1999). The difference here is that while emotions are personal experiences, affects are the forces (often detached from workers) that precede, produce, and inform such experiences. Affect is pre-personal, social, and it is not what people feel, so much as what they are compelled to feel (Hardt, 1999;Oksala,2016). Feminist politics argues that it is impossible to separate emotional labour from the production of affect labour (Oksala, 2016). As such, Veldstra (2020) describes affective labour in terms of emotional labour and focuses on how affective labour involves “both the expression of the self in terms of economically valuable affects and the subordination of unprofitable feelings”.

In other words, there is an emotional work required in the production of affective labour and it is impossible to speak about affective labour without an emphasis on the

subjective experience of a worker. Veldstra (2020) added that to strip affective labour of the subjective experiences of the bodies that carry out such work is an act of structural violence that rationalizes the exploitation of people, especially racialized newcomers, under the guise of capitalism. Theorists attest to the fact that workers, especially racialized and newcomers, in affective labour experience stress and inauthenticity as they grapple with the disconnect between two opposing feelings (Mirchandani, 2003).

In her 2003 work titled “*Challenging Racial Silences in Studies of Emotion Work: Contributions from Anti-Racist Feminist Theory*”, Kiran Mirchandani submits that immigration status, racial background and class often affect the nature of the emotion work women do as part of their paid employment. They challenge the racial silences in studies of emotional labour and, drawing on feminist anti-racist perspective, calls for a multifaceted approach to difference. They argue that this standpoint allows scholars to investigate new forms of emotional labour beyond a homogenous conception of social and economic context. To describe the ways in which emotion-work is conducted in relation to an individual’s social position and defined by the shifting relations of differences, Mirchandani, (2003) notes:

[R]ather than possessing particular ethnicities, class positions, and gender traits, individuals occupy social locations which are relational and shifting. The work of recognizing, managing, and participating in these shifting relations of difference requires emotion work which is done in conjunction with the work of managing one’s own feelings, making others feel a certain way, and defining one’s work (p. 729).

3. 6 Integration

Over the years, Canada's approach to integration has evolved to reflect the increasing diversity in the migrant population and the changing need in the economy (Boyd & Vickers, 2000)). Canada's model of integration is described as a long-term, two-way process that involves the commitment of both the immigrant and the host society. It promotes the engagement of newcomers in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of Canada (Ager & Strang, 2008). Integration is present when immigrants maintain their heritage culture and become involved in the larger community (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Through an inductive approach, Ager and Strang (2008) highlight key elements of successful integration: access and achievement across employment, education, health and housing sectors; understanding of citizenship and rights; social networks within communities, and structural barriers /factors that affect integration process.

Notwithstanding the complexity of integrating to a new country and the various aspects of life it encompasses, integration and settlement initiatives often focus on the economic outcome of immigrants (Dobrowolsky, Bryan, & Barber, 2015). One possible explanation for the limited attention given to other aspects, including social integration, is the difficulty of conceptualizing and measuring the social facet of a person's life (Mccoy et al., 2016). In comparison, other areas of integration, such as employment, housing, and in many cases, learning / developing language skills tend to be more quantifiable and therefore are more easily measured (Mccoy et al., 2016).

However difficult it seems to be construed, evidence from several empirical studies across the country shows that social integration is a critical component in the overall

process of immigrant integration. (Friesen, 2011; Valenta, 2008). According to Wilkinson (2013), 'success' in economic integration, without cultural and social inclusion, may lead to a lack of life satisfaction, and poor health among immigrant populations. Few authors have investigated the social integration of newcomers in the workplace. Research by Major et al. (2014) shows that employment provides immigrants with the opportunity to develop social connections, language skills, and learn about the norms and culture of the host society. Similarly, Valenta (2008) posits that if certain conditions are fulfilled, employment and the workplace are essential sites where immigrants affirm identities, form networks, and develop a sense of attachment to the larger society.

3.7 Sense of Belonging and Immigrant Youth

In addition to navigating multiple identities, youth are confronted with the normative personal identity that characterizes this development stage (Schwartz et al., 2006). Hence, a sense of belonging is considered a great resource for the well-being and integration of immigrant youth as they strive to situate themselves in society (Tastsoglou & Petrinioti, 2011). Researchers have investigated the sense of belonging of immigrant youth in settings, including schools (Erwin & Daniel, 2017), locality (Byers & Tastsoglou, 2010), and ethnic community (Tastsoglou & Petrinioti, 2011).

As with adult immigrants, social networks, reception in social institutions, and proficiency in English / French Language are some identified factors that influence youth's feeling of belonging (Hou et al., 2018a). While there is a mixed result regarding the correlation between sense of belonging and bridging social networks of adult immigrants (Mccoy et al., 2016). There appears to be a consensus in the literature that developing social

and friendship networks is crucial to immigrant youth's sense of belonging. Wilson-Forsberg's (2015) qualitative research on the social integration of first-generation youth in New Brunswick, for example, shows that social and friendship networks contributed to young people's sense of attachment, active participation, and long-term establishment in the local community.

Regardless of whether a youth is a newcomer to Canada (first generation) or born in Canada to immigrant parents (second or third generation), perceived discrimination seems to be a common experience. Tastsoglou and Petrinioti (2011) found that a majority of the second-generation youth in their study reported receiving unfair treatment based on their religion, ethnicity, or skin color in public spheres. This experience, however, has an insignificant effect on their sense of belonging. Some identified reasons for the strong sense of belonging among second-generation youth are established social networks, language skills, and familiarity with the mainstream culture.

There has been important work done on identity formation and a sense of belonging amongst second-generation youth in Halifax (Byers & Tastsoglou, 2008; Tastsoglou & Petrinioti, 2011), but there is a considerable dearth of scholarship on the integration experiences of newcomer youth in Halifax. Similarly so, very few studies have explored the employment experiences of these youth in this context, with no research focused on how those experiences might impact integration and in turn, sense of belonging. In what follows, I attempt to redress this oversight. If social integration refers to the "extent to which individuals become vested in the core institutions of society, participate in those institutions, and experience a sense of satisfaction" (Reitz, 2009 p.21), a key indicator of

social integration is a sense of belonging held by immigrants to the community (Mccoy et al., 2016; Wu & So, 2020).

3. 8 Research Design

This study applies a qualitative exploratory research design to investigate the experiences and perspectives of ten immigrant youths in Nova Scotia. Exploratory studies are typically used when little is known about a given topic (van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). A qualitative method consists of guided in-depth and open-ended personal interviews, which allow participants to express their opinions in their own words. Further, the open-ended interviews may reveal respondents' depth of emotion and help to understand how people make sense of their world and experiences (Patton, 2015). A qualitative exploratory approach was considered appropriate to achieve the goal of this research: to explore the employment experiences of immigrant youths in Halifax and how the experiences influence their sense of belonging to and in Nova Scotia.

3.8.1 Recruitment

Non-probability sampling, specifically, a mix of purposive and snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. According to Patton (2015), a purposeful sample seeks to focus on information-rich cases that generate “insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations,” and that are selected according to the questions of the study (Patton, 2015, p. 264). Among the strategies presented by Patton (2015) to select a purposeful sample, this study used the snowball technique. Snowball technique means to “start with one or a few relevant and information-rich interviewees and then ask them for additional relevant contacts, others who can provide different and/or confirming

perspectives” (Patton, 2015, p. 270). Therefore, participants were asked if they knew someone who could also participate in the study. If they did, they were then asked to pass on an information sheet about the research.

Initially, I shared the recruitment poster containing the details of the project and a request for support email to program coordinators of local immigrant-serving organizations. They distributed the research poster through both internal and external communication channels. Interested youth were asked to contact me directly to prevent them from being identified as participants by the organizations.

I reached out to the organizations with the hope to support the maximum variation sampling strategy proposed by Patton (2015), which seeks to achieve diversity in the subjective experiences of participants and allows for a more robust analysis. I wanted to include youth from various backgrounds along the line of ethnicity, gender, immigration status (landed immigrants or government-assisted refugees), occupation, and length of time in Nova Scotia. This diversity of social locations could provide a better picture of how workplace experiences influence newcomer youth’s sense of belonging and overall integration in Nova Scotia.

In addition, I posted the recruitment poster on my LinkedIn and WhatsApp profiles to bring awareness to the study. Through a combination of the above sampling methods, 14 people responded via email stating that they were interested in participating in the study. Out of these, three did not follow through, they stopped engaging with the process. Seven youth heard about the project through an immigrant-serving organization, two from social media, and two participants through word-of-mouth from other participants.

This sample size was adequate for this study as there is no “one size fits all” for reaching data saturation in a qualitative study (Patton, 2015). Also selecting a small number of information-rich cases (or non-probability sampling) well illustrates the qualitative approach of this study.

The criteria to participate in this study were defined as follows:

- Be between 18- 30 years old
- Been living in Canada for at least one year
- Currently live in Nova Scotia
- Have at least Canadian Language Benchmark CLB 4 (English)
- Have landed in Canada as a government-assisted refugee (GAR), private sponsored refugee (PSR), or permanent resident

To be eligible for this study, participants were expected to be in the adaptation phase of the acculturation process. That means they had already concluded their acclimatization period when they make basic adjustments to organize a new life in a new country. In terms of time, this meant that the youth had been living in Halifax for at least one year (Berry et al., 2006).

Language skill was also an important criterion for participation in this research. Participants had to have at least Level Four of proficiency in the English Language. According to Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB), at Level Four, the learner “communicates one-on-one or in small supportive groups in an informal, non-demanding context related to topics of personal relevance” (CLB, 2016, p. 11). Participants self-

identified their level of English and all the participants in this study met the requirement as their proficiency in the English language was sufficient to engage in informal interviews.

3.8.2 Ethics Protocol

This research was approved by Dalhousie University's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board in November 2020. For consent forms, privacy and confidentiality, interview guide, risks, and compensation, please see Appendices F, E, D.

3.8.3 Data Collection

For the telephone interviews, consent forms were e-mailed to participants to review and sign, and then sent back to me prior to the interviews. I also read out the confidentiality guideline and obtained verbal consent at the beginning of each interview. I collected minimal identifying information from the participants to protect confidentiality. To safeguard the information provided by participants, identifying information, both direct (name) and indirect (details that when combined might reveal participant identity) will not be included in the interview transcripts.

All the digital data (recorded interviews and word-processed transcripts) collected for this project were stored in encrypted files in a secure, password protected computer. Following the interview, audio files (recorded on a voice recorder) were immediately uploaded to the computer. Once transcription was completed, the audio-file were permanently deleted. Other than on the consent forms, participant names will not appear in any documentation.

As part of the transformative framework, interviews were conducted at spaces and times that were convenient for participants. Initially, interviews were conducted in – person

but soon moved to phone interviews as a result of COVID – 19 pandemic and public health restrictions. Also, I offered a space to debrief after the interviews were over and, in some cases, they used this moment to ask for information and guidance as newcomers.

The average time for interviews was forty-five minutes. An interview guide was used to guide the interviews and promote consistency in questioning. Nevertheless, the participants were allowed to lead the conversation and encouraged to share what was most important to them. I did this by asking follow-up and probing questions to better understand participants' perspectives. Also, after engaging with two participants, I decided to word some questions differently in order to elicit more information from participants. Tweaking the questions and asking them differently led to a richer conversation with participants. Interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and then transcribed verbatim. It was helpful to transcribe the first two interviews immediately after I met with the participants. It did not only provide an opportunity to stay close to the data, but also an insight into what worked and what needed to be improved upon in the process.

3.8.4 Data Analysis

After interviews were completed and transcribed, the data were analyzed using an inductive approach (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019). Using an inductive approach, I identified the common themes that emerged, therefore allowing the data to shape tentative theories about what was observed (Patton, 2015). I used thematic analysis to examine the data through an open-ended coding approach to identify themes and relevant examples in and across the data. This means that transcripts were read and re-read to gain insights into the information shared by the youths. This approach is appropriate for qualitative research approaches, which are often used in health and social service research. It allows researchers to stay

close to the data, with minimal transformation during analysis (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2019).

Finally, through this research, I have come to recognize the importance of considering my position as a researcher, immigrant, and woman of African descent. I also recognized the importance of practicing self-reflexivity regarding how my social locations influence my understanding of the research process and the data. Regardless of the similarities between me and the participants in certain ways, I also occupy an outsider role in some ways. I am not a youth, I do not have refugee experiences, nor have I worked as a young person in Nova Scotia. To mitigate bias, I practiced self-reflexivity throughout my time in the field and during the data analysis process. This includes being cautious of not focusing on one aspect of the story but instead striving to present a comprehensive narrative that acknowledges the complexities of their experiences.

