

Labour Market Transition: Barriers and Supports for First Generation Immigrant and Refugee Youth

by

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## ABSTRACT

Immigrant and refugee youth (IRY) face higher unemployment rates than their Canadian-born counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2016). The barriers IRY face in their labour market transition (Shields et al., 2006; Lauer et al., 2012) and the consequences of youth unemployment (Hammarström, 1994; Beiser & Hou, 2001; Johnson et al., 2015) are well-known. Informal sources of employment supports, such as that provided by one's social network (e.g., family and friends), can help with one's job search; however, IRY are recognized as lacking access to a vast and resourceful social network (Kunz, 2003; Lauer et al., 2012; Oguz, 2013). Formal employment supports, in the form of employment centres and the employment programs and services (EPS) they provide, offer another avenue to acquiring support in finding a job; though, few studies have examined how IRY access employment centres and use EPS (Shields et al., 2006; Essential Skills Ontario, 2015; Galley, 2015). Through conducting semi-structured interviews with ten IRY and administering surveys to eight employment coordinators, this qualitative study explored the barriers IRY face in transitioning into the labour market, their use of informal employment supports, and how IRY navigate employment centres and EPS in Ottawa. Applying thematic analysis, it became evident that IRY face a host of barriers in their labour market transition. Those with a longer length of residency in Canada tended to rely on a relatively higher amount of social network support to search for employment. Nonetheless, for the majority of participants, two sources of employment supports provided through one's social network was not exceeded. While formal employment supports were regarded to be a positive experience for and helpful to IRY, there also existed barriers in their abilities to access employment centres, and negative experiences with EPS were raised. IRY's multidimensional identities and social positions were shown to underpin their experiences in navigating employment and employment supports.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Community Health/Service Centre: CH/SC

Employment Programs and Services: EPS

(First Generation) Immigrant and Refugee Youth: IRY

Mainstream Organization: MO

Settlement Agency: SA

A glossary of relevant study terms is provided in Appendix A.

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## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

First generation immigrants and refugees comprise a significant proportion of Canada's population. About 20% of Canada's population was foreign-born in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2015). On July 1, 2016, Canada's population rose to 36,286,425, signalling an increase of 437,815 people from the 2015–2016 year, with seventy-three percent of this increase directly resulting from immigration (Statistics Canada, 2016). The 2015–2016 year encompassed the most sizable number of immigrants arriving in a single annual period since the early 1910s (ibid). The significant influx in immigration throughout 2015–2016 was due in part to the arrival of Syrian refugees (ibid). Immigration currently accounts for two-thirds of Canada's population growth (Statistics Canada, 2017). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2015), 30% of all immigrants were younger than 25 years of age in 2013. These facts connote an increasing newcomer population in Canada.

Immigrants experience poorer employment rates than their Canadian-born counterparts. Immigrant youth, in particular, experience higher unemployment rates than Canadian-born youth. In 2015, the unemployment rate was 13.0% for Canadian-born youth aged 15-24, whereas for immigrants in the same age group, the unemployment rate was 17.3% for youth who landed 5 or fewer years earlier and 15.6% for youth who arrived between 5 to 10 years earlier (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Immigrant youth take about ten years to start experiencing employment rates that are comparable to Canadian-born youth (Stewart et al., 2015; Statistics Canada, 2016a). After the ten-year mark, the unemployment rate becomes 12.9% for immigrant and refugee youth, bridging the gap with their Canadian-born peers (Statistics Canada, 2016a).

The reality that immigrant youth experience high rates of unemployment during their first ten years lived in Canada is concerning because workforce involvement early on in young people's lives is reported to be key for their future occupational attainment and earnings (Gregg, 2001; TD Economics, 2013; Helgesson, Johansson, Nordqvist, Lundberg, & Vingard, 2014; Laurijssen & Glorieux, 2015; Caribbean Development Bank, 2015). The negative effect of youth unemployment on future unemployment (Gregg, 2001; Helgesson et al., 2014) and decreased future earnings (TD Economics, 2013; Laurijssen & Glorieux, 2015) have been established. These findings underscore the need to focus on and support IRY's labour market integration without delay. Moreover, the consequences of unemployment, such as increased physical health issues (Hammarström, 1994; Beiser & Hou, 2001; Lim, Grammenos, & Semenza, 2014; Johnson, Wibbels, & Wilkinson, 2015), mental health issues, social alienation (Hammarström, 1994), and increased suicidal ideation and suicide attempts (Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2007) have been well-documented in the literature.

As research shows, one of the means of finding employment is through social networks (Brown & Konrad, 2001; Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2008; Zhang, Anderson, & Zhan, 2011; Yan, Lauer, & Chan, 2012 citing Erickson, 2001; Oguz, 2013; Webb, 2015). But first generation immigrant and refugee youth are reported to lack access to a vast and resourceful social network (Kunz, 2003; Lauer, Wilkinson, Yan, Sin, & Tsang, 2012; Oguz, 2013). In addition to informal networks, there are formal sources of employment supports that assist in one's transition to the labour market; though, very little is known about how IRY navigate and use formal employment supports (Yan et al., 2012; Lauer et al., 2012; Shields, Rahi, & Scholtz, 2006).

In conversation with this research, I sought to examine, more extensively, how IRY access and use formal EPS from three types of organizations (MOs, CH/SCs, SAs) in Ottawa. I

endeavoured to analyze possible differences in service provision between these three types of organizations. Past research has called upon further work to examine how the social networks of immigrants and refugees support their integration in Canada (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). Thus, I made it an element of my study to explore the role that IRY's social networks have in their integration into the labour market. Research has tended to omit the labour market transition experience of first generation IRY (Wilkinson, 2008); therefore, this study serves to provide further insight into the barriers first generation IRY face in transitioning into the labour market.

Social workers practice in an increasingly globalized context, made especially apparent in their work with immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (Nash, Wong, & Trlin, 2006; Murphy, Hunt, Zajicek, Norris, & Hamilton, 2009). Within the social work profession, there has long been recognition of unemployment as the source of many service users' problems and social workers have long been working with those who are unemployed (Briar, 1980). However, little is in place that concretely situates the role of social work in assisting those who are seeking employment (Liang, Ng, Tsui, Yan, & Lam, 2016). Sherraden (1985) argues that unemployment is a burden placed particularly on non-white people. While this thesis focuses on employment coordinators, social workers often take up these roles. This thesis explores how IRY navigate employment and employment supports. In doing so, it begins the process of uncovering how to support diverse IRY groups in securing employment through an anti-oppressive and intersectional lens.

### **Research Questions**

The present study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the barriers and obstacles faced by IRY in their labour market transition?
- What is the role of informal employment supports, i.e., social networks and online/social media employment aids in IRY's job search?

- What factors influence IRY's access to employment centres and EPS?
- What are IRY's experiences with using EPS?
- Are there distinct ways in which service users experience employment program and service delivery from MOs, CH/SCs, and SAs?

Ten IRY who used EPS from employment centres in Ottawa were interviewed and eight employment coordinators who worked in employment centres in Ottawa completed a survey questionnaire tool for this study. Information collected from both sets of data enabled me to shed light on the questions above and draft directions for future research in view of further supporting IRY in their navigation of employment centres and EPS in Ottawa.

### **Structure**

Chapter 1 introduced the study and outlined its research questions. In Chapter 2, I present the relevant literature pertaining to the study's topic, particularly in relation to immigration policy, IRY and unemployment, and IRY and sources of employment supports. Chapter 3 presents the study's theoretical frameworks, anti-oppression and intersectionality, and their relevance to the research at hand. Chapter 4 explains the study's methodology with respect to its design, instruments, procedures, analysis, challenges, limitations and factors that enhanced the study, and the characteristics of the participants in the study. The main findings of this thesis are delineated in chapters 5 through 9.

In Chapter 5, I explore the barriers IRY study participants identified that IRY experience in their labour market transition. In Chapter 6, I focus on the messages IRY study participants received about work from their social networks, along with their own opinions on work, and explore IRY's use of informal employment supports through their social networks and online/social media sources. Subsequently, Chapter 7 delves into the factors that influence IRY's

access to employment centres—a source of formal employment support that can help one in finding a job. After having had accessed employment centres, Chapter 8 describes how IRY experienced and perceived the specific EPS they used. Chapter 9 further contributes to study findings by exploring employment coordinators' perspectives on the barriers IRY face in their labour market transition, factors that influence their access to employment centres and EPS, and how IRY use EPS. Also in Chapter 9 is my analysis of the differences and unique features of employment supports provided out of the three different types of organizations specified in this study (MOs, CH/SCs, and SAs). In Chapter 10, the recommendations brought forward by IRY and employment coordinators are presented. Chapter 11 provides a conclusion to the study and pinpoints directions for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature<sup>1</sup> review provides an overview of: (1) immigration policy in Canada; (2) IRY and unemployment in Canada; (3) factors influencing IRY's labour market transition; (4) importance of early labour force integration for IRY; (5) consequences of youth unemployment; (6) social capital as a form of informal employment support; and (7) formal employment support through employment centres.

#### **Immigration Policy in Canada**

Prior to 1967, Canada's immigration policy entailed overt racist preferences for immigrants of white racial origins (Simmons, 2010; Thomas, 2015). With the introduction of the Points System in immigration policy in 1967, the composition of source regions for immigration changed from predominantly Europe and opened up to individuals from all parts of the world, including people from Asia, Latin America, and Africa (Boyd, 2009; Yan et al., 2012). The Points System assesses Economic Class applicants based on human capital assets, such as language skills, education levels, work experience, age, arranged employment in Canada, and adaptability (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015a). As a result of these indicators, on average, immigrants tend to hold higher levels of education than both earlier generations of immigrants and Canadian-born individuals (Krahn & Taylor, 2005; Boyd, 2009; Simmons, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2012; Wilson-Forsberg & Sethi, 2015).

Immigrants arrive to Canada as permanent residents under four categories: the Economic Class, Family Class, Protected Persons Class, and under Humanitarian and Compassionate Considerations. In 2011, 62.8% of all immigrants were from the Economic Class, 22.7% from

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<sup>1</sup> The literature research cited throughout this thesis does not always distinguish between different categories of immigrants and may group both those who arrived to Canada through refugee classes and those from other classes of immigration as 'immigrants'. I apply the language used by researchers when citing their work, and when the information is available, I distinguish between refugees and immigrants.

the Family Class, 11.2% individuals immigrated through the Protected Persons (Refugee) Class, and 3.3% arrived in Canada through the Humanitarian and Compassionate Consideration category (Statistics Canada, 2015a). Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) (2017) facilitates permanent residents' entry by putting in place measures to maximize their economic contribution to Canada, with one measure being through the allotment of work permits, meaning that these individuals can work in Canada. Thus, permanent residents are individuals who are not yet Canadian citizens, but who can work in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015b).

On the other hand, asylum seekers do not obtain permanent residency status until the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) accepts their claims for refugee status. Once their refugee claims have been referred to the IRB, asylum seekers can apply for work permits (Refugee Rights in Ontario, 2017). Should they be approved for a work permit, they consequently apply for a Social Insurance Number (SIN), which must be awarded to them before they can work in Canada (Settlement.Org, 2016). If their application is accepted, asylum seekers receive a SIN number marked by a '9' as the first number, which denotes 'temporary worker' status, meaning someone who is neither a Canadian citizen nor a permanent resident (Economic and Social Development Canada, 2016).

Immigration is commonly highlighted as a strategy to mitigate the effects of an aging population and a declining birth rate on labour force availability. Twenty-five percent of Canada's population is projected to be 65 years of age or older by 2031 (Beach, 2010). For the first time in Canada, on July 1, 2015, more individuals were aged 65 years and older (5,780,900) than children aged 0 to 14 (5,749,400) (Statistics Canada, 2015b). Moreover, Canada's declining birth rate could dip to near zero in 20 years (Statistics Canada, 2016b). Taken alongside this

aging workforce and a declining birth rate, immigration is commonly seen as a significant contributor to the continued growth of Canada's labour force (Wilkinson, 2008; Beach, 2010; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012; The Conference Board of Canada, 2016).

### **Immigrant and Refugee Youth and Unemployment in Canada**

Despite higher credentials among newcomer groups, immigrants face difficulty in securing employment, and even when employed earn wages that are lower than their Canadian-born counterparts (Kunz, 2003; Galabuzi, 2007; Boyd, 2009; Beach, 2010; Simmons, 2010; Xue, 2010; Hansen, 2011; Lauer et al., 2012; Yan et al., 2012; Sevgur, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2014). Youth are often omitted from research examining labour market transitions among first generation immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2008; Wilkinson, 2008). The exclusion of immigrant youth in research is often justified with the rationale that the group is less likely to be active in the labour market than adults and that they tend to be engaged in other activities, such as school (Lauer et al., 2012). But higher unemployment rates among immigrant youth when compared to Canadian-born youth and immigrant adults highlights an important problem requiring attention. When youth are considered, research has tended to emphasize the experience of second generation immigrant and refugee youth and their labour market transitions in Canada (Shields et al., 2006; Wilkinson, 2008; Lauer et al., 2012). The dearth of research in this area indicates that there is a limited understanding of first generation IRY's transition into the labour market.

There is evidence to suggest that immigrant and refugee youth are uniquely disadvantaged when compared to immigrant adults in the labour market. Francis and Yan (2016) argue that newcomer IRY face the double jeopardy of being young and new to Canada. Although it is assumed that first generation immigrant youth experience better labour market outcomes than their parents (Wilkinson, 2008), statistics conversely show that the unemployment rate is

substantially higher for immigrant youth than immigrant adults. Among immigrants who landed 5 to 10 years ago, the unemployment rate was 15.6% for youth (15-24 years old) compared to 8.0% for adults (aged 25-54) in 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Based on their analysis of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants from four cities (Vancouver, Winnipeg, Hamilton, and Toronto) in Canada, Lauer and colleagues (2012) found that during their first four years in Canada, first generation immigrant youth face significant barriers to employment. Immigrant youth who have lived in Canada for less than four years experience fewer means of access to job markets, more challenges with foreign credential recognition, and substantial delays in finding a job when compared to immigrant youth who have lived in Canada for more than four years (Lauer et al., 2012).

Not only are they new, but first generation immigrant and refugee youth are additionally burdened by persistently high youth unemployment rates in Canada. Canadian Labour Force Survey data from 1977 to 2012 shows that the Canadian youth unemployment rate is consistently higher than it is for adults (Bernard, 2013). The gap between Canadian youth and adults' unemployment rates has not diminished since the early 1990s, and has become wider since the global recession of 2008-2009 (ibid). In 2012, adult unemployment levels reached pre-recession levels, while youth took a harder and more enduring hit, as their unemployment levels had still not returned to pre-recession levels (ibid). Canadian youth also face the concern of delayed retirements and as a consequence of the recession, older workers filling jobs that would have otherwise been filled by youth (Dhanjal & Schirle, 2014).

Yan and colleagues (2012) also assign the term 'double jeopardy' to first generation immigrant youth, noting that individuals in this group are likely to be of ethno-racial minority backgrounds and come from immigrant families, which the researchers argue doubly

disadvantages the group as they attempt to enter the competitive Canadian job market. Large portions of young individuals who immigrate to Canada belong to a visible minority group, increasing the likelihood that their attempts to enter the labour market can be tainted by discrimination (Francis & Yan, 2016).

### **Factors Influencing Immigrant and Refugee Youth's Labour Market Transition**

It may be helpful to provide an overview of some of the factors known to influence IRY's labour market transitions. Lauer and colleagues (2012) argue that employment challenges for IRY surface based on the intersections of class, ethnicity, place of birth, gender, age, and educational qualifications. The literature cites barriers to labour market transition faced by the IRY group in Canada, including:

- the Canadian immigration process, with refugees seeking work permits enduring a wait time of up to seven years;
- inadequate government financial support to cover the expenses of searching for a job—i.e., to pay for bus tickets to get to employment agencies or attend job interviews;
- devaluation of foreign education or issues with transferring credentials;
- a lack of Canadian employment experience;
- the pressure to engage in volunteer work first rather than paid employment;
- language;
- lack of access to information;
- racism and discrimination;
- obstacles to acquiring meaningful employment; and
- social pressure to economically integrate into a less than inviting society (Shields et al., 2006).

Other barriers faced by IRY in accessing employment opportunities in Canada include a lack of self-confidence (Oguz, 2013), a lack of social networks, and coming from an immigrant family—who are themselves struggling economically and cannot support their children’s job seeking endeavours (Lauer et al., 2012).

Immigrant and refugee youth experience commonalities and differences in their transition into the Canadian labour market. For example, both groups face challenges with discrimination, settling into a new society, and learning about a new culture (Wilkinson, 2008). Where the experience of IRY may differ is that the effect of trauma could very well be an aspect of refugee youth’s lives (*ibid*). As well, while both immigrants and refugees may experience family poverty as a result of parental unemployment and underemployment (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009), refugee youth may face additional financial burdens given their need to repay transportation loans allotted to them when they came to Canada (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2008). Refugee youth are also less likely than immigrant youth to have English and/or French language skill sets upon arriving in Canada (Wilkinson, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2012). Teledgi (2006) assesses the devastating impact of long family reunification processes, noting that refugee children and youth can feel betrayed by their parents. These experiences can compromise refugee youth’s education and overall health in the host country (Teledgi, 2006). But research on how such unique factors impact the various components of resettlement and integration in a host society—including within the labour force—among immigrants and refugees, is scarce (Wilkinson, 2008).

The literature also cites a few protective factors to acquiring employment among IRY, commonly predicated on length of stay. A longer length of stay in Canada is correlated with increased chances of obtaining employment among IRY (Kunz, 2003). Limited access to social networks among newcomer IRY impedes their labour market transition (Kunz, 2003; Lauer et

al., 2012; Oguz, 2013). Thus, a longer length of stay can mitigate this barrier due to newcomer youth developing a larger social network over an extended time period (Lauer et al., 2012). Further, arriving to Canada as a child (before the age of 5) is positively correlated with employment as a young person (Kunz, 2003). Arriving in Canada at a younger age also increases the achievement of language proficiency (Beiser & Hou, 2001), as well as the attainment of Canadian education—which has been shown to enhance labour market outcomes for immigrant youth (Picot & Sweetman, 2012) and decrease the earning gaps between Canadian-born and first generation immigrant individuals (Banerjee & Lee, 2012). Research confirms that first generation immigrant youth indeed enroll in and achieve higher than average levels of education than their Canadian-born peers (Nee & Sanders, 2001; Krahn & Taylor, 2005; Boyd, 2009; Wilkinson, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2016c). Further, being bilingual (knowledge of a language other than English) has been recognized to increase IRY's chances of acquiring employment (Wilkinson, 2008). Wilkinson's (2008) study found that having at least one parent be university educated has significant influences on young immigrant individuals' chances of being employed.

### **Importance of Early Labour Market Integration for Immigrant and Refugee Youth**

Commonly labelled as 'scarring', economic research indicates that unemployment at a young age has pervasive and long-lasting impacts on an individual's career prospects, both in terms of the likelihood of future unemployment (Gregg, 2001; Helgesson et al., 2014; Caribbean Development Bank, 2015), and on future decreased earnings (Gregg, 2001; TD Economics, 2013; Laurijssen & Glorieux, 2015). Studies from different countries consistently suggest that first generation IRY's early labour market transition is a critical factor in their chances of being employed in the future (Beiser & Hou, 2001; Helgesson et al., 2014; Laurijssen & Glorieux, 2015). Beiser and Hou (2001), examining a sample of 608 Southeast Asian refugees (75% being

younger than 35) who resettled in and around Vancouver, British Columbia, between 1979 and 1981, found that being unemployed at Wave 1 increased the chances of being unemployed at the Wave 3 follow-up—more than eight years after the follow-up in Wave 1. In the Swedish context, Helgesson and colleagues (2014) compared the employment outcomes of over twenty-five thousand 20 to 24-year-old first generation immigrants living in Sweden with a random sample of over one hundred and seventy thousand native Swedes of like ages throughout a fifteen-year period. They determined that, at each stage of follow-up, first generation immigrants were more likely to be unemployed than their native-born peers. These studies support the notion that unemployment at a young age increases the chance of unemployment as youth get older, and that first generation immigrants may be asymmetrically impacted by this trend (Helgesson et al., 2014).

Drawing on data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health in the United States, Perreira, Harris, and Lee (2007) evaluated the early work experiences of first, second, and third generation immigrant youth (12 to 20) who attended high school in 1995 and 1996. They concluded that first generation immigrant adolescents were significantly less likely to work during middle and high school years and summers than were their second and third generation immigrant counterparts (Perreira et al., 2007). The concept of ‘school orientation’ provides an explanation for this phenomenon, positing that adolescent immigrants focus their efforts on school success based on a desire to repay their parents for their investments (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002). Two Canadian studies demonstrated that immigrant youth are less likely to combine work and school during their secondary and post-secondary education when compared to Canadian-born youth (Kilbride et al., 2004; Kunz, 2003). Referencing Statistics Canada (2007b), Lauer and colleagues (2012) reported that 25% of migrant youth have work experience

before leaving high school compared with 60% of youth born in Canada. Taking into account the considerable research connecting the increased risk of unemployment in the future for youth who are unemployed early on, Laurijssen and Glorieux (2015) contend that "... ethnic minority youth perhaps are best off with starting to work as soon as possible after [leaving school]" (p. 101).

### **Consequences of Youth Unemployment**

The consequences of youth unemployment on the individual, community, and economy have been well-documented. Using World Health Organization representative data samples from 50 countries (including Canada), Johnson and colleagues (2015) argue that the national presence of income inequality, characterized by the gap in income among people in a society, is significantly correlated with the prevalence of psychotic symptoms. A New Zealand study found that increased exposure to unemployment among youth aged 16 to 25 was positively linked with both an increased risk of suicidal ideation and number of suicide attempts (Fergusson et al., 2007). In Sweden, Helgesson, Johansson, Nordqvist, Lundberg, and Vingard (2013) found that being unemployed between the ages of 20 to 24 years old was positively correlated with absenteeism, drawing on disability pensions, and an elevated risk of premature death at a follow-up, 15 years later. Even when both groups (native-born Swedes and migrant Swedes) experienced early unemployment, immigrant youth were disproportionately affected by its consequences. They found an increased risk of premature death in first generation immigrant Swedes who experienced early unemployment when compared to native-born Swedes who experienced early unemployment (Helgesson et al., 2013).

Against the backdrop of the economic crisis in Europe, severely affecting youth (15 to 24), Lim and colleagues (2014) argue that high levels of youth unemployment increase mortality due to heightened vulnerability to communicable diseases as related to the factors of poverty and

unmet medical needs, increased risky behaviours, and pressures on the public health system. The Caribbean Development Bank (2015) reports that high levels of youth unemployment not only inhibits economic growth, but also brings about negative social consequences such as risky behaviours, unplanned pregnancy, lost future earning capacity, crime, and psychological issues. Based on a review of the literature, Hammarström (1994) claims that youth unemployment is correlated with increased illness, battering of wives and children, psychological disorders, physiological illness, alcohol and tobacco consumption, illicit drug use, deteriorated health behaviour, social alienation, criminality, and a lack of financial resources.

Unemployment at an early age may increase burdens on the welfare system and contribute to the loss of productivity for many years to come (Helgesson et al., 2013). Beiser and Hou (2001) found that unemployment acted as a significant risk factor for depression among Southeast Asian refugee young men in Canada. Other research indicates that depression is associated with job loss and difficulty with maintaining employment (Beiser, Turner, & Johnson, 1993). In Canada, the short-term economic cost of unemployment (defined by wage loss) is estimated to be \$10.7 billion and the long-term cost over an 18-year period is projected to be at \$12.4 billion, together totalling \$23 billion or 1.5% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (Canada 2020, 2014).

### **Social Capital as Form of Informal Employment Support**

Assessments of immigrants' integration into Canada have tended to focus on characteristics related to their human capital, such as their level of education, knowledge of Canadian official languages, and previous work experience (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). Studies that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s began to demonstrate the importance of the type and quality of immigrants' social networks in supporting their integration into Canadian society

(Potter, 1999). Bourdieu (1986) prominently elaborated the concept of social capital, referring to it as the accumulation of current and potential resources linked to reliable and stable relationships of mutual acquaintance, trust, and recognition. These relationships and acquaintances amount to membership in a group that has collectively owned capital and bestows various kinds of credit upon its members (ibid). Lin (2001) articulates that, in simple terms, social capital is a resource that people access to reach their goals, including that of employment (cited in Yan et al., 2012). Social capital can also take the form of the offer of support in trying times, such as when looking for a job (Brown & Konrad, 2001). Social networks are widely recognized as critical to job seekers' ability to obtain employment (Brown & Konrad, 2001; Abada et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2011; Oguz, 2013; Webb, 2015).

Three types of social capital are identified in the literature: bonding, bridging, and linking. *Bonding social capital* entails trusting and cooperative relationships among people who are similar in some form, particularly with respect to a shared social identity (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). People who form close groups or share strong ties tend to have similar interests and access to a limited scope of job-related information that they can share with one another, given the likelihood of strong ties with people to whom they are similar (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). An attribute of strong connections among individuals in a network, like among family and friends, is the increased likelihood of the provision of larger amounts of social and emotional support that is important in the process of integration (ibid). Although strong ties have been associated with different types of supports, these ties are typically smaller in size (ibid). Nonetheless, the influence of bonding social capital is shown in Leu (2009) who reports that almost 70% of jobs are acquired through family and friendship networks in the United States (cited in Lauer et al., 2012).

*Bridging social capital* consists of mutual and respectful relationships among a network of people who are characteristically dissimilar, by way of age, race/ethnicity, education, and socio-economic status (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Bridging social capital commonly refers to less intimate associations (Geys & Murdoch, 2010; Zhang et al., 2011). These weaker ties connect those who are more different from one another (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). The benefits of these ties are that they bridge access to a range of information to which an individual may not ordinarily receive, and offer access to more scarce and specialized information, including that of job openings (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). These associations serve a bridging function across race, gender, income, occupation, and others, and thus likely increase people's access to new information and resources that can facilitate advancement—economic included (Zhang et al., 2011). Compared to bonding capital, bridging capital has been correlated with increased access to job information (Briggs, 1998) and individual economic well-being (Zhang et al., 2011; Zhang & Anderson, 2014).

*Linking social capital* refers to relationships developed across formal, explicit, and institutionalized power, marked, for example, by relationships between individuals seeking access to services, resources, or employment opportunities, and those providing services (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). The benefits accrued by the facilitation of these supports may otherwise be inaccessible by service users (ibid). Torezani, Colic-Peisker, and Fozdar (2008) argue that linking social capital is critical to newcomers' ability to obtain employment outside of ethnic niches. Besides their study, the connection between linking social capital and access to employment opportunities is scarce. This study explores how IRY access and use formal employment supports, an interaction that fits within the confines of linking social capital.