3.8.5 Participant Profile

In total, eleven youth who have lived in Nova Scotia for between 1 and 10 years were interviewed for this research. Table 1 summarizes the profile of the participants

Table 1: Participant profile

Characteristics	Description
Age	22- 30 years

Ethnicity background	West Africa (4), East Africa (2), Central Africa (1), South Asia (2), Caribbean (1), Eastern Europe (1)
Gender	Female (8) Male (3)
Length of residence in Nova Scotia	1- 5 years (5), 5- 10 years (6)
Education	High School diploma (4) Post-secondary education (5) Master's degree (2)
Employment Status	Part-time/ temporary (7) Permanent Full time (4)
Employment Sector	Retail / Service (4) Health care (2) Non – profit /public (5)
Immigration status	Landed immigrants (7) Refugee background (4)

3.9 Limitations of the Study

This study includes a small sample size; hence the findings cannot be generalized. However, generalizability was not the aim of this qualitative exploratory study (van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). In a similar vein, while having conducted this study in Halifax, findings may not account for the experiences of immigrant youth in Nova Scotia as a whole,

other parts of Canada, or Canada as a whole. However, I believe this study is a useful starting point for further research and discussion on the topic in Nova Scotia and beyond. The English language criterion and inability to provide interpretation could have prevented some interested youth from participating in the research. This includes being cautious of not focusing on one aspect of the story but instead striving to present a comprehensive narrative that acknowledges the complexities of their experiences.

3.10 SUMMARY

Drawing on the conceptual foundation detailed in this chapter, the subsequent chapters present the study's findings. In the next three chapters (Chapters 4-6), I explore the main themes derived from the analysis of the interview transcripts. In the next Chapter (Chapter 4), I explore the experiences of youth in precarious employment and how the requirement of 'Canadian Experience' produces and reproduces the dependency of youth on precarious work.

CHAPTER 4: FINDING BELONGING IN PRECARIOUS WORK

This chapter offers insight into the dimensions and conditions of immigrant youth employment in Halifax. For the youth in this study, employment in Halifax is characterized by limited social benefits, few statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low wages, labour market insecurity, and precarity. While much of the migration scholarship on precarious employment has tended to focus on temporary forms of labour migration, a growing critical scholarship points to the widespread integration of immigrant newcomers (those who have secured permanent residency) in precarious and insecure labor markets. Exploring the experiences of precariously employed immigrant youth in an under-studied settlement context, this chapter builds on this scholarship. Moreover, and representing its key conceptual contribution, the chapter problematizes the increasingly taken-for-granted requirement and category of “Canadian Experience”. In what follows, this chapter offers a discussion of the rise of precarious labour markets in Canada since the 1980s, with a particular focus on the integration of migrants, both temporary and permanent followed by an analysis of the study’s findings vis-à-vis the employment experiences of immigrant youth.

4. 1 Precarious Work in Canada

Precarious employment is a term used to highlight labor market insecurity, a deviation from the traditional standard work. The standard employment relationship (SER) refers to a continuous employment relationship where a worker has one employer, works full-time has access to social benefits and entitlements, and expects to work indefinitely. On the other hand, precarious employment refers to work that is characterized by low wages,

atypical work contracts, limited statutory social benefits, and uncertainties. Hira-Friesen (2018) identifies three specific types of precarious work from their Canadian labour market survey - temporary jobholders, multiple jobholders, and involuntary part-time work.

Through their research on the intersection of precarious legal status and precarious work, Goldring and Landolt (2011) developed a framework that encapsulates precariousness beyond earnings or occupational mobility. The eight dimensions of the Index of Precarious Work (IPW) are unionization, contract type, terms of employment, predictability of schedules/ control, basis for pay, benefits, place of work, and cash payments. The authors added that routine exploitations are harmful breaches that lie inbetween the continuum of decent work and severe exploitation and risk being dismissed as trivial. Taken on its own, each index of work precarity may pose no problem, and may not even be illegal. But taken together they result in jobs that are dirty, dangerous, and difficult (3D). These practices have the potential to cause physical and psychological harm since they are often more subtle and normalized within otherwise legitimate business practices (Davies, 2019)

The spread of precarious employment in Canada since the 1980s has been documented by researchers (Hira-Friesen, 2018; Vosko, 2006a), as are its prevalence among immigrants, youth, and racialized groups and the effects on social inclusion and immigrants' sense of belonging (Goldring & Landolt, 2011; Yan et al., 2008). Precarious employment is not new but, over the years, has manifested in different ways within diverse contexts (Vosko, 2006). It is shaped by many factors, including forms of employment, social context, as well as the interaction between social relations such as gender, age,

“race”, immigration status and economic and political conditions (Syed, 2016; Vosko, 2006).

In the early twentieth century, contingent and precarious work was the norm among immigrants. It has manifested as non-standard forms of work in specific occupations and within certain political and economic contexts that foster the social reproduction of inequality in the labor market. In the 20th century, heightened demands for workers in agriculture, construction, and other forms of work critical to building the transatlantic railway (Boyd & Vickers, 2000) and the settlers’ demand for female domestic workers (Barber, 2008) prompted various immigration policies. One of such policies facilitated the recruitment of workers by employment agents to fill labor demands. Employment through intermediaries across diverse sectors has since been a critical manifestation of precarious work in Canada. This practice is manifested in specific occupations such as live-in domestic work and seasonal agriculture work, which involves the recruitment of workers from abroad on a short-term basis (Barber, 2008).

The temporary immigration status of these workers means that they have limited access to social and labour protections. Discriminatory immigration policies that deny temporary workers citizenship rights, and structural racism makes immigrant workers of colour exceptionally vulnerable to the worst forms of precarious labour such as low-wage, casual, temporary work that lacks protection and social benefits (Syed, 2016; Vosko and Zukewich 2005). In addition to structural discrimination, the rise in globalization and neoliberalism has exacerbated precariousness in Canada’s labor market.

Globalization has led to an increase in the free flow of capital across borders. While globalization results in high-level professional jobs, it also produces low-skilled, low-

income jobs which need to be filled (Syed, 2016). These work opportunities, which are often dirty, dangerous, and difficult, are taken up by discouraged and vulnerable individuals such as immigrants and visible minorities (Davies, 2019). The latter's labor is often devalued and perpetuated by policies that underpay them for certain types of work. For instance, Philippine nurses, caregivers, and construction workers are exploited with low wages in Canada. Furthermore, Canadian jobs have become increasingly precarious through complex austerity measures and neoliberal restructuring (Syed, 2016).

The global recession of the late 20th century has notable impacts on the Canadian welfare state which, prior to that period, was largely based on Keynesian economics. The tenet of this macroeconomics theory is that government intervention can stabilize the economy and offer protections to a large portion of its economy (Lightman & Lightman, 2017). However, the election of a federal Liberal government in 1993 marked a fundamental change in the socio-economic landscape. One of the notable neoliberal reforms was the replacement of the Canada Assistance Plan with Canada Health and Social Transfer. An important feature of the CAP was that provinces could not impose any work-related requirements on eligibility for assistance. On the other hand, CHST legislation eliminated the prohibition on conditionality, attached a condition of employability to eligibility for assistance, and thereby opened the door to workfare (Lightman & Lightman, 2017). In general terms, neoliberal reforms have resulted in cutbacks in social program spending, reduced government intervention, and deregulation that gives empowers the corporate elite.

Neoliberal policies and corporate influence have failed to increase the minimum wage, weakened the rights of labor to organize, and reduced opportunities to collect

statutory holiday pay, all of which particularly exploit young workers and immigrants (Galabuzi, 2006; Syed, 2016). Influenced by tendencies in capitalism, employers use subcontracting and other strategies to reduce labor costs, lower employment standards, and maximize profit at the expense of workers' rights and welfare (Vosko, 2006). In contemporary times, precarious employment reflects a combination of historical domination of vulnerable groups and discriminatory immigration policies. In addition, the ongoing neoliberal reforms and capitalism that widen the gaps between the poor and the rich continue to push workers into limited choices and poor working conditions.

4.2 Low-Wage & Unstable Jobs

The majority of the youth in this study reported that they were in temporary, casual, low-wage jobs with limited statutory benefits. Ahmed has a Canadian diploma and works for an average of 15 hours/ week as an interpreter on an on-call basis for two different agencies. He reflected on his job situation:

The organizations only pay for the hours worked, which vary from 1-2 hours at a time, and do not pay for commute time. There are no added benefits or vacation pay...Sometimes, it is just a waste of time traveling to do a 1- hour job. No insurance...no improvement with pay...everything is the same (Ahmed)

Ahmed's job situation is not a matter of choice; instead, he was pushed into a low-income, involuntary part-time work that lacks opportunity and security. He expressed that his effort to secure a full-time permanent job has been futile. Engaging workers with specific skills on an "as needed" temporary basis is the hallmark of the shift in the nature of work since the end of the 20th century (Walton, 2016). The growth of neoliberal policies and globalization, which favors flexibility over stability, has created an unstable and

fragmented labor market that enriches a few at the expense of the masses. One significant risk of Ahmed's employment is the lack of access to social security coverage in case of a job loss as he may not work enough hours to qualify for employment insurance (Canada, 2021).

The low wage and limited hours worked also make it hard to make ends meet or save for the future. The difficulties immigrants face in the labour market and how it translates into poverty have been well-documented in research (Cranford & Vosko, 2006; Goldring & Landolt, 2011; Gottfried et al., 2016; Hande et al., 2020). A combination of low earnings, lack of social wage leading to out-of-pocket payment for essential needs such as health costs, and casual work with no guaranteed hours of work continues to drive the poverty rate among immigrant populations. Using the 2006 Canada census data, Shields et al. (2011) found that low-income and employment precarity contribute to the high rate of poverty among immigrants, especially those from racialized communities. In contrast to Ahmed's experience, few youth participants in permanent positions reported more control over their work schedule and access to statutory benefits. Nonetheless, they earned minimum wage, which was barely enough to support their basic needs. Indeed, research shows that precarity shows up even in permanent, stable employment with benefits (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Man, 2004). The low wages, lack of opportunity for skills development and career progression, and other deplorable working conditions contribute to contingent work.

4.3 Job Training

Inadequate job training was an experience shared by more than 70 percent of the participants. The youths reported a lack of structured training required to carry out their

job in a safe and healthy manner. Despite the reported insufficient support to carry out job duties, IRY mentioned that their employers expected so much in terms of job productivity as soon as they were hired. Raphael notes: “They expected independence, accuracy, [and] they expected a lot in a very short time.” Another participant, Adiza, talked about her experience of being a new hire in a retail store: “I wasn’t given a proper orientation, and although they emphasize teamwork, the reality is that you are on your own, and nobody responds when you need support to assist a customer.” Although this dimension of precarious work is not explicitly documented in the literature as one of the indicators of precarious employment, building on the work of Goldring and Landolt, (2011). working without adequate training may be classified as dangerous work, an element of precarious employment, which compromises workers’ health (mental health) and safety.

Closely related to inadequate training is the lack of opportunity for skills development, an index of precarious employment suggested by May (2019). Many youths voiced that they were not offered the chance to learn about other business areas that could potentially lead to better career prospects. Although many youths see their current employment situation as a temporary measure that enables them to gain work experience or save up for further education, they quickly realized that their goal was far-fetched as their employment did not support their objectives. A participant in a temporary low-wage work whose goal was to go back to school to upgrade his credentials expressed frustration about the difficulty experienced in achieving his goal. He stated: “there are no opportunities, they pay minimum wage...you can’t save money even if you work hard.” The lack of financial resources and opportunities that support skills development and future goals possibly explains why many immigrants get stuck in precarious employment,

notwithstanding their age, skills level, or length of time in Canada. This was the case for highly educated African immigrant men in Creese and Wiebe's (2000) research who were trapped in manual labour for the long-term because they found the cost of returning to school unattainable.

4.4 Employer Abuse & Labor Standard Violations

Another dimension of precarious employment is the exposure to employer abuse and labour standards violations (Davies, 2019). Participants shared narratives that point to unfair workplace practices and violations of labor rights. Four of the participants clearly articulated their perception of unfair workplace practices and suspected that their employers took advantage of them in certain instances. Some youth participants seem unaware of the exploitation that characterizes some of the actions of their supervisors.

A participant, Binta, reported that she often worked additional hours without overtime pay, not because she wanted to, but in order not to displease the manager, she picks up the extra shifts. She noted:

“I work like 20 hours in one day sometimes...when she [supervisor] calls my co-worker they said cancel every time, but I always work, or she will not be happy.”

(Binta)

In the case of Aria and Mario, they shared that their current job duties and work shifts were entirely different from what they were hired to do. They added that they did not receive prior notice for the changes. When youths were asked if they raised their concerns with employers, some youth replied in affirmation. However, their concerns were met with indifference from employers and in some cases negative consequences. For example, Pamela narrated how her work contract was terminated and her wage not paid because she

spoke up about how she was only assigned menial tasks and did not get a chance to do the job she was hired for. This experience supports previous research where immigrants restrain from making formal complaints because of fear of reprisal (Hande et al., 2020). Moreover, similar to findings from previous research with immigrants (Bauder, 2001; Hira-Friesen, 2018; Shalileh, 2017), some of the participants were just grateful to have a job in an otherwise challenging job market. In a research study with immigrant workers in Ontario, Hande et al., (2020) reported that workers often perceive that their employment status is too precarious and learned not to complain because doing so would jeopardize their work position. They added that even as immigrant workers in Canada develop consciousness around exploitation, their growing perceptions of precarity in the labour market discourage workers from making formal complaints.

The second category of participants are those who seem unaware of exploitative practices towards them. To explain this phenomenon, previous research found that immigrant workers were subject to exploitation and poor working conditions due to limited knowledge of workers' rights in Canada (Hande et al., 2020; Syed, 2016). Another possible explanation is that workers who have been accustomed to poor working conditions in their countries of origin may not be moved to complain if similar problems happen in Canada. Hande and colleagues' research (2016) with immigrant workers in Ontario found that some of the participants did not feel the need to speak up against unfair practices and accepted the status quo. In the case of Binta, for example, the NS Labour regulation states 12 hours as the maximum hours of work in 24 hours, except when the worker agrees to additional hours (Nova Scotia, 2011). However, the clause in this regulation does not take into account the possibility of vulnerable workers being coerced by employers to agree to

additional hours. Perhaps, she might have refused to work long hours, but the power differentials between her and the supervisor would persistently discourage her from doing so. This sentiment reflects Mullaly's (2010) concept of 'powerlessness', a form of oppression whereby one is subject to disrespectful treatment due to the minority status they occupy.

4.5 “Canadian Experience” Requirement in the Canadian Labour Market

Canadian experience is nuanced with no universal definition for the term. It can be defined as a combination of hard skills, soft skills, and competence in an unwritten Canadian workplace norms (Bhuyan et al., 2017; Chatterjee, 2015; Sakamoto et al., 2010). Sakamoto and colleagues (2010) documented different meanings ascribed to the concept in the labour market. For Canadian employers, the Canadian Experience encompasses both 'soft' and 'hard' skills. Hard skills are referred to as technical abilities to carry out specific job tasks in Canada whereas soft skills, including forms of communication, values, and behaviors, refer to skills that are needed to operate effectively within the 'Canadian workplace culture'. Sakamoto noted that soft skill, a form of 'tacit' knowledge is one way to talk about the Canadian work experience and employers use this to determine if an immigrant will be a good 'fit' within their work environment.

Therefore, employers and, by extension, settlement agencies that offer employment programs often frame skilled immigrants as possessing technical skills but lacking appropriate tacit knowledge. In turn, this legitimizes the Canadian experience requirement for employment. Some authors, however, cautioned that this discourse of Canadian experience constructs immigrants as deficient due to their 'lack of skills' without

considering other factors such as cultural, racial, and social characteristics (Bhuyan et al., 2017). In 2013, the Ontario Human Rights Commission formally recognized that Canadian experience as an employment requirement is discriminatory and raises human rights concerns. The code explicitly linked the requirement in hiring practices to racism and stated that ‘Not hiring someone because of where they worked before may be discrimination based on race, ancestry, colour, place of origin or ethnic origin’ (Ontario Human Rights Commission 2013).

4.5.1 The Role of Settlement Agencies

Employment is a core component of the services offered by settlement agencies and they often support immigrants and refugees to transition into the labour market through government-funded employment programs. These programs usually include both classroom learning (to teach newcomers about Canadian workplace culture) and short-term job placement to gain work experience (ISANS, n.d.). Many youths in this study had used the service of a settlement agency to obtain a current or previous job. Evident from participant narratives, is an acute understanding that their position within Canadian labour markets is an outcome of limited “Canadian Experience”. It appears from the information shared by the youth that settlement workers play a critical role in shaping this narrative of the importance of acquiring the Canadian experience.

A youth participant, Maribu, relayed that an employment program facilitator told her and other participants that the concept of “Canadian experience” that employers promote has more to do with soft skills and how one “fits in” into a team environment, manages conflict, and speak clearly. Thus, some of the participants viewed their job, regardless of its relevance to their prior training and experience, as an opportunity to gain

Canadian experience needed to move forward in their careers. This impression may be true in some cases, especially for those whose current job roles are relevant to their chosen career path. For example, one of the youths who currently work as a home care support mentioned that she believes that the experience in her current role will count towards Canadian experience for her future career in nursing.

On the other hand, literature shows that many immigrants often get stuck in contingent forms of employment despite gaining work experience in Canada. In the case of African men in Creese and Wiebe (2012)'s study, manual labour was the only field they found jobs where local employers do not require 'Canadian experience'. Unfortunately, experience gained in these low-skilled jobs never translated into "Canadian experience" that might facilitate their entry into their professional fields. Thus, most of them found themselves trapped in a series of insecure, low-wage jobs for the long term. Drawing on the work of Senthana et al., (2020), the issue of job-skill mismatch was highlighted by some of the youths in my study. Their experiences include feeling pressured and, in some cases, grateful to take low-skilled, low-wage jobs that did not reflect their education and experience. These job positions are often leveraged by settlement service providers who had pre-existing relationships with employers.

Research indicates that the settlement sector has undergone neoliberal restructuring over the past few decades which has resulted in fiscal constraints and increased responsibilities. The effects of neoliberal restructuring are particularly evident with service provision and quality, which often means that newcomers are referred to low-quality jobs not aligned with their previous skills and education Senthana et al., (2020). Building on the evidence from previous studies on the employment experiences of newcomers that

sought the service of settlement agencies (Senthanar et al., 2020; Shalileh, 2017; Shields & Drolet, n.d.), this study provides an example of how settlement agencies operating within the neoliberal landscape perpetuate work precarity among newcomers. Settlement agencies stream many immigrants into precarious employment under the guise of Canadian Experience in order to maintain their relationships with employers and meet government expectations of immigrants' economic integration notwithstanding the quality of the job.

Many youths in my study like other immigrants in previous studies (Gottfried et al., 2016; Man, 2004) define “Canadian Experience” as work experience in Canada, which is often in terms of technical knowledge. A youth participant, Preye, who worked in a job unrelated to her training and experience relayed her struggles of getting work in her field and questioned the idea of Canadian experience. She stated:

they [recruiter] kept saying I had no Canadian experience ... does it mean if you don't have Canadian experience or a Canadian degree then you can't get anything, just like you are wasting your time applying for a job...I'm not even applying for big jobs, just applying for the position of a receptionist or administrative assistant, the same thing I was doing back home (Preye)

Some participants believe that Canadian experience is a means to discriminate against recent immigrants and create hurdles in accessing the labour market.

Reflecting on how the lack of Canadian experience has impeded her chances of obtaining suitable employment, a youth participant remarked, “I can't get Canadian experience if I'm not employed”. This sentiment is representative of a paradoxical catch-22 situation that was expressed by immigrant youth in Shalileh's (2017)'s study. The youth identified the requirement of Canadian experience as a major barrier in transitioning into

the labour market. Wilson-Forsberg and Sethi (2015) stated that “Requiring Canadian experience, but not extending the opportunity to gain that experience as a result of having no Canadian experience, is perhaps the most punishing of paradoxes encountered by skilled immigrants in Ontario and other Canadian provinces” (p. 97).

4.6 Precarity and Sense of Belonging

Precarious employment perpetuates poverty and social isolation which invariably contribute to how immigrants youth perceive the host community as well as their sense of belonging. Sense of belonging reflects a person’s experience of inclusion and feeling of acceptance in a place or social relationship (Fuks et al., 2018). The low wages and job instability experienced by many youths in this study mean that they barely earn enough to meet their basic needs. Living in poverty has profound consequences on the social aspects of people’s lives. Some researchers have identified a strong effect of socioeconomic status on sense of belonging (Caron, 2014; Hou et al., 2018b).

Inadequate income can prevent people from participating in social activities in their community and developing the connection needed to foster a sense of belonging (Valenta, n.d.). For some youths in this study, socioeconomic status and the precarity of their job were deterrents to active participation in the community. Luke, a youth who works multiple jobs and scattered hours states: “I work the night shift, I would start working at 5 and get off at 1...I also work weekends, my hours change all the time, I didn’t have a life. I couldn’t do anything”. He further explained that he earned minimum wage and had to work multiple jobs in order to pay his bills and meet other financial obligations which leave him with no time for other activities.

Similarly, another youth reported how her employment arrangement impacts her ability to develop social networks. Although Mira works for a single employer, she works in multiple sites as an on-call, casual staff and often has to take up job assignments at various locations on the shortest notice. Aside from the enormous time needed to plan travels to unfamiliar places, Mira said that her employment arrangement discourages her from developing a meaningful social network as she works with entirely new teams for every job assignment. Hence, this experience leads to a feeling of disconnection from the community. Other IRY talked about their experiences of exploitation and job instability as well as their influence on the perception of Nova Scotia and sense of belonging. Some of the IRY reported they live in constant fear of losing their jobs, which invariably impacts their sense of inclusion and attachment to both the workplace and the community. For this group of youth and those who were previously unemployed, they felt let down by employers and the government alike that pay lip service to a true integration that supports the wellbeing and prosperity of newcomers.

Government and employers, through settlement agencies, support the economic integration of immigrant youths, however, some authors claimed that the opportunities offered to this vulnerable group are often low quality and contingent work (Senthanar et al., 2020; Shields & Drolet, 2016). Within the neoliberal market, the workfare system requires those receiving benefits to perform some work or to participate in job training thereby upholding the rhetoric that any job is a job. This belief contributes to the over-representation of IRY youth in contingent and unsafe work, which undermines their ability to successfully integrate into society, with great implications for social inclusion (Man, 2004).

Reflecting on her experience, an economic class immigrant youth questions the point of integration if it does not meet the basic employment needs of immigrants. “I mean why are you nice to me if you don’t give me the opportunities I need to settle”, she stated. This reaction reflects the body of literature on integration research, which posits that immigrants who experience barriers to opportunities in the receiving community are less likely to develop a positive perception of relationships with the receiving society and are less likely to successfully integrate (Ager & Strang, 2008; Banting & Soroka, 2012; Bauder, 2001).

Similar to the findings in a study carried out by Di Napoli et al. (2021) with immigrants (aged 15–64) working in Italy, the thought of losing one’s job or an abrupt end to an employment contract generates a deep sense of self-isolation and perceived social exclusion. Building on Caron's (2014) finding that immigrants’ sense of belonging to the receiving society hinges on their ability to contribute to the receiving country economically and to live a good life. The feeling of not adding value to their workplace because they occupy a low-status position that does not require them to use their skills and earn decent wages contributed to some youth’s psychological adjustment to the community. Compared to youth in fairly decent jobs (standard employment terms, positions commensurate with skills), youth in precarious employment reported feelings of stress, anxiety, and frustration, and were more likely to have a weak sense of belonging.

4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter has sought to present the dimensions and conditions of immigrant youth employment and how the requirement of “Canadian experience” excludes Immigrant youth from decent employment. Seven youth reported that they worked in contingent employment. Although, three youth work in permanent roles with one employer, the stories shared revealed some indices of precarious employment, including inadequate training, low-wage, and involuntary part-time (making youth work multiple jobs to meet basic needs) were common patterns in most of the jobs. This chapter shows that the requirement of “Canadian experience” perpetuates work precarity among immigrant youth and has a grave consequence for belonging.

Following the insights from this chapter, chapter five explores the strategies deployed by newcomer youth to navigate the emotional labour often required of their work. Concentrated in service, hospitality, and retail, many newcomers are faced with the task of managing their own challenging emotions as they greet, serve, and respond to the needs of customers. Revealed in chapter five, these challenging emotions map onto the realities of migration, as well as the structural forms of exclusion that prompt their participation in precarious labour markets and their experiences of social isolation in the workplace. Chapter five contributes, then, to a growing body of scholarship (Farrugia et al., 2018; Gerrard & Farrugia, 2021) focused on the affective labour of migrants, while adding to this scholarship consideration of the complicated implications of affective labour for the sense of belonging experienced by newcomer youth.

CHAPTER 5: SMILE FROM THE HEART: MANAGING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE, CREATING POSITIVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

In the previous chapters, I offer insight into the social and economic dimensions and conditions of employment of the youth in this study. Central to these discussions are the implications of precarious employment and the structural violence embedded in the workplace on youths' sense of belonging and how youth find belonging through solidarity with other immigrants. In this chapter, I draw on the concept of emotional and affective labor to understand the emotion work involved in adjusting to inequality, social exclusion, and contingent employment within a capitalist economy. Contemporary discussions on emotional labour have normalized whiteness through an assumption that workers are by default, white and empirical studies rely on racially homogenous samples.

Therefore, as part of my analysis, I discuss how the interlocking nature of race and gender influence the way the youth in this study experience emotional labour. Mirchandani (2003) asserts that emotional labour must be conceptualized to include all forms of emotion work involved in adjusting to inequality, racial injustice, and precarious employment. While there has been a reflection on the emotional labour of workers in affective labour generally, the discussion in this chapter suggests that emotional labour does not only depend on the nature of work but also on the gender, ethnicity, and immigration histories of the worker. Hence, my analysis of the case study highlights that emotional labour is fundamentally relational and takes into account the subjective experiences of the worker.