Social capital has been recognized as the most accessible form of capital for low-income people, and is claimed to have a role in reducing poverty at individual and community levels (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; Weaver, 2012; Zhang & Anderson, 2014). Not only does the presence of social networks matter, but so too does the resourcefulness of one's social network (Litwin, 2011). Immigrants' social networks can be limited to only a handful of family, relatives, and friends (Simmons, 2010; Yan et al., 2012; Oguz, 2013). Limited social networks among newcomer youth in a host country has been acknowledged as a significant disadvantage in the labour market (Kunz, 2003; Lauer et al., 2012; Oguz, 2013). First generation immigrants' smaller and less robust, powerful, and resourceful social networks hamper them from acquiring job information and links with employers (Lauer et al., 2012) and decrease the likelihood that they will find good occupational opportunities (Perreira et al., 2007; Fang et al., 2010).

Individuals who are poor are known to face limits to the resourcefulness of the social capital to which they have access (Thomas, Muradian, de Groot, de Ruijter, 2010). As stated by Lauer and colleagues (2012), many first generation immigrant adult family members are themselves struggling economically and do not have the knowledge and employment networks in Canada to help young people obtain jobs. According to Lauer and colleagues (2012), social networks as a medium to gain employment support are only effective when family members are well established in Canada.

Based on their analysis of the first wave (2001-2002) of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada interviews, Bergeron and Potter (2006) report that immigrants from the Family Class tend to have more connections, with 64% of them knowing relatives upon arrival. At 25%, immigrants from the refugee category were most likely to not have any personal connections (relatives or friends) in Canada upon arrival (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). Given the

circumstances faced by refugees, such as needing to flee unsafe situations as quickly as possible without an opportunity to contemplate possible support networks in a host country, this group is less likely to have family ties that may be available among those in the Family Class (Statistics Canada, 2012). With respect to country of origin, Bergeron and Potter's (2006) analysis found that immigrants from countries that have been sending immigrants to Canada for longer periods of time had a greater chance of knowing family and relatives. Young people (15 to 24 year-olds) and older people (55 and older) are disadvantaged in their association with social networks upon arrival in Canada as they are more likely to indicate only knowing relatives upon landing (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). By contrast, those aged 25 to 54 were more likely to have friends and family upon arriving in Canada (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). Researchers argue that individuals with smaller and less effective networks are less likely to find jobs (Kunz, 2003; Kilbride et al., 2004; Oguz, 2013).

### **Formal Employment Support through Employment Centres**

Canadian studies on first generation immigrant and refugee youth's access to the labour market is limited (Wilkinson, 2008). Research on the sources of support that IRY tend to rely on in their job search efforts are conflicting. According to Lauer and colleagues (2012), newcomer youth are more likely to use informal sources (predominantly friends) than formal employment agencies to secure their first jobs. While confirming that when using informal job search techniques, first generation immigrant youth are more likely to leverage the help of friends rather than family, Yan and colleagues (2012) conversely state that formal job search techniques (i.e., want ads, cold calls, or employment agencies) are a rather more popular and effective means of searching for work for the group. Focus on formal employment support is necessary. As highlighted by Bergeron and Potter (2006), access to employment presents the biggest challenge

for newcomers to Canada, with 70% facing difficulties accessing employment. There is a gap in research about how immigrant and refugee youth utilize employment agencies. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to gaps in knowledge in this area by examining the role of formal employment supports in IRY's job search.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of Canada's immigration policy, the higher unemployment rate experienced by IRY relative to Canadian-born youth and immigrant adults, and the many barriers and few protective factors that are known to influence IRY's transition into the Canadian labour market. This section also emphasized the importance of integrating into the labour market early on as youth, given its importance for future occupational attainment and earnings. I highlighted social capital as a form of informal employment support that is regarded to be limited among immigrant and refugee youth. Lastly, I wrote about the dearth of research delving into IRY's navigation of formal employment supports. Based on the existing research outlined, this thesis explores the barriers IRY in Ottawa face in transitioning into the labour market, their experience with informal and formal employment supports, and differences in employment service delivery between three different types of organizations. In the next section, I describe the two theoretical frameworks, anti-oppression and intersectionality, that I adopted in the interpretation of my study findings.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical frameworks used in this study are anti-oppression and intersectionality. I use these two frameworks in combination, as they are complementary. I look to intersectionality to fill the gaps present in the anti-oppressive framework. These frames resonate with my educational background, values, and beliefs, and are suitable in helping to understand IRY's navigation of employment and engagement with informal and formal employment supports.

#### **Oppression**

In order to understand the anti-oppression framework, it is helpful to describe oppression. Oppression can be defined as “the domination of subordinate groups in society by a powerful (politically, economically, socially, and culturally) group” (Mullaly, 2010, p. 38). Kumashiro (2001) characterizes oppression as prejudice multiplied by power (i.e., access to resources), where members of the dominant group enforce prejudice and limit non-dominant group members' access to resources. As cited in Wamback and Van Soest (1997), Lipman-Blumen (1984, 1994) focused on the qualities of oppression—restricting, restraining, and preventing psychological, social, or economic movement of an individual or group. In bringing these ideas together, Mullaly (2010) explains that oppression is evident when a person is:

... blocked from opportunities to self-development, is excluded from full participation in society, does not have certain rights that the dominant group takes for granted, or is assigned a second-class citizenship ... because of his or her membership in a particular group or category of people (p. 40).

Oppression is enacted in a myriad of ways and serves several functions, some of which are outlined as follows. First, oppression infers that an individual's experience of marginalization

is neither accidental nor preventable, but shaped by forces and barriers that are part of systematically oppressive relations (Mullaly, 2010). Oppressed people are used as scapegoats for common societal discourses—often blamed for crime, social disruptions, recessions, inflation, and government deficits. These discourses serve to maintain dominant–subordinate relationships (ibid). Looking onto Freire’s work, Mullaly (2010) explains that oppression serves to maintain oppressors’ access to resources, including that of better-paying and higher-status jobs.

Moreover, oppressors obtain preferential treatment from a society’s social institutions (Mullaly, 2010). In asserting that individuals would not consider themselves as oppressors or subscribe to the notion that oppressive behaviours maintain their favourable position, Freire justifies why oppressive practices still ensue:

... for [oppressors], having more is an inalienable right, a right they acquired through their own ‘effort,’ with their ‘courage to take risks.’ If others do not have more, it is because they are incompetent and lazy, and worst of all is their unjustifiable ingratitude towards the ‘generous gestures’ of the dominant class. Precisely because they are ‘ungrateful’ and ‘envious,’ the oppressed are regarded as potential enemies who must be watched (cited in Mullaly, 2010, p. 42).

It is important to note that oppression is neither a fixed nor static practice nor process, but is dynamic, multi-dimensional, and relational (Mullaly, 2010).

Mullaly (2010) writes about five forms of oppression that will be described below: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Exploitation refers to social processes whereby the dominant group is able to build and maintain power, assets, and status from the labour and energy exerted by subordinate groups (Mullaly, 2010). Working-class persons, people of colour, and women are particularly susceptible to the

experience of exploitation. Marginalization is about a growing underclass, consisting of people of colour, old and young persons, and Aboriginal groups, among others, who are confined to society's margins because the labour market will not accommodate them. Powerlessness is characterized by a dearth of decision-making power in one's work, barriers to the development of one's capacities, and being subjected to disrespectful treatment as a result of the status that one occupies, based on social characteristics such as race, gender, class, ability, and others. Cultural imperialism occurs when the dominant group's experiences and culture are projected to be universal and represented as the norm. As per the fifth form of oppression, oppressed groups also experience violence—not just physical—but ridicule, harassment, and intimidation. For example, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer\* (\*defines other identities not mentioned) (LGBTQ\*) people fear unprovoked attacks and people of colour have reason to fear harassment. Another example of violence is structural violence; it relates to when violence is perceived to be unsurprising, accepted, and tolerated, and where perpetrators encounter little to no punishment (ibid).

Oppression functions at personal, cultural, and structural levels (Kumashiro, 2001; Mullaly, 2002). Personal oppression reflects thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours that assign subordinate groups with negative prejudgments, typically based on stereotypes (Mullaly, 2002). Examples of personal oppression is telling jokes at the expense of a non-dominant group member or when a teacher disciplines a multiracial child and dismisses the same behaviour in a white child (Kumashiro, 2001). This form of oppression can result in acts of aggression, hatred, and aversion that can be conscious or unconscious (Mullaly, 2002). Cultural oppression can take the form of cultural messages, products, or images that define reality or present worldviews that privilege males over females, white people over people of colour, heterosexual people over

LGBTQ\* persons, affluent people over people who are poor, employed individuals over unemployed individuals, able persons over those with (dis)abilities, among others (ibid). An example of cultural oppression looks like a dark-skinned child wearing contact lenses to resemble Elizabeth Taylor, based on the impression that white is cool whereas being a person of colour is not (Kumashiro, 2001).

Policies devised through social, political, and economic systems contribute to the third level (structural) wherein oppression functions (Mullaly, 2002). Structural oppression can manifest as policies developed that reflect and promote the worldviews of those who occupy positions of power. In these cases, those who have never experienced poverty may establish poverty policy, and those who have never been turned down for a job or house because of their skin colour create race relations and human rights policies. The resulting implications of these practices are that groups of people are inhibited in their ability to realize their full potential and/or gain access to resources and opportunities, based on policies that do not have a sufficient understanding of their experiences. Overt discriminatory policies in the past have included the forced sterilization of poor people, black persons, and ethnic minorities in North America. Covert structural discrimination is common today, and an example of this is that black women have been found to be given less prenatal care information than are white women (ibid). Thus, while policies, rules, and regulations may overtly seem neutral and non-discriminatory, the ways in which diverse groups experience their implementation can vary substantially and have discriminatory effects.

All of the forms and levels of oppression described above have harmful implications. Internal oppression, for example, is produced when groups (e.g., people of colour) begin to believe and act as if the “dominant belief system, values, and life are the best and exclusive

reality” (Baines, 2011, p. 2). Markers of internal oppression can include self-censorship, shame, self-hate, and the practice of disowning the realities of individuals and cultures (Baines, 2011). For example, racialized people may believe that they are inferior to non-racialized groups (Kumashiro, 2001).

Now that oppression has been defined as functioning in different forms and at various levels, leading to the subjection of marginalized groups in various spheres of life, including in their labour market transition, I can begin to define the use of the anti-oppressive framework.

### **Anti-Oppressive Framework**

The anti-oppressive framework emerged in social work as a response to the difficulties faced by advocates, such as people with disabilities, feminists, and ethnic minorities in their work to challenge various power structures (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). Anti-oppression serves to analyze the *structure* of oppression and discrimination, which arguably affects all of the aforementioned advocates’ work (ibid). The central premise of the anti-oppression framework is to eliminate power differences in society and to increase access to rights, to which all people are entitled (Wormer, Kaplan, & Juby, 2012). Anti-oppressive practitioners oppose the unequal structures—colonialism, patriarchal capitalism, racism, ageism, ableism, and heterosexism—that create much burden for service users (Carniol, 2005). Dominelli (1996), an influential writer of the anti-oppressive framework writes about its philosophy, process, and aims:

AOP embodies a person-centred philosophy; an egalitarian value system concerned with reducing the deleterious effects of structural inequalities upon people's lives; a methodology focusing on both process and outcome; and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aims to empower users by reducing the negative

effects of social hierarchies on their interaction and the work they do together (p. 170-171).

As described previously, oppression occurs at many levels and takes many different forms. The anti-oppressive framework asserts that everyday experience is shaped by multiple oppressions (Baines, 2007). Social characteristics based on gender, race, class, age, and others, foster oppression (Mullaly, 2002). As with the anti-oppressive framework, one would examine correlations between race, gender, (dis)ability, and other identity markers, and access to, or systematic exclusion from, various—and better—jobs (Baines, 2011). Based on the understanding that individuals and groups in society face multiple oppressions, by extension, service providers need access to a broad range of goods and resources to meet service users' various needs (Baines, 2007).

Acknowledging the deliberate conditions that create oppression for groups in society, Baines (2007) argues that politics are an integral component to anti-oppressive social work. This is especially important when providers are attempting to meet client needs in an increasingly corporatized and pro-market society, which in fact benefits from and supports colonialism, war, poverty, and injustice at local levels and internationally (ibid). Thus, the anti-oppressive framework is grounded in the notion that practitioners are called upon to, a) serve people in need, and b) reorganize society by challenging and transforming the forces that benefit from the perpetuation of inequity and oppression (Baines, 2011).

Additionally, the anti-oppressive framework supports the view that individuals or subordinate groups are not helpless to resist dominant discourses that subjugate and oppress them (ibid). After all, as argued by Baines, service users “can and need to be active in their own liberation” (Baines, 2007, p. 21). Nzira and Williams (2009) offer that “empowerment involves

addressing the imbalance of power between groups in society” (p. 26). In alignment with the anti-oppressive framework, Nzira and Williams (2009) contend that empowerment is typically achieved through disempowered groups’ own actions, albeit a more powerful social group often challenges the extent to which it is achieved (Nzira & Williams, 2009).

Anti-oppression theorists’ account that different groups in society, based on various facets of their identity, are systematically susceptible to oppression contributes to my understanding of the various ways in which my study’s participants are vulnerable to unemployment due to their lack of access to the labour market. My thesis focuses on a particularly vulnerable group—IRY—who experience oppression in their access to the labour market. Drawing on the anti-oppressive framework, I looked at whether, and how, the experiences and perspectives of IRY relate to various forms and levels of oppression. The anti-oppressive framework provided me a frame through which to examine the role of systems of oppression in IRY’s experiences of navigating the labour market. The theory, acknowledging strength and resilience, also underpins questions posed to IRY study participants, such as how they deal with their perceptions and experiences of barriers and obstacles to employment, in order to explore the ways in which they cope, strategize, and move forward in their pursuit of securing employment and exert their agency and demonstrate resilience despite challenges.

The anti-oppression framework also influenced my ability to explore factors that inhibit or facilitate IRY’s access to informal sources of employment supports and resources. For example, the literature widely cites that, as a result of various structures of oppression, the parents of IRY typically endure unemployment or low-wage work (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Yan et al., 2012), which in turn impedes access to sources of employment support or resources to which the IRY group could have otherwise had access through their parents (Yan et al., 2012).

Anti-oppression has the explanatory power to connect experiences of oppression to the resources to which one has access. Therefore, I considered how IRY navigated support from social networks and how these interactions may have been influenced by oppression and an accompanying lack of access to resources. In addition, the anti-oppression framework accounts for the notion that different social groups may gain access to, use, receive, and experience supports and services in society differently, based on the notion that seemingly neutral rules, regulations, and policies underpinning these supports may disadvantage certain groups in practice. My study examines how a unique and diverse group uses and accesses EPS. Having explained the key components of the anti-oppressive framework and how I use it, I will now discuss its cited challenges.

### **Challenges with the Anti-Oppressive Framework**

There are several cited challenges with the anti-oppressive framework. Some critique the anti-oppressive framework as subscribing to an oppressor–oppressed binary (Ghail & Haywood, 1997; Kumsa, 2011). At the same time, though, scholars argue that the anti-oppressive framework acknowledges people’s strength, resistance, and power, regardless of their position in society (Mullaly, 2002). In doing so, the framework refrains from regarding those who experience oppression as weak and incapable of using their agency to improve their circumstances. Anti-oppression theorists’ rejection of static and fixed identities also accounts for relational interactions whereby one could be an oppressor in one context and oppressed in another, and further, some relations are acknowledged as involving mutual oppression (Mullaly, 2002; Kumsa, 2011).

Moreover, it is argued that it would be naïve to deflect the reality that some groups are more likely to experience oppression in society. For example, women are more likely to

experience oppression (by men) due to their status as women (Mullaly, 2002). As well, gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals are more likely to face oppression (by heterosexuals). The same is true for people of colour, in that they are more likely to face oppression than are white people (ibid). In contrast, particular identities carry 'privilege'. Privilege infers that certain groups are automatically accepted as worthy of inclusion, respect, support, and overall good treatment (Nzira & Williams, 2009). An example of a privileged group in North American societies are white, middle-class, heterosexual, male, North American, middle-aged individuals (ibid).

A shortcoming of the anti-oppressive framework, observed by some critiques, is that it is weak in its conceptualization of multiple and overlapping axes of oppression (McDonald & Coleman, 2007; Brown, 2012). For instance, it has been regarded as limited in its insights on practice guidelines for work with individuals facing multiple and intersecting oppressions (Wormer et al., 2012). As well, while appearing to be progressive, anti-oppression has been scrutinized for evading discussions on racism—particularly that of anti-black and anti-Native—among social workers, managers, and educators (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016). Anti-oppressive practitioners have also been scrutinized for advocating for the eradication of oppression based on single axes like, a) anti-racist; b) anti-sexist; and c) anti-heterosexist (Barnoff & Moffatt, 2007).

Some even comment on its support of a hierarchy of oppression (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). A hierarchy of oppression refers to ongoing struggles between groups for the recognition of the specific oppression they encounter, along with the view that some forms of oppression are more important (Zine, 2001; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005; Barnoff & Moffatt, 2007). This can also include a group imposing their lens on how they deal with or resist a form of oppression on a group facing another form of oppression that they have not experienced (Barnoff & Moffatt, 2007). A hierarchy of oppression contradicts the notion that the eradication of one form of

oppression must intrinsically be connected to the eradication of all forms of oppression (Zine, 2001; Barnoff & Moffatt, 2007). It deviates from the course to social justice as it negates that structures of oppression function to reproduce and reinforce one another (Zine, 2001; Miller, Donner, & Fraser, 2004; Barnoff & Moffatt, 2007). To address some of these shortcomings, I introduce intersectionality to complement the anti-oppressive framework.

### **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality addresses the anti-oppression framework's cited weakness by conceptualizing multiple and intersecting oppressions (Hancock, 2007). It promotes that one marginalized identity cannot be placed over another, and that experiences must be examined in light of intersecting oppressions (Hancock, 2007; Wormer et al., 2012; Stern, 2015; Bright, Malinsky, & Thompson, 2016). Intersectionality emerged from black feminism and critical race theory (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, & Tomlinson, 2013). Kimberle Crenshaw, a legal scholar, coined the term and first applied it to address the marginalization of black women in various realms, including anti-racist and feminist theory and politics, as well as in antidiscrimination law (ibid). Moreover, she highlighted the group's lack of representation in social movements and advocacy concerning violence against women, which takes away from the fact that women of colour who are immigrants and from socially disadvantaged communities are particularly vulnerable to the experience of violence (ibid). Intersectionality responds to a focal concern with contemporary feminism, that is, its spotlight on oppression faced by white middle-class women, thereby ignoring the reality of all other women's—including black women's—lives (Lutz, Vivar, & Supik, 2011). As stated by Crenshaw (2016), the issue with this is that, "Without frames that allow us to see how social problems impact all the members of a targeted group, many will fall through the cracks of our movements, left to suffer in virtual isolation." Criticizing the single-

axis and one-dimensional analyses in white feminism, Collins (1990) instead promotes gender, race, and class as “interlocking systems of oppression” (cited in Lutz et al., 2011).

In a 2016 TED Talk, Crenshaw mentioned the names of four African-American people and asked the audience to stand up if they had heard of them. The majority of individuals in the audience stood up. Next, Crenshaw asked the audience to stand up if they recognized the names of another set of four African-American people, and this time, the majority of people did not stand up. The distinction between the names the audience did and did not know boiled down to gender. The first list included the names of African-American men who were killed by police and the second list of names was African-American *women* who were also killed by the police. Crenshaw explained that, a) police violence against African-Americans, and b) violence against women are two social issues receiving widespread attention, however, when thinking about who are implicated in these crimes, the intersection of *black women* does not tend to come to mind. Crenshaw insinuated that white women come to mind when thinking about violence against women, and as demonstrated by her exercise, black men are more likely to come to mind when thinking about the victims of police brutality. She interpreted that:

Communications experts tell us that when facts do not fit with the available frames, people have a difficult time incorporating new facts into their way of thinking about a problem. These [African-American] women's names have slipped through our consciousness because there are no frames for us to see them, no frames for us to remember them, no frames for us to hold them (Crenshaw, 2016).

Crenshaw resolves that the implications of not bearing witness to the range of experiences and identities in a social group are that reporters do not talk about them, policy makers do not reflect on them, and politicians do not receive requests to engage with them (Crenshaw, 2016). Focus on

a group's most privileged members "marginalises those who are multiply burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination"

(Crenshaw, 2011a, p. 26).

Moreover, public policy is scrutinized for being reductionist, which is antithetical to an intersectional approach. Public policy tends to reduce people's experiences to a single and treatable issue that is "politically" feasible and relatively inexpensive, all with the effect of erasing the multifaceted ways in which identity markers shape experiences (Manuel, 2006). Lutz et al. (2011) problematize that legal discourse tends to examine issues based on individual cases, rather than based on structural categories, as is done in the field of sociology. More, anti-discrimination law tends to examine discrimination based on single axes (Crenshaw, 2011). Crenshaw (2011) articulates that the ensuing issue is that black women can only obtain protection when it is made clear that their experiences are emblematic of those who are reflected in antidiscrimination law, such as women or black individuals. Bauer (2014) asserts the importance of planning research and conducting analyses aimed at documenting inequalities through a range of intersectional positions. Crenshaw (2011) grounds intersectionality "as a prism for examining a host of issues, conditions, policies and rhetorics" (p. 222). Given the often singular approach taken by structures of power, it is all the more important to examine experiences from a multidimensional perspective to negate from the impediments caused by a failure to recognize how one's intersecting identities could impede access to resources, opportunities, and supports.

Crenshaw's depiction of a lack of frames to view intersecting marginalized identities is reflective of critiques against gender and race social theory, both of which tend to theorize as if "all the women are white [and] all the blacks are men" (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983; Bright et

al., 2016). Conversely, Stern (2015) argues that intersectionality is "... a theoretical and methodological lens used to examine how social, cultural, and biological categories such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other identity positions interact on multiple levels to inform and shape social inequality" (p. 69).

Intersectionality promotes that structures of oppression, including but not limited to race, gender, class, age, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, do not function independently of one another, but they interrelate, creating an "intersection" of multiple forms of oppression (Fonow & Cook, 2005; Mahalingam, Balan, & Haritatos, 2008; Alzoubi, 2011; Wormer et al., 2012). The interactions of such systems of oppression organize society, and impact political access, any form of justice, and equality (Hancock, 2007). Work that fails to explicitly account for the complexities of individuals' experiences and the social groups within which they take part risks distorting and misrepresenting people's experiences as singular by virtue of an examination of lone factors (Bright et al., 2016).

Several tenets of intersectionality follow here. One is that no social group is homogenous (Bowleg, 2008; Mahalingam et al., 2008). Another is that there are unique, non-additive implications of being situated within more than one social group (Bowleg, 2008; Mahalingam et al., 2008; Bright et al., 2016). This means that an intersectional identity influences an individual more deeply and in nuanced ways than if examining each of their identity categories separately and adding them together (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983; Bright et al., 2016). Practically speaking, women of colour, for example, are found to be particularly vulnerable economically, more so than are men of colour and white women (Cole, 2009). More, individuals must be situated in social structures to experience the power relations enforced by those structures (Mahalingam et al., 2008). As stated by King (1988), "As black women, we decide for ourselves

the relative salience of any and all identities and oppressions, and how and the extent to which those features inform our politics” (p. 72).

Rwigema, Udegbe, and Lewis-Pearl (2015) conducted a study on service providers’ perspectives on what intersectionality means; below is a helpful excerpt quoting Onyii, a service provider in their study:

Well, in my experience, [intersectionality] looks like “spiralling crises”. ... It looks like the youth coming to you to get help around obtaining refugee status. Their aunt’s family will no longer host or help them because they have been found out as gay. If and when the status issue gets resolved, they have difficulty in obtaining a job for lack of “Canadian experience,” because they have a Caribbean accent, and because they don’t know how to do basic things like make small talk before the interview. Without employment, they seek social service support from a shelter where they face racism and/or homophobia or transphobia from staff and/or other residents. ... So where you may have started off with one issue, getting residency status or access to shelter, the issues end up spiraling very quickly for young people who do not have the socio-cultural capital to navigate systems in Canada. ... This is what facing “intersecting oppressions” looks like. (p. 39).

Intersectionality offers an important and complementary framework with which to interpret my findings. Intersectionality complements anti-oppression as it facilitates an examination of how intersecting identities contribute to IRY’s experiences of employment and using EPS. It is important to acknowledge that study participants are members of numerous marginalized social groups and occupy identities that intersect, and which may affect how they

experience EPS and employment in general. The fact that youth experience high unemployment rates, but IRY face even higher unemployment rates, may refer to the compounding effects of multiple facets of their identities that shape their experiences. The interpretation of my study's findings focused on how possible accounts of IRY's intersecting positions informed their access to and use of EPS, and where gaps and barriers exist to having their needs met more comprehensively, based on their social identities. Of employment coordinators, I asked whether (and how) they perceived a range of IRY identities to influence how they used and accessed EPS.

Intersectionality is aptly engaged in collecting, identifying, documenting, and advocating for the rights of marginalized people, based on raw accounts of individuals who occupy social groups connected with multiple forms of oppression (Phoenix, 2011; Bauer, 2014; Harrison, 2015). Thus, I was interested in exploring how the premise of this theory may have contributed to IRY's experiences of navigating employment and EPS use, and the act of documenting them. Intersectionality offers the perspective that services could be rendered ineffectual if not adopting a comprehensive understanding of how various identities shape particular needs, which may call upon additional supports to foster equitable access.

### **Summary**

This chapter described the lenses through which I interpret my findings on IRY's experiences of navigating employment and employment supports. The anti-oppressive framework posits that oppression faced by marginalized groups based on grounds such as race, gender, age, ability, among others, impede their access to resources and opportunities in society. Further, oppression can be enacted at many levels, consciously and unconsciously, seemingly neutral and not, and these can hold the effect of limiting marginalized group members' ability to

realize their full potential. The anti-oppressive perspective seeks to eliminate power differentials in society and increase access to the resources, including that of supports, to which all people have a right (Wormer et al., 2012). Intersectionality adds to my theoretical frame in contextualizing the range and dimensions of experiences within a social group to uncover nuances that, without accounting for, can inhibit their access to resources, opportunities, and supports in society. The next section describes the study's methodology.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Research Design**

This study applies a qualitative exploratory research design to investigate the experiences and perspectives of ten immigrant and refugee youth (IRY) and eight employment coordinators on IRY's access to employment opportunities and how they navigate, use, and access employment supports. Exploratory studies are typically used when little is known about a given topic (van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). A focused query of how IRY use and access formal employment support services has not yet been addressed in the literature, and as such, there is a dearth of knowledge on this topic. Therefore, an exploratory qualitative study is the most appropriate research design to glean an understanding of the main features of this issue. Data for this study are drawn from interviews with IRY and surveys administered to employment coordinators. This chapter describes the research design, data collection tools, methods, procedures, and analysis. Research challenges, limitations, factors that affected or enhanced the study, and research participant characteristics are discussed in this chapter. Prior to the recruitment of research participants, Carleton University's Research Ethics Board (Human Ethics) approved the study and its data collection tools, methods, and procedures.

#### **Immigrant and Refugee Youth Interviews**

##### **Research Instrument**

A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix B) was used to collect information from ten IRY about their perceptions of and experiences with employment and employment supports. I utilized interviews in order to learn about and explore the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of participants (van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). Because little is known about the study's focus,

particularly in relation to formal employment supports, the questions posed in the interview guide were designed to be open-ended and as least directive as possible, so that participants could respond with the ideas that resonate with them, thereby informing me about what is most important to them (Fontanella, Campos, Turato, 2006). The benefits of the semi-structured interview guide include that the order of questions can vary based on the flow of the discussion; additional questions can be posed, allowing the conversation to go in directions not previously assumed; but, a basic set of questions are asked of all participants to enable the comparison of responses (van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011).

The topics of questions asked in the interview guide included: how IRY learned about the employment programs and services (EPS) they used from organizations; what specific EPS they used and how they felt about them; and what factors shaped barriers and/or promoted access to EPS for the group. IRY were also invited to make suggestions on how to enhance EPS for other IRY. Other questions posed related to the barriers and obstacles IRY perceived and experienced in transitioning into the labour market, along with how they overcame and/or dealt with identified barriers. Furthermore, IRY were asked about their perspectives on the topic of work; the messages they received regarding the topic of work; social networks' opinions on their use of EPS; and IRY's use of informal employment supports.

### **Recruitment Methods**

It would have been a much more difficult endeavor to recruit IRY without the help of an employment coordinator who served as an "in" to the organizations from which I recruited IRY study participants. I provided employment coordinators from nine different organizations with a range of recruitment options and materials to recruit IRY. The application of recruitment

methods was ultimately up to employment coordinators' discretion. Below is the list of all of the suggested recruitment options:

- Posting recruitment posters (Appendix C) in their employment centre premises
- Posting the recruitment poster electronically on their website and/or their social media outlets (e.g., on organizations' Facebook pages)
- Sending out a recruitment email (see Appendix D for a sample recruitment email provided to employment coordinators) with the recruitment poster attached to it, along with a note of an employment coordinator's approval of the study, to employment centre service users in bcc
- Intake workers and other employment support staff were invited to make an announcement about the study to groups of service users
- Based on employment coordinators' approval and recommendation, I also visited employment centre premises in order to establish a connection with prospective participants and let them know about the study

I provided employment coordinators with a sample of a recruitment email that they could use, physical recruitment posters, and posters converted to formats that could be posted electronically. The feedback I received from employment coordinators indicated that physical posters and sending out emails to service users were the most common means of recruitment that employment coordinators applied. I encouraged coordinators to contact me at any time with any comments, questions, and/or concerns about recruitment, or the study in general. With their permission, I also followed up with them to check on the status of recruitment practices within their agencies.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

The eligibility criteria used in this study included that IRY must: a) have been born outside of Canada; b) be between the ages of 16 and 29; c) have used the EPS from the employment centres from which they were recruited within the last year; and d) must be comfortable expressing themselves in English. As per the preferences of IRY, I conducted two interviews in French. For the purposes of this study, it did not matter whether or not IRY were employed. IRY received \$15.00 as a token of my appreciation for their participation in the study.

The age eligibility criterion increased throughout the course of the study. The motives behind this change were to better align my study with the categorization most employment centres in Ottawa have for the age of ‘youth’ (commonly set at 15 to 29 or 15 to 30) and to increase the chances of acquiring interview participants. Typically, in national categorizations identified by Statistics Canada, Health Canada, and other federal government departments, youth are defined as being within the 15 to 24-year-old age group. Employment centres usually define youth differently, though, and provide ‘youth’ EPS to those who are 15 to 29 or 15 to 30. Lauer et al.’s (2012) findings reinforce that most federally funded Canadian youth employment programs categorize youth as within the 15 to 30-year-old age category. To capture the experiences of youth who use EPS, I ultimately decided to, as closely as possible, align my age eligibility criterion for IRY to that of employment centres’ at 16 to 29. Fifteen-year-old youth were excluded from this thesis given that a guardian’s approval of their participation was required.

### **Procedure**

Seventeen youth emailed me to express their interest in participating in the study. In response to each person’s email, I thanked them for their interest and asked them to confirm their

eligibility based on the study's criteria. Out of the seventeen youth, I coordinated a date and time to meet with ten participants for interviews. Of the seven other individuals who demonstrated interest in participating in the study, four of them eventually stopped responding to my emails attempting to coordinate an interview, and the remaining three did not meet all aspects of the eligibility criteria. The ten IRY participants with whom I met were recruited from five out of the nine organizations with which I collaborated. Prior to interviews, IRY received the Research Interview Participant Letter of Invitation/Information (Appendix E) and Research Interview Participant Consent Form (Appendix F) in an email attachment, for their review. These documents stipulated that IRY could choose from three locations to meet with me for the study interview: a room at Carleton University; a room that can be closed-off and that is distanced from the employment coordinator contact's office in the employment centre they frequented; or a quiet public space, such as a coffee shop. Six participants chose to meet at the employment centre they frequented, three decided to meet in a study room at Carleton University, and one participant wished to meet me at a study room at the University of Ottawa.

Once I met interview participants at an agreed-upon location, I briefly introduced myself and engaged them in casual conversation so that they may feel comfortable. Once they indicated that they were prepared to start the interview process, I went over the key features of the "Letter of Invitation/Information for Interview Research Participants" and consent form with them. I then asked if they had any questions and responded to any they may have had. I provided participants with the counselling resource list, explained its purpose and how it is a free resource for them should they experience any emotional duress as a result of the interview. I also let the participants know that if they exhibited signs of emotional discomfort, I would stay with them until they indicate that they are okay. Only one young person displayed signs of becoming

slightly upset when speaking about a challenging experience; she mentioned that she was comfortable with continuing to talk about it and orally indicated that she was okay both after her explanation and upon the completion of the interview. Finally, I asked if youth felt comfortable and wished to sign the consent form.

As all participants with whom I met voluntarily signed the consent form, the next step was for them to fill out the demographic questionnaire (Appendix G). After its completion, I asked if participants were okay to, a) start the interview, and b) be tape-recorded. As all youth responded positively to both these questions, we embarked on the interview. With their permission, I also took brief notes throughout the interview in case the audio recording failed, as well as to jot down observations. Interviews lasted between 25 minutes and 1 hour and 26 minutes, with the average being 49 minutes. At the end of each interview, I made sure that participants were okay, thanked them for their participation, and provided them with the stipend. I asked participants who met me at Carleton University if they were knowledgeable on how to get to their next destination. For those who wanted the help, I accompanied them to the main university campus bus stop.

### **Informed Consent**

IRY were made aware that their participation in the study was voluntary. I explained that their participation in the research study offered no benefit to employment opportunities, due to the possible confusion of a 'research interview' with that of a 'job interview'. Youth were reminded that they could decline to respond to any question(s) without needing to explain their reasoning, that we could halt the interview at any point if they so wished, and that doing either would not affect the stipend they would be offered. I iterated that up to an identified date 30 days after the interview, participants could email me to revoke their participation in the study or to

omit any response(s) they provided, which, in either case, would have no impact on the stipend they would receive. I received no notice of wishes for IRY to remove themselves or revoke any of their responses from the study, during or after the 30-day period. IRY were notified that they are entitled to gain access to the transcript of their interview, but no participants requested this.

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

To protect the anonymity of the research participants, all recruitment materials stipulated that IRY email me directly should they be interested in participating in the study, as opposed to contacting employment coordinators. Doing so helped to protect the anonymity of IRY participants from employment coordinators. I also asked employment coordinators for meeting space to conduct interviews in rooms that were distanced from their offices or were available and open at times when employment coordinators themselves would not be within the employment centre premises. Another measure of anonymity included the use of pseudonyms assigned to study participants and used when they were referenced or quoted directly in the thesis. Information that could be personally identifying, such as the names of the organizations that IRY accessed, employment coordinators they spoke of, or places they worked, were not included in the study report. IRY were made aware of all of these provisions through my explanation and in the letter of information and consent form.

## **Employment Coordinator Surveys**

### **Research Instrument**

I administered a survey (Appendix H) to nine employment coordinators. In the survey, first, a list of EPS was provided and employment coordinators were asked to check off those services that their employment centre offered. In developing this list, I consulted the literature on employment program and service provision, with a focus on service delivery to newcomers and

immigrants and refugees (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998; Reinberg, 1999; Peera, 2003; Krahn & Taylor, 2005; Shields et al., 2006; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Thomas, 2009; Van Ngo, 2009; Access Alliance, 2011; Froy & Pyne, 2011; States News Service, 2012; Oguz, 2013; BC Centre for Employment Excellence, 2014; Caribbean Development Bank, 2015; Thomas, 2015). Responses to this question served to contribute to the exploration of whether there are differences in the ways in which different types of organizations deliver EPS. Open-ended questions posed to coordinators sought information on their EPS outreach methods, barriers in reaching out to the IRY population, and their suggestions on enhancing outreach practices. The employment coordinator survey also elicited information on employment coordinators' perspectives about how IRY use and access their EPS, what factors affect IRY's access to EPS, and how EPS could be improved to circumvent barriers and promote further accessibility. Also posed were questions about whether employment coordinators perceived any differences in the use of EPS among IRY and Canadian-born youth, as well as whether they noticed differences in service use based on the diversity within the IRY group.

### **Recruitment Method**

To recruit employment coordinators, I cold-called a wide range of organizations in Ottawa, which: a) were in and of themselves employment support centres, or b) had employment support services embedded as a part of their mandate. The agencies I contacted were categorized into the following types of organizations: MOs, CH/SCs, and SAs. Upon speaking with a representative in organizations, I introduced myself, briefly described the topic of my study, and asked if I could send the appropriate recommended contact a follow-up email explaining the research and implications for their participation. After obtaining confirmation of an employment coordinator's interest (both to complete the employment coordinator survey and to help with the

recruitment of IRY), I arranged to meet with them in-person to discuss the research and their participation therein, as well as to begin to set up the IRY recruitment methods that they were inclined to employ in their centres.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

The sole eligibility criteria for the recruitment of employment coordinators was that they were in a position of providing employment support services to IRY, whether in a management capacity or that of a front-line staff.

### **Procedure**

I successfully recruited nine employment coordinators from nine different organizations (3 CH/SCs, 3 SAs, and 3 MOs) and sent them the survey electronically. All but one employment coordinator filled out the survey, resulting in eight completed surveys (3 from CH/SCs, 3 from SAs, and 2 from MOs). Employment coordinators had 30 days after I provided them with the survey to revoke their participation in the study or to omit any of their responses. None of the employment coordinators expressed wishes to revoke their response(s), or participation in the study as a whole, within or after the 30-day period.

### **Informed Consent**

Upon contacting identified employment coordinators (through phone and/or email), I provided opportunities for them to indicate their interest in the study. Upon expression of their interest in the study, I sent them the Employment Coordinator Letter of Invitation/Information (Appendix I) and Employment Coordinator Consent Form (Appendix J). Both documents provided a description of the study, along with its purpose, methods, anonymity and confidentiality, among other study elements. Upon meeting with employment coordinators in-person, I had them review the consent form, I responded to any questions they may have had,

and they were then provided with the opportunity to sign the consent form if they agreed with all of its provisions. All of the nine employment coordinators chose to sign the consent form.

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

In an effort to uphold the anonymity of employment coordinators, I did not use their real names or include personally identifying information in the write-up of the study. I also informed employment coordinators that I could gladly pick up their completed survey in-person; but most opted to send me their surveys electronically, in which cases I printed the surveys and deleted the corresponding emails.

### **Data Preparation**

Soon after the completion of each interview, I transcribed the audio recording verbatim while it was fresh in my mind, and also reviewed and recorded the notes taken throughout interviews. To ensure transcription quality and accuracy, I re-listened to each tape twice more. As well, after each interview, I reviewed my interview guide in light of new study findings. Further, I read over transcripts several times to become immersed in the data. Concerning employment coordinator surveys, I also read over each completed survey several times.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of my data presupposes that knowledge is not passive nor taken for granted, nor is it “found”; rather, it is discovered, constructed, explored, and re-examined in light of new experience (Schawndt, 1998 as cited in Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Stern & Porr, 2011). This understanding positions me as an active researcher, who, in embarking upon various systematic methodological tasks, weaves together a narrative of the stories told and experiences portrayed by participants through focusing my analysis in the data by allotting keen attention to patterns that emerge naturally (Stern & Porr, 2011; Connelly, 2013). Thus, while I

had an awareness of the structures affecting IRY's experiences, and used those understandings when reviewing the findings and intersecting them with the literature, I did not enter data collection and analysis processes with pre-conceived ideas about study findings (Stern & Porr, 2011). This allowed me to better understand IRY and employment coordinators' perspectives from their point of views.

The first step I undertook in the thematic analysis of my data was coding sentences, thoughts, and cases for the ultimate purpose of honing in on distinct themes that could be specified and described (Oktay, 2012). Once themes were identified, I re-read transcripts in order to group passages according to the developed themes. As Oktay (2012) explains, "when coding qualitative data, it quickly becomes apparent that some codes go together" (p. 60). Grouping similar passages helped with the synthesis of participant statements and the elaboration of distinct themes. I then looked to the literature and my theoretical frameworks to engage in a meaningful discussion with the emerging patterns. As well, in order to explore possible differences in the ways in which different types of organizations deliver EPS, I employed a comparative analysis to identify contrasting research themes, describe them, and compare and assess them with any related data (Carey, 2013).

### **Challenges Faced in Research**

I faced several challenges during the execution of this research project. Time was a critical factor as I contacted a wide range of employment centres in Ottawa to invite their participation in the research. Successfully establishing connections with employment coordinators from nine organizations in Ottawa, supporting them with implementing recruitment methods for IRY, and visiting the premises of organizations to establish relationships with employment coordinators and a sense of trust with IRY service users required a substantial

amount of time. Further, I had approached organizations other than the nine employment centre representatives who ultimately agreed to participate in the research. I was not able to recruit employment coordinators from other organizations for a few of reasons. Some did not respond to my numerous and diverse attempts to get in touch with them; for others, it was uncovered that their programs were not being offered on a regular or stable enough basis, or they were not enlisting the participation of many 16 to 29 year old youth through their EPS. Another challenge was staff turnover in a few organizations. This made my ability to maintain a consistent organizational contact with whom to introduce my project or implement recruitment efforts difficult.

### **Limitations and Factors that Enhanced the Study**

Limitations warrant consideration; those of this study are detailed below. First, a small study sample is a limitation of this project. As stated previously, I recruited ten IRY participants for interviews. Four were recruited from CH/SCs, four from SAs, and two from MOs. These youth were able to speak from their experiences having used the respective type of organization from which they were recruited. Evidently, not many respondents were captured per type of organization. The employment coordinator sample was limited as well, with eight employment coordinators completing a survey (three from both CH/SCs and SAs, and two from MOs).

Due to the small study sample, I was unable to make any conclusive statements about possible differences in IRY's navigation of EPS through the three different types of organizations (MOs, CH/SCs, and SAs). But I did report my observations on differences in organizations' service delivery when all organizations referenced a common matter, or when unique features of a particular type of organization emerged. While I did this, it is important to keep in mind that such analysis is based on an unequal number of employment coordinator and

interview participant respondents per type of organization, with MOs consistently having fewer respondents. A factor that enhanced my study in this regard was that participants were invited to speak about their experiences having used other employment centres in the past, which they did, and which increased the amount of feedback I received per type of organization. The ten IRY interview participants shared the experiences they had had with a total of 17 employment centres (7 MOs, 5 SAs, and 5 CH/SCs). It must be noted, though, that when participants spoke about their experiences having used employment centres other than the ones from which they were recruited, their feedback was significantly less in-depth than the feedback they provided on the employment centre they were recruited from.

The limitations of using a small study sample include that findings cannot be generalized. However, generalizability was not the aim of this qualitative exploratory study (van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). The small study sample raises the question of whether the cases presented in my research are representative of all IRY and employment coordinators, which they are likely not, and do not claim to be (Oppong, 2013). In a similar vein, while having conducted this study in Ottawa, findings may not account for the experiences of IRY and employment coordinators in Ottawa as a whole, other parts of Canada, or Canada as a whole.

Given the study's exclusive focus on IRY, this study cannot claim whether or not the issues brought forth are unique to IRY. The sole exception to this rule is that, of employment coordinators, I asked about their perception of whether and how IRY and Canadian-born youth use EPS differently. Further, my review of the literature and my theoretical frameworks provide insights that could substantiate the notion that IRY's unique and variant experiences in society could lead to them navigate EPS uniquely, when compared with Canadian-born youth.

My study did not stipulate eligibility restrictions based on interview participants' length of residency in Canada. The related criterion was that participants were "able to express themselves in English". Although all were able to communicate effectively with me, lower levels of English language proficiency in a few participants may have made it difficult to express themselves to a fuller extent. Further, having conducted two interviews in French, translating them into English might have posed a limitation. Although I am fluent in my comprehension and expression of the French language, French spoken by people from different cultures and dialects may invoke different expressions and manners of relating. In order to reduce the risk of misunderstanding, in both of these cases (conducting interviews in French and with those who had lower levels of English language proficiency), I provided research participants with as much time as they needed to express themselves and let them know that they could take their time. I commonly reflected what I heard back to participants to ensure accuracy of understanding, and in the few moments when I was uncertain about my comprehension of participants' expressions, I casually checked in with youth by summarizing what I understood and asking if it reflected their intended statements, or if they could reiterate their thoughts.

Another limitation present in my study, as in most research, refers to trustworthiness—the extent to which findings presented reflect an authentic portrayal of the perspectives and experiences provided by study participants (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). But, limited funds, as a Master student, negated my ability to recruit a secondary researcher to replicate my method of analysis.

Real or perceived differentials in power are known to affect interactions between interviewers and participants (Merry et al., 2011). Being a Master student could foster an environment of unequal power in the context of a one-on-one interview for study participants,

which may influence how they engage in the process. This factor can impact how forthcoming youth may be to disclose information about their experiences (Merry et al., 2011). However, being close in age with some of the youth and being a visible minority and first generation immigrant myself could have been a helpful factor in enabling IRY to feel more comfortable with me in an interview context. In striving to create a non-threatening and anti-authoritative environment, I engaged with youth through an informal, welcoming, open, and empathetic stance, which may have helped them feel comfortable in sharing their personal experiences (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, Pessach, 2009). Also, by engaging in casual conversation; sharing about my interest in the study; going over pertinent research documents using accessible language; aiming to address possible concerns; demonstrating genuine interest in, and reception of, their perspectives and experiences; checking in with them; and listening attentively, I endeavored to build rapport and trust with participants (Merry et al., 2011).

The use of a survey tool for the collection of data from employment coordinators posed two limitations for my research. For instance, some participants expressed themselves very briefly in response to survey questions. Moreover, the survey tool limited my ability to probe, gain clarification, or deepen my understanding of the topics brought forth by employment coordinators.

I intended to obtain survey responses completed by a single employment coordinator. But without explicitly specifying this, the pilot employment coordinator survey was completed by a team of employment coordinators, rather than an individual employment coordinator. This alerted me to the need to indicate clearly that employment coordinators were expected to fill out the survey individually. The limitations of having a team complete the survey may include that some may feel uncomfortable sharing in a group context; due to the concept of ‘group think’,

staff's thinking could steer towards the direction of the majority; and people may hesitate to bring up divergent ideas, or those that are critical. Additionally, some members (e.g., more junior staff members) might feel uncomfortable responding in the presence of superiors. Lastly, having a team as opposed to an individual employment coordinator complete the survey conveys an inconsistent methodological approach. While acknowledging these potential limitations, the responses that emerged from the pilot survey were nonetheless aligned with the survey responses provided by single employment coordinators, with the only notable difference being that a higher number of responses were recorded in the pilot survey. Additionally, as this predicament occurred with the pilot survey, I was able to leverage it as a teachable moment. It is important to note that when presenting the findings, I did not distinguish the employment coordinator team's response as such, but categorized it with the rest of the responses as a single response.

### **Research Participants**

Thus far, I have explained the study's methodology with respect to its research design, analysis, challenges, limitations, and factors that enhanced the study. The next section introduces the research participants who partook in this study. These include the ten IRY interview participants and eight employment coordinators who completed a survey for this study, and whose experiences and perceptions will be delineated in the subsequent findings chapters. The characteristics of research participants reflect demographic information obtained at the point of our meetings, all of which took place between the months of January to August 2016.

### **Immigrant and Refugee Youth Participant Characteristics**

Four IRY were recruited from CH/SCs, four from SAs, and two from MOs. Six of the interview participants were young women and four were young men. Youth were between the ages of 16 and 28. Four youth were 16 to 18 years of age, three were between the ages of 20 and

23, and three were 25 to 28 years old, making the average age of interview participants 21. From the nine out of ten participants who chose to respond, five indicated that they came to Canada through Refugee classes and four entered Canada from other Immigration classes. Throughout the course of interviews, it became clear that most participants were living with their families.

Nine out of ten study participants were single and one was married or in a common-law relationship. Of the nine participants who responded to the question of, "What is the highest level of education between your parents?" one participant indicated high school, two checked off college diploma/certificate, three highlighted a university undergraduate degree, two underlined a university master's degree, and one indicated a PhD university degree. These levels of educational attainment among IRY's parents were all obtained in countries outside of Canada.

Participants' racial/ethnic backgrounds spanned from Africa (seven participants), South America (one participant), and Asia (two participants). IRY defined their ethnic/racial background as Sudanese, Rwandese, Somalian (2), Congolese (3), Mexican, Middle Eastern, and South Asian. All participants spoke a language in addition to French or English. Most participants were fluent in English, two were bilingual (French and English), and two spoke French. The other languages IRY spoke spanned Anuak, Arabic, Somali, French, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, Spanish, and Bengali. Upon arrival to Canada, three youth were between the ages of 8 to 11 years old, three were between the ages of 15 to 17, and four were between 19 to 24 years of age, bringing the average age of arrival to Canada to 16. At the time of our interview, six youth had lived in Canada for a length of time spanning 4 months to 1 year and 7 months, one had lived in Canada for 5 years, and three youth had lived in Canada for a period of 9 to 15 years. This made a little more than half of the study participants relatively new to Canada. The average length of time that participants had lived in Canada was 4 years.

With respect to education, four participants were enrolled in high school, three had acquired their high school diplomas, one had achieved a college diploma, one was enrolled in an university undergraduate program, and one had completed a university undergraduate degree, all of which took place in Canada, except for two youth who had obtained their high school diplomas in their countries of origin. The five participants who were enrolled in school were not working at the time of our interview. Of the five participants who were not enrolled in school, three were employed, one was employed and in a training program, and one was unemployed.

The length of time the ten IRY study participants had used the employment centres they were recruited from spanned 2 to 52 weeks, with the average being 13 weeks. IRY who stopped using EPS did so for various reasons, including that they found a job, prioritized other employment centres that provided financial incentives, had to attend school, and one was referred to another employment centre that was closer to her new residence. Appendix K provides a table correlating each IRY research participant's pseudonym with their gender identification, time lived in Canada, age of arrival to Canada, age, admission class, educational involvement, employment status, and highest level of education among parents.

### **Employment Coordinator Research Participant Characteristics**

Employment coordinators who completed the survey were recruited from CH/SCS (3), SAs (3), and MOs (2). Employment coordinators had worked in their employment support roles for a period of 5 months to 10 years, with the average time having worked as an employment coordinator being 4 years.

### **Summary**

Up to this point, the relevant literature, theoretical frameworks, and methodological approach to the study have been described. Now, drawing on this foundation, the findings of the

study will be presented. In the next five chapters (Chapter 5-9), I explore the main themes derived from the analysis of IRY interview transcripts and employment coordinator surveys. The following chapter, Chapter 5, explores the barriers and obstacles that IRY spoke of perceiving and experiencing in their labour market transitions.

## CHAPTER FIVE

BARRIERS IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE YOUTH FACE IN THEIR LABOUR MARKET  
TRANSITION

IRY are known to face many barriers in their transition to the labour market (Shields et al., 2006; Lauer et al. 2012; Oguz, 2013). This study's exploration of the barriers IRY face in their labour market transition are consistent with available literature findings. Having asked a single question about the barriers and/or obstacles IRY face in accessing employment, I received abundant responses. Specifically, I asked IRY about whether they believed they faced any obstacles or barriers to employment, and if so, what they looked like. All ten study participants stated experiencing barriers and/or obstacles to employment. My analysis revealed the following themes as barriers that IRY experience in their labour market transition: (1) education; (2) credential transfer; (3) social pressure; (4) work experience; (5) Canadian work experience; (6) discrimination; (7) immigration status; (8) social networks; (9) culture; and (10) language.

**Education**

IRY identified education as a barrier in their ability to secure employment. Two youth mentioned that not having acquired either a high school diploma or a university degree prevented them from accessing jobs for which that level of education was required. There was also a perception, put forward by a study participant, Ali<sup>2</sup>, that immigrants perpetually go to school in Canada under the impression that further education leads one to find a job. This finding corroborates Bergeron and Potter's (2006) analysis of the first wave of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (2001-2002), which indicated that less than half of all refugees attempted to find employment in their first six months in Canada. Rather, the majority of refugees were more likely to be looking for education and training services to facilitate their

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms are used for IRY and employment coordinator study participants.

integration (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). Ali mentioned that the associated barrier is that immigrants perpetually go back to school and pursue further education at every point at which they cannot find a job; he noted that these efforts are not necessarily effective in enabling one to secure a job. Ali's perception possibly reflects research finding that first generation immigrants may not understand that a university education may no longer be the best avenue to securing good employment (Lauer et al., 2012). One reason IRY may first concern themselves with education upon arrival to Canada may be indicative of efforts to have their credentials recognized or pursue the schooling that can award them with credentials equivalent to that which they obtained in their country of origin. The barrier of credential transfer is explored next.

### **Credential Transfer**

A refugee young person, Aisha, identified the difficulty of transferring educational credits from other countries: "it's very hard here to transfer, and my papers—I didn't bring them with me." Research reflects that due to their circumstances, refugees are less likely to have been prepared for the move to Canada, and thus, may not have all of their belongings, including their educational credentials (Statistics Canada, 2012). Other researchers have identified this barrier, particularly for those emigrating from war zones such as Somalia (Warfa, Curtis, Watters, Carswell, Ingleby, Bhui, 2012). Circumstances unique to one's immigration status as a refugee could increase the likelihood that they will be faced with the barrier of credential transfer in Canada. Not only is credential transfer a cited difficulty, but so is the recognition of credentials. This challenge is supported by data gathered by the Conference Board of Canada (2016a) which found that in 2015, 524,589 immigrants holding international credentials were challenged by the lack of recognition of their prior learning.

Aisha brought forth the issue of immigrants and newcomers working in fields that are unrelated or uncharacteristic of their educational backgrounds. She mentioned that it is rare to find immigrants and newcomers working within the fields in which they obtained educational credentials. Aisha articulated that civil engineers, journalists, and doctors are examples of professionals she had seen unable to obtain work in their area of expertise in Canada and said that, instead, “you see them working in a call centre or in a manufacturing something.”