Responding to the overarching objective of the thesis, this labour, and its consequence, are explored in relation to newcomer youth's sense of belonging in Nova

Scotia. In sum, my findings offer insight into the significant and negative implications of the emotional and affective labour expected of and performed by the youth for their sense of belonging. Indeed, the psychological toll of navigating toxic work environments while managing the emotional complexities of migration and performing the work required of service and hospitality represents a significant barrier to the overall sense of belonging experienced by the young people in my study.

For the purpose of this analysis, emotional labour is defined as the work needed to manage the feelings and emotions of the individual worker and to produce profitable and positive affects in others (Oksala, 2016; Whitney, 2018). Elaborated in this chapter, newcomer youth are expected to manage their own feelings and emotions in order to produce good feelings in others and to deliver positive customer experience. By adhering to established ‘feeling rules’ - social norms that dictate what feelings are appropriate in a given social context (Hochschild, 2012), youths suppress the challenging feelings and emotions prompted by economic insecurity, unfair workplace practices, discrimination, and social isolation.

Offering a case study of how this plays out for immigrant youth in Halifax, I draw on the experiences of Mabel, a female newcomer youth of African descent employed in a retail store in Halifax to explore and elaborate on the emotional labour that occurs at the intersection of precarity, race, and gender. What strategies does she use to manage her feelings to meet her employer’s demand for a positive customer experience? If smiling is one of the feeling rules and expectations from her employer, what then are the implications of “smiling from the heart” on Mabel’s sense of belonging. The ability to smile wholeheartedly is considered a soft skill – a major component of the ‘Canadian Experience’

– used by many Canadian employers to determine if immigrant workers will be a good fit within their work environment (Sakamoto et al., 2010). The expectation to smile amid poor working conditions and inequities within the affective economy is an act of violence, with negative implications for social belonging, as the smiling worker is asked to refute the affective burden of their own experiences.

5.1 Emotional / Affective Labour

Over the past thirty years, a multi-faceted literature has developed on the emotion work done by air flight attendants, customer service associates, caregivers, and all professions that demand affective labour as part of their production. The concept of affective labour can be traced to the contributions of Marxist feminists in the 1970s (Hardt, 1999; Veldstra, 2020). Central to the contribution is the work of the International Feminist Collective in Italy and the International Wages for Housework campaign. The goal of the movements was to expand the conceptualization of work beyond waged employment and challenge the prevailing ideology that rendered women powerless by drawing attention to the essential role caring work plays in social reproduction (Bolton, 2009; Vora & Boscagli, 2013). They challenged the beliefs that women perform such work as an ‘act of love’ (Cox and Federici 1975 cited in Veldstra, 2020). Hence, women’s work in the home is uncompensated and devalued as it does not recognize the crucial role it plays in sustaining the labour force and the society at large.

The movement also critiques the dynamic that positions caring work as the inevitable, and purview of women. Emphasizing the expectation that caregivers absorb and moderate the feelings of others to reproduce social life, they argue that both circulating

affects and emotional labour are key to capitalist reproduction. The emphasis on the idea that labour exceeds its most easily visible forms among advocates of the Wages for Housework movement underscores the analysis in which emotional work is a fundamental yet invisible workplace expectation. The emotional work detailed by the feminist movements becomes the basis for Hochschild's exploration of the expanding reach of capital into the lives of workers. While the service work that interests Hochschild provides compensation, the emotional component of that work remains both highly gendered and largely invisible (Veldstra, 2020; Whitney, 2018). As affective labour is entrenched in neoliberalism, sociality is often found within the capital and the terms that govern labour also become the terms that determine social inclusion and belonging (Veldstra, 2020).

5.2 Youth in Affective/ Service Industry Labour

Retail and service work is pervasive in advanced capitalist societies (Brook, 2009). This sector of the economy relies on young workers, making youth labour critical to the functioning of this industry. Scholars have investigated the impact of neoliberal policies on young people, who are over-represented in affective economies ((Farrugia et al., 2018). In addition, the effect of structural insecurity on the production and reproduction of inequality along the line of class and gender in precarious conditions is well documented in the literature (Farrugia et al., 2018; Kunz, 2003)

CASE STUDY: Mabel

Mabel identifies as an African female immigrant youth moved to Nova Scotia as a permanent resident two years prior to this interview. She holds a high school diploma and has post-secondary education from her home country. Upon arrival in Nova Scotia, she connected with an Immigrant serving organization for employment support. With the support of the organization and through her personal network, she applied to many jobs and employers but was unsuccessful in her job search. After nine months of unemployment, she was pleased to receive an invitation to an interview at one of the largest retail stores in the city and within a week she was offered a part-time sales associate position. Her duties in the position include stocking the shelf, pricing products, and making customers happy.

Mabel mentioned that she would have preferred a different job that allows her to use her skills, nonetheless, she was pleased to have a job. The wage helps her pay some of her bills and working allows her to be a productive member of society. In her words: “this is just a survival job but I don’t want to be idle”. Despite the precarity of her employment, the poor working conditions, and perceived racism, the employer expected staff in client-serving roles to portray positive feelings and engage warmly with customers with a smile. In order to keep customers happy and satisfied, she needed to suppress feelings of anger, frustration, and sadness when attending to customers. She commented:

even with the pain of the environment, you have to attend to the customer with a smile, you smile from your heart and show them you are happy to help... you have to be happy (Mabel)

When asked what she meant by the ‘‘pain of the environment’’, Mabel referred to unfair treatment, micro-aggressions, and discrimination from customers, co-workers as well as lack of support from the employer. To explain her point, she described instances where customers had asked to be served by staff who are local instead of her, she obliged this request on many occasions, but a few times, she insisted that she was the only available associate to serve the customer. In another instance, a customer repeatedly said they could not hear and understand her accent and openly expressed their frustration:

they kept saying I cannot hear you, but I was trying hard to hear them, so why don’t they listen and try and hear what I’m saying... I feel they just wanted me to feel bad or different...most times I feel like maybe my colour (Mabel)

She went on to express how experiences like those shared above make her feel bad and like an outsider. Most especially because she felt she could not do anything to change the situation. She had reported some of her concerns to her supervisor, but she didn’t think anything was done about her complaints and she feared that they might perceive her as the problem. She commented:

They [employer] need more complaints from more people to make it solid if only one person says there is an issue, they will be like No, you are the problem and need to work on yourself ...One person cannot make the change. There have to be more complaints before they will look into it.

As pointed out in previous studies, the feeling of helplessness and powerlessness is heightened when systemic violence and errors are seen as a personal problem that the individual employee needs to address (Veldstra, 2020). For Mabel, resistance was not an

option given her vulnerability in the workplace and the lack of robust alternative social networks, especially under conditions of growing precarity. Emotional and affective labour are entrenched as hegemonic forms, hence resistance to unfair treatment faces a number of risks as experienced by women and those who provide affective labour (Bolton, 2009). There is a risk of facing enormous opposition and being ostracized from social life for failing to reproduce sociality (Vora & Boscagli, 2013).

In addition to her experiences with customers and co-workers, Mabel expressed a feeling of culture shock and said that she is still learning to adapt to Canadian workplace culture. According to her “I’m still adapting to this place, and it is difficult”. After several unsuccessful attempts to develop meaningful personal relationships with her co-workers, she seemed emotionally exhausted. For instance, she mentioned how she would smile, and colleagues would not smile back, and how some would not respond when she greeted them. Initially, she thought they were probably not in good moods, but she soon learned to let go of her habitual tendency to establish relationships with co-workers at a personal level. She commented: “If I didn't offend you, why are you behaving as if we have had a misunderstanding... this kind of thing is unusual where I come from”.

Cultural shock refers to multifaceted experiences that may result in diverse emotions when immigrants get in contact with a different culture in the host society (Winkelman, 1994). The feelings of anxiety, uncertainties, and interpersonal stress experienced by newcomers may be aggravated as they engage in affective economy that has feeling rules (Shan, 2012).

To comply with the display rules, newcomer youth may have to make a conscious effort to understand things they had previously processed unconsciously in their own

culture. For example, they may need to make an effort to interpret new language meaning, new non-verbal and social communications, and communicate differently to create a positive feeling and pleasant experience for customers. This process of learning to “fit in” the cultural norm of the workplace requires that youth understand several new pieces of information may result in information overload and cause emotional strain. In their study with foreign students, Zhou et al., (2008) found that the change from a normally effortless functioning within participants’ own culture to conscious attention to new information and ways of being and doing things resulted in emotional fatigue. This feeling manifested in the desire to isolate themselves, as a consequence of a low sense of belonging. Therefore, while Canadian youth might also be expending emotional labour in carrying out their job within the service economy, this labour is heightened for newcomer youths. In addition to dealing with the stressors that come from the job, they also have to work through the feelings that come from being in unfamiliar environments. Similar to Mabel’s experience of culture shock and adaptation, participants in Shan’s (2012) study of the emotion work of Chinese immigrants in the workplace learned to bracket their feelings of uncertainties, frustration, and anxiety as they changed their communication, work practices, and learned to “fit-in”.

While social interaction and relationship development in the workplace can foster the adaptation of immigrants to a new culture (Ahn & Davis, 2020; Major et al., 2014), the rules of relational practices are often implicit and in stark contrast to the cultural understanding of the youth. This difference often results in tension that contributes to the emotion work carried out by the young workers. Mabel mentioned in another part of the interview that forming social networks and friends is important for her well-being and

adaptation. For many immigrants from collective societies that emphasize relationships and the needs of a group over individual interests, people do not only communicate overwork, but they also relate on a personal level. Mabel learned quickly, although reluctantly, that to be socialized into the Canadian workplace culture where individuals view themselves independent of the collectives and relationships may be loose and temporary.

5.3 Emotive Dissonance

Building on the work of Farrugia and colleagues (2018), Mabel's narrative on the need to smile is to express a company's feelings rather than just a way to express personal feelings. The internalization of good feelings is promoted by the employer not only to enhance the quality of the emotional display but also to diminish the likelihood of what Jansz and Timmers (2002) refer to as *emotive dissonance* which is caused by the incongruence of what workers feel and what they feign. In other words, workers are expected to 'be' the feelings not just 'perform' the feelings. But the question is how does one internalize and produce good feelings when constantly exposed to structural violence? This obviously was not an easy question for Mabel to answer.

From Jansz and Timmers' 2002 work, we can identify a tension between workers' underlying feelings and the expectation of positive performance on the job. Mabel had to undertake some negotiation in order to learn to smile effectively, including developing strategies to manage her emotions and sustain an outward countenance she needs to keep the customer happy. Drawing on Jansz & Timmers (2002)'s thesis, Mabel might have to pull together what she felt and displayed by changing what she felt sometimes and at other

times changing what she portrays depending on the circumstance. Of course, displaying authentically positive emotions and producing the proper state of mind in others while suppressing underlying contradicting feelings is not without a cost. Mabel indicated that it was difficult adapting to the workplace. When asked to say more about what she meant by “difficult”, she elaborated with the following:

What makes it difficult is the fact that you meet people with different beliefs who not only think their beliefs and values are superior and expect you to take them but are not open to other people’s cultures.

While Mabel reported that she was open to learning about the Canadian culture, being a newcomer from a minority group and having to resist certain expectations that conflict with her values and dealing with discrimination was both stressful and exhausting. Her experience is similar to those of the self-employed women of colour in Mirchandani's (2003) study. The women reported how demeaning treatment and racial stereotypes of their background from customers added another layer to the emotional stress they already feel at their work. There is a relationship between emotional labour and the social location a worker occupies within interactive race hierarchy and immigration status (Mirchandani, 2003). In the case of Mabel, she might not only be participating in the production but also doing the work to manage her emotions and bad feelings that result from microaggressions and discrimination. Drawing on Mirchandani (2003) the work required in participating in and managing newcomer youths' shifting social locations and identities often requires emotion work. This work is done in conjunction with the work of making others feel a certain way and defining one’s work.

According to Veldstra (2020), these positive imposed feelings affect the bottom line of the organization without necessarily improving workers' quality of life. The fusion of real and acted feelings though may produce the positive feelings to produce the proper state of mind in others could produce adverse effects on the well-being of workers. A system that requires a suppression of the real self may lead to dissatisfaction and low social belonging (Veldstra, 2020). Mabel talked about how she managed to 'smile from the heart' when serving customers. To ensure the delivery of the requisite quality of service, there are codified feeling rules that are imposed on emotional labourers. These rules determine the content and appropriateness of the displayed emotions, whereby workers have no control over the process of emotion production and are alienated from their emotional product (Hochschild, 2012).

The employers' appetite for appropriate and desirable feelings and behaviors is reflected in the requirement of 'Canadian experience' for employment. Possessing the requisite tacit knowledge, skills, and behaviors is one way to talk about the Canadian work experience and employers use this to determine if an immigrant will be a good 'fit' within their work environment (Sakamoto et al., 2010). Workers are expected to manage their feelings both for employability and social belonging. Any expression of bad feelings is punished by a threat of job loss or exclusion from the social circle in the workplace. (Veldstra, 2020).

5.4 Strategies to Manage Emotional Labour

It is common for workers in affective economy to develop strategies to bracket their feelings and emotions and produce positive affects on others (Hochschild, 2012; Cossette

& Hess, 2015). Mabel's experiences as shared previously resulted in feelings of sadness: "I have feelings too and when I first started this job, I cried a lot", she noted. However, to protect her well-being and fulfill her job duties she figured out ways to manage herself and her relationships with others. She decided to not smile at colleagues and assumed no expectations that they would smile at her. This, in turn, safeguarded the emotional energy required to provide quality service to customers. This precarious interaction with co-workers is a potential for emotional exhaustion that adds another layer to the emotional labour already experienced on the job.

Although it contributed to feelings of exclusion, limiting the amount of happiness expended on co-workers allowed her to meet the employer's expectation to "smile from the heart" and show customers that she was happy to help. She was very clear that she felt that her relationship with customers ought to be different from what she had with colleagues and that keeping her job was more important than building relationships at work. Cossette & Hess (2015) attest that in affective labour, the smile secures the worker's place in the workforce, and there is a risk of unemployment and financial insecurity inherent in not smiling. Nevertheless, smiling from this place of vulnerability may obscure the underpinning emotions and undermine the experiences of a newcomer youth who is trying to navigate a new environment. The feeling rules – social norms that dictate what emotions are accepted in a social setting- go beyond behavioral compliance, which they refer to as surface acting. Rather, they strive for workers to internalize the feelings they are required to portray, mostly for two reasons: to improve the quality of the emotional display and to diminish the likelihood of emotive dissonance which is caused by managing the tension between what is felt and feigned over a period of time (Cossette & Hess, 2015).

Surface and deep acting are strategies used by workers in affective labour to regulate their emotions to meet organizational standards. Surface acting involves faking the required emotions, in other words, a person displays an emotion that does not reflect their true feelings. For instance, they put on fake smiles when they greet or attend to customers.

In contrast, deep acting involves modifying feelings to match the required display rules. Workers who use deep acting seek a comfortable space for themselves where they could merge real and acted emotions and avoid the danger of emotive dissonance. (Cossette & Hess, 2015; Brook, 2009). Emotional dissonance is the conflict between experienced emotions and displayed emotions to conform to laid down norms required to carry out a job (Jansz & Timmers, 2002). Studies show that emotive dissonance may lead to stress and a negative effect on social belonging (Mirchandani, 2003; Veldstra, 2020; Vora & Boscagli, 2013). The need to suppress feelings of sadness and frustration in order to perform ‘deep acting’ and smile from the heart did not only cause her a lot of stress as mentioned during the interview but also had a negative impact on her sense of belonging.

Although Mabel reported that she produced a positive experience for customers, it was unclear if she achieved deep acting and was able to avoid the conflict between her ‘real’ and ‘acted’ emotions, or maybe a worker could experience emotive dissonance and still manage to produce positive affects in others? When asked if she had a sense of belonging, without hesitancy, she responded: “I don’t belong here”. Many factors might have contributed to this response, including the precarity of her employment, her unsupportive employer, and experiences of discrimination and microaggressions that made her feel like an outsider. Mabel ‘s experiences contradict conditions that promote a positive

sense of belonging that Fuks et. al (2018) describes as a feeling of inclusion, acceptance, and recognition in a space or social relationship.

Affective labour, particularly when considered against the harsh realities of precarity and discrimination in the workplace, has grave consequences on how a person views themselves as being accepted and valued members of the community (Veldstra, 2020). The low wages and job instability experienced by Mabel means that she barely earns enough to meet her basic needs. Living in poverty has profound consequences on the social aspects of people's lives. Scholars have identified a strong effect of socioeconomic status on sense of belonging (Caron, 2014; Hou et al., 2018b). If a sense of belonging is a deep-rooted feature of one's identity (Hou et al., 2018a), then the occupational displacement and inability to display her authentic self at work erode Mabel sense of self and belonging. The dissatisfaction and tension that emanate from the incongruence of her cultural values and internal feelings with the employer's expectation of positive affect and Canadian workplace norms might have contributed to Mabel's low sense of belonging. After all, as Jansz & Timmers (2002) argue, displaying positive emotions and producing the proper state of mind in others while suppressing underlying contradicting feelings is not without a cost.

5.5 SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on the relevance of emotional labour in understanding the demands placed on immigrant youth working at the intersection of precarity and structural forms of exclusion that manifest in various forms. Drawing on the experience of a female youth of African descent working in a retail store, the discussion in this chapter suggests that emotion work does not only depend on the nature of work but also on the gender, ethnicity,

and immigration histories of the worker. The employer's expectation for immigrant youth to display feelings that keep the customer happy and satisfied often require the suppression of feelings of anger, frustration, and sadness engendered by discrimination and precarity. This is, however, not without a cost. However, the youth in this study did demonstrate a capacity to forge meaningful relationships in and through work. Importantly, however, these relationships and eventual solidarities were typical only with other immigrant youth who were similarly isolated and limited in their capacity to generate social capital with their white, Canadian, non-immigrant co-workers. This is the focus of the next chapter, which explores how youth in this study find belonging in the midst of precarious work and structural violence within the workplace.

CHAPTER 6: FORMING NETWORK IN THE WORKPLACE: BARRIERS & NEWCOMER SOLIDARITY ACROSS DIFFERENCE

This chapter elaborates on the factors, identified by the study's youth participants, that impede the formation of positive relationships in the workplace, as well as the implication of this for the youths' sense of belonging. Further, the chapter answers the question of how young immigrants, particularly those who are racialized, survive working in Halifax? What, if any, are the conditions that may allow for the formation of meaningful relationships in these otherwise fraught sites, and how have the youth at the center of this analysis, ensured that their social and emotional needs are met?

In what follows, I offer a discussion on the role of social capital in immigrant integration. Moving beyond an economistic understanding of social capital and drawing on a growing literature on social capital and immigrant experience, I expand the concept to include social networks based on trust and reciprocity that can provide *both* material and non-material resources (including a sense of belonging). In this way, I broaden the focus of social capital beyond the potential economic returns of social networks that are often encountered in the social capital literature (Li, 2004; Raza et al., 2013) More precisely, I draw attention to employment, not only as a source of material resources but as a site where people can develop social networks and possibly a sense of belonging. Further, offering something of a counterpoint to the thesis, which has thus far, focused on the implications of precarious employment, the emotional labour demanded of their work, and the toll of this labour on their wellbeing in a context largely characterized by social exclusion and punctuated by overt racism. This chapter offers insight into the youth's efforts to form social networks, trusting relationships, and friendships in their workplaces. Of particular

interest in the analysis of data is how solidarity with other immigrants and Canadian-born alike help the youth develop a positive sense of belonging.

6.1 Social Capital

Migration scholars have documented the benefit of social capital in the successful integration of immigrants in host societies (Ager & Strang, 2008; Nawyn et al., 2012) with the majority of research focused predominantly on the economic return of social capital (Li, 2004; Raza et al., 2013). While social capital may be exchanged for human capital (Sobel, 2002), it is important to note that social capital provided by social networks and trust also benefits non-economic elements of integration. This understanding is critical in the context of immigrant youth who work in precarious employment, where the chance of converting social capital to human capital is slim and, in many cases, non-existent. While work and workplaces may offer immigrants the opportunity to gain social capital through interaction with co-workers, particular factors might impede this goal. Experienced or perceived discrimination (Di Napoli et al., 2021), linguistic diversity (Nawyn et al., 2012), occupational displacement (Valenta, 2008), and job precarity (Hande et al., 2020) are some identified barriers to developing social capital in the workplace.

6.2 Relationship between Social Capital and Sense of Belonging

With some notable exceptions (Pearce, 2006; Wellman et al., 2001), few scholars have investigated the relationship between a sense of belonging and social capital. As elaborated in chapter three, a sense of belonging is generally a feeling of inclusion, acceptance, and recognition in spaces or social relationships (Fuks, Smith, Peláez, De Stefano, & Brown, 2018). It develops in everyday life on a personal level and links a person to society (Ahn

& Davis, 2020). Wellman and his colleagues consider social capital an essential factor for generating a sense of belonging. They argue that a sense of belonging comes from social interactions between people, influencing their participation in the host society. Pearce (2006) submits that as individuals' participation in the social life of the new society increases, their sense of attachment and belonging to a given community tend to increase. Each form of social connection can have different outcomes on immigrants' sense of belonging. Bonding social capital may substantially influence a sense of belonging to an ethnic community since it is formed through strong ties among closed networks, such as the family, community norms, and expectations. Conversely, bridging social capital does not foster solid commitments and expectations to one particular group, and the benefits that come with it can influence a sense of belonging to a larger community such as a province (Ager & Strang, 2008)

6.3 Social Capital Deficits and Exclusion in the Workplace

While conceptualizations of social capital that focus on economic returns have often reduced social relations to rational, market-driven interactions, my findings prompt a different understanding of social capital that does not reduce social networks to rational choices. Many youths recognized the importance of friendship and workplace relationships for their ability to develop a positive sense of belonging. And yet, they faced significant barriers to developing such social networks and friendships at work. Indeed, many of the youth interviewed recounted the challenges to develop a social network due to employment instability, as detailed in the previous chapter, compounded by experiences of discrimination, language barriers, and the unwillingness of co-workers (often long-standing residents, so “local” and white) to accept them.

Given the precarious nature of their employment and the limited power of their co-workers in that context, the immigrant youth interviewed tended not to focus on these relational challenges as impeding future job prospects. In contrast, most troubling for youths was how their exclusion, contributed to a feeling of isolation and impacts their well-being and life satisfaction. As elaborated by participants,

We are all social animals; I like to mingle with other people not just for career opportunities but for the social side of it and everything else...after all, we are not islands (Kimo)

Making friends helped my mental health and helped me to feel at home at work and with my co-workers and supervisor (Zohara)

Following this last insight, youth who reported a positive sense of belonging, despite the precarious nature of their work, highlighted factors such as friendly co-workers and multi-cultural work environments as contributing to their feeling of belonging. Concerning the latter, the presence of co-workers from diverse ethnic/ cultural backgrounds in the workplace represents one of the key ways those in the study overcame feelings of isolation.

6.3.1 Impact of Racial Discrimination

From my data, experiences of perceived discrimination and unfair treatment by supervisors and colleagues inhibit meaningful relationships in the workplace. A youth participant, Zohara, who identified as Muslim, reflected on how her experience of unfair treatment at one of her first jobs in Halifax, coupled with the actions of her co-workers, impacted her ability to make friends and form networks in the workplace:

The supervisor was so mean to me that she would come and talk loudly to me without anything happening. She would say bad things...I was never able to make friends in my workplace. But now I understand, like, it was not my fault; it was about how people see me as an immigrant. They would say, okay, she is different; we cannot be good to her or be her friend (Zohara)

This revelation corroborates with findings from previous research on the influence of discrimination on forming networks and a sense of belonging. According to Vasta (2013), one of the consequences of discrimination in the workplace is the possibility of withdrawing from mainstream institutions and attaching to ethnocultural organizations and people from a similar background. Similarly, a study carried out by Hou and colleagues in 2018 reveals that discrimination discourages a sense of belonging and might invoke "reactive ethnicity," such that immigrants become more attached to their ethnic group. Contrary to the assumption that immigrants prefer to interact with those with similar backgrounds and in the process turn away from integration, the youth in this study are looking for a welcoming space to learn about their new home, feel less isolated, and become a valuable part of society regardless of the ethnic composition of such spaces and relationships. Moreover, according to Berry et al. (2006), identifying with one's ethnicity is an important protective factor in the integration of newcomers, including youth against the negative effect of discrimination as well as culture shock in the host society.

Despite having a positive relationship with colleagues and feeling included in her current workplace, Zohara said she did not have a sense of belonging to Halifax. Her experiences of discrimination in previous jobs and within the community outweigh the positive experience in her current workplace, making it challenging to translate the social

capital gained from the workplace to a sense of attachment to the community. Although Zohara has lived in Halifax for over ten years, her plan is to move to a larger and more diverse city where many look like her. She offered some explanations for her decision.

I don't have a feeling of belonging in Halifax; maybe not all immigrants will say this to you, but whenever I go down the street with my hijab, I feel people looking at me differently. Also, when I go down the street, they look at me and treat me differently; sometimes they will say, where are you from? I'd say from Halifax, they will say where are you originally from? Even if I were born here, they would say the same thing just because I have my hijab; I think it's unfair (Zohara)

One commonly used indicator of social inclusion is discrimination experienced or perceived by immigrants. Vasta (2013) asserts that discrimination, in particular, can negate the sense of belonging for some ethnic minority groups. Similar to the experience of some of the Muslim participants in McCoy et al. (2016) 's study, Zohara's sense of attachment to Nova Scotia was challenged by experiences of discrimination both inside and outside of her employment. The awkward question that many immigrants face in casual conversation, "where are you from... no, I mean where are you really from? may be ostracizing to many immigrants and may come off as "You are different, you don't belong here." Arguably this question is faced not only by Muslims but rather by anyone who displays signs of racial, ethnic, cultural, or linguistic difference.