While it is unknown whether the people Aisha referred to completed their education in or outside of Canada, her perspective is in keeping with a body of literature problematizing the barrier of credential recognition among immigrants and refugees, and the subsequent deskilling that occurs (Bauder, 2003). An employment counsellor featured in Bauder’s (2003) study spoke of ‘brain abuse’, occurring among immigrants whose credentials are not recognized in Canada and who may thus work in professions that do not utilize the extent of—or anywhere close to—their skills:

... when you’re being assessed for immigration, your ... qualification [and] skills [are] counted [when] you’re permitted to enter this country. But when you enter this country you drop to zero level ... Yeah, brain drain! ... That country from where the person has immigrated loses that brain, this country who should have been otherwise benefitted [from] that quality doesn’t accept that brain. So ultimately what happens, neither this country got help, nor the country where he left got help. It is brain abuse because it’s not proper utilization of the quality and skills of people (p. 714-715).

Especially upsetting is that recent research identifies a growing gap between immigrant and native-born individuals’ outcomes in the Canadian labour market, despite the impetus on recruiting highly educated immigrants (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). As well, the impact of skills

underutilization on people's well-being is alarming. In Ottawa, Ontario, Subedi and Rosenberg (2016) conducted a quantitative study invoking the participation of 146 skilled immigrants working as taxi drivers, convenience store workers, and gas station workers, and found that the underutilization of skills among skilled workers led to elevated levels of work-related stress, a decline in mental and physical health, and overall poor quality of life. Findings from a Mississauga, Ontario, study by Dean and Wilson (2009) further reported on the impacts of skill underutilization, including the negative mental health effects of a lack of income, family pressures, a loss of social status, and a loss of employment-related skills. Yan and colleagues (2012) found that first generation immigrant youth are least likely to find work that is commensurate with their educational backgrounds, career interests, and aligned with the sense that they are being fairly compensated for their work. Their study found that this predicament progressively ameliorates for second and third generation immigrant youth (Yan et al., 2012). It is clear that first generation immigrants and refugees are disproportionately affected by negative employment outcomes in Canada, such as through a lack of meaningful employment that utilizes the extent of their skills and credentials. They face significant and grave employment sacrifices until future generations of immigrants enter the labour market with more optimal experiences.

Nursing was recognized as the only profession where Aisha had seen a positive correlation between immigrants' field of study and field of work. She, therefore, reported feeling pressure to attend school for nursing as people in her social network advised her that that avenue would lead to a job and good wage. Aisha reflected on the tension this invoked for her:

Like my mom, she always tells me like, "oh, you should leave that International Relations [university program], it won't serve you ... here, you just have to go into

nursing.” I’m like, “I don’t like nursing” ... or should I do it for the money? It’s hard, and sometimes, I feel like, you know, I should just do it.

### **Social Pressure**

Notwithstanding the important barriers IRY face in transitioning into the labour market, the group additionally feels pressure to seamlessly secure work. IRY can feel pressured in their job search by relatives and acquaintances in their countries of origin who believe in the myth of job abundance in Canada. This may increase the sense of failure when youth are unemployed. Aisha highlighted the disconnect between how people in her country of origin perceive work opportunities in Canada versus how she perceives them: “People in my country, when they hear that I’m [in Canada], they’re like, ‘oh, you’re so lucky,’ ‘you’re in the right country,’ ‘there’s a lot of opportunities’, and I wonder... where are those opportunities?” Shields and colleagues (2006) have raised the challenge of social pressure faced by IRY from their families and/or communities to seamlessly succeed in acquiring work in their host society. Not only that, but they face social pressures to obtain work that is reflective of their credentials and jobs which they could have obtained in their countries of origin (Shields et al., 2006).

### **Work Experience**

Two youth identified that a hurdle they face in their labour market transition is a lack of work experience. A study participant, Barak, remarked, “... sometimes for like a cashier position, they tell me like you need to [have been] a cashier in like another store.” This sentiment is representative of a paradoxical catch-22 situation captured by McCubbin (2007), who, upon completing nursing training, noticed that newly qualified nurses were expected to be experienced in order to get a job. She noted, “It appears that I am unable to get a job because of my lack of experience and I cannot get the experience until I get a job” (McCubbin, 2007, p. 32). Despite

this barrier, Barak, who had not had a job before, would persevere and apply to jobs asking for work experience anyways: “I usually just like apply there and see what happens.”

A few other youth who had successfully acquired employment reflected back on the challenge that a lack of work experience had on impeding their success in finding a job. Because they had transcended the barrier of a lack of employment experience, these youth now expressed confidence in their ability to find jobs in the future. Ali, for example, said that, “It can be hard to find a job sometimes, especially if you don’t have experience,” but as he had already obtained work experience, he went on to say that, “I don’t think it would be as hard anymore for me, hopefully.” Indeed, research shows that being employed as a young immigrant is a strong indicator of success in obtaining future employment (Beiser & Hou, 2001; Perreira et al., 2007; Lauer et al., 2012; Helgesson et al., 2014; Laurijssen & Glorieux, 2015). Interestingly, research suggests that Canadian-born youth are not affected by the requirement of work experience to the same extent as IRY. Having conducted a study involving employment service providers and newcomer service users in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Thomas (2009) found that newcomer youth were met with the expectation that they have work experience in their school to work transition, whereas the same standard was not placed on Canadian-born youth. This shows that one’s foreign-born identity can hold them to unfair standards in their attempt to secure employment.

### **Canadian Work Experience**

Not only are IRY burdened by the expectation of general work experience, but they are also challenged by the requirement of Canadian work experience. A few youth brought up the requirement of Canadian work experience as a barrier in their labour market transition. One young person recalled that this was the single most significant employment obstacle she faced. Another participant, Aisha, stated that she felt obligated to gain Canadian work experience, as

many job opportunities she reviewed requested this. Aisha was dismayed at the difficulty of obtaining employment as a result of this requirement: “anytime you apply, they just tell you, do you have any Canadian experience?” The barrier of Canadian experience as a prerequisite for employment among immigrants is well-documented in the literature (Bauder, 2001; Petri, 2009; Thomas, 2009; Li, 2010; Wilson-Forsberg & Sethi, 2015).

The concept of “Canadian” work experience undermines relevant work experiences and educational credentials newcomers bring with them from other countries (Thomas, 2009). Requiring “Canadian” experience, even for volunteer opportunities, as found in Wilson-Forsberg and Sethi’s (2015) study, reinforces an “us” versus “them” dynamic. Reitz (2001) describes the stipulation of “Canadian” experience as an attempt to cover up discriminatory workplace practices and Thomas (2009) frames it as a subtle form of racism—a disguise used not to hire newcomers, which is an unfortunate contradiction to the country’s push to attract young professionals. Reitz (2001) asserts that in a context where discrimination against minorities is illegal, discrimination is likely to manifest in the form of rationales related to qualifications (i.e., Canadian work and educational experiences)—regardless of the real bearing of these qualifications on the hiring process. After all, as Thomas (2009) questions, how can it be expected that a newcomer to Canada would have “Canadian” experience? Poignantly stated by Wilson-Forsberg and Sethi (2015), “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).

Ali relayed that an employment workshop facilitator told him and other service users that the concept of “Canadian” experience that employers promote has less to do with the

embodiment of Canadian education and workplace experience. Rather, it is conceptualized as referring to one's ability to "fit in" into a team environment, speak well, and exercise positive social skills. Ali went on to share that the course facilitator conveyed that, from the perspective of an employer, there is a 50/50 split between (a) your technical skills and (b) your ability to integrate socially into a group, which in combination, can help one secure a job and increase their chances of being promoted. Ali reflected on his perception of the information he received from the facilitator:

I guess as long as you're likeable and seem to understand the language—you're good—the most part. That's for everyone too, I think. If you have good social skills, you'll get hired [more] likely than someone who's shut in, doesn't know how to talk."

Ali claimed that the embodiment of strong social skills could arguably be more important than obtaining educational credentials and work experience in Canada when it comes to securing work. He boasted the importance of this for immigrants, when stating that, "I don't know, like some people are just rude that come to Canada." Ali's statement could be reflective of a paradox to ethnic discrimination, where, though not universal, visible minorities and immigrants can hold prejudices against one another (Simmons, 2010). Ali could also be speaking to a manifestation of internal oppression, marked, for instance, by disowning the realities of individuals and cultures (Baines, 2011) and suggesting that racialized groups are inferior (Kumashiro, 2001). Possibly reflected here is also the grouping of immigration theories in the 'mainstream absorption' model, which postulates that newcomer youth may be in a strong position to experience positive employment outcomes in a host country—but only on the condition that they adopt the mainstream culture and act in ways to fit in (Wilkinson, 2008).

Ali then outlined attitudes and mind frames that one can adopt in order to “fit in” into the Canadian workforce—strategies he noted that can potentially make up for the purported lack of strong English language skills among immigrants. He advised that, “People always like positive people; I don’t think they would hire some grumpy dude to work in a very sociable position... so make sure you’re good at talking and being positive—that’s good.” Ali warned about the consequences of a failure to recognize the influence of poor social skills in integrating into the workforce: “You’re not going to get a job, for a while maybe, or ever.” Similarly, Rossiter and Rossiter (2009a) identify interpersonal skills as a factor influencing immigrants’ experiences of integration into Canada. Ali’s understanding also concurs Webb’s (2015) findings where post-migration employment was found to not be a rational process of fitting skills to jobs that need them, but rather a social-cultural process whereby the local perspective of whether migrants “fit in” takes precedence. Webb (2015) explains, “In other words, recognition of migrants’ skills is embedded in social processes and values, which are infused by gatekeeper’s perceptions and evaluation of migrants’ social and cultural background” (p. 274). Reitz (2001) argues that there exist “unwritten codes” in Canadian workplaces, which may take time for newcomers to learn.

Ali’s statements on how IRY must act in order to “fit in” at a Canadian workplace resemble the notions of ‘internal oppression’ and ‘assimilation’. Internal oppression reflects the belief by oppressed groups that the dominant group is the best and sole reality, and that, by extension, everyone must conform to their practices and ways of behaving (Baines, 2011). In addition, Ali’s perspectives are commensurate with the idea of assimilation where subordinate groups must surrender their identities, cultures, and values in exchange for the offer of improved life chances (Mullaly, 2002). Poignantly, findings from a CBC and Angus Reid Institute online survey study sampling 3,904 Canadians found that “68 per cent of Canadian respondents said

minorities should be doing more to fit in with mainstream society instead of keeping their own customs and languages” (CBC News, 2016). Successful integration into Canadian society has been identified as a “two-way street” (Biles, Burstein, & Aiken, 2008), referring to the notion that while the host society has an obligation to accommodate, welcome, and respect minorities and immigrants, these groups are expected to integrate and embrace elements of their new society (Dib, Donaldson, & Turcotte, 2008). However, critics widely recognize integration as a one-way process in practice: although the framework of integration boasts the tolerance of immigrants, there exists intolerance towards cultural specificities that exist outside of the mainstream (Li, 2003), and further, enduring changes are predominantly and disproportionately expected of immigrants (Sayegh & Lasry, 1993; International Organization for Migration, 2006).

This section shows that the stipulation of Canadian work experience that IRY face may underline discrimination and racism in the workforce. The notion of “fitting in” may be evidence of a one-sided reality of integration, can underpin assimilation, and whether one “fits in” is up to the discretion of employers. More, this one-sided model of integration proposes that immigrants and refugees must secure employment despite the barriers imposed on them, and without the allotment of formal support to obtain the required experience (Da Lomba, 2010). This makes it all the more difficult for IRY to gain access to the labour market. Important tenants of the anti-oppressive framework are to eliminate power differentials in society and increase people’s access to rights, such as that of work (Wormer et al., 2012). Being foreign-born as an IRY makes them susceptible to the unfair requirement of Canadian work experience.

### **Discrimination**

An interesting finding of my study was that very few of the participants’ narratives explicitly identified discrimination to be a barrier for them in their labour market transition. The

reflections of those who overtly identified discrimination, along with those who alluded to it but rejected its occurrence or simply did not identify it as a feature of their experiences, are outlined in this section. Precisely addressing this tension, Zarifa, a participant in this study, said, “Umm, I know that in Canada, a lot of people don’t think that there’s too much racism that goes on, but there certainly is.” She identified grounds of discrimination that she worried could impede her chances of becoming employed, such as her race, ethnicity, and skin colour:

I don’t know if it’s like me overthinking, but like, my name sometimes could be a barrier, because it is like an ethnic name and I don’t know if some employers are like a little more skeptical of hiring somebody [with this name]. They may think that [job applicants with such a name] may not know English or they might not have whatever it is, but yeah, I think that’s always like my biggest fear, that people will turn me down based on my background, and based on my skin colour, or name, and all that kind of stuff.

Kunz (2003) asserts that compared to immigrant youth who are not visible minorities, immigrant youth who belong to a visible minority group are more likely to experience unemployment.

Further support of racial discrimination on employment outcomes is reflected in an analysis of the Canadian labour market which revealed that African-born immigrants, purported to make up 10% of the 25 to 54-year-old labour force in 2011, faced the lowest employment rate (70.1%) and the highest unemployment rate (12.6%) of all immigrants in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2012). Analysts even proposed that higher numbers of refugees from Africa and South America in 2011 could have accounted for the overall increase in Canada’s unemployment rate that year (ibid), demonstrating the pervasive impact of racial discrimination. Given the source countries of immigration in Canada in recent years (Boyd, 2009; Yan et al., 2012), many IRY are likely to

occupy racial minority groups, therefore making them vulnerable to the experience of racial discrimination in their access to the labour market.

Zarifa also spoke about her experiences of workplace discrimination. She revealed that managers in previous jobs had treated her differently, but that they themselves were unaware of this because of how engrained differential treatment is toward racial minorities. This supports studies on implicit prejudice, which signal that most people hold strong negative associations with minority groups that can lead to subtle forms of discrimination that elude conscious awareness (Quillian, 2008). Zarifa wished she could muster the courage to tell her employers, “Hey, I would really appreciate if you didn’t speak to me that way.” But power differentials between her and employers would persistently discourage her from doing so. Zarifa’s 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.

Zarifa also recalled noticing that service users she had worked with were not used to seeing a dark woman, “even the kids, they are not used to seeing a really dark woman working in that field.” In a study of 30 ethnic minority social workers in various service agencies and organizations in Ontario, Canada, Yan (2008) found that almost all recounted being rejected from their clients (mostly those from the dominant culture), because of their accent. Despite their professional authority, and as employees of public service organizations, ethnic minority social workers could not avoid prejudice, racism, and discrimination from their clients of dominant cultures (Yan, 2008). In lieu of assigning clients’ rejection of them as racist, ethnic minority social workers tended to frame this as a competence issue on their part (ibid). Ethnic minority social workers in Yan’s (2008) study reported “working extra hard” to prove their professional competence (p. 326). Badwall’s (2016) research with racialized social workers in Toronto,

Canada, revealed the premium they placed on acknowledging racism in social work organizations—as reflective of racism within society’s fabric—and not as individual acts of discrimination, and the importance of recognizing that critical practice dilemmas arise from racism, thus requiring supervisor and managerial support to address them. More, the need to address gaps in material in social work education to support non-dominant social worker groups was raised (Badwall, 2016).

Similar to social workers in Yan’s (2008) study, Zarifa shared with me that she feels as though she constantly has to compensate for characteristics such as her race and skin colour in her work. In an effort to diminish the likelihood of being subject to discrimination, Zarifa adopted certain strategies, such as making herself available to work all the time, to prove that she is an effective worker—and even more telling—as effective as other people in the work environment. She feels, “It is really, really important for me to show my managers, employers, and coworkers that I do have the same skills, and I can do the job as much as they can.” She highlighted another strategy she took on to demonstrate her worth as a prospective employee in job seeking processes: “So, I always try to do like follow-ups right away whenever I apply for jobs and just make sure that they know that they will be hiring a good person, and I work hard.”

Another participant, Aisha, alluded to discrimination, but claimed that it does not exist in the racial, ethnic, and/or political form in Canada. In addition, if it does, it only exists in exceptional cases. She explained that:

Discrimination in Canada—they don’t as far as I know. There are some – probably – cases, there’s always exceptions, right? But it’s not like the majority. There’s no racial [discrimination in Canada]. It’s probably there somewhere but it’s not like the majority, if you know what I mean.”

Greenhill and Marshall (2016) argue that discourses in Canada lauding multiculturalism, diversity, freedom, and tolerance actively deny processes of marginalization and othering, and as they are valuable ideals, are taken up and treasured by immigrants. Aisha suggested that barriers inhibiting people from pursuing their occupational goals and potentials can rather be explained by people's own negative self-talk and allowing others to negatively affect their thoughts about themselves, with the effect of limiting their progress toward their dreams:

It's just you and your mind and other people going in your head, telling you, "you can't do it—stop dreaming," you know ... For example, I want to be a lawyer, right? But then, I know most of the lawyers are probably white or Canadian citizen, and people tell you if you take law in school you're just going to spend a lot of time in school but you won't [become a judge].

She explained that among her circle of IRY friends, there is a belief that they can become lawyers, but they are disadvantaged as they are unlikely to become judges—given that many judges are white, and they are not. Aisha's statements suggest that IRY do not see themselves reflected in the professions they want to pursue, which is characteristic of structural oppression on the account of a lack of access to employment opportunities based on race (Mullaly, 2002). The notion that youth are aware of a race barrier to higher status jobs connects to a function of oppression as described by Freire: that oppression limits access to better-paying and higher-status jobs (cited in Mullaly, 2010). The way in which Aisha conceptualized one's ability to secure employment through their own effort and perseverance bears similarity to Freire, who states that having more is an inalienable right that oppressors have accrued through their own courage and effort (cited in Mullaly, 2010). In turn, Aisha's statement may reflect internal

oppression, whereby a dominant belief system is taken up by marginalized groups (Baines, 2011).

Another participant, Sally, wished to get rid of her accent and indicated expending much effort to eliminate it. Nevertheless, she noted that doing so is a difficult endeavour for those who immigrate at older ages: “I try hard, but I believe [people] who come later in their age, it’s more difficult for them.” Sally’s worry about the implications of her accent was clear, “Even if you’re hard working, [an accent] might push you back from a promotion. I don’t know—I feel like that is a barrier in my career.” There is overwhelming support for the barrier of non-native accents on work opportunities in Canada (MacDougall, 2007; Creese, 2010; Hakak, Holzinger, & Zikic, 2010; Wilkinson et al., 2010; Lauer et al., 2012). Given the role of language on people’s experiences and in producing marginalizing effects, Lutz et al. (2011) exemplify language as an intersectional dimension for further investigation in their vision to articulate a European intersectionality discourse. Though recounting her concern of an accent in diminishing occupational opportunities, Sally did not overtly highlight discrimination as an element of her experience in navigating employment in Canada.

It is important to note that the three youth who acknowledged discrimination (whether overtly or covertly) as a barrier to employment were within the category of the top four oldest participants in the study at 23, 25, and 28 years of age. In addition, two of them had lived in Canada for the longest amount of time out of all study participants (10 and 15 years). This possibly indicates that having more work and/or life experience in Canada may expose youth to more experiences emblematic of discrimination. This finding is in keeping with Ho, Rogers, and Anderson’s (2013) review of the American literature, which determined that a longer length of residency resulted in increased reports of discrimination among African-American immigrants,

because of increased exposure to experiences of discriminatory practices, and thus, recognition of them. Not only do illegal acts, such as discrimination, impede IRY's labour market transition, but so too do barriers that are grounded in Canadian law, such as one's immigration status.

### **Immigration Status**

Immigration status is yet another barrier to acquiring employment among IRY. One young person explained that asylum seekers spend a substantial amount of time without work permits, thus being unable to work legally in Canada. Aisha depicted an enduring wait until one is awarded with the opportunity to work: "Most [refugees] just spend time home. You see time going day by day; surviving by social aid and time keeps passing by until you get your work permit." Applying self-report post-traumatic stress and depressive and anxiety symptom tests among a convenience sample of 98 asylum seekers in Australia between 2008 and 2010, Hocking, Kennedy, and Sundram (2015) concluded that a reduction in asylum claim rejections and awarding rights to work can diminish the rate of post-traumatic stress disorder and major depressive disorder in adult asylum seeker communities. In a qualitative study that incorporated interviews to explore the views of 11 male asylum seekers in Australia, researchers found that the capacity to gain access to the right to work and acquire employment could considerably improve mental health and restore feelings of self-worth that had been trivialized throughout long immigrant detention periods (Fleay, Hartley, & Kenny, 2013).

In keeping with United Nations declarations, as well as the views of the International Labour Organization, the University of Michigan Law School (2010) proclaims that, "The right to work is fundamental to human dignity. It is central to survival and development of the human personality" (p. 293). This sentiment directly contradicts the experience of asylum seekers who

may be unable to work for significant time periods. As articulated by Aisha, one's refugee status creates an additional burden in their ability to access the labour market.

### **Social Networks**

A few participants linked experiencing difficulty with finding a job to their lack of access to people who can help them in this endeavour. A study participant, Thierry, remarked on the lack of exposure to word-of-mouth information from friends or contacts in Canada who "can tell you, 'oh, this place, there is someone who is looking for people to work.'" Due to this perceived shortcoming, he made making friends in Canada a priority so that he could become privy to information about job opportunities. This effort is in keeping with research that suggests that first generation immigrant youth are more likely to draw on friends for employment support rather than family (Perreira et al., 2007; Lauer et al., 2012; Yan et al., 2012), which is also thought to be more effective in leading them to find a good job (Fang et al., 2010). Carene agreed that friends could be an important resource in helping one find employment. Perreira and colleagues (2007) found that first generation immigrant youth networking with school peers from higher socio-economic status families increased their access to jobs and the likelihood that they would be employed. Yan and colleagues (2012) assert that based on parents' involvement in low level and low paid employment, especially in a job market that is unfriendly to them, the extent of cultural capital transmission, which could otherwise be helpful in enabling second generation immigrant youth to find work is doubtful. Cultural capital is defined as "knowledge or resources unique to a particular cultural group that give social advantage to members of that group" (Wegmann & Bowen, 2010, p. 7). Given sub-par cultural capital transmission for second generation immigrant youth, logically, the availability of cultural capital transmission from their parents to first generation immigrant youth could be expected to be even more restricted.

Thierry and Carene's perspectives align with a large body of research acknowledging the important role of social networks in increasing one's access to employment opportunities (Brown & Konrad, 2001; Kunz, 2003; Peera, 2003; Bergeron & Potter, 2006; Abada et al., 2008; Hakak et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2011; Lauer et al., 2012; Oguz, 2013; Webb, 2015). Research indicates that individuals with smaller and less effective networks, like immigrants, are less likely to find employment (Kunz, 2003; Simmons, 2010; Yan et al., 2012; Oguz, 2013). Moreover, studies show that immigrants need to network with members of the dominant group to be successful in securing employment (Thomas, 1993; Bhagat & London, 1999). The concept of 'bridging social capital' dictates that newcomers associate with people that are less like them across indicators such as race, class, gender, income, occupation, and others (Geys & Murdoch, 2010; Zhang et al., 2011). Due to the heterogeneity among these connections, newcomers may become privy to job-related information that is different and scarcer than that to which they may otherwise have access, holding the possibility of increased avenues to job opportunities (Geys & Murdoch, 2010; Zhang et al., 2011). First generation IRY—and especially newcomers—are likely to bear the burden of a limited access to social networks who can help them obtain work. The challenge they face in accessing job opportunities because of limited social networks ties into their lack of access to job references and susceptibility to become involved in work enclaves.

### **Job References**

The literature identifies the opportunity to acquire job references as a benefit of working as an immigrant youth (Perreira et al., 2007; Lauer et al., 2012). But this study shows that IRY face barriers in obtaining their first work experience, in part, precisely because of their lack of access to job references. Two IRY study participants expressed that they face the barrier of not having access to any—or enough (and job-appropriate)—references in Canada. For example,

Hannah explained that, “you need three references and I was able to find one but I was looking for a second one ... People new to Canada ... might have people they know [in Canada], but it would be family members, they wouldn’t be able [to serve] as references.” Due to their limited access to social networks who can help them find work and who may be able to serve as job references, IRY may be unable to access job market opportunities to the same extent as Canadian-born youth. When they do have access to social networks, these individuals can likely consist of other immigrants, who may be able to support them in finding jobs, but perhaps in limited spheres of work.

### **Work Enclaves**

One research participant observed that IRY are likely to end up working in fields that are occupied by many other immigrants and refugees. She noted that this occurs because immigrants talk amongst each other, including on topics related to how they got their jobs. Becoming privy to this information, immigrants and refugees follow suit in similar work paths. Aisha remarked:

Most of the immigrants do the same [jobs]. Because, you talk to me, I tell you how I got [my job], and you do the same thing. Not because it’s what you want, but just because... that’s the only person that you know ... and you’re like, “okay, I’ll just do the same thing,” right?

This finding reflects a large body of ‘bonding social capital’ research, which posits that close connections among individuals in a group suggests that these individuals are similar to one another, including with respect to access to information (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). Based on the information to which they are privy, individuals in a group tend to make the same kinds of recommendations to one another (ibid). For example, Bergeron and Potter (2006) articulate that if many people in an immigrant’s network have jobs in the fashion industry, newcomers who join

this group are likely to be subjected to information on job opportunities in this industry, based on tips their networks provide them with in support of their integration. Torezani and colleagues (2008) argue that ‘bonding social capital’ (strong ties in a network), though facilitating access to work (albeit in ethnic niches), work against migrants by impeding occupational mobility that transcends low-status employment. Aisha witnessed ‘work enclaves’ in fields such as personal support work, call centres, and manufacturing, among others:

So you find most of the immigrants ... be personal support workers, right? And then the youth, the ones that are smarter are either in nursing or call centres or manufacturing because their friends did the same thing and they’re the ones that told them how to do it.

As explored, not only do IRY face barriers in accessing employment opportunities, but they are also concerned with the range of job opportunities to which they are privy upon transitioning into the labour market.

Aisha spoke about the convenience of immigrants obtaining employment based on tips they receive through other immigrants. She put forth that IRY do not have the time and luxury to explore and navigate the job market due to the financial pressures they face to find a job as quickly as possible. Social capital is regarded to be the most accessible form of capital for low-income people, and is even claimed to be an important factor in reducing poverty at individual and community levels (Zhang & Anderson, 2014). Nevertheless, Aisha also suggested that the predicament where immigrants are found to work in select fields in clusters, due to their exposure to other immigrants, is confining. Likewise, Yan and colleagues (2012) cite Portes (1995b) who confirms that strong involvement with newcomer communities by second generation immigrant youth can hamper one’s opportunity for upward career mobility. As with the concept of ‘bonding social capital’, the homogenous characteristics of one’s network of

friends and kin diminishes the likelihood that individuals are exposed to new information that can support economic advancement (Zhang et al., 2011). Due to limited social networks, IRY may be limited in their ability to gain employment and may be exposed to a limited range of job opportunities, both which may hamper their future career prospects and advancement.

Aisha poignantly stated that an immigrant noticing another immigrant “surviving” in a particular domain of work motivates them to pursue work in the same field. Bauder (2003) identifies that it is common for individuals to obtain ‘survival jobs’ while they attempt to enter their careers. But ‘survival employment’ has been characterized as work that is low-skilled, low-wage, and insecure (Creese & Wiebe, 2012). As Creese and Wiebe (2012) write, ‘survival employment’ refers to jobs below the qualifications and dignity of immigrants—jobs that they are encouraged to take in order to secure a basic level of economic survival. Similarly, Simmons (2010) explains that lower earnings and lower-end jobs are characteristic of work enclaves. Additionally, Ooka and Wellman (2006) found that immigrants in lower-status groups who draw upon intra-ethnic contacts are more likely to obtain low-paying jobs because those who are in their networks tend to occupy these positions. In aims of countering what she depicted as a confining employment prospect (work enclaves), Aisha expressed that she is adamantly committed to working within an area in which she is passionate, rather than being stuck in a job she is unhappy with, but that is easy to obtain: “It will always feel like a job when you do something you don’t like but when you like it, you just don’t even [know where the time goes].”

### **Culture**

Participants expressed that they face cultural barriers throughout the job search process. Youth who identified cultural barriers tended to be newcomers to Canada or spoke about newcomer immigrants. For example, multiple newcomer youth said that resumes cause them

angst and pose significant challenges for them. Sally, for instance, mentioned that resumes in her country of origin typically span eight pages, which results in a tension for newcomer IRY from her country of origin who are suddenly expected to translate their resumes into two-page documents in Canada. She had witnessed newcomer relatives of hers face difficulty with this concept, to the point where her husband had to rewrite the resumes of their newcomer family members, and explain to them the differences in resume presentation in the two cultures. Non-adherence to suitable frames of presenting resumes in Canada can result in IRY's resumes being rejected early on in job application stages.

Aisha relayed that the staff of an employment centre told her that her resume was not acceptable in the Canadian context as it contained sensitive information and she was advised to not send out another like it. She told me that she could not imagine that any of the information she provided could be considered to be sensitive. Further, Aisha had a "general" resume that she believed could be used to apply to many job posts broadly, and did not know that a resume must be tailored to the specific job in question. Al-Ali (2010) found that distinct strategies are at play when people from different countries devise cover letters. In his study, he gathered cover letters written by English native speakers and Arabic native speakers. Cover letters written by English native speakers employed strategies like providing more information about professional and academic qualifications, and explicitly requesting a job interview (Al-Ali, 2010). On the other hand, Arabic native writers tended to appeal to employers' compassion and refer to the enclosed resume, but not ask for an interview (ibid).

Participants of the study also described facing cultural barriers throughout job interviews. Based on her experience with what she described as a failed job interview, Aisha, who had lived in Canada for five months and a half, compared the approach taken to respond to the common

interview question, “tell me about yourself” in her country of origin, and in Canada. As a response to this question, she stated that in her country of origin, “You just talk about yourself, you’re like, my name is this, I’m this years old, I live here and there, I’m married, or I have kids. You just talk about yourself, but here it’s different because when you mention all that, they just—they’re like—we don’t need to know your life, right?” She went on to share that she learned about how the question might be answered in the Canadian context, pertinent to candidates’ competencies related to the jobs they are applying for.

Having a strong sense of whether you failed or succeeded in a job interview was also typical in Aisha’s country of origin, where it was noted to be common to hear—upon the completion of an interview—an interviewer say, “thank you for coming, but you’re not hired—you’re not the person that we’re looking for.” Aisha contrasted this with her experience in the Canadian context where she said interviewers consistently maintain smiles and offer messages like, “thank you for coming” or, “hmm, okay” in soft voices, even when “you said everything they didn’t want to hear.” In reflecting upon a job interview experience, Aisha said that she was even shown an office and told, “this will be your office.” Assuming that she got the position, she went to buy attire appropriate for the receptionist post for which she interviewed. She did not have the money to buy the clothes and would not have bought them if it were not for her positive feeling after the interview. She justified her purchases based on the rationale that she would soon be paid. However, she did not get the job and acknowledged that she would have much rather preferred to be told right away that she was unsuccessful in securing the job, noting that:

You always fail in life, you don’t always succeed, and so it’s not bad to tell me I failed, right? ... You know, it’s harsh and, you know, it breaks your heart and everything, but at least it’s better because you could just start moving on with life.

Two other youth corroborated the frustration caused by being unaware of their status in job application processes in Canada.

Another cultural challenge identified by research participants was the concept of online job application processes. Maysa, who had lived in Canada for six months, expressed frustration with constantly being referred to apply for jobs online, when she would go to do so in person (e.g., in stores): “yeah it’s difficult because every store you go to, they tell you that you have to apply online—that was difficult for me, because in my country, there is no online.” The designation that, “in my country, there is no online” may be indicative of a cultural barrier for Maysa in maneuvering job application procedures in Canada that invoke online processes. In Canada, newcomer IRY face challenges in learning a new job application process in general, and the added layer of learning the mechanisms of application processes that increasingly rely on online tools could add further complexities for this group. An American study revealed that foreign-born Latinos have lower odds of engaging in online health-information behaviour and demonstrate a lack of confidence in filling out online forms related to health risks when compared to American-born Latinos (Gonzalez, Sanders-Jackson, & Emory, 2016). This calls upon the need for the planning of supports for immigrants and newcomers given the upsurge of online content delivery and interaction in various realms (ibid), including employment. Without access to informal and/or formal employment supports to guide IRY in job application processes, the group may be economically disadvantaged for long periods of time before becoming knowledgeable about, comfortable with, and successful in Canadian job application processes.

### **Language**

The majority of youth described language as affecting their ability to find work. The barrier of language skills in access to employment opportunities among the immigrant youth

group has been identified in the literature (Peera, 2003; Wilkinson, 2008; Lauer et al., 2012). Four youth, who had recently immigrated to Canada, had lived in Canada for 4–6 months, and who had relatively limited English language proficiency, expressed that this limitation was a significant barrier for them in their job search. For example, Maysa, who arrived in Canada when she was 19 and lived in Canada for 6 months reflected on the challenge she faced with the English language in a job interview: “when they accept you, you have to do interview, maybe you can’t understand what they’re saying. That is difficult.” Two other newcomer youth (who had arrived at the ages of 17 and 19, and had lived in Canada for 4 and 5 months, respectively) suggested that strengthening their English language skills is their priority and that doing so constitutes an important step forward toward securing employment. Another young person, who had lived in Canada for 10 years after having arrived at 16 years of age and who spoke English well still revealed that her English language skills are a weakness that continue to concern her. Although she identifies English as her “primary” language when applying to jobs here, she conceded that it is not the language in which she is most proficient.

Two youth, Keyon and Thierry, stated that they had strong French language skills, but minimal English language skills. Peera (2003) outlines that youth who speak French are disadvantaged similarly to youth who speak a language other than English in Canada. Kunz (2003) argues that immigrants who come to Canada as children are more likely than those who arrive as young adults to acquire language fluency in one of Canada’s official languages, in addition to labour market appropriate language competence.

Three youth (two of whom had lived in Canada for the longest periods, 9–10 years), all of whom were proficient in English, commented on their lack of French language skills as impediments in their job search. They talked about the expectation of bilingualism for many jobs

in Ottawa, and Sally explained, “I am not bilingual and 90% of the job requires bilingualism.” She expressed worry at possibly needing to change her field of work from administration if she were to one day be unsuccessful in securing a job in the field, due to the common requirement of fluent French language skills in that domain: “that scares me. I don’t want to.”

In relation to English language comprehension, a newcomer, Maysa, mentioned, “They use words that you never hear” on official documents like job applications. This indicates that for newcomers, perhaps English that is used in casual conversation, or even in more formal places such as schools, can be markedly different from that which is used in job search processes. As she explained, a newcomer may not come across the language used on official documentation on a day-to-day basis, which acts as a barrier in IRY’s, and specifically, newcomer IRY’s navigation of job search processes. Understanding the language conveyed on official job documents is one issue. Another associated issue, as presented by Peera (2003), is the lack of written language fluency, which can deter IRY from success in job application stages that invoke writing. IRY are concerned with first developing sufficient English language skills, and then French language skills.

### **Summary**

Study participants identified important barriers that they experience or perceive in their transition to the Canadian labour market. Not having yet acquired the requested levels of education stipulated by job posts, and immigrants perpetually going back to school in the event that they cannot find a job were identified barriers. The difficulty of transferring credentials, the social pressure to acquire employment, and a lack of both general and “Canadian” work experience were other challenges IRY study participants were met with. Several IRY referred to experiences emblematic of discrimination, but few explicitly mentioned its occurrence. Their

stories underpinned discrimination on the account of race and ethnicity. One young person spoke of employing various strategies to circumvent experiences of discrimination in her access to employment opportunities and once in the workplace.

Refugee claimants may endure long wait times before being awarded with the opportunity to work. Participants identified the presence of limited social networks in their pursuit to find work; this barrier can result in a lack of access to job-appropriate references in Canada and the emergence of work enclaves where immigrants and refugees work in fields in clusters based on the same kind of access to job information that they pass on to one another. Cultural barriers presented for IRY in resume-writing, job interview, and online job application forums. IRY participants who were newer to Canada tended to speak about their limited English language proficiency, while IRY who had a longer length of residency tended to mention the barrier of a lack of French language fluency.

All of the IRY research participants conveyed that they experience barriers and/or obstacles in transitioning into the labour market, and together, identified a wide range of difficulties with which they are faced. These many barriers inevitably limit IRY's access to employment opportunities, thus marginalizing them in society by not accommodating them in the workforce (Mullaly, 2010). Acknowledging the negative effects of structural inequalities on people's lives (Dominelli, 1996), there is much work to be done at a societal level to support first generation IRY's transition into the labour market.

The barriers IRY spoke of relates to their occupation in intersecting social categories that hamper their labour market transition. The study participants spoke about aspects of their social identities such as immigration status, being foreign-born, newcomer status, racial and ethnic background, culture, and language skills in impacting their access to employment. This raises the

importance of examining the breadth of experiences in a social group to see how individuals uniquely, and in nuanced ways, experience inequalities (Crenshaw, 2011; Phoenix, 2011; Bauer, 2014; Harrison, 2015), such as in their labour market transition. This can serve the ultimate purpose of devising effective policies and strategies to support the integration of individuals in a range of intersectional positions, based on their experiences. As cited in Murphy et al. (2009), the National Association of Social Workers (2008) in the United States claims the role of immigration and the civil rights movement in highlighting the need for social workers to adopt an understanding of people's particular linguistic, social, cultural, and economic experiences and identities in order to effectively support them.

Considering the employment barriers faced by the IRY group, access to informal and/or formal supports may possibly help them transition into the labour market by increasing their access to job information or opportunities. The focus of the next chapter is on IRY's access to and use of informal employment supports, as defined by one's social networks and online/social media job aids. Also featured in Chapter 6 are insights on the views that IRY's social networks relay to them about work and what IRY themselves believe about work. While not a central research question, I was interested in exploring possible other influences—apart from labour market transition barriers—that may affect IRY in their employment seeking trajectory, and to see if those influences diverge from their own beliefs and values on work.

## CHAPTER SIX

### VIEWS ON WORK AND INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Thus far, this thesis has examined the barriers IRY face in transitioning into the labour market. Chapter 6 builds on this by shedding light on IRY's relation to work through the views that they have and receive about the concept of work and where work is placed as a priority in their lives. In addition, building on the notion that IRY face barriers in transitioning into the labour market, in this chapter, I explore the sources of informal employment supports that IRY have access to and use in order to understand the role of informal employment supports in IRY's access to the labour market. This chapter features the following two topics: (1) IRY's views on work, including messages that IRY receive about work from people in their social networks, and how IRY themselves conceptualize work; and (2) IRY's uses of informal employment supports, including supports from their social networks and online and social media sources of employment aid.

#### **Views on Work**

This section explores the messages that IRY reported receiving about work from members of their social networks, followed by how IRY conceptualize work.

#### **Messages Youth Receive about Work from their Social Networks**

Given the documented influence of social networks on young people's inclination to partake in work (Bauder, 2001; Nee & Sanders, 2001; Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; Wilkinson, 2008; Lauer et al., 2012), I was interested in learning about the messages IRY study participants may have received from individuals in their social networks on the topics of work and employment. I asked my IRY participants about any messages they received from their social networks about work, on how work should be prioritized relative to other endeavours, such as

school, and how attainable work is. In their responses, participants commonly referenced views relayed to them by their parents and/or immediate family members.

All ten research participants reported hearing from their families the idea that school takes precedence over work. For example, Keyon commented, “[my parents] tell me that school is the first priority and the next is work ....” Similarly, Barak said, “Well, like, I’m doing school, my mom and dad, both of them—they tell me, first concentrate on school ....” While all participants consistently reported that school is upheld as the priority endeavour by their parents, six youth spoke of family expectations that school will be followed by work—either upon its completion or when it is not in session. Sally shared, “... in my family, everyone works and it is expected after you graduate, it doesn’t matter what gender you are, what age you are—you are expected to work, at least to support yourself, nothing extra.” Zarifa reinforced this notion, explaining that, “... because I already graduated, work is like my first priority right now, but once I’m back in school, then school becomes the first thing on my mind.” Barak commented that, “... [My parents] tell me, in the summer, you can like look for a job. During the school year, I got to stay focused on school.” Four youth discussed receiving ideas in support of prioritizing school over work with the rationale being that education enables one to acquire a job—or a better job—in the future:

... school is a way of getting work. After you finish school, you’ll find work. (Hannah)

... school is more important ... it helps you to find the job you want, but if you like start job now and you stop school, it doesn’t help you. (Maysa)

Education is better than work, because after education, you will get better job. (Carene)

The messages that they give us often is that if you do not study and go and work, you will work in fields that do not offer a lot of money, like those who paint houses, and you will do work like that. So what they tell us, and continue to tell us, is to study really hard so that you can get jobs that are good for our lives. (Thierry)

While accepting that school takes precedence over work, Aisha spoke about the need to sacrifice studies in order to work to support familial finances:

We all know that school is more important than work. You have to first finish your classes before you start working, but we have different needs, so ... it depends upon the situation of your life. How is your family? Like in my family, for example, we need—I need—to work.

This prioritization of education over other endeavours, relayed to IRY by their families, is consistent with findings from Anisef and Kilbride (2003), who reported that immigrant parents place their hopes for the future in their children, and perceive their children's academic achievements to be the only pathway to success. Nee and Sanders (2001) argue that first generation immigrant parents negotiate the innumerable hardships and challenges they face throughout the process of immigration with the mindset that they are enhancing their children's educational prospects. These notions substantiate education as a focal point for first generation immigrant parents, who then pass messages about its importance on to their children.

IRY also received messages about the attainability of work from their social networks. Some youth indicated hearing about the difficulty of securing employment. Additionally, Zarifa shared a message that she received as a young, black woman:

“Being a black woman, you always have to be 10 steps ahead of—or you have to try to be ahead of—everybody. Or that’s what I was taught as a young person and I’ve always taken that with me.”

Zarifa’s quote possibly demonstrates an engrained understanding that racialized persons must work harder in order to be awarded with the same opportunities that non-racialized people receive. It also highlights the pressure that young, racialized women receive to excel in order to be treated equally. Her concern is founded in King (1988) who notes that due to race and sex discrimination narrowing their employment options, black women often have to work in low status and low paying jobs. Further, although white women individually may be economically disadvantaged due to their sex, they nevertheless have access to top income earners—white males (King, 1988). Anthias & Yuval-Davis (1983) argue that “every feminist struggle has a specific ethnic (as well as class) context” (p. 62).

This section has shown that IRY are told by their parents to place their efforts in school, that work is difficult to acquire in Canada, possibly particularly for racialized people. Also, while being told that school is of utmost importance, so too is the need to supplement familial income, a need that can detract from a young immigrant or refugee person’s ability to engage in school.

### **How Immigrant and Refugee Youth Conceptualize Work**

I asked interview participants about their own views and perspectives on work, including how they prioritize work in general and/or in relation to other endeavours such as school, and how attainable they believe employment to be. Seven youth spoke about their views on, and priorities of, work and school: initially, five youth expressed that school should take precedence over work, one young person expressed that work should take precedence over school, and one participant expressed that school and work should be pursued together. Opinions that are more

complex emerged over the course of participants' responses; three participants added believing that school and work should occur in tandem.

Five participants, three who were in high school, one who had graduated from high school, and another who had graduated with a college diploma, relayed believing that school should take precedence over work. Reasons for this belief were that school enables one to acquire a job (or a better job) in the future; fulfills prerequisites for specific jobs and admission to higher education; expands one's knowledge; is an accomplishment that no one can take away; and acts as a medium to enhance English language skills. The following quotes illustrate participants' prioritization of school over work:

... you will likely [increase] your chance at finding a better job through school—there's no doubt about that ... school's important. You can get a good job. (Ali)

Work is something that is important for me, but education is always umm the most important, just because I want to be knowledgeable and I want to be able to, just like stay relevant all the time ... [and] because my education—nobody could ever take that away once I do get it, and knowledge is probably like one of my biggest priorities. (Zarifa)

It is important to study first, because, the problem that we often have as immigrants is the language—you cannot find a job when you speak nothing but French. (Thierry)

One study participant, Hannah, said that she believes work is more important than school: "I think school, you can do it, but if you find a job, it's more important." Research indicates that despite higher levels of education among newcomer groups in Canada, income differences exist based on ethnic membership (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003). Specifically, Anisef and Kilbride (2003)

found that youth from Black, Chinese, and Greek communities questioned the value of school. This finding is symbolic of structural oppression where certain racialized groups have unequal access to opportunities and a fair wage (Mullaly, 2002). In my study, even though all IRY received messages boasting the importance of school, only half (five) of the interview participants themselves acclaimed its priority or advantages.

Four participants expressed the importance of simultaneously pursuing school and work, for a variety of reasons. One noted the need to orient oneself to the realm of work earlier, rather than only after the completion of school, because at that point, it may be “too late” to start familiarizing oneself with the workforce. Another reason was that obtaining a job relevant to one’s education while in school allows one to glean a sense of the types of jobs that are available in a particular field, which youth can then know to pursue upon graduating. It was also put forth that working while in school could render one privy to information about specific courses that employers might appreciate and request from job candidates. Upon gaining access to this information, youth could take these courses while still enrolled in school. Motivation to work and undertake school simultaneously was also tied to the acknowledgement of the importance of school, which is also coupled with the need to work to acquire job experience and save money for future studies. The following quotes from participants are examples of this perspective:

... sometimes [school and work] are dependent on each other, so you need both ...

because I’m not sure exactly where Health Sciences would put me in a job, so I think

finding a job right now, like before I finish school, maybe that would be like, I would

know where to look for a job. That’s my idea, because after I finish Health Sciences, I’m

not sure where I will go, so if I find a job now, I think that’s more important. And

sometimes they would request certain courses that you’ve taken in university so if I find

[a job that requests certain courses], maybe I can now take the courses while I'm still in school. Sometimes that helps too. If they request a certain thing and I would tell them, yeah, I took a course and I did this so maybe that would help. (Hannah)

Well, I think work [and school] is like, I think it's kind of like 50/50, like I want to work so that I can get money so that I can pay for my education ... my education is important ... I think, I kind of want to have a job now too, so like I'm going to feel kind of secure, so [instead of incurring a student debt] I can try to save up right now [for future schooling] ... and [also], if I already have a job, I can say that I already have experience, [so] it's going to be easy for me to find another job. (Barak)

IRY's focus on simultaneously pursuing work and school is consistent with existing research that shows that IRY benefit from working during school (or immediately after), as doing so is linked with enhancing future occupational attainment in an otherwise dismal employment environment—particularly for the IRY group (Perreira et al., 2007; Lauer et al., 2012; Laurijssen & Glorieux, 2015). Lauer and colleagues (2012) claim that work experience obtained during adolescence and young adulthood among IRY can help them accumulate resources, like job skills, which can facilitate future economic success. Wilkinson (2008) argues that immigrant youth are more likely than Canadian-born youth to combine work and school for the purpose of financing school, which also raises a challenge with accessing funding for postsecondary education. Nevertheless, working and attending school simultaneously was not reported to be without its shortcomings. As Aisha pointed out, working and studying at the same time might make you "... fail school or fail in class or don't do your job properly because you don't have all your focus with you." Citing Zhou and Bankston (2000), Wilkinson (2008)

explains that immigrant youth are more likely to succeed both in work and school if financial and social support is provided to their families. The Social Planning Council of Ottawa (2010) posits that income support for working-poor families (families living below the poverty line despite working full-time, year round) enables their children to continue studying.

Without any explicit comparisons with other endeavours, three youth, none of whom were in school, spoke about work being their primary focus. Two of these participants spoke about the need to work to be financially independent or contribute to a family income:

Work is more personal for me than family and friends because when I graduated from school, I had a loan on my head so it was a need for me to find something to start paying off my loan. Also, I had my basic expense which my family was expecting for me to cover because they had supported me enough. Also, they have their part of the expense, so it was my time to support myself, so they were supporting me to find a job, they were encouraging me, like, any way possible – they were encouraging me to find a job. (Sally)

I need to work because my dad is as new as I am in Canada and he's taking English classes because he can't get employed without knowing the language, right? So my mom is the one that's in charge of everything [working] and I need to help her. So that's why, I always look for work. It's not like I don't think about studies, but yeah, I would think about studies later ... (Aisha)

Bauder (2001) explains that newcomer families may rely on their children as an additional source of income. The need to work in order to contribute to a family income can result in IRY obtaining employment that conflicts with school schedules, increases stress, and compromises

academic progress by resulting in lateness in school, a lack of focus in classes, and not submitting assignments on time (Social Planning Council of Ottawa, 2010). These factors may increase the likelihood that IRY who work in addition to attending school drop out of high school (ibid). The Social Planning Council of Ottawa (2010) reported that IRY accounted for 14% of young adults who did not complete high school in 2006.

Zarifa spoke about the pressure she felt to be employed in order to evade repeating poverty, and in doing so, referred to the intersections of immigrant status, language proficiency, culture, and class:

So growing up as a refugee or whatever and not knowing the language, and not knowing the culture and stuff, [and] living in a low-income community, it was really important for me to be able to... like, it adds more pressure for you to go and find work or whatever because I never want to repeat poverty. (Zarifa)

Zarifa's concern is somewhat reflected in a study conducted by Shields and colleagues (2006) who asserted that despite their eagerness to work, their 61 IRY study participants from Africa and Asia may well end up locked in vicious cycles of poverty, dependence on government assistance, and unemployment/underemployment. Their assertion is based on overwhelming research highlighting newcomers' (immigrants and refugees who have lived in Canada for fewer than 5 years) overrepresentation in unemployment, underemployment, and poverty rates, and low-skilled, low-paid work with few benefits and opportunities for advancement, and the prevalence of part-time work (Shields et al., 2006). Payne (1987) argued that unemployment is connected with long-term socioeconomic difficulties and may run in families (cited in Lauer et al., 2012). Further, research shows that coming from immigrant families who are themselves struggling economically impedes IRY's entry into the workforce (Lauer et al., 2012). Zarifa's

quote resembles the concept of ‘racial boundaries’, written about by Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992), which depicts the interconnections between race, gender, nation, skin colour, and class, which keep people from achieving their full potential (cited in Lutz et al., 2011).

In addition to speaking of the priorities placed on work and/or school, IRY also spoke about other perceptions they held on the topic of employment. For example, Keyon shared his perspective about the advantage of job posts being publicly advertised in Canada. He juxtaposed this idea with his experience in his country of origin, sharing that, “... where I was, it was like a ‘circle’. Only those who worked [in a given place] would know who needs workers. But here, I find that it is better because they advertise/publicize [job opportunities].” Ali also spoke about access to job posts, explaining that EPS help broaden the range of jobs to which service users would otherwise not have access, given the presence of a ‘hidden job market’ in Canada. For Ali, “... there are a lot of jobs that are like hidden. Like, you know, the ‘hidden network’ they usually call it, I think. There’s usually like a bunch of jobs that we don’t know about ...” Though notice of job opportunities seem to be more accessible in Canada when compared to the scenario Keyon conveyed in his country of origin, there is still a sense of a ‘hidden job market’.

IRY also reported that, despite their many attempts, it is difficult to find work. Barak, for example, spoke about the challenging experience of witnessing many students in his high school receive numerous job offers in a given week, whereas he would not receive a single response despite having sent out many job applications. In a similar vein, another participant suggested that, once hired, it is not that difficult to conduct work, but that the steeper challenge actually lay in securing work to begin with.

Evidenced in the above section is that IRY decide to pursue school, work, or the two in combination based on the promise of future employment. Captured in their prioritizations was

the notion that study participants were clearly motivated and concerned with increasing their chances of finding work. Other general insights suggested that one participant felt much pressure to secure work to evade poverty based on the susceptibility she felt due to intersecting aspects of her identity; others spoke of the difficulty of obtaining employment; and another young person spoke about the challenge of succeeding in school and work when having to conduct both tasks together. Study participants are evidently concerned with working; the next section explores their use of informal employment supports as a means of increasing their access to job opportunities.

### **Informal Employment Supports**

The following sections discuss IRY's use of informal employment supports as related to their social networks and their use of online and social media means of employment aid. Due to their noted limited access to labour market opportunities, I explore IRY's perspectives on and experiences with the range and extent of informal employment supports they drew on that, in some way, could possibly mitigate their lack of access to job opportunities.

### **How Immigrant and Refugee Youth Use Informal Employment Supports Provided by their Social Networks**

One of my objectives in this study was to learn about how youth navigate formal employment supports, and this is explored in chapters 7 and 8. I was also interested in learning about the range and extent of social network supports that IRY have access to in their job search efforts. In the literature, IRY are regarded to be disadvantaged in this realm, because they are noted to be less likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to have access to a vast and resourceful social network (Kunz, 2003; Lauer et al., 2012; Oguz, 2013). To contribute further to the literature, I asked IRY study participants in Ottawa about the employment supports they relied on from their social networks to facilitate their search for work.

The responses of five IRY revealed an absence of, or a relatively small, social network support for job help compared to other participants. These five young people had lived in Canada for an average of 1.7 years. Two of them indicated not having received employment support outside of the employment centre they used. Three of them reported relying on one of the following sources of informal employment supports: an uncle who told them that there exist many job opportunities and that the process to apply to them starts with drafting a resume; and in two cases, a teacher who referred youth to websites where they could conduct job searches. None of these youth were employed at the time of our meeting. Hannah suggested that the support offered by her uncle fell short: "... but [he] didn't like sit down with me and write it with me like the [staff at a CH/SC employment centre] did." Lauer and colleagues (2012) found that IRY may not use family ties in their job search due to their parents' and relatives' limited Canadian labour market knowledge.