6.3.2 Rules of Relational Practices

While social interaction and relationship development in the workplace can help immigrants gain bridging social capital - connections beyond their ethnic community- that

may foster social inclusion (Major et al., 2014). However, the rules of relational practices are often implicit and in stark contrast to the cultural understanding of the youth, thereby making it harder for many of them to develop any meaningful relationships in the workplace. Some of the participants expressed their surprise at the behaviors of some of their colleagues. For example, they felt shocked that co-workers might warmly welcome them on their first day at work and ignore them entirely afterward. A youth trying to make sense of a co-worker's behavior offered:

How can you smile and say hello to someone today and ignore them entirely afterward...? If I didn't offend you, why are you behaving as if we have had a misunderstanding... getting used to that kind of thing is not normal where I come from, right? When you are on good terms with someone, it is normal to say hi and smile to the person whenever you see them as long as everything is fine... But I'm adapting to those kinds of things [behaviour] at my work (Mabel)

Another youth shared this sentiment, and she explained why she prefers to make friends and works with immigrants compared to local Canadians:

I enjoy working with immigrants because I flow better with them, and I feel they can understand me better... I'm not saying that I don't understand Canadians but sometimes you don't know what they are really thinking ...sometimes you might annoy them, and you know in Africa if you annoy someone, they will tell you I don't like what you did and you will clear the air. But many Canadians will not say it they move on, and you don't know you have hurt someone. You will not know what you have done (Kimo)

Another constraint youth identified for forming a connection in the workplace is the lack of trust they had with their employer and co-workers, making them reluctant to put in the work for a meaningful relationship. When asked if there have been opportunities to develop connections with co-workers, one of the youths, Priye, answered: "I don't want to because I don't trust them." She described instances where co-workers form cliques at work, exclude her from certain activities, and how stories and personal information about other co-workers are spread in the workplace. Hence, she feels skeptical of interacting with co-workers on a deeper level for fear of divulging pertinent information that might be used against her.

Trust, like a social network, is a crucial component of social capital. According to scholars, trust is needed to develop meaningful and long-lasting relationships, and it is related to various predictors of a feeling of attachment to a community (Pearce, 2006). While previous research found that visible minority persons are more trusting than people of European origins in the local majority((Soroka et al., 2007), experiences of discrimination and racism may impact the way newcomers develop 'generalized trust' that is needed to create bridging networks with local Canadians (Uslaner, 2002). Priye expressed that many of his co-workers neither share his beliefs and values nor seem interested in learning more about his practices. Instead, the onus is on him to adapt to the mainstream practices, develop trust and maintain social networks with others.

The precarity of work positions occupied by many youths in this study is also an impediment to forming bridging capital in the workplace. These jobs are often low-wage, contract, and temporary and do not provide ideal conditions for developing personal ties with work colleagues (Goldring & Landolt, 2011). One participant who works in multiple

sites as an on-call casual staff told me about the challenges of her current employment arrangement and its impact on developing social relationships. Mira mentioned that her employment arrangement discourages her from developing a meaningful social network as she works with entirely new teams for most shifts. It seems that the more unstable the job, the fewer the opportunities for forming friendships at work (Vosko, 2006b). While the challenges of forming a meaningful network may be true for many people in on-call, casual jobs with no regular schedule, it has a negative impact on the integration of the immigrant youth in this study. Compared to local Canadians who may have various arenas for forming and maintaining social networks, the workplace represents the only available arena for developing friendships and integrating into society for many of the study participants

6.3.3 Occupational Displacement

Some youth also shared Priye's sentiment and did not want to form networks at work. Their disinterest is related to a feeling of dissatisfaction in their current position and occupation. This set of youth occupy positions much lower than their training and experience and feel they do not belong to the job and work environment. Hence, they seem disinterested in forming friendships with co-workers. For instance, one of the participants worked as a shelf stocker in a grocery store despite her post-secondary education and prior experience in Administration. When asked about her relationship with work colleagues, she replied: "I don't want to make friends ...I don't belong here" She expressed her frustration and dissatisfaction with her job and how she wishes to do a job that matches her academic background and experience. Adiva's frustration concurs with Valenta's (2014) study findings where highly-skilled immigrants who had occupied high profile positions in their home country found part-time, blue-collar jobs in low-status service occupations. This

occupational degradation led to resentment among the workers and hindered their identification with the environment and forming relationships with co-workers. Valenta (2008) explained that, among other things, the study participants could not identify with the workplace environment because of their cultural capital, human capital, and occupational misplacement (p. 7).

The negative impact of deskilling on the integration of immigrants is well-documented in the literature (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Man, 2004). A situation where employers discount immigrants' postsecondary credentials and professional skills and fail to recognize foreign labour market experiences often results in social class displacements for immigrants (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Man, 2004). Social class displacement occurs when immigrants lose access to occupations they previously held in their homes and experience deterioration in their earnings. For some of the youths in this study, this is captured in the realities of having to rely on hands, rather than minds in order to make a living. Although many of the study participants brought with them human capital (education and work experience) from their home country, they did not attain the same positions in Canada as they had in their home countries. Occupational degradation, coupled with discrimination in the workplace led to dissatisfaction and hindered their identification with the social environment.

6.3.4 Role of English Language Skills

The data also highlighted the crucial role language skills play in developing social networks and the social capital of youth participants at work. Some youth mentioned that they could not participate fully in their workplace because of the limitations regarding their

English proficiency and the exclusionary behavior of co-workers. Miriam, a youth participant in her twenties, who have been in Canada for four years, told me how she avoided conversations with co-workers because she was not confident in her English. Unfortunately, many of her co-workers became impatient and sometimes disengaged when she could not keep up with the pace of their conversation. Similarly, another youth reported that she felt excluded because she could not engage in social discussions like her colleagues. As reported in the literature, small talk and humor are key elements to developing relationships and belonging in the workplace (Holmes, 2000). For youth who cannot engage in such conversations either due to lack of familiarity with the subject matter or linguistic barrier, there is a tendency to feel like an outsider.

This finding builds on Major's (2014) longitudinal study investigating how language practices among migrants lead to a feeling of inclusion or exclusion at work. They found that some participants felt excluded and could not fully participate in workplace interaction because of limitations they or others placed upon them based on their English proficiency. Power relations are embedded in interactions, like any other interaction, that occurs between newcomer youth and their co-workers who are native speakers (Duff, 2007). Hence, regardless of the language skills of newcomer youth, as native speakers, co-workers who are part of the dominant group have the linguistic power to determine the norms and modus operandi of social interactions, which may be - intentional or otherwise - exclusionary and create a feeling of otherness. Further, the power dynamics between the youth and the native speaker, if unchecked, may stifle the development of any meaningful relationship. Building on previous research that suggests an association between social belonging and language skills, Nawyn and colleagues (2012)

assert that power relations are embedded in linguistic interactions. These power relations shape the sense of belonging of immigrants who speak English as a second language. Drawing on Nawyn et al.'s (2012) idea to explain the experiences of the youths in this study, fluency in the official language of the host community, in itself, does not lead to social capital.

In addition to fluency, most youth often have to adapt to the communication styles of local Canadians, conform to the social norms to form a network, and feel accepted. Li (2000) refers to this phenomenon as 'double socialization' whereby young people have to learn the English language, and culture, and adapt to the communication pattern in the workplace at the same time to obtain social capital. For example, the official language of Mabel's home country is English, and despite her fluency in speaking the language, she reported that she had a hard time forming a relationship in her workplace. She attributed the difficulty to her co-workers' apparent unease talking to someone with a foreign accent. "They will say I can't hear you, and I think I'm trying to hear you, so why don't you try and hear what I'm saying too?"

An accent is one of the characteristics that may be used to identify someone as "different" and is often used as an excuse for discriminatory treatment. Evidence of discriminatory treatment towards immigrants has been well-documented in the literature (Berry & Hou, 2017; Nawyn et al., 2012)) For example, in their study with immigrant youth in Vancouver, Kayaalp (2016), participants reported that they experienced a lack of recognition, rudeness, anger and deliberate misunderstanding due to their accents. These negative attitudes made it difficult for the youth to develop meaningful relationships and deprived them of a safe space for civic and social participation. Accent discrimination is

considered a product of the ethnic hierarchy in the host society as accents are usually perceived relative to newcomer youths' ethnic and racial backgrounds (Kayaalp, 2016).

Another youth who worked in the backend of an IT company with little interaction with her co-workers expressed a feeling of isolation. She identified her low proficiency in the English language as a significant barrier to engaging with colleagues. She was worried that because of her difficulties, people would view her negatively:

If we can get fluent in English, then we can make our life very beautiful... I'm a little shy when speaking in English. Maybe I am talking wrong so that the other person may be thinking something. They look like she doesn't know anything.

Because of that, I don't talk so much (Miriam)

6.4 Newcomer Solidarity Across Difference

Despite the precarity of their work conditions, some youths were able to develop a sense of belonging. Forming networks and sharing experiences with other immigrants, usually within a diverse workplace, were strong contributors to this positive sense of belonging. Hou (2009) asserts that since the workplace has become a major part of people's social life, working with people from related backgrounds could facilitate social interaction among members from diverse backgrounds, thus contributing to their overall feeling of belonging.

“Thank God I have people from my home country there [workplace] so I meet them to discuss the issues... they tell me to ignore some of the issues. I also speak to other immigrant workers too when I'm going through things” (Martha)

Working with other immigrants here at the store has been very helpful, it has kept me in the job and I'm able to handle issues at work better (Priye)

A diverse workplace and the opportunity to share workplace experiences did not only help Martha and Priye manage the issues they were facing at work, it also supported their retention in the workplace.

6.4.1 Familial Relationship Among Newcomers

Some participants have come to develop familial-like relationships with other immigrant workers in the workplace. A youth who had shared her experience of discrimination and poor working conditions in a retail store also mentioned that being able to speak to someone who understands what she was going through in the workplace has helped her to manage the situation. She noted:

Thankfully I have a sister here, so I always call her and tell her things and she tells me the way to handle issues. ...those are the people that keep me going otherwise I won't be able to survive this place.

Importantly, the co-worker Martha refers to here is neither a biological sister nor a relative, but a peer who she has come to trust and share her challenges with. Similarly, another youth, Zohara, who works in an immigrant-serving organization referred to her co-workers as family and friends. The youths were able to develop trust with those workers based on commonalities in their experiences and backgrounds. This finding is consistent with previous observations about the development of familial relationships among newcomer women laboring in exploitive conditions at a garment manufacturing plant (Fenwick,

2008). A wide diversity of ethnic/linguistic language groups in the workplace may foster capabilities for social belonging and work across differences (Fenwick, 2008).

Zohara, who had shared her experiences of discrimination in previous jobs in Halifax expressed relief for eventually finding work in an ethnocultural organization. She reported that connecting with others from similar and diverse backgrounds contributed to her sense of psychological safety as she believed those individuals were able to relate to her anxiety and struggles as a newcomer. She also believes that those individuals have insight into her experiences as an immigrant and Muslim in Nova Scotia and treat her better. Regarding her current employer, she noted:

My colleagues are friendly, I don't see my co-workers like being co-workers...I feel we are more like friends because even during work we have like a few moments to talk... This is actually my first work having this kind of relationship with co-workers or my boss.

Again, as seen in the above statement, forming a meaningful and positive relationship in the workplace is key to a feeling of acceptance and inclusion for the immigrant youth in various contexts, including in the workplace (Wilson-Forsberg, 2015). Building on the idea of Lee (2015), close connections with other workers fostered solidarity and a sense of belonging among them which may override the forces of isolation and injustice embedded in the work structures. Another interpretation could be that she was able to find common grounds for belonging by sharing stories and experiences that resonate with her co-workers. They located common concerns and complaints, and through their stories were able to build a familiar, safe, and comfortable environment to develop their skills, learn the Canadian culture and participate in the workplace.

6.4.2 Sharing Stories

Participants would also share stories of their lives prior to moving to Canada, and the challenges they face in the workplace and the community. This sharing makes it feel less isolating as they came to an understanding that many of their struggles are not unique to them. Storytelling creates an atmosphere of friendship, fosters camaraderie, and may develop the capacity for self-advocacy and inter(cultural) belonging (Lee, 2015). According to Lee, social belonging can be applied to diverse spaces where individuals who share neither common native language nor common culture form solidarity and social relations. The mutual engagement of the youth in this study through sharing common experiences of immigration and settlement in Halifax provides the foundation for solidarity and social belonging. Like one youth mentioned, “It was really nice to learn about other people's culture. I also find a lot of similarities in our cultures and our stories”.

6.4.3 Belonging to Self and Ethnic Culture

The acceptance and encouragement from peers also contributed to a sense of belonging and how some youth see themselves and their value in the workplace. Simbi said:

I know who I am... she [a senior colleague] helps me to develop my confidence, she says to me don't be shy, be yourself... she encourages me to stay positive

When asked if she has a sense of belonging to Halifax, Mercy answered without hesitation “Yes, I feel I belong here”. Schwartz et al. (2006) posit that personal identity- an individual's goals, values, and beliefs- has the potential to keep newcomers grounded during their transition to a new society. Although precarious employment and workplace stressors can have negative consequences for immigrants of all ages, the impact of a low

sense of belonging may be most severe for young adults. In addition to confronting the normative personal identity issues that characterize the developmental period of young adulthood, immigrant youths are also faced with the challenge of integrating into the mainstream culture that incorporates elements of both heritage and receiving cultures (Berry et al., 2006).

For Simbi, this meant being aware of her goals, values, and beliefs. During my interview with her, she shared how important staying true to her African culture was to her and how she has deliberately stayed close to the ethnic community. In terms of her goals, she was clear on what she had wanted – in another part of the interview she had told me that she aspires to be a Nurse practitioner and she recently returned to school to pursue this goal. The presence of a strong support system through her immediate family, the ethnic community, and connections with co-ethnics in her workplace may have contributed to her positive sense of belonging. Also, Simbi's personal identity might also be developing as she learns from established immigrants at her workplace and through collective support from other immigrant co-workers. All these factors have the potential to provide stability as she integrates into the Canadian labour market.

6.4.4 Solidarity with Allies

It is important to note that forming social interactions and critical learning among the youths in this study was not restricted to ethnic co-workers, in fact, and offering a counterpoint to some of the more difficult encounters earlier in this chapter, some youths had expressed that they had received some form of solidarity from their Canadian colleagues. As Wenger (2002) points out, a shared experience of vulnerability can bring

individuals together to form a united group that offers mutual support for its member on an ongoing basis. Solidarity with newcomer youth from Canadian co-workers could also be an act of civic solidarity which is characterized by an openness to newcomers; acceptance of people of diverse ethnicities, languages, and religions as legitimate members of the community (Soroka et al., 2013). In a similar vein, Rader (2008), in their study about the various roles taken by privileged allies who stand with marginalized co-workers concluded that “privileged allies” who often have a better understanding of the workplace culture and knowledge of labor regulations seem to be in a better position to challenge workplace injustices and create a more welcoming work environment. These allies can provide support to individual marginalized co-workers as they negotiate the mainstream organizational culture and structure.

6.4.5 Social Learning

Fenwick (2008) notes that learning is embedded in social relations and is understood to be an expansion of capacity, with a focus on action that builds individual and collective agency. Learning in the workplace context enhances workers’ well-being, and critical awareness of work structures, and can increase workers’ control over their activity. Through interaction with co-workers, youths learned more about the workplace culture and develop strategies to deal with some workplace issues. Martha talked about how during break time she and her co-workers would share their experiences and come up with some ideas on how to manage structural violence in the workplace. In one instance when she was worried that her Canadian co-workers were not interested in making friends with her, a peer had told her that the workplace is not necessarily a place to make friends, but a place

to do a job. Another youth spoke about how she had learned acceptable ways of doing certain things in the Canadian workplace. She noted:

I often discuss some of the issues I face with a senior colleague who is also an immigrant and she taught me how to speak up in a good way, what behaviors are acceptable, and how to communicate with co-workers and customers (Aria)

Fenwick (2008) cautions that social relations in the workplace can produce knowledge that is reproductive and maintains the status quo. While there are possibilities that the youth are being socialized into the Canadian workplace culture by their peers, there are opportunities to develop capacity for individual and collective consciousness and action. One of the benefits of connecting with other immigrant workers identified by some youth is learning how to advocate for themselves and find allies in the workplace. Duff (2007) voiced concerns about oversimplifying the socialization of newcomers to the host community. They emphasize that ‘socialization does not necessarily lead to the reproduction of existing cultural practices but may lead to other outcomes, such as hybrid practices and values (p.311). This idea suggests that socialization is not unidirectional towards the target culture, but rather it is complex and multidirectional.

6.5 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the challenges that limit the possibilities of forming meaningful networks and belonging in the workplace for the study’s youth participants. As revealed by the stories shared by the youth participants, social exclusion at work can take many forms, ranging from microaggression to overt racism. In recognizing the non-economic value of two key components of social capital—networks and trust—on the sense of

belonging to immigrant youth, this chapter offers insight into the influence of social capital on the sense of belonging of immigrant youth. The findings of this study show that the onus for forming social relationships with co-workers was mostly on the youth and acceptance/inclusion is conditional. It is determined by the dominant culture's norms and values rather than a two-way integration process that acknowledge and recognize the minority's cultural values.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis aimed to explore the intersection of the employment experiences and the development of a sense of belonging in Halifax immigrant and newcomer youth. Through a qualitative method and individual interviews, the research identified factors that contribute to youths' sense of belonging. The findings of this study reveal that seven of the youths were in low-wage, temporary and insecure employment that exploits their vulnerability. Central to this finding is how the requirement of "Canadian experience" excludes Immigrant youth from decent employment. This finding is supported by reports in the literature that demonstrates how the requirement for "Canadian Experience" creates barriers for immigrants to access decent work (Hira-Friesen, 2018; Sakamoto et al., 2010).

While they exist to support the economic integration of newcomer youth in the host society, it seems that settlement agencies may unintentionally bolster the integration of newcomers into precarious employment. Under the impression that any job is useful to obtain "Canadian Experience", seven youths were placed in jobs that are low-wage, temporary positions that do not match their prior education, skills, and interest. There was, however, a mixed reaction to the benefit of their current employment in fulfilling the requirement of Canadian experience. While youths with limited prior work experience and high school diplomas saw their employment as an opportunity to gain the requisite experience and to learn about the Canadian workplace culture, others with post-secondary education saw it as a barrier to moving ahead in their profession. Similar to findings in previous studies on the employment experiences of adult immigrants in precarious work (Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Valenta, 2008.), deskilling, occupational displacement, and

lack of opportunity in the workplace resulted in a low sense of belonging for the youth with post-secondary and advanced degrees. This set of youth was unable to identify with the workplace environment because of their cultural capital, human capital, and occupational misplacement.

Developing friendship and networks was important to all the youths in this study and the finding shows that positive social relationships in the workplace contribute to youths' sense of belonging. Indeed while the social capital developed in the workplace might not have contributed to economic gain – a focus of many authors (Raza et al., 2013; Webb, 2015), the components of social networks: social connection, trust, and participation contributed to their psychological safety and inclusion (Ahn & Davis, 2020). However, experiences of racism, discrimination, cultural misunderstandings, and language barriers often stand in the way of developing such relationships and networks. Despite the existence and persistence of discrimination and other forms of structural violence in the workplace, given the often public-facing nature of their jobs, many of the youth were compelled to engage in challenging emotional labour and affective self-management to guarantee positive customer and client experiences. The psychological toll of navigating toxic work environments while managing the emotional complexities of migration and performing the work required of service and hospitality represents a significant barrier to the overall sense of belonging experienced by the young people in my study. Echoing Brook (2009), the study shows that interpersonal relationships at work have been commodified and workers' emotional labour has been colonized by the capitalist interests of profitability and productivity.

Nonetheless, the analysis of the data shows that the youths did demonstrate a capacity to forge meaningful relationships in and through work. They find belonging through various overlapping forms of solidarity with other immigrant workers and allies. From their accounts, this was made possible by the openness of the co-workers, diverse workforce, and being grounded in their own ethnic culture/ community.

In line with Wilkinson (2003)'s argument, the findings from this study reveal that 'success' in economic integration, without a sense of belonging, may lead to a lack of life satisfaction, poor mental health, and disengagement from the host society. In fact, and based on the findings in this study, a positive sense of belonging is the first step in the process of integration in other areas, including employment and success may be unattainable without it. When youth feel accepted, valued, and included they are more likely to contribute to the larger community in more profound ways. While employment and the workplace are essential sites where immigrants affirm identities, form networks, and develop a sense of attachment to the larger society, precarious labour conditions, and unfair treatment often stifle this possibility for immigrant youth. Overall, there is a mixed result on the influence of precarious employment on youths' sense of belonging. Clearly, there is an interrelationship between such variables as immigration status, ethnic communities, family support, gender, and level of education at the intersection of precarious employment and a sense of belonging to Nova Scotia. Similar to previous research on the integration of immigrants in Canada (Ager & Strang, 2008; Hou et al., 2018b) a feeling of belonging for the youths is independent of the length of residency in Canada.

7. 1 Contribution of the study

The theoretical framework and the various concepts used proved to be consistent and adequate to analyze the complexity of the experiences of the youths in employment/workplace. Anti-oppressive and structural perspectives coupled with extant discussion of precarious work, social capital, affective labor, and solidarity across differences, help to understand youths' experiences within a socio-economic, cultural, and historical context. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on the integration of newcomer youth in smaller urban cities in Canada.

7. 2 Limitations of the study

Some factors restricted the range of data collected for this study. First, the English language requirement- Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 4 – for participation in the study was a deterrent to some potential participants. This was true in the case of youth interested in taking part in the study, who had lived in Nova Scotia for more than a year but could not communicate with me due to his low English skills.

The findings cannot be generalized and may not account for the experiences of youths in Nova Scotia and Canada as a whole. Nonetheless, the insights from this study may be a useful starting point for further research and discussion on the topic in Nova Scotia and beyond.

7. 3 Future Research

Given that the immigrant youths group is heterogenous, it may be worth exploring the impacts of specific factors such as education, type of job/ occupation, sector of employment, racial background, and diversity in the workplace on youths' sense of

belonging. Also, longitudinal research that looks at the employment experiences of the youth in the next five years might also be relevant. This could contribute to a better understanding of their socio-economic integration as most of the youth have been in Canada for less than five years, hence, considered to be in the early stage of the integration process (Berry et al., 2006) and offer insights on policies, services, and workplace practices that support this transition.

7.4 Relevance to Practice and Policy

This research project is relevant to the field of social work as it investigates the intersection of employment, a social determinant of health, and the social inclusion of newcomer youth, hence promoting socio-economic justice for all. In addition to the contribution to the social work field, this study also contributes to the wider body of knowledge on immigrant integration in Canada. Immigration continues to drive the population growth in Nova Scotia as an increasing number of immigrants moved to Nova Scotia in the past five years (Statistics Canada, 2017). This influx has resulted in a growing number of settlement social workers who support the integration of newcomers and deliver employment programs. While social work research might give heed to the state of marginalization and exclusion, the study highlights the mechanism through which such marginalization is produced and sustained. One of such mechanisms is the “Canadian experience” requirement that excludes immigrant youth from decent work and impacts their ability to develop meaningful social networks.

7.5 Recommendations

Policymakers and service providers alike must adopt a holistic approach to the integration of newcomers. This rounded perspective would take into consideration the influence of

social belonging on the integration process of newcomers and recognize that immigrant integration is not synonymous with employment. However, if certain conditions are met, employment and workplaces could be sites of social integration. As seen in the findings, being foreign-born makes immigrant youth susceptible to the unfair requirement of the Canadian experience. As a way to move forward, policymakers and employers should remove this barrier as a way to improve the economic outcome of immigrant youth and their social belonging.

As identified through their stories, youths found belonging through various overlapping forms of social interactions and solidarity with other immigrant workers and allies. A workforce that represents diverse backgrounds, and practical support from colleagues and supervisors contribute to youths' feeling of emotional safety and acceptance. Employers should provide equal opportunities for newcomer youth and promote an inclusive working environment where everyone feels valued and respected. Through a workplace mentorship program, employers can support the learning and career growth of immigrant youth. The experiences of youth, like those in this study, should inform the design and delivery of services that establish emotional, physical, and cultural safety and acknowledge systemic issues, and the strengths of youths. This will require a commitment to continuous evaluation and an effective feedback mechanism. Further, in addition to securing employment, settlement organizations should provide ongoing support for youth and a strong voice in advocacy for better work conditions and work opportunities. As part of employment programs, youths should be educated on employment rights, benefits, and responsibilities. As seen in the study, many youths had little knowledge of

the labour law and some of them had indicated an interest in learning more about their rights in the workplace.