Three participants stated that they relied upon a larger informal social support network, of up to two sources, to facilitate their job searches. The young people had friends who suggested resume formats and/or referred them to job-listing websites, as well as university friends who created a support group (which existed during and after the completion of their studies) to help each other find work by, for example, sharing information about job fairs. There were also parents and family members who encouraged IRY in their pursuits to find jobs, family friends who offered information on and connected youth with volunteer opportunities for exercising job-relevant skills, and mentors who reviewed resumes, acted as job references, and sent job opportunities to youth. In relation to the latter examples, Zarifa described:

So I've made those relationships (with mentors) when I was pretty young, around like 10 years old and I've kept those relationships, until I'm 22 years old right now. Um, but yeah, they're pretty helpful. I use them as references.

Compared to other study participants, the three youth featured above, with larger social network supports, had lived in Canada for the longest (9 to 15 years). All of the three youth had jobs. It is possible to read this as suggesting that the longer youth live in Canada, the more robust their networks of informal social supports become, thus potentially facilitating their job search efforts (Lauer et al., 2012).

Despite having lived in Canada for a relatively short time, two other study participants felt they had numerous sources of social network supports to draw on. Keyon, who had lived in Canada for only five months, received employment support from his uncles, aunts, and cousins, who had told him that they would help him search for jobs. He mentioned that he was also able to network about job opportunities with his acquaintances at church. Still, Keyon did note that these sources of employment assistance were not enough to connect him with needed resources on how to create a resume or conduct himself in an interview. Keyon and Hannah's experiences reinforce the importance of offering high quality job search training for IRY as they commonly lack sufficient social networks and resources to support them in this realm (Oguz, 2013). Keyon was not employed at the time of our meeting.

Aisha, who had lived in Canada for only five-and-a-half months, also referenced a comparatively large level of employment assistance from people in her social network, including friends who advised her of job opportunities, dropped off her resume to employers they knew, and instructed her to visit their employers. Aisha spoke about the efficacy of becoming acquainted with job opportunities directly through friends:

There are friends that tell you, “Go apply here and there”; “here they’re looking for people.” I go there, and the job that I have now, I got referred from a friend that works there. So I went there and I did an interview and they took me.

Aisha was the only person who reported having secured a job directly through her social network. Lauer and colleagues (2012) found that, when drawing on informal supports to search for employment, newcomer youth are 1.5 times more likely to use friends rather than family. Further, Nesdale and Pinter (2000) found that immigrant youth were more likely to draw on job search support from friends whose cultural background most reflected the host society. This reinforces racial discrimination, whereby those whose cultural backgrounds differ from that of a host society are limited in their access to employment opportunities.

Social networks are an important avenue to securing employment; this section has shown that, study participants’ access to social networks tend to be limited, with most not having access to more than two sources of social network support. Moreover, the effectiveness of IRY’s social networks in their job search are in question, with numerous young people stating that the support they had access to did not meet their job information needs.

### **How Immigrant and Refugee Youth Use Online and Social Media Sources as Employment Aid**

Given the prevalence of online and social media sources as means of learning about job opportunities, promoting one’s employability, and/or enhancing one’s job search capacity, I asked IRY about their engagement with these mediums. I asked participants whether they had used online or social media sources to supplement their job search efforts, and if so, what their experiences were like. Responses to these questions contribute to gaining an overall view into the various sources of employment supports that IRY draw on.

Two youth, Hannah and Thierry, reported not having used any online or social media sources of help in their employment searches. Upon further probing, they explained that they simply had not come across such sources of potential job supports. The other eight research participants reported having engaged with these sources in some capacity, including through using websites such as Kijiji, Job Bank, Monster, Workopolis, Indeed, LinkedIn, Wikihow, and Charity Village to search for and/or apply to jobs, and to obtain information on how to promote oneself as a job candidate (e.g., how to write a resume). Online and social media sources of job support were also used to research the websites of organizations that study participants were interested in working for to see if there were available job opportunities. Yan et al.'s (2012) study revealed that more than half of their study participants from immigrant families used the Internet in their job search. As well, one young person in this study spoke about using the social media app 'Snapchat', which enables the communication of 'snaps' in the form of photos or videos of up to ten seconds with other app-subscribers to receive information on a job fair in real-time.

These eight participants reported mixed experiences with online/social media forums in their employment searches. Three participants reported having positive experiences. For example, Zarifa was thrilled to receive real-time notice of a job fair through a friend on Snapchat; she quickly made her way to the job fair, and from there, successfully gained employment. Keyon was pleased to gather more information on how to devise a resume through Wikihow. Four participants reported having negative experiences. Aisha explained that she was not successful in acquiring employment through online job banks: "from Workopolis and Indeed, I always get emails and I try to apply to some of [the jobs], but it hasn't helped [in finding a job]." Barak also expressed dissatisfaction with his experiences of applying to jobs through

online sources and being unsuccessful in obtaining employment through them. Finally, one participant, Sally, expressed mixed experiences. While Sally found job search mediums such as Kijiji, Job Bank, Monster, and Indeed to be helpful, she indicated uncertainty about the helpfulness of using Facebook or LinkedIn to promote her candidacy, due to a lack of technical skills to promote:

I don't think that Facebook or LinkedIn helped me much because I am not a very technical person. I don't have a very specific set of [technical] skills that would grab any employer's attention through LinkedIn, but my partner, who's a software developer and who has specific knowledge about some computer languages, gets lots of response through LinkedIn.

Sally's point suggests that IRY may perceive only certain types of skills as promotable through particular online and social media forums. Without knowing that a wide range of skills can be promoted through online and social media forums, IRY may miss opportunities to promote themselves that could otherwise lead to job opportunities.

### **Summary**

Findings featured in this chapter show that IRY receive messages from individuals in their social networks (mostly consisting of parents) that education should prevail in priority over finding work. Half of the youth themselves perceived that school should take priority, while others recounted the value they placed on obtaining work or engaging in work and school endeavours in tandem. In addition, some were exclusively focused on work. Both members of IRY's social networks and IRY themselves perceived it to be difficult for IRY to secure employment. IRY's occupation in intersecting social categories emerged in the messages that they received or themselves held about work, with respect to pressures felt to work extra hard to

secure employment as a young, racialized woman, and the noted susceptibility to poverty based on the intersecting categories of immigrant status, language proficiency, culture, and class.

Findings explored in this chapter also demonstrated that youth who had lived in Canada for a shorter amount of time tended to have access to fewer sources of informal employment supports through their social networks, while those who had lived in Canada for a longer amount of time drew on a larger range of informal social network employment supports. Exceptions to this pattern were two youth, who, despite having lived in Canada for less than six months, reported drawing on numerous sources of informal employment supports. Of the seven participants who had lived in Canada for fewer than five years (average of 1.3 years), only one had a job, and five spoke of relying on a limited amount of informal social network support to supplement their job search efforts. The remaining three participants, who had lived in Canada for over nine years (average of 11 years), all reported relying on a larger quantity of informal social network support, and were also all employed.

My findings are consistent with existing research on the associations between a longer length of residency and increased access to social networks for employment supports (Lauer et al., 2012). They are also aligned with research that shows the usefulness of a rich network for supplementing employment search efforts (Kunz, 2003; Lauer et al., 2012; Oguz, 2013). My findings contribute that resourceful social networks can exist among IRY despite their length of residency. It may also be suggested that IRY are limited in their access to labour market information and opportunities due to the lack of access thereof faced by their parents, indicating a trickle-down effect of a limited access to labour market information and opportunities by immigrant and refugee people (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Yan et al., 2012).

Most of the research participants reported having leveraged online and social media sources to enhance their job search efforts; some had positive experiences with these sources, some found them ineffective, and some doubted their ability to engage with them based on a lack of skill that is perceived to be promotable on online and social media venues.

Thus far, the findings of this thesis have established that IRY face barriers in transitioning into the labour market in Ottawa and IRY and members of their social networks prioritize work and/or school according to their promise in enabling youth to gain access to employment opportunities. More, IRY's informal social network supports typically do not exceed two sources of help, and for the majority of participants, online and social media means of employment aid were either ineffective or unused.

As IRY's access to and use of informal employment supports may be limited, I wanted to explore another avenue to seeking employment help, that is, through formal employment supports—employment centres. The next chapter begins to explore IRY's navigation and negotiation of employment centres and EPS. Positioned as a source of formal employment support, Chapter 7 looks at the factors influencing IRY's abilities to first gain access to employment centres, prior to utilizing specific EPS.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## FACTORS INFLUENCING ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT CENTRES AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Formal sources of employment supports, such as EPS provided through employment centres, are an avenue in addition to informal employment supports (social networks and online/social media sources) through which IRY can acquire support that may enable them to access labour market opportunities. There are a small number of studies that have explored a few components of IRY's access to employment centres (Shields et al., 2006; Lauer et al., 2012; Galley, 2015). This study builds on existing research by more thoroughly exploring a wider range of factors that influence IRY's abilities to first gain access to employment centres or EPS.

This section describes the factors that interview participants identified as having influenced their access to employment centres or EPS. First, considering that access to employment centres requires an awareness that they exist, I discuss participants' perceptions of the awareness of employment centres (or lack thereof) among IRY, and their thoughts on barriers to learning about them. Next, I explore IRY's social networks' perspectives on their use of employment centres, as responses to their use of employment centres may impact the group's access to employment centres. I then present a number of factors study participants said affected their access to employment centres or EPS, including: location, travel, and physical space; financial costs; program logistics; language; culture; and eligibility and screening into EPS.

When I write about aspects of participants' experiences that invoked barriers or obstacles in their access to employment centres or EPS, I use Francis and Yan's (2016) definition of 'gaps', meaning: "... chasms or cracks between, on the one hand, young immigrants and refugees and their needs and, on the other, services available through formal support services.

Gaps inhibit successful integration by maintaining a separation of youth from mainstream society” (p. 78-79). When I refer to aspects of participants’ experiences that facilitated access to employment centres or EPS, I apply Francis and Yan’s (2016) definition of ‘bridges’: “... bridges create a continuum of services that offer a stable pathway for youth and connect them with services that promote their integration into mainstream society” (p. 79).

Some study participants described their experiences with and perceptions of numerous employment centres in Ottawa; I invited participants to speak about their experiences with the range of employment centres they used. As such, in chapters 7 and 8, some youth’s pseudonyms are associated with multiple types of organizations (MOs, CH/SCs, and/or SAs) and/or to multiple employment centres within one type of organization.

### **Lack of Knowledge of Employment Centres among Immigrant and Refugee Youth and Barriers to Learning about Them**

A primary barrier to accessing employment centres is IRY’s lack of knowledge of their existence. For example, Aisha described that, despite their various lengths of stay in Canada, her friends only found out about employment centres through her when she brought up the topic in conversations. She explained that, “even the people who are here for like four years were like, ‘how did you find out about that?’, ‘how come I never knew that happened?’ People just don’t know.” Aisha noted that these friends would then express keen interest in partaking in EPS. She identified that barriers preventing IRY from learning about employment centres include a lack of reading print newspapers to see advertisements about employment centres, visiting community facilities where they could be exposed to posters advertising employment centres, along with getting “lost in [immigration-related] paperwork.” Additionally, several participants underlined

the lack of effective advertisement and outreach efforts among employment centres in reaching IRY to let them know about the availability of employment supports.

### **Social Networks' Perspectives on Immigrant and Refugee Youth's Use of Employment Centres**

A lack of social network support of EPS could contribute to the loss of an employment support resource for the IRY group. While IRY's social networks' lack of support did not deter IRY's use of employment centres in this study, social networks' responses could potentially act as a barrier for other IRY in accessing employment centres, and so, the following findings are presented as potential barriers or facilitators of access to EPS for IRY. I asked study participants how their family, friends, and others in their social networks responded to their use of an employment centre. Youth reported a range of experiences with how supportive their families and others in their social networks were of their use of employment centres.

First, all of the interview participants indicated having people in their social networks who were aware of their use of employment centres. Of the nine participants who responded to the question, eight indicated that there were people in their social networks (consisting of family members and friends) who were in favour of their use of employment centres. IRY reported several reasons for why people in their social networks positively viewed their use of employment centres. One such reason was that they believed that EPS could help IRY secure jobs—and in ways that they believed they could not. Hannah shared, “they actually supported it, really supported it, and umm, they thought that it's the right step because they weren't able to give me all of the little details of information [on how to find a job].” Another participant, Sally, noted that individuals in her social network had previously benefitted from EPS, and thus,

approved of her use of these services as well: “my family gave total support of the employment centre—they previously were benefitted by them.”

On the other hand, a few participants shared that some people in their social networks did not understand the role or function of employment centres, and a portion of these youth had family members and friends question their use of employment centres. For example, Aisha pointed out that the purpose and use of employment centres are not clear to everyone in her social circle, such as friends and family. She mentioned that her friends might say, “I don’t see the use [of employment centres] if you can apply for another job [without employment centres] and still get it.” Additionally, she shared that her mom scrutinized her use of employment centres on the supposed basis of a lack of prior exposure to such centres:

My family doesn’t understand. They always ask me, “What are you doing? What do you gain from there? Do they pay you?” Like my mom doesn’t understand because she’s never had those kinds of services, but I’m like, “it helps me; I know it does help me.”

Sally also relayed that a friend of hers questioned her use of employment centres, as that friend had had negative experiences with employment centres in the past. Research suggests that a lack of knowledge of, or trust in, local service providers by members of IRY’s families can inhibit IRY’s access to community services (Francis & Yan, 2016). Given the barriers IRY study participants face in their labour market transition, their limited access to social networks, and narrow positive experiences with online and social media sources of finding a job, the possible loss of formal employment supports based on a lack of support of EPS from their social networks could further impede their search for work.

### **Location, Travel, and Physical Space**

Five study participants spoke of their access to employment centres having been affected by a lack of orientation to Ottawa and its bus transit system, their geographical distance from employment centres, and the small physical space of an employment centre.

#### **Lack of Orientation to Ottawa**

Two newcomer IRY relayed experiencing travel barriers in accessing employment centres at the beginning of their stays in Canada due to their unfamiliarity with Ottawa's streets and bus transit system. One study participant, Aisha, shared some of the challenges she experienced due to a lack of orientation to Ottawa when navigating travel to an employment centre:

[In my country] we don't even have those addresses, these names of the avenues and streets. You just have to know where you're going because it's a small country and a small town. If you don't know [how to get to where you're going], you just take a motto, a motto it's a kind of a bike—they know places. So just tell them, "I'm going this way," and they just take you.

Aisha also mentioned that she did not know how to use the Global Positioning System (GPS) on her phone or how to leverage online bus transit system aides; these tools could have helped her travel to employment centres.

Aisha recalled receiving the help of an employment coordinator in learning about the bus transit system in Ottawa, including how to use Google Maps and OC Transpo websites to plan her travel and see busses' scheduled or estimated arrivals. In reflection, she mentioned, "I got to learn everything from [the CH/SC employment program] ... they told us all that." Zarifa, who had lived in Canada for over 15 years, believed that her considerable length of residency served

to mitigate travel barriers. She said that, having lived in Canada for quite some time, she accumulated the knowledge necessary to be resourceful and circumvent transportation issues.

### **Bus Transit System in Ottawa**

Participants reported infrequent bus services on weekends to be an impediment in accessing employment centres that were open on weekends. So, while weekend operations at employment centres were regarded to facilitate access for IRY who could not attend on weekdays, the limited travel options by bus then presented a more significant barrier.

Cumbersome winter weather conditions in Ottawa further complicated transportation by bus to employment centres that were already far for service users, and diminished the likelihood that youth would attend. As put forward by Maysa, “if it was not far for me, maybe I will come every day, but it’s too far. I just come on weekends and sometimes I don’t come ... because in winter it’s too difficult to get the bus.” Participants noted that employment centres located directly on bus transit routes are more convenient.

Thus, IRY considered proximity to employment centres to be helpful. Three youth living in close proximity to employment centres reported getting to centres with ease. One participant, Sally, was pleased to be referred to an employment centre that was closer to her new residence by a past employment coordinator.

### **Physical Space**

The physical space of a MO employment centre was reported to possibly act as a barrier for some. Zarifa observed that the small physical space of a MO employment centre she visited could foster an uncomfortable experience for service users with anxiety or other mental health issues, due to the heightened risk of feeling confined in such an environment.

### Financial Costs

Despite being free, attendance in employment centres and participation in EPS still held various financial implications for IRY, some potentially inhibiting—and others promoting—accessibility. Aisha noted that having to bring one’s own lunches to employment programs poses a barrier to access, especially for newcomers to Canada. As she suggested, “a little fund” for food and refreshments on behalf of employment centres for service users would serve to “motivate [them].” Some IRY have to devise creative and difficult financial arrangements in order to participate in EPS. For example, Ali, who was participating in an IRY-specific employment program at a CH/SC, remarked that some individuals worked overnight shifts in order to be able to attend the employment program during the day. The employment program took place on a full-time basis on weekdays, detracting from opportunities to work and garner an income at those times; with no other means of income, some IRY needed to arrange overnight work. Ali added that most employment program participants in the particular CH/SC were women with husbands who were working. Ali shared that while his mother was a means of financial support during his participation in the employment training program, he had to pay her back a significant amount upon completing the program. Aisha and Ali’s reflections indicate that a lack of an income may deter IRY’s participation in employment programs.

Conversely, two participants spoke appreciatively about an employment program each, both run out of MOs, which offered service users financial incentives for their participation. Ali explained prioritizing the use of a MO employment program that offered payment over a CH/SC employment program that did not. Aisha also favoured a MO employment program that offered financial incentives for participation:

... the fact that it's paid too, it's very motivating. Cause you'll be knowing – cause it's a lot of time too because it's from 9 to 4, but it's only two weeks training program, and the fact that you be knowing, I'll be studying and I'll be having some money, to provide me any needs [is good].

Providing financial incentives for participation in EPS can circumvent income-related barriers; in effect, doing so can support IRY's involvement in EPS and thereby enhance their chances of securing employment that is suited to their goals and competencies. Shields and colleagues' (2006) study found that it is difficult for IRY to attend employment programs when they are dealing with issues of basic needs, such as housing.

In addition to employment programs offering financial incentives for participation in employment programs, there were other means of financial support provided to participants that promoted access to EPS. A participant shared that a CH/SC offset daycare costs for service users with children in a CH/SC, enabling them to participate in employment programs without the worry of having to pay for child care arrangements. The provision of free employment training and workshops was recognized as a facilitator of access to EPS, enabling IRY to avoid the pressure of financial costs that may have otherwise been incurred for equivalent training taken outside of employment centres. Free training is important as existing research highlights that fee-based programs deter IRY's participation (Social Planning Council of Ottawa, 2010). The provision of bus tickets for free promotes access to employment centres by counteracting the cost of travel and facilitates IRY's ability to go to malls, for example, to apply for jobs in-person and attend job interviews. Zarifa spoke highly about the provision of bus tickets and how the lack thereof may limit youth's job finding capacities, “[bus tickets] was something that was like really critical for me, because if I can't get to [job] interviews, then how am I going to get a job, right?”

This financial support was especially highly valued since bus transportation in Ottawa was deemed to be expensive. Not only was the monetary aid helpful, but the approach adopted in delivering the service was dignifying as employment coordinators were reported to be “really good about giving you as much [bus tickets] as you need” (Zarifa). In addition to financial barriers, program logistics were reported to influence IRY’s access to EPS.

### **Program Logistics**

Study participants identified several logistical factors that influenced their access to employment centres and EPS. In this section, I discuss participants’ reflections on the time commitment invoked by employment programs, as well as employment centres’ hours and days of operation.

#### **Employment Program Time Commitment**

Along with posing a financial barrier, some youth described that the time commitment required to partake in employment programs was a barrier in and of itself. Three participants noted that the respective employment programs they used took place on full day, full-time bases during the week, over the course of a few months. Aisha explained that the intense time commitment detracted from time that could have otherwise been spent directly toward searching for employment. She critiqued that, “you couldn’t even search for work because it felt like you’re attached to something full-time, so you don’t have time for you to go out, and you know, get to explore more [job opportunities].”

Youth who reported having no time-intensive commitments outside of the program, such as work or school, were less concerned with the heavy time commitment involved with employment programs. A participant without other heavy time commitments also suggested that

breaks, presentations, and games helped break up long employment program days, which made the days seem more manageable. Hannah asserted that:

Yeah, they were long hours; like, we would go from, I think from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm.

But at that time, I didn't have study or another job, so I didn't find the hours long. We

had a lunch break and we had a lot of, sometimes games, sometimes presentations.

Furthermore, two youth said that the burden of time required to participate in employment programs was mitigated in later stages of programs, when the expectation to physically attend employment centres was reduced.

### **Hours of Operation**

Youth also explained that their access to employment centres and EPS is restricted by the hours of operation. Zarifa noted that the hours of operation of the CH/SC employment centre she used conflicted with high school hours. She explained that many youth finish school at 3:30 pm, but that the employment centre she accesses closes at approximately 4:00 pm, leaving high school students with insufficient time for travel, let alone service use. Similarly, Sally mentioned that her full-time work schedule during the week conflicted with the hours of operation for the CH/SC employment centre she wished to access. Barak, a MO service user, also referred to the issue of hours of operation, noting that he had to skip a high school class because a screening session for an employment program he wanted to participate in was scheduled during high school hours.

### **Days of Operation**

Days of operation emerged as another factor that shaped IRY's access to employment centres and EPS. The lack of service delivery on weekends was a notable difficulty for two youth who used CH/SC and MO employment centres. Sally, a CH/SC employment centre service user,

believed that the lack of employment program provision on weekends inhibits full-time workers who work during the week from obtaining employment support in order to, for example, switch careers or seek an additional job. She poignantly stated that, “I think there are a lot of people who want to change their careers or want to look for a part-time job, but they don’t have the time on weekdays to go and search for those. They can be greatly benefitted from a weekend service.” Carene and Thierry revealed that the sole reason they were able to benefit from EPS at the SAs they frequented was that the centres were open on the weekends. They would otherwise not have been able to access the employment centres of the SAs since they attended high school on a full-time basis during the week. Ali and Sally, speaking about MOs and CH/SCs, respectively, both pointed out that it would be helpful to gain access to employment centres on weekends, even if only for a couple of hours on one day of the weekend.

### **Language**

Fluency in the language of service delivery can play a pivotal role in IRY’s access to services. Participants from all three types of organizations noted that, based on service users’ comfort levels, service delivery was available in both Canadian official languages (English and French). While Thierry noted that bilingual service delivery was available in the SA employment centre he used, he also mentioned that English was used more often in the centre when addressing individuals or groups of service users. Thierry insisted that the more common use of English at the centre was not an overwhelming barrier for him, as he had basic English language competencies; though he nevertheless conceded that it was a bit of an issue for him, as he was markedly more comfortable with the French language.

Seemingly more adverse barriers emerged when service users were not proficient in either English or French. One young person from a CH/SC and another from a MO explained

that translation services were not in place for youth who did not have strong language skills in either Canadian official language. Sally, for example, spoke of a friend who did not have functional language skills in either English or French; Sally took it upon herself to rewrite her friend's resume when it became evident that her friend could not understand the feedback from employment coordinators.

Staff members' breadth of linguistic backgrounds and competencies was reported to facilitate IRY's access to employment centres. Participants in this study said that CH/SC and MO employment centres leveraged the diversity in staff members' language skills in order to connect with and support service users. Ali listed several languages that were reflected among staff members in a MO employment centre and referenced their helpfulness, "I know there was an Italian person there, there were some Arabic-speaking people, Spanish, French, and English; I don't know—I'm sure there were other languages. Yeah, it was helpful. They were pretty good."

Finally, access to employment centres as related to language was promoted by staff from all organization types who were able to establish a channel of communication with service users despite IRY's limited language capacities. Thierry shared that staff members from a SA who were unable to speak French with him (his language of choice), were still somehow able to effectively communicate with him. Aisha concurred this assertion through her experience at a CH/SC and revealed that, "I don't know how [the staff] do it." Even when language is not an issue, cultural barriers could impede the interaction that takes place between IRY and employment coordinators.

### **Culture**

Barriers related to cultural, cross-national differences in job applications are inevitable. Sally observed that it may be difficult for IRY to approach employment coordinators about job

seeking documents in Canada. She gave the example of her brother-in-law, a newcomer to Canada, who went to an employment centre, sought help with his resume, and eventually became so confused to the point where her (Sally's) husband had to intervene, update his resume for him, and instruct him that "...this is the way Canadians look at resumes." The confusion experienced by Sally's brother-in-law stemmed not from a language barrier, but a lack of understanding regarding the presentation of job application documents in Canada. Sally further noted that newcomer IRY may, out of a fear of judgement, be hesitant to seek clarification from employment centre staff on how resumes are presented in Canada. She said it might feel more comfortable to explore and uncover these differences with someone from the same cultural background:

A newcomer can feel shy or uncomfortable to ask [about differences in resume presentation in different cultures]. Like, if I go and tell someone [like an employment coordinator] that your resume should be 8 pages long, [they] might give me a judgemental look. Because of that, I won't ask [them] that question, but if I have a friend from my culture, I can really ask because that person would understand where I am coming from.

Albeit taking the following principle from the literature on mental health therapeutic processes, it is relevant nonetheless to pinpoint that, service users fearing judgement may be an indicator of a potential failure in cross-cultural relationships between service users and service providers (Ho et al., 2013). Researchers have identified that the underutilization of mental health services among children and adolescent refugees and ethnic minorities can in part be attributed to inadequate cultural awareness and competence among mental health professionals (de Anstiss, Ziaian, Procter, Warland, & Baghurst, 2009).

### **Eligibility and Screening into Employment Programs and Services**

A few study participants identified eligibility and screening barriers and/or facilitators of accessibility to employment centres and EPS. A study participant articulated that without a SIN card, one is unable to partake in employment programs. This precludes access to EPS for IRY who do not have work permits. Aisha spoke about a screening process barrier, noting that she filled out a form at a SA employment centre, which she understood served as an application to obtain employment support. She was told that upon completing the form, she would receive contact from a staff member at the organization to speak with her about the possibility of enrollment in the employment centre; but months later, she still had not received a follow-up from the centre.

As a factor influencing accessibility, one young person spoke about the application process he needed to complete in order to be screened into employment programs in two different MOs. Ali commented that it was very easy to apply to participate in both of the employment programs. He exclaimed that, “I just had to drop in my social [insurance] number and one of my bank papers, and that’s it! Then, I got an email saying when [the employment program] was going to be taking place and I went there, and that’s it!”

### **Summary**

This chapter explored the factors that influenced IRY’s access to employment centres and EPS. A lack of knowledge of employment centres among IRY is a significant barrier to accessing formal employment supports. The majority of IRY had people in their social networks who were in favour of their use of EPS, while others had members of their social networks question their use of formal employment supports, or demonstrate non-understanding of their use of these services; these perceptions could potentially influence IRY’s access to employment

centres. A lack of orientation to Ottawa and how to navigate travel therein constitute another set of barriers to employment centres. Less frequent bus services on weekends and cumbersome winter weather conditions limit IRY's likelihood of travelling to employment centres. Living in close proximity to employment centres enhances access, while living far from centres poses a barrier. Also, small physical spaces in employment centre premises could trigger symptoms in service users experiencing anxiety and/or other mental health issues.

Not having a source of income could be a barrier to accessing EPS; full-time and full-day employment programs and having to bring in lunches for day-long employment programs could also hold the possibility of inhibiting access to EPS for IRY due to monetary considerations. Financial promoters of accessibility include the provision of monetary support to offset daycare costs, free bus tickets, financial incentives to partake in EPS, and free of cost training and workshop opportunities. The time commitment required for participation in employment programs served as an obstacle for IRY with other time-heavy commitments like work and/or school, and was less of an issue for those without such commitments. Inadequate hours of operation was a barrier for high school students and those who worked full-time during the week. Being open on weekends enhanced access to employment centres, while being closed on weekends was a barrier for IRY who were unable to attend during the weekdays.

With respect to language, IRY reported the unavailability of translation services and the predominant use of English in otherwise bilingual service delivery contexts in employment centres. Factors enhancing accessibility in relation to language included the adaptability of employment centre staff to facilitate a channel of communication despite language barriers between them and service users, and a wide range of linguistic backgrounds being present among staff. Cultural barriers were reported to make IRY uncomfortable with exploring differences in

job application processes in Canada and service users' countries of origin with employment coordinators, due to fears of judgement. A lack of a SIN card inhibits IRY's ability to access EPS. A lack of follow-up with youth to explore screening interested individuals into employment centres was a barrier to accessing employment centres. Easy-to-navigate application processes to gain entry into employment programs facilitated access.

The relevance of intersecting forms of social relations within the IRY group is made clear in their ability to access employment centres and EPS. This chapter demonstrated that various aspects of IRY's social identities relating to class, ability, immigration status, culture, and length of residency in Canada can influence how they first access employment centres and navigate EPS. In 1988, King raised that many of the differences in the priorities of black and white women hinge on class in that concerns related to transportation, hunger, welfare, limited health care, and poor housing are rarely on the agendas of white feminists. This pinpoints the importance of examining the range of IRY identities when planning and delivering supports.

Some of the same barriers IRY faced in transitioning into the labour market (e.g., culture, language, immigration status), as presented in Chapter 5, also impeded their access to formal employment supports. It is important to mitigate these barriers in formal employment support contexts so that the same barriers impeding their labour market transitions do not also hinder their ability to get help with navigating that transition. This is especially important when considering that this group may also lack access to informal employment supports—making the requirement to have robust and accessible formal employment supports all the more important. To not do so would be to further marginalize IRY by upholding barriers to the development of their capacities (Mullaly, 2010). Considering that those who carry privilege are viewed as automatically worthy of support from institutions in society (Nzira & Williams, 2009; Mullaly,

2010), in alignment with the anti-oppressive framework, it is necessary to work towards eliminating this differential in access to rights (Wormer et al., 2012), such as that of support.

Having presented IRY's perceptions of and experiences with factors hindering and facilitating access to employment centres and EPS, the next chapter explores IRY's perceptions of and experiences with the specific EPS they used once they accessed employment centres.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## USE OF EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In addition to exploring how IRY first access formal employment supports, it is necessary to examine how the unique and diverse group uses specific EPS, as their ability to take up EPS may differ, for example, from Canadian-born people's ability to navigate EPS. The benefits associated with access to formal employment supports lay in what IRY are able to take away from them and what advantages they accrue from their use of EPS. This study fulfills gaps in the literature by learning about how a unique and diverse group—IRY—uses EPS.

In this chapter, I explore IRY's experiences with EPS once they had gained access to employment centres. I begin by sharing (1) how IRY heard about the employment centres and EPS they used, and the extent of EPS use among their personal networks, and (2) IRY's reasons for engaging in EPS and the types of jobs they were pursuing. Next, I present IRY's experiences with EPS during (3) the job search process and (4) applications to specific jobs. I also discuss (5) IRY's experiences with different modes of EPS delivery, including group and one-on-one supports and finally, (6) their use of computers, Internet service, and printers. Thus, this section sheds light on how IRY first learn about EPS, the extent of their use among their social networks, why they are motivated to use EPS, and what study participants think about the programs and services once they start to use them.

**Learning about Employment Programs and Services**

Study participants reported learning about EPS in a variety of ways, including through word-of-mouth (e.g., communication with family members and friends), written advertisement (e.g., flyers, posters in community centres), internal referrals (i.e., referrals made between departments within a single organization), and external referrals (i.e., referrals made from one

organization to another). IRY also reported learning about EPS through outreach workers, personal Internet searches, and social media.

To obtain a glimpse into the use of EPS in my study participants' social networks, I asked them if they knew anyone else who uses or has used EPS. With the exception of one young person, all study participants knew of at least one other person in their social networks who had used EPS, and one young person knew of three other people (the study's maximum of other people known). These other individuals consisted predominantly of friends, followed by siblings and other family members. The ten IRY in my study had themselves used a total of 17 employment centres (seven MOs, five SAs, and five CH/SCs). At first, these observations appear to contradict with what I presented in Chapter 7, that is, participants contend that IRY are generally unaware of the availability of employment centres. However, both findings may be true at the same time considering that (a) participants in my study were, by design, necessarily EPS users, (b) many participants identified learning about EPS through word-of-mouth, and (c) one person may represent only a small percentage of an individual's social network. It may be the case that the use of EPS is contained among groups of IRY who are aware of and exhibit strong engagement with them, but that there is a gap to be bridged for other IRY groups to learn about and initiate engagement with EPS. The use of EPS among IRY's social networks does not appear to be widespread.

### **Work Goals and Motivations for Using Employment Programs and Services**

All study participants engaged in EPS to help them in their pursuit to find work. Nine out of ten participants had an idea about the job they wanted to pursue, and some explained their rationales for pursuing their target job or field of work. Study participants' motivations to secure work rested in wishes to have something to do, acquire general work experience, obtain

Canadian work experience, familiarize oneself with the Canadian workplace, and meet personal expectations to work.

Sally obtained her undergraduate degree in biochemistry in Canada and thus wished to secure work in a science-related field. Additionally, she was open to obtaining a job in administration. Ali was accepting of any employment opportunities except for those in cleaning or construction work as he had previously worked in those domains and disliked them. Keyon also adopted a process of elimination approach in narrowing down the fields of employment that he would be receptive to and similar to Keyon, spoke about excluding work in the fields of construction, as well as jobs that demand mathematical reasoning and numerical calculation/reflection. When asked what job she wished to obtain, Aisha first noted, “Nobody likes sitting at home doing nothing, so I just wanted to have a work experience.” She continued to share that she wanted to obtain a job in order to achieve the requirement of Canadian work experience. With respect to the field in which she was interested in gaining this experience, she told of her hopes to gain employment in community services as that field encompasses the education she had initiated in her country of origin, in International Relations.

Carene and Thierry were pursuing work in the fields of policing as they were exposed to employment opportunities in that field from SA employment coordinators. Thierry explained that while his long-term career goal is to be a computer scientist working in the field of information technology, he was pursuing immediate employment in policing in order to acquire work experience and familiarize himself with the Canadian workplace. Barak was looking for a “simple job”, like as a cashier in Walmart or a store clerk in another store in the service industry. Maysa was open to obtaining any job, but preferred an “easy” one to start with, and to this end, similarly exemplified working as a cashier. She wanted to gain work experience in Canada. Not

ever having worked before (including in her country of origin), Maysa expected that, "... in Canada, I have to work." In using EPS, Zarifa wished to find a job that was in between the realms of working with children and youth, and working in a women's shelter. She was motivated to find work because she was not in school, and insinuated that, at the very least, either work or school need to be in place for her at any given moment.

IRY were clearly motivated to secure employment, had ideas in mind about the types of jobs they wished to pursue, and in their stories, also relayed that they hoped to seek the experiences that would mitigate the barriers they face in transitioning into the labour market such as a lack of general and Canadian work experience and cultural barriers. Their perspectives on the EPS that could help them gain the jobs and experiences they seek are explored next.

### **Employment Programs and Services**

The remainder of this chapter explores IRY's experiences with and perceptions of the EPS they used. The EPS that will be discussed are divided into the following sub-sections: Acquiring Job Information and Experience, Submitting Applications and Preparing for Interviews, Experiences with EPS Delivery, and Computers, Internet Service, and Printers.

#### **Acquiring Job Information and Experience**

IRY spoke about the forums through which they gained access to job information, other employment supports, and job-relevant experiences. Six EPS are discussed in this section: job information; job posts; job search process; job fairs; employment packages; and volunteer placements.

**Job Information.** When asked about what jobs IRY were interested in acquiring through their involvement in EPS, one interview participant, Hannah, shared that she was unaware of the jobs that are available in Canada, knowledge she deemed to be a necessary precursor to

determining what job(s) she wanted to pursue. For her, employment coordinators were important resources. Hannah explained that employment coordinators helped her by imparting information on local job opportunities and bridging her interests and background education from her country of origin to coordinate a volunteer placement in a relevant field that exists in Canada:

I was actually hoping that [employment coordinators] will help me with that—to know what kind of work there is [in Canada]. I come from a medical background so I wanted something in a medical clinic or something related to health. So, my volunteering was in a medical clinic. I helped with filing patients' records so it was something within what I wanted.

Two other study participants, Thierry and Carene, became interested in police employment programs that hired newcomers, after hearing about it through employment coordinators in SAs. These findings suggest that employment coordinators can have an influence on the jobs that IRY are exposed to and apply for. Oguz (2013) reinforces the importance of raising awareness about local job types and career paths for IRY. The World Bank (2012) finds that enhancing the quality of labour market information can ease the school to work transition and improve IRY's capacity for job mobility. Lauer and colleagues (2012) argue that first generation IRY require specific job information that is not required by Canadian-born youth.

**Job Posts.** Gaining access to job posts is integral to applying for jobs. IRY spoke about their experiences with job posts that were posted physically, hosted on online databases, and sent through email on behalf of employment centres.

**Physical job posts.** IRY explained that they valued being able to view job advertisements that were posted in employment centres and featured in employment centres' resource binders. One critique that was brought up about job advertisements posted physically in employment

centres was that they often requested high levels of work and educational experiences, thus making them inaccessible for youth who may not have acquired the stipulated experiences. This may limit IRY's exposure to jobs that they can reasonably apply for based on their age.

*Online job portals/databases.* Two young people, Ali and Sally, spoke about using online job portals/databases, which refer to job posts that are hosted on websites or online databases. Together, they noticed a couple of issues in their use of employment centre online job portals: exclusively listing academic job opportunities; limited number of job posts listed; and while online job portals had 'advanced search functions', that could theoretically enable one to specify particular fields of employment or employment positions of interest, this function yielded scarce and/or outdated job posts. Another issue that was identified with online job databases was that job posts youth received through email were not also featured on employment centre's online job portal. This means that in cases where service users are not registered to receive job post emails, solely leveraging an employment centre's online job portal would not expose them to the range of job posts the employment centre has access to.

Due to his dissatisfaction with online job portals, substantiated by most of the reasons above, Ali deemed that: "[Online job portals] weren't very useful, I had to actually go and talk one-on-one [with an employment coordinator]." Ali raised the concern that having to physically visit employment centres to gain access to more job posts due to the dearth of and limited job opportunities available on online databases, strengthens the argument that youth who do not attend employment centre premises physically or who face barriers in doing so, are at a disadvantage in their search for work. On the other hand, those who connect with employment coordinators on a one-on-one basis were perceived to have a stronger chance of obtaining employment—and more quickly—than those who levered exclusively online methods, given the

presumed increased likelihood of obtaining access to more job posts through in-person communications. The potential of increased access to employment supports through in-person forums impedes the job search capacity of service users who face barriers in their ability to attend employment centres physically.

***Job posts sent by email.*** Participants spoke of appreciating job posts sent to them from employment centres through email. At the same time, numerous IRY identified the limitation that job post emails were sent to all registered service users, irrespective of their relevance to service users' specified areas of job interests or qualifications. Sally offered the following criticisms and example, believing that they also reflected her friends' experiences:

I specifically told [the employment coordinator] which area of interest I have, what kind of job I was looking for, but instead she used to send me job postings from all over the place, which I am not interested in, so, that's the only thing that didn't help. All the emails were general. Like, they're hiring a mechanic and they would send an email to everyone even though that's not my expertise or that's not my [job] interest.

The negative effect of sending job post emails to all registered users of employment centres instead of targeting them based on service users' identified job interests was reported to be that the sheer volume of emails overwhelmed participants and increased the likelihood that they would miss job postings that were actually of interest to them. After presumably gaining access to local job information and job posts, gaining the tools to search for the jobs that they wish to pursue, and beginning the process of responding to job posts can be the next challenge for IRY.

**Job Search Process.** The logistics of searching and applying for jobs can vary drastically in different countries around the world, disadvantaging newcomers in a host society (Constant, Kahanec, Rinne, & Zimmermann, 2011). Providing IRY with quality job search information is

important, as IRY are known to lack access to resources and social networks that could fulfill this information need (Oguz, 2013). Enhancing IRY's job search skills is believed to be key to smoothing their school to work transition and increasing their capacity for job mobility (World Bank, 2012). IRY from all types of organizations in this study spoke appreciatively about the information and guidance they received on where and how to search and apply for jobs in Canada. For example, Thierry and Carene mentioned that it was useful to learn about where and how one could apply for jobs in the fields of policing. These youth said they were strongly supported by SA coordinators in their navigation of the job application processes associated with a police employment program. Hannah mentioned that she had never actually searched for a job before, neither in Canada, nor in her country of origin, and that she faces the added barrier of a complete lack of orientation on how to do so in the Canadian context. Hannah said that she found support from staff at a CH/SC about the job search process, noting that they "[helped her] with that." While most IRY's perspectives of the support they received on job search information and processes were positive, some said that they wished to obtain more detailed and thorough insight and information on job search processes in Canada.

**Job Fairs.** Four participants (who were recruited from CH/SCs and MOs) used job fairs. Even though two of these youth reported successfully having obtained jobs through job fairs, IRY study participants generally were not comfortable with job fairs. The only positive reflection of job fairs presented in one young person who expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be able to attend numerous job fairs held consecutively on one day. Besides this, unfavorable views of and experiences with job fairs emerged among IRY interview participants. One, expressed by Sally, related to her feeling as though she could not sufficiently showcase herself and her skills in a job fair forum, "I couldn't express that much of myself in a job fair ... It's too crowded; no

one gives attention to one specific person so you cannot fully express your skills or your strength.” Ali remarked that employers featured at a job fair he attended were predominantly hiring for positions that required levels of work and educational experiences that he had not attained, from which he insinuated that said job fair may have been geared toward an older demographic, and not youth. This highlights another forum where IRY may be disadvantaged in their ability to utilize job search support based on their age.

**Employment Packages.** One participant identified benefiting from employment packages, which provided youth with further job information, awareness of other employment supports, and volunteer service lists. Sally used EPS from two MOs and reported that they both offered employment packages to service users. These packages contained links to resources such as job search websites, a volunteer service list (i.e., places where you could volunteer), and a list of private agencies (e.g., Excel HR, Hunt Personnel) that provide employment support. Sally explained that this resource was available to all registered service users, and that it can help newcomer IRY become acquainted with employment support services and volunteer opportunities quickly. Sally explained that this package was particularly helpful for a friend of hers who had clear ideas about the work she wanted to pursue upon immigration to Canada, and who was able to find pertinent information on her interests through the employment package:

I think that it’s very helpful for the newcomers. I had a friend who used to work with UNICEF before, so she had enough experience with UNICEF when she came to Canada from Iran. First thing she wanted to know [upon arrival] was, “where is the UNICEF office? I want to do work for them because I have enough experience.” So it helped a lot.

**Volunteer Placements.** Volunteer placements enabled IRY to acquire job-relevant experiences. Two study participants, Hannah and Aisha, expressed appreciation for the volunteer

placement services they participated in, which were offered by CH/SCs. Service users were able to volunteer at organizations for a determined period of time and employment centre staff took charge of coordinating those placements, working together with service users and taking their needs into account. Hannah and Aisha told me that their volunteer placements drew upon the education they had almost completed in their countries of origin, in the medical and social services fields, respectively. Hannah expressed content in gaining work experience through the volunteer placement. Hannah and Aisha also spoke highly of the flexible and supportive approach adopted by staff in coordinating and executing volunteer placements. Hannah was supported in her choice to cut her volunteering short due to the commencement of school, and Aisha was able to amend her volunteer hours to accommodate more hours per week so that she could complete her requirements sooner in view of probable forthcoming job opportunities.

Indeed, job placements can facilitate the school to work transition process and expand IRY's capacity for job mobility (World Bank, 2012). Hannah also reflected that in a placement forum, she was also able to find references in Canada who could speak directly to her work ethic. Lauer and colleagues (2012) similarly find that work experience obtained during immigrants' adolescence and young adulthood facilitates access to networks and references that are useful in ameliorating their chances of success in future economic pursuits. Through the adoption of social and human capital, volunteering has been regarded as a stepping stone for the integration of immigrants into a host society (Handy & Greenspan, 2009). However, neoliberal ideologies contend that a lack of volunteering can be used as a reason for why IRY do not accrue more labour force success, all while ignoring the premise that volunteering is an impractical option for migrants who have little financial support to rely on (Shields et al., 2006).

### **Submitting Applications and Preparing for Interviews**

The next section features the EPS that provided study participants with support on the job application stages of submitting resumes and cover letters, preparing for interviews, and providing references to potential employers.

**Resumes and Cover Letters.** IRY reported having obtained resume help through the employment centres they used. They overwhelmingly praised support with resumes as one of the most advantageous supports they recounted receiving. Sally captured the extent to which IRY in general expressed content with the help they received on their resumes:

I would go back, as I mentioned, as soon as my contract gets over. I'll go back and update my resume with them because they deal with tons of people on a daily basis. They have much better knowledge than me [on resumes], of course, and so that's a great support for anyone who's looking for a job, yeah.

Employment support staff helped service users draft their resumes for the first time, rearrange the order of the information presented, and edit and fix mistakes. Employment coordinators also instructed youth on strategies they could adopt to market themselves on their resumes. For example, Hannah explained learning to think more comprehensively about her skills:

... You don't think that you have a lot of the skills, but they would tell you that if you have a lot of brothers and sisters, you can say that I have experience working with children—it's a different way of thinking.

One way in which youth experienced help with resumes was through being instructed on the appropriate manner of presenting information on such a document in Canada. This is an important source of support for IRY who may be used to presenting resumes differently in their countries of origin and/or who simply may not have as much experience in devising them in

Canada as might their Canadian-born counterparts. Aisha described having obtained help on how to present her resume in Canada, which she said served to counteract challenges she faced with cultural differences, as resumes were presented differently “back home.” She said that coordinators took issue with the resume she had prepared prior to gaining resume support from them: “I remember the first time I [showed my resume to employment coordinators] at [a CH/SC], they were like, ‘please, I hope you never send this resume anywhere else—it has sensitive information.’ And I was like, ‘What? How?’” In reflecting upon the resume support she then received, she also added that, “We didn’t know [that you have to tailor resumes] before. We were just like, ‘[there] has to be one resume for everything!’ Haha, yeah.”

Some study participants (one recruited from a SA and three from CH/SCs) indicated having learned about and acquired help with their cover letters. Hannah, for example, mentioned that she found out about the concept and process of writing cover letters through EPS: “I didn’t know about cover letters haha. They said that you need a cover letter when you’re applying and all of the dos and don’ts [when devising a cover letter].”

**Interview Support.** Several young people (four from SAs, two from CH/SCs, and one from a MO employment centre) alluded to the support they received with job interviews, and each of them expressed benefiting substantially from this source of support. They reported learning about how to conduct oneself in an interview, what to do and not do in an interview, and appropriate interview attire. IRY also learned about questions that job seekers are advised to ask interviewers, such as regarding job responsibilities, hours of work, and duties and obligations. Hannah commented on her new-found insight: “... [it] was very helpful to know that it’s your responsibility to ask these questions. A lot of people will not tell you. You need to ask about that. Yeah, that was helpful.” Youth also received the opportunity to practice interview skills in mock

interview settings.

Interview support can be critical, especially because interviews present another context where IRY can be met with cultural barriers; indeed, this was the case for a participant of this study. Aisha recounted that through EPS, she “found out that there’s a lot of different things than back home—especially for interviews.” Aisha, a newcomer to Canada, learned how to approach responding to interview questions, which served to mitigate a cultural discrepancy. For example, she explained that in her country of origin, responses to the common interview question, “tell me about yourself” can welcome a range of details, including personal information, which, generally, are not the types of responses that the question is meant to elicit in the Canadian context. Through the EPS, she learned how this question might be answered in Canada:

... All you have to do is to answer something related to the work you’re looking for: “I’m a motivated person, hard-working person,”—all those qualities, right? So I learned all that at [the CH/SC employment centre]. I didn’t know before.

**References.** Study participants spoke about the value of employment coordinators serving as references for them in their job applications. Having references attest to your merit for a prospective job is an essential prerequisite in obtaining employment in Canada. Immigrant youth are disadvantaged in this regard (Perreira et al. 2007; Lauer et al., 2012), possibly due to their comparatively shorter length of stay in Canada when compared to their Canadian-born counterparts. As told by Hannah, newcomer IRY are less likely to have contacts that are not family members or friends, and thus, appropriate to serve as job references.

Hannah explained that obtaining a reference from a staff member at a CH/SC employment program she used was an important source of support for her. She drew on this resource when she applied for a job requiring three references; the employment coordinator

served as one of her three references. Needless to say, she secured the job and praised how integral the employment centre staff member was in her success in finding a job. Speaking about the utility of this resource, Hannah shared:

Having someone to be a reference for you and telling that, yeah, she was on time, she— all of these things that they would tell as a reference ... I think that's especially important for people new to Canada ... having some of the people who work [at employment centres] as references is helpful.

Hannah also appreciated that staff let service users know of this resource at the very start of the program, which she suggested can alleviate some anxiety among IRY about securing a job in Canada: “and they said that from the first day: whenever you want a reference, just send an email and we'll be a reference.”

Thus far, this section has explored some of the specific EPS that IRY study participants identified having used from employment centres. In the next section, I outline IRY's experiences with the delivery mediums through which they spoke of acquiring employment supports.

### **Experiences with Employment Program and Service Delivery**

There were four main categories of EPS delivery sources through which IRY reported receiving job support. These included job training and workshops, one-on-one employment supports, staff, and liaisons and follow-ups to coordinate and provide further employment help.

**Job Training and Workshops.** Four youth recruited from CH/SCs and two from MOs reported their experiences with job training and workshop support from the EPS they used. Youth praised the job training opportunities and workshops, both for their content and the networking opportunities they provided.

The courses youth reported benefitting from can be grouped into those relating to technical skills, the job search process, and social skills. Technical training opportunities that youth identified partaking in included First Aid; Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation; High-Five; Non-Violent Crisis Intervention; Food Handlers; Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System; Microsoft Word; and managing finances. Workshops on the job search process included how to navigate and excel in job interviews; how to obtain a police record check; time management; resume support; cover letter support; and what to ask for when offered a job. Courses on social skills included conflict resolution; how to be confident in public speaking; using social media as a tool for job searching; interacting with different types of customers; managing work roles and altercations with coworkers; and how to keep a job.

One service user, Barak, noted that the most helpful components of the MO EPS he used were the training and workshops on how to manage finances, deal with difficult customers, and manage disputes with colleagues. Barak added that he appreciated receiving information about educational opportunities in colleges and universities, earning brackets for various degrees and credentials in Canada, and avenues through which students can gain financial support to pay for educational endeavours when their parents cannot. Hannah's assessment of the workshops and training she received from a CH/SC also indicated that these opportunities enabled her to become acquainted with the Canadian workplace and job market, in addition to awarding her with certificates that she could highlight on her resumes. Hannah underlined how the training helped her feel more prepared to embark on job searches in Canada: "you're not just new to Canada. You have a lot of training and you have the resume ready, so that's cool." A valuable attribute reported about a MO organization in particular was that multiple training workshops were coordinated in one day, meaning that youth were able to benefit from more than one learning

opportunity when travelling to the employment centre. Another MO was praised for offering workshops in French and English and advertising them accordingly in both official languages.

A common thread connecting the perspectives of interview participants who reported taking training from the two different types of organizations (MOs and CH/SCs) was the indication that the job training opportunities they received were free. This proved to be accommodating, since, as Barak put forth, the training opportunities provided would have incurred significant financial costs if taken external to the employment programs. Youth's evaluation of the training and workshops they received appeared to vary based on their length of stay in Canada. Ali mentioned that the courses he took in a MO, such as on how to leverage social media and participate in job interviews, were very basic for him and that he already knew of the information being relayed. In retrospect, he said that he would have liked to receive more in-depth information on these topics. Ali had lived in Canada for approximately nine years at the time of our interview. In contrast, Hannah, who had lived in Canada for a little over a year and a half, referred to the importance of basic training information that could equalize the playing field for newcomers who are searching for jobs. She said that the "basic" level of information could be taken for granted by people who had lived in Canada for a more substantial amount of time. She exemplified that the employment program she used "... offered a lot of people that came and spoke to us about like not to give your SIN number to anyone, a lot of things that you don't know, but people here they know them." Not only did IRY benefit from job information and training, but through these forums, they also gained access to informal networking opportunities.

***Informal Networking.*** Participants explained that employment training programs and workshops provided valuable opportunities to socialize with other youth. Similarly, longer-term employment programs with embedded training opportunities also created environments

conducive to socialization and the development of networks. For example, through a teamwork training exercise at a MO employment centre, participants were asked to speak with one another for the purpose of enhancing their confidence in conversing in English. Through this exercise, Ali spoke about his intent to learn French and his passion to work abroad with other participants who shared his interests, and who offered him names of resources to achieve his goals:

I actually got to know about other services or things that could help me more than the people actually teaching the courses. Because I told [another service user] that I would like to travel the world ... she talked about how she travels all over the place and she told me about some websites that were really interesting for finding jobs in other countries. [Another training participant] told me about some programs that help you like with public speaking, so those were useful, I think. [Other training participants] told me about some services for immigrant people to get help in learning French... [so] I went there and applied and set up an appointment and I'm starting French this month because I really suck at French.

Aisha also referred to the helpfulness of navigating job search processes alongside others: "it's good because when one just finds something [a job], they just tell everybody and that can help any one of us."

These employment training programs served as a forum to meet others and socialize. Aisha and Hannah both shared that it was nice to become acquainted and connect with others in the context of an employment training program. They appreciated the opportunities to interact with people from different backgrounds, countries, and generations, and gain perspective and insight in their job search process by hearing others' experiences. They shared the following messages:

Yeah, it was very positive, even the interaction with other people, it was nice. Meeting people from different backgrounds, knowing they come from different countries; some still struggling, some found a job while they are in the program, which was nice too. It's not just learning about jobs, it's actually [being] with the people... (Hannah)

And it's also a kind of a hangout thing, knowing that you're going ... to meet people because we are all friends, right... but there's also people from different countries and we all get along so well, so it's good to meet people over generation, you know, get to interact, yeah. (Aisha)

Torezani and colleagues' (2008) study found that employment services provided opportunities for refugees to develop one's social network and 'weak ties' within the wider community.