Finally, the dichotomy of social and economic integration in the literature and in policy is problematic and a holistic approach to immigrant integration is highly recommended. A rounded approach that moves beyond the commodification of immigrant labour and acknowledges that work is part of a general social framework. A social fabric that is embedded in cultural practices and defined by the social relations within which it is situated (Walton, 2016). Contrary to the misconception that measuring the social facet of a person's life is difficult, this study shows that sense of belonging is a valuable concept for understanding the social integration of immigrant youth. Sense of belonging is a critical component in the overall process of integration, without which successful engagement and participation of immigrant youth in the host community may be hampered.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Poster



**Are you an immigrant or
refugee youth resident in Nova
Scotia?**

My name is Temitope Abiagom, a Master of Social Work student at Dalhousie University. I am conducting a thesis project on the employment / workplace experiences of immigrant youth in Nova Scotia. I invite you to participate in a 45- 90 minutes

- o **Have you been in Canada as a landed immigrant / refugee for at least one year?**
- o **Are you a youth between the ages of 18 - 30 years who was not born in Canada?**
- o **Are you able to express yourself in English?**
- o **Are you willing to help us understand your employment / workplace experience in Nova Scotia?**

If yes, I would like to speak with you. For more information, or to volunteer for this study, please contact me at: (902) 401 3351 Email: t.abiagom@dal.ca

Appendix B: Recruitment letter sent by organizations to prospective participants

Dear _____,

This is an invitation to participate in a study about immigrant and refugee youth that are residents in Nova Scotia, conducted by Temitope Abiagom.

Temitope is a Master student of Social Work at Dalhousie University, and she is exploring the experiences of youth in employment / workplace in Nova Scotia. Participation in her research is voluntary and involves taking part in one individual interview, which should last between 45 to 90 minutes. She hopes that this study may contribute to the improvement of services addressed to immigrant and refugee youth in the province. There is a gift card of \$15 in recognition of your time to participate in the study.

To participate in this study, you must:

- (a) Be between 18-30 years old.
- (b) Have landed in Canada as a landed immigrant, government-assisted refugee (GAR), private sponsored refugee (PSR) for at least one year
- (d) A resident in Nova Scotia for at least 1 year
- (e) Have at least CLB level 4 of proficiency in English.

Please, see the poster attached to this message. If you have interest in participating in this study, **please directly contact Temitope Abiagom** by email, text or phone call:

Email : t.abiagom@dal.ca

Phone : 902-4013351.

Thank you very much for considering to participate in this study. The researcher looks forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Appendix C: Email to contact organizations for recruitment support

Dear...,

My name is Temitope Abiagom, a Master of Social Work student at Dalhousie university. I am doing a thesis on the social inclusion of immigrant and refugee youth in Nova Scotia and looking to interview youth ages 18- 30 years about their employment / workplace experiences.

This research is exploring the social nature of work and how employment and workplace experiences influence the sense of belonging of youth who have lived in Halifax for at least 1 year. I hope the results can contribute to a better understanding of integration of newcomer youth, both in the workplace and the larger community.

I am seeking to include in this study the experiences of people from different cultural backgrounds. Is there any possibility that (name of organization/association) could support me to recruit individuals for this study? This means only inviting people that meet the profile required and letting them know about the research (see poster and recruitment email attached). Then, if they are interested, they should contact me directly. Please, do not share any personal information of them with me.

The recruitment could be done by forwarding the poster to their emails, for example, or by posting on your organization's website and social media pages. I can also bring hard copies of the posters to put up in your premise if you prefer.

I will be available for a meeting if necessary, to talk more about the research. You can reach me at 902- 401 3351

Thank you so much for your assistance!

Temitope Abiagom

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Demographics:

1. How old are you:
2. What gender do you identify as?
3. What is your current immigration status: Refugee/permanent resident/citizen
4. How long have you lived in Nova Scotia?
5. How old were you when you arrived in Canada?
6. Do you have families / relatives in Nova Scotia?
7. What is your country of origin?
8. What is your ethnic / racial background?
9. Do you speak other languages other than English?
 - If yes, what other languages do you speak?

Education History:

10. What is the highest level of education you completed
11. In which country was your highest level of education obtained?
12. Have you received an education in Canada: Yes/no
 - If yes: diploma/ under-graduate/post-graduate level
13. Are you currently a student: Yes/no
 - If yes: elementary/junior high/high school/college/university/post-graduate level

Work / Employment Related Questions:

14. Do you currently work? Yes/no
 - If yes: what sector
15. What type of employment are you in? Casual / Part- time/ Full- time / self-employed

16. How long have you been in your current position?
17. What is your current position / nature of the work (associated tasks)
18. What do you enjoy about your work?
19. What do you find challenging about your work?
1. What changes would you like to see?
2. What could make these changes possible?
20. What are your career goals for the future?
1. What do you need to make this happen?
2. How does your current employer support these goals?
21. Can you tell me a bit about your relationship with your co- workers.
22. Have you had the opportunities to make friends at work? Do you spend time with them outside of work?
23. Tell me about your experience as an immigrant/ refugee in the workplace
1. Do you feel you belong to your workplace?
24. Tell me about your experience as an immigrant youth in Nova Scotia
25. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix E: Confidentiality and Consent Form | In-depth Interviews



Project title: The Social inclusion of Immigrant Youth: Exploring the influence of employment and workplace experiences on sense of belonging to and in Nova Scotia

Researcher:

Temitope Abiagom
Master of Social Work student
School of Social Work
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Dalhousie University
t.abiagom@dal.ca
902- 401 3351

Supervisor:

Catherine Bryan
School of Social Work
Dalhousie University
C.bryan@dal.ca

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by me, Temitope Abiagom, student at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada, supervised by Dr. Catherine Bryan, from the School of Social Work – Dalhousie University. This study is part of the requirements to conclude my Master of Social Work.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may decline to answer any question and/or withdraw from the study at any time. Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important that you understand the purpose of this research. The study is described below. The description tells you about what the study is about, the risks, inconvenience, or discomfort that you might experience. There will be no consequences if you decide not to participate in the research. Participating in the study will not benefit you directly, but it will contribute to a better understanding of how employment and workplace experiences influence the social inclusion of immigrant youth in Nova Scotia. You should discuss any questions you have about this study with the researcher. You can also contact my supervisor at C.bryan@dal.ca.

Propose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the social nature work. Specifically, it investigates how workplace and employment experiences contribute to feelings of inclusion or not in Nova Scotia. It is my hope that insight gained from this research would contribute to improved policies and services for immigrant youths.

The study has a qualitative approach, with individual interviews with 15 youth. Analysis will be conducted by the researcher

Who can Participate in the Study

To achieve the study's objective, you must meet the following criteria to participate in the interview

- (a) Been living in Nova Scotia for at least 1 year
- (b) Youth between the ages of 18 - 30 years who was not born in Canada?
- (c) Have at least Canadian Language Benchmark CLB 4 (English)- If you are not sure about your English level, we can have a brief informal meeting before the interview to check if it will be possible for us to communicate well.
- (d) Have landed in Canada as a government-assisted refugee (GAR), private sponsored refugee (PSR) or permanent resident

Study Design

The interview should take between 45 to 90 minutes and will be conducted in person by the researcher and is intended to gather information about your employment and workplace experience and how this experience influence your feeling of inclusion to Nova Scotia. Questions will be open-ended. This means that you will be able to provide as much detail as you are willing to share, as well as offer insights, reflections, and opinions.

If you agree, I would like to audio record the conversation. If you do not agree, I will take notes and repeat and reflect back to you what I have heard. We can schedule and carry out the interview at an agreed time and place. You may also be asked if you know someone who might also be a potential participant in this study. If you do, you might be asked to pass on an information sheet to them about the study, if you agree to do so. Once the interview is transcribed, if you want I may email or delivery a copy of the transcription to you for you to review and you can provide me with any feedback.

Information gathered through the interviews will be reviewed and analyzed by the researcher

What you will be asked to do

Participation will include one interview that for 45 to 90 minutes. In consideration of the on-going restrictions on social gathering due to COVID- 19, interviews will take place largely virtually via telephone to ensure we comply with public health protocols. In light of this, participants will be encouraged to select a place and time where they will have privacy for the duration of the interview.

During the interview, you will be asked to respond to a series of questions about your employment and workplace experience. Because they will be open-ended questions, you will be able to provide as much or as little information as you wish. If you do not want to answer a specific question, or set of questions, you do not have to.

Possible Benefits, Risks and Discomforts

While this study may not directly result in benefits to you, your participation will contribute to our shared understanding of the social inclusion of immigrant youth in Nova Scotia. The research may also contribute to improved policies and services.

The risks associated with the study are considered minimal and include the possibility that you may find discussing your personal experiences emotionally upsetting. There is a chance that an interview may bring up past issues that are still unsettled. In such a case, I will be prepared to indicate counselling and other supports if desired. A list with supportive services will be provided for you in the beginning of the interview. Feel free to skip any question you do not want to answer, or to interrupt the interview at any point.

Incentive

To thank you for your time, we will give you a \$15 gift card when you engage in an interview session.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

It is the responsibility of the researchers involved in this study to protect your anonymity and ensure confidentiality regarding the information you provide.

Anonymity. Your identity will be known only to the researcher and her supervisor. In other words, they will be the only people with access to your name or contact information. Personal information, such as your name, will not be included on any of the data collected including notes taken during the interview, audio recorded data or transcripts. Additionally, your name will not appear in any reports of publications.

Confidentiality. Any information you provide the researchers will remain confidential. This is true for both information provided during the interviews as well as before or after the interviews. To guarantee confidentiality, the researchers, when transcribing your interview will omit all identifying information, including your name. Once the transcript is complete, the audio file will be deleted.

Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information you provide during the interview. Transcripts and audio recording will also be kept in a secure and locked location. Again, audio recordings will be destroyed following the completion of the transcript.

Where your comments may appear in text, for example in a report or publication, no identifying information, such as name, age, or occupation, will be included.

Legally, there are some limitations to confidentiality. For example, disclosures of abuse or neglect of a child, elderly person or vulnerable adult, must be reported to appropriate

officials. If, for those reasons, the researchers must breach confidentiality, you will be informed.

How to Obtain Research Results

You can obtain the results of this study by including your contact information at the end of the signature page and giving me permission to keep this information with me in order to receive a report of the research.

Dissemination of results

The results from this study will be reported in a written research thesis as well as during my oral thesis defence. Since the research thesis is a public document, information could be used in future literature and can also be found online. If you agree, direct quotation of your interview may be used.

Also, findings from the study will be presented at conferences that focus on Immigrant settlement and integration

Consent

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If at any time the nature of the study changes in a way that might affect your decision to participate, you will be contacted immediately with additional information.

Finally, you can withdraw from the study at any time during or after the research has begun. If you wish to withdraw, please contact Dr. Catherine Bryan.

Questions

If you have any questions prior to or after being interviewed, you can contact the researcher via email at t.abiagom@dal.com or by phone at (902)4013351 or her supervisor at c.bryan@dal.ca.

Problems or Concerns

If you have any difficulties or wish to voice concern about any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact Catherine Connors, Director of Dalhousie University's Office of Human Research Ethics Administration, for assistance at (902) 494 1462. Please feel free to call collect.

Appendix F: Consent and Confidentiality Form – Signature Page

Project title: The Social inclusion of Immigrant Youth: Exploring the influence of employment and workplace experiences on sense of belonging to and in Nova Scotia

Researcher:

Temitope Abiagom

Faculty of Graduate Studies
Master of Social Work student
Dalhousie University
t.abiagom@dal.ca
(902)401 3351

I, (name) _____, agree to participate in the research project

The Social inclusion of Immigrant Youth: Exploring the influence of employment and workplace experiences on sense of belonging to and in Nova Scotia

My participation will consist of one interview, during which I will be asked to discuss my employment and workplace experiences. My participation in this research is entirely voluntary and I may withdraw at any time. This means I can decide to not participate before, during, or after the interview, and that I can refuse to answer any question that I chose not to. Furthermore, I can stop the interview at any point if I no longer wish to proceed.

It is the responsibility of the researcher involved in this study to protect my anonymity and ensure anonymity and confidentiality. This means my identity will be known only to the researcher and her supervisor. Outside parties will not have access to my name or contact information. My personal information will not be included in any of the data that is collected including notes taken during the interview, audio recordings or transcripts. Additionally, my personal information will not be included in future publications of reports. If I agree to allow the researchers' use of direct quotations from my interview in a publication or report, it is with the understanding that they will use a pseudonym, and that they will omit any information that will connect me to the quote.

Any information I provide the researchers will remain confidential. This is true for information provided before, during and after the interview. If I agree to be audio-recorded, it is with the understanding that the content will only be used for research purposes and in respect of confidentiality. All transcripts and audio-recordings will be kept in a secure and

locked location. Audio files will be deleted once the transcript is complete. Access to the information collected through the research will be restricted to the researcher and her supervisor.

If I have any questions about this form or this study, I may contact the researcher for the project, Temitope Abiagom. Also, if, at any point, I wish to access supportive services to address any emotional or psychological issues that may arise because of my participation, I may contact the researcher.

If I have any concerns about the conduct of this study, I may contact the Dalhousie Office of Human Research Ethics Administration.

There are two copies of this form; one of which, I may keep.

I consent to being audio recorded: YES NO

Following completion of interview,

I consent to the use of direct quotes from my interview: YES NO

I agree to provide contact information in order to:

receive a report of the study.

receive a copy of my interview transcription.

Contact information:

Participant's signature _____ Date

Researcher's signature _____ Date