Another medium through which IRY gained access to job help, namely through one-on-one employment supports, is explored next.

**One-on-One Employment Supports.** Most participants spoke of one-on-one employment supports, which is employment help whereby service users meet with employment coordinators on an individual basis to receive tailored support in their job seeking endeavours. Participants shared that they used this form of employment support to get help with the writing, reviewing, updating, and formatting of their resumes and cover letters. The help that staff were shown to provide in one-on-one contexts also consisted of maintaining files of certificates, resumes, job interests, following up on service users' job search progress, walking youth through possible interview scenarios, and offering job information. IRY's positive and negative experiences with the one-on-one employment supports they received are reported below.

***Positive experiences.*** Of the participants who spoke about one-on-one employment

supports, many said it was the most useful form of job help they received from EPS. Recounting her positive experience with one-on-one employment supports in a MO employment centre, Sally said that there was:

... a specific counsellor who would open a profile for you, keep all your skills, copy of your certificates, a copy of your resume, and she had a form where you had to fill out like what's your [job] interest, why you are interested in that, are you looking for part-time, full-time, what's your salary expectation. She would keep all those in mind.

Another MO service user, Ali, shared that the one-on-one employment support was the most helpful employment support component for him because it facilitated access to more job information and posts, instead of constantly being referred to online resources. Ali felt supported on a deeper level through the one-on-one support service, noting that, "the one-on-one's with people, I guess, felt a bit more personal and like you were more than just a random stranger. They actually try to help you instead of just telling you to use their online website."

For Sally, a positive evaluation of a MO was that the employment centre offered one-on-one employment supports as a walk-in service, rather than by appointment (the latter of which is more commonly the case). Reinberg (1999) echoes the sentiment that one-on-one interaction with immigrants and refugees is the only way in which trust in the credibility of staff and agencies can be built. The World Bank (2012) identified job counselling, which is fostered through one-on-one employment supports, as a key component of youth employment intervention strategies.

Some IRY also spoke fondly about the prospect of one-on-one employment supports; while they had not yet acquired this source of employment help, they were anticipating it. Such positive anticipation further signifies the perceived benefit of one-on-one employment support

for IRY study participants. For example, Zarifa mentioned, “I’m getting to meet with a counsellor on Monday to get a more in-depth idea of why I am not getting any calls for different jobs ... really, one-on-one time is what I think I need.” Sally even noted that the lack of this source of support at one of the MO employment centres she used was a detriment to her experience at that centre. She poignantly expressed regret that, “there was no one-to-one connection with the counsellor.”

*Negative experiences.* Some IRY had negative experiences with one-on-one employment supports. Ali, a MO service user, noted experiencing a diminishing quality of one-on-one employment support, with increasingly less access to job information as time went on. He mentioned that some of the one-on-one employment support encounters were unproductive. For example, Ali explained receiving little help from his counsellor later on in the process after having met with her several times already: “I felt like the lady wasn’t really giving me much information about jobs, she never mentioned a job in specific, and kind of asked me about my resume, but she didn’t do anything, just talked.”

Some youth indicated meeting with employment coordinators on a one-on-one basis to be a nerve-racking experience. Youth reported fearing that coordinators would act condescendingly, and some youth who used to support others explained that it was difficult to put themselves in a service user position. One young person also seemed to feel pressure to demonstrate positive and enthusiastic attitudes when meeting employment coordinators on a one-on-one basis. Ali cautioned that, “if you’re grumpy and don’t want help, then I think [one-on-one employment support] would not be as good.”

**Staff.** Staff at employment centres emerged as a pivotal theme throughout the interviews. It was evident that staff had an important influence on IRY through their role in delivering EPS.

The majority of interview participants from MOs, CH/SCs, and SAs noted that they appreciated the staff in employment centres for many reasons. Some youth also reported negative experiences with staff.

***Positive Experiences.*** The care, competence, and diversity of staff were valued by IRY service users. Hannah appreciated the care and support of staff at the CH/SC employment centre she used, and especially valued their flexibility; she explained that the staff adjusted the volunteer component of an employment program to support her acceptance into school, which commenced prior to her completing her required volunteer hours. Hannah explained that staff understood why she could not continue to volunteer, exercised flexibility, supported her decision, and conveyed happiness that her goals were being realized: “When I started school, it wasn’t like, ‘no you should finish the 30 hours [of volunteer work].’ They were actually very happy that I got accepted because it’s something I wanted. They knew that I had applied for university.”

IRY expressed having trust and confidence in staff’s competence to help them find a job. Barker and Thomson (2015) argue that for a relationship to constitute social capital, such as in the case of linking social capital, service providers not only require access to valued resources (economic, cultural, or social), but also contact with service users who trust them. For example, Sally reflected on staff’s competence in previously helping her find a job; she mentioned that, once her current work contract ends, she plans to return to the same CH/SC employment centre for help in seeking yet another job. Also regarding a CH/SC employment centre, Zarifa noted that she found it beneficial that there was always one staff member in the general premises of the employment centre to offer all service users prompt help in proofreading and editing job application documents. Valuing the diversity of cultural and racial backgrounds reflected in the

staff at a CH/SC employment centre, Zarifa argued that IRY may feel more comfortable and less nervous in seeking help when they see their own cultural or racial background reflected in the staff composition. Rossiter and Rossiter (2009) found that activity leaders in social programs not being culturally or racially reflective of the population they were working with resulted in low IRY participation. Proctor and Davis (1994) outline three concerns that clients working with racially dissimilar practitioners face: whether the practitioner is a person of good will, whether the helper is skilled in their role, and whether the support offered is reflective of the service user's reality.

IRY also recounted numerous interpersonal qualities of staff members, which made their navigation of employment support a positive experience. A number of study participants from all types of organizations referred to the positive traits of staff in employment centres, focusing on their helpfulness, kindness, sociability, welcoming nature, and strong listening skills:

Everyone is so helpful here, and they really are wanting to help you—pretty empowering to be in a place like that. (Zarifa, CH/SC participant)

They're nice. The staff there is very nice and they always welcome you and always wear that smile that makes you feel at home and at ease. So yeah, I feel great, and I kept telling people [about it]. (Aisha, CH/SC participant)

Well, I can say that the people, in general ... are sociable and friendly. The counsellor, all of the people I address, they are sociable and they listen to me. It's really good... that helps a lot. (Keyon, SA participant)

*Negative Experiences.* Negative experiences with staff were also reported. One negative experience for a service user was the level of engagement that employment centre staff

demonstrated with service users. Based on his experience at a MO, Ali said the following: “Well, they answer your questions [but] they don’t always offer [help]. They didn’t ask me if I needed anything. They just answer your questions.” Ali offered that it would be more helpful for employment coordinators to “try to be engaged in the people they’re giving services to.” He felt as though the onus was on service users to elicit staff’s help, and believed that employment coordinators should take on a bigger role in proactively engaging service users. Another study participant, Sally, reported feeling unsupported by staff. Reflecting on her experience at a MO employment centre, Sally explained that, “... I think that was not a counsellor ... [a] student was helping out. So I didn’t feel like they were very helpful ... yeah, I was all by myself, like no one was there to support.”

Another MO service user, Zarifa, spoke about a negative interaction with a staff member who spoke to her in a condescending manner. She commented, “I don’t want to be talked to like a 16-year-old kid. I’m a grown woman.” Although she insisted that she felt as though her experience was unrepresentative of typical interactions at the employment centre and that she would still recommend their EPS, she conveyed that the experience left her feeling hesitant to visit employment centres in the future. She advised that, “...employment mentors and staff need to be careful with how they communicate with their clients and not being biased toward young people.” Barker and Thomson (2015) explain that service users are less likely to access needed assistance when their previous experiences with service providers had been unhelpful or even humiliating. Employment supports were also facilitated through liaisons and follow-ups. This topic is examined next.

**Liaisons and Follow-Ups.** Youth also spoke about their experiences with liaisons to other internal employment supports and follow-up services. A complaint with liaisons within an

employment centre emerged for a youth. Barak was enrolled in a MO employment centre and wished to benefit from one-on-one employment supports therein. He reported being told that an employment coordinator would arrange one-on-one employment supports for him, but he shared that he ultimately did not receive follow-up contact in view of gaining access to this support.

Youth also spoke about the notion of follow ups being facilitated upon the completion of an employment program for the purpose of checking in on IRY's job seeking progress. In speaking about follow-ups after the completion of a CH/SC employment program, Aisha disappointedly noted that, "they follow up while you're doing the placement, but after you fill your hours, it's done. You get your certificate and you keep going on with your life." She continued to share that participants could choose to maintain contact with employment centre staff after the completion of employment programs, but that doing so, in her perspective, was a rare occurrence among youth. She insisted that the onus should be placed on staff to follow up with past service users.

Participants avidly appreciated and purposefully sought out employment programs that included follow-up support. Sally, who identified receiving follow-up contact from employment coordinators in a MO employment centre she used, talked about its advantages:

[An employment coordinator] used to call me from time to time and ask if I am still looking [for a job], what's my update, did I find anything, and when I started my contract at [an organization], she used to call me every month. She asked me, am I happy with this job, do I want her to keep my profile active. I really appreciated that—that was really helpful, so that was really positive.

Through the course of our meeting, Aisha told me that she would soon be pursuing a MO employment program because, after a two-week employment training program, "they keep

making sure where are you at, how far are you, what did you do, you know—they keep checking up on you, and it's motivating.” These findings suggest that IRY adamantly want to receive follow-up support from employment coordinators/staff at employment centres. Similarly, the World Bank (2012) shows that following up with individual participants in youth employment projects is known to be a contributing factor to their employment seeking success.

### **Computers, Internet Services, and Printers**

In addition to obtaining job information and insights on job application processes, IRY also had access to computers, Internet service, and printers to facilitate their job search. Youth's reviews of their experiences using these services were mixed. The availability of computers and Internet service were appreciated by participants based on claims that these resources enabled them to search databases of job posts, type out resumes and cover letters, and apply for jobs online. However, one young person, Ali, expressed discontent that the computers were extremely slow or not fully functional. Zarifa brought attention to the implications of time limits on computer use at some employment centres. She explained that while an MO employment centre imposed a time limit on computer use, a CH/SC did not, the latter arrangement better meeting her need for additional time to focus on enhancing her writing in job application documents:

... [MO employment centre] has like a limit on their computers, so like two-hour limit, but here [at a CH/SC employment centre], there's no really limit on how much you can use, so I would prefer to come here just because I can really get a lot of work done as opposed to being rushed ... writing is not my strongest point, so I really have to like take my time and stuff.

Unlimited time allotted for computer use can be an important consideration for IRY in particular, given that their skills in written English language and their experience with meeting the

requirements for job application documents may be more limited than that of Canadian-born youth's. Participants also spoke to their appreciation for the availability of printers. Sally, for example, noted that the availability of printers at a CH/SC helped significantly as she had to print a resume and did not have a printer at home to do so.

### **Summary**

IRY clearly had jobs they wanted to pursue in mind and held a wide range of reasons for wishing to acquire work, many of them underpinning the desire to obtain general or Canadian work experience. This chapter explored IRY interview participants' use of 14 EPS from employment centres. In many cases, the EPS IRY used fulfilled job information and application needs to which they may otherwise not have access. IRY received job information through EPS, supporting them in learning about job opportunities in Canada. IRY learning about how to search for and apply to jobs in Canada from employment coordinators filled gaps in their knowledge on this topic. Using job posts from employment centres, IRY positively indicated becoming privy to job opportunities, but complained about being sent overwhelming amounts of job post emails and not gaining access to a sufficient amount of jobs through online job databases/job portals. Youth generally did not feel comfortable with job fairs with respect to the limited range of employers they noted being present at these fairs, along with the difficulty of showcasing one's qualifications and skills in those forums. Employment packages served as a medium through which IRY could gain further information on employment supports and volunteer opportunities.

Youth really appreciated the job training and workshop opportunities they received, though there was a divide in the level of training appreciated by youth based on their length of residence in Canada. In addition to positive training opportunity and employment program experiences, IRY valued the informal networking aspects that prevailed in these contexts. One-

on-one employment supports were beneficial for IRY as they indicated obtaining more in-depth and tailored employment supports. Negative aspects of one-on-one employment supports were that the helpfulness of that interaction became stagnant overtime and IRY identified feeling nervous to seek out those supports. Interview participants appreciated the racial and cultural diversity of staff, the trust they felt in employment coordinators' competence to help them find a job, along with the flexibility, kindness, and helpfulness that employment coordinators extended to service users. Negative experiences with staff among IRY included that they were not being engaged and that they were interacted with in a condescending manner. With respect to liaisons and follow-up services, IRY adamantly wanted to receive them, and spoke about a gap in their availability among a couple of types of organizations.

Computer and Internet services enabled youth to search for jobs and write out resumes, in turn, providing them with a forum to apply their learnings. Printing services alleviated the barrier of not being able to print out resumes among those who did not have a printer at home. Negative experiences with computer services included the reports of non-functioning computers and time limits placed on computer use. Youth benefitted substantially from resume and cover letter, interview, volunteer placement, and references support.

Some of the feedback IRY reported on in their experience using EPS related to their length of stay in Canada, age, ability, culture, and class. Given that IRY's access to employment supports may be limited to formal sources of help, it is important to investigate how they use EPS in order to facilitate an environment from which they are able to benefit without problems. It is evident that IRY's use of EPS served to counteract some of the barriers they face in their labour market transition, such as through gaining access to labour market information, employment packages, and volunteer experiences, as well as through the allotment of job

references that IRY may otherwise lack. The imposition of a time limit on computer use may disproportionately negatively affect IRY. The next chapter contributes further to study findings by exploring employment coordinators' perspectives on the barriers IRY face in their labour market transition, the factors they believe influence access to employment centres and EPS for IRY, as well as their insights on how the IRY group uses EPS.

## CHAPTER NINE

## EMPLOYMENT COORDINATOR PERSPECTIVES

Study findings on the barriers IRY face in accessing the labour market, their views and those relayed to them by their social networks about work, their use of informal employment supports, and IRY's access to and experiences using formal employment supports have been presented. This chapter further contributes to my research goals by presenting employment coordinators' perspectives on: (1) barriers IRY experience in their labour market transition; (2) barriers IRY face in learning about employment centres; (3) how the group learns about employment centres; (4) factors influencing IRY's access to employment centres and EPS; and (5) IRY's use of EPS. The reflections of eight employment coordinators from eight distinct employment centres within eight different organizations (three of which can be classified as CH/SCs, three as SAs, and two as MOs) are captured in this chapter. Lastly, this chapter responds to the research question of possible differences in employment program and service provision between the three different types of organizations: MOs, CH/SCs, and SAs.

**Barriers Immigrant and Refugee Youth Face in their Labour Market Transition**

Due to their roles in providing employment supports to service users, I was interested in gaining employment coordinators' perspectives on the barriers IRY face in their search for work. A few employment coordinators reported that IRY experience barriers related to immigration status and discrimination in their labour market transition. For example, referring to an immigration status barrier, a CH/SC employment coordinator, Maryam, remarked that, "work permit[s] ... contain conditions [that limit refugees] to a certain line of work," thus restricting refugee youth's access to employment opportunities. Tania, a SA employment coordinator, reported on discrimination based on immigrant status, noting that, "refugee claimants with SIN

numbers that start with '9' never get jobs in my experience." Further, she wrote that, "... black youth have a harder time getting a job because of racial discrimination." Concerning discrimination on the grounds of accent, Tania stated that IRY with accents are held back from employment opportunities.

Employment coordinators also identified that IRY face cultural and religious barriers in their labour market transition and when navigating job search processes. A SA employment coordinator generically reported that IRY experience cultural and religious barriers in their labour market transition, and to these points, claimed that, "[Canadian society] needs to enhance and facilitate [IR youth's] adaptation and integration [into the workforce]." A CH/SC employment coordinator shared that, "in some cultures, they value education more than working for a youth," thus impeding IRY's ability to transition into the labour market once they start searching for work. A MO employment coordinator reinforced that, "Yes, due to some cultural difference some IR youth traditionally enter the labour market later." Tania, a SA coordinator, offered another example of a cultural barrier in IRY's job search navigation, noting that, "[Immigrant and refugee] youth also have a hard time understanding the concept of saying good things about oneself in the resume. This is seen as bragging in most cultures." Corroborating this observation, Al-Ali (2010) remarked that people from Arabic cultures perceive self-appraisal as a form of bragging that holds no weight.

Other obstacles to employment for the IRY group brought up by employment coordinators consisted of barriers relating to low self-confidence, accreditation and the financial costs associated with the process, the lack of social networks, and the tendency to focus first on education and then on work. Furthermore, the IRY group was regarded to be lacking in Canadian education and employment experiences. As well, a lack of English language fluency among IRY

was a top concern for a few employment coordinators. A SA employment coordinator noted that many IRY service users in her agency are unable to understand or speak English, which could inhibit their success in finding a job.

A longer length of stay in Canada was noted to mitigate some of the employment barriers depicted above. For example, Mark, a MO employment coordinator, argued that a longer length of residency in Canada among IRY could be a mitigating force for barriers such as a lack of language proficiency, social networks, Canadian employment and educational experiences, and cultural fluency:

The first [barrier] would be the length of stay in Canada. At the [beginning of their stay], their [social] network is really limited and I can say the same with their language. The fact that they almost have no Canadian experience in terms of employment or education, and even cultural differences, will be barriers to overcome.

An increased length of stay in Canada has been shown in the literature to aid with the barriers of a lack of social networks (Lauer et al., 2012), language fluency (Beiser & Hou, 2001), and Canadian education (Picot & Sweetman, 2012) and employment (Kunz, 2003) in IRY who have lived in Canada for shorter time periods. Another employment coordinator, Tania, from a SA, also referred to length of stay in Canada, putting forward that a longer residency could increase self-confidence levels and lead to less apparent accents, both of which were otherwise pinned as employment barriers for IRY:

Length of stay is a factor because youth who have been here longer have less apparent accents when they speak English, which means [being more] likely to get jobs. Length of stay also shows up in how confident the youth feel when applying for jobs, or during interviews.

### **Barriers Immigrant and Refugee Youth Face in Learning about Employment Centres**

Employment coordinators were asked to write about the barriers they believe IRY face in learning about the availability of their EPS. Physical and organizational barriers were noted to inhibit potential service users from learning about EPS. A MO employment coordinator, Mark, reported that being located on a higher level—as opposed to the main floor of a multi-story building, makes it difficult for people to learn about his employment centre, as it is not readily visible upon entering the host building. Mark also identified that it could be difficult for individuals to learn about his EPS, as the overarching organization hosting the employment centre is more publicly known for other programs and services offered under its mandate.

A lack of outreach mechanisms to promote EPS to IRY was another identified barrier, as reported by employment coordinators. Chantelle, a MO employment coordinator, described that staff in her employment centre do not know how to reach youth who are not in full-time school to advertise their EPS. She explained that advertising her EPS in schools is futile, given that students there tend to be in school on full-time bases, and full-time students are ineligible to her EPS. Tania, a SA employment coordinator, spoke about the lack of outreach mechanisms in her organization to target specific groups of IRY. Tania commented, “Non-governmental sponsored immigrants may not know about these services because we wouldn’t know how to reach them.” She explained that most referrals to her organization are facilitated through government-sponsored immigration programs, as opposed to privately sponsored immigration programs, thus preventing IRY who enter Canada from non-governmental immigration programs to hear about their EPS.

Inaccessible outreach materials also restrict IRY’s ability to learn about EPS. Comprehension of outreach materials by IRY was an identified issue. For example, Amina, a SA

employment coordinator, highlighted that the lack of translated outreach materials presents the barrier of language for IRY, “some of the barriers with IRY in learning about our programs are that our ... flyers tend to be all in English,” inhibiting IRY who are not fluent in English to understand the content of flyers. A CH/SC employment coordinator identified that for the IRY group in particular, information conveyed on outreach materials can be unclear, challenging, and confusing, thus difficult to understand.

Employment coordinators also mentioned that a lack of resources to conduct follow-ups and a lack of Internet access among the IRY group prevent them in hearing about EPS. For example, Tania, a SA employment coordinator, referred to the lack of organizational resources to conduct follow-ups with youth who are referred to her agency. She explained that the youth program she oversees receives referrals, but the problem lies in that, “referrals are not always enough. [The organization’s staff] need to follow up [with the IRY]; but there’s a lack of resources to do that.” A lack of Internet access among the IRY group was also noted to prevent them from learning about EPS, as per a CH/SC coordinator’s view.

### **How Immigrant and Refugee Youth Learn about Employment Centres**

It is helpful to obtain an idea of how employment coordinators perceive that IRY service users learn about their EPS. Based on coordinators’ opinions, the ways IRY learn about their EPS include:

- Word-of-mouth (e.g., information passed on by parents, co-workers, relatives, and/or friends)
- Professional referrals (professionals in schools, health care centres, counselling services, ethnic and/or religious organizations, Ontario Works, federal government agencies, and legal aid)

- Print and electronic sources such as newspapers, email blasts, and Internet websites (e.g., on government websites)
- Newcomer centres, in-Canada Orientation Sessions, and Overseas Orientation Sessions

### **Factors Influencing Immigrant and Refugee Youth's Access to Employment Centres and Employment Programs and Services**

Employment coordinators wrote about the factors that influence IRY's access to employment centres and EPS. These included eligibility to EPS, location and travel, language, culture, financial costs, program logistics, and health and social considerations.

#### **Eligibility to Employment Programs and Services**

Eligibility to EPS was a factor that shaped access to employment centres and EPS for IRY; namely, immigration and student status were brought up by MO and CH/SC employment coordinators. A CH/SC employment coordinator, Maryam, for example, expressed that, "most of our employment services have criteria's: Canadian citizen, permanent resident or conventional refugees." Mark similarly indicated that his MO employment centre offers services, "... to anyone that lives in Ontario, including refugees (if they have a valid work permit to work in Canada)." Both of these coordinators suggest that their centres offer employment supports to anyone who has a valid work permit to work in Canada. But this criterion precludes access to IRY who do not have work permits, such as refugee claimants (or asylum seekers). On the other hand, Maryam talked about several EPS available to all at her CH/SC organization, regardless of their immigration status:

In our employment programs we have an employment resource centre that is open to all job seekers regardless of their status in Canada or eligibility to programs. They have free

access to computers, Internet, printer, photocopier, fax machines, job offer boards, and support from an employment consultant.

Another barrier inhibiting access to EPS included student status; a MO employment coordinator, Chantelle, reported that full-time students are ineligible to her centre's EPS.

### **Location and Travel**

Employment coordinators identified location and travel as influencing service users' access to employment centres. CH/SC employment coordinators indicated that distance from employment centres, and thus, burdensome travel to get to them act as significant hurdles for service users. This barrier was noted to be exacerbated when coupled with cumbersome winter weather travel conditions. Furthermore, a SA employment coordinator reported that employment centre staff may refer service users to job fairs or workshops in locations other than their own organization. But not being familiar enough with Ottawa to know where events are located and how to get to them inhibits IRY's ability to take advantage of these opportunities. Challenging transportation arrangements can particularly negatively affect vulnerable clients, including newcomers and youth (18-29), who are pursuing employment and training programs (Essential Skills Ontario, 2015). As a promoter of accessibility, MO and CH/SC employment coordinators reported that having their employment centres located along bus routes fosters more convenient travel for youth who leverage the bus transit system.

### **Language**

Employment coordinators from all three types of organizations identified language as a barrier faced by IRY in accessing their EPS. For example, Amina pointed out that employment workshops and job posts offered by her SA tend to predominantly be delivered in English, hindering IRY's ability to benefit from and leverage employment seeking resources if they are

not fluent in English. A MO employment coordinator, Mark, expressed that, “if the client does not speak English or French, it is very difficult for our staff to communicate and work effectively with the client.” A CH/SC employment coordinator, Reem, specified that a lack of English language skills among IRY can inhibit their ability to understand the employment support information that is offered through their EPS. On the other hand, Tania, a SA employment coordinator, indicated that providing EPS in a variety of languages, as is done in the delivery of her EPS, facilitates access to EPS for the IRY group.

### **Culture**

Employment coordinators generally expressed that there is a lack of EPS provision that supports IRY’s unique needs. For example, a CH/SC employment coordinator, Reem, mentioned that cultural differences between IRY and employment centre staff create barriers to access EPS for IRY. A SA employment coordinator critiqued that, “employment services should be culturally sensitive to newcomer youth.” A CH/SC coordinator mentioned that there is a, “lack of system in place to welcome IRY in employment services.” Another SA coordinator, Tania, noted that, “there’s [no EPS] specifically for IR [youth] in Ottawa.” On the other hand, Tania also explained that providing employment services in culturally sensitive manners, as is conducted throughout the delivery of her EPS, facilitates easier access to EPS for IRY. The Social Planning Council of Ottawa (2010) recounts challenges with providing culturally sensitive services to support immigrant and refugees’ integration in realms like health, social services, education, business and the media, and justice. This study shows that the barrier of culturally sensitive service provision to immigrants and refugees is also reflected in the realm of employment services.

### **Financial Costs**

Employment coordinators reported that IRY may face financial barriers in their access to EPS. An employment coordinator, Mark, believed that IRY may not know that EPS are free. He mentioned that many IRY are unaware that his employment services "... [are] not a paid service but a free service..." He insinuated that the perception that there may be a cost associated with the use of EPS discourages IRY from accessing them. Coordinators also identified that some IRY are hindered in their capacity to partake in unpaid employment programs/placements, given their immediate need for a source of income. Claiming that they may deter IRY's participation in EPS due to financial barriers, Adisa, a CH/SC employment coordinator, described that:

Our programs are group-based training programs that run for 16 weeks (more or less depending on the program). The challenge this poses [for IRY] is the need for income to support a family or oneself. The certifications, networks and support received in the program usually become incentives for those who can afford to be unemployed for a few months as they see great long term advantages.

Shields and colleagues (2006) report that it is difficult for immigrant and refugee youth to attend employment programming when they may be concerned with basic needs, such as housing. Galley (2015) indicates that paid internships lead to higher chances of obtaining stable employment after the fact, and are more accessible to participants without another source of income. This indicates that not only do fee-based programs create barriers to IRY's participation in programs (Social Planning Council of Ottawa, 2010), but those which do not provide financial incentives for participation may also result in barriers for the group, due to a possible lack of other sources of income. Another monetary barrier to EPS for IRY, brought forth by a SA employment coordinator, Tania, was the cost they have to bear for bus tickets and snacks.

A CH/SC employment coordinator, Adisa, brought up the issue of a lack of sufficient resources in her employment centre to adequately support IRY who need long-term support to fulfill the employment-related information gaps they face: “understanding [employment-related] information [is a barrier]—most [IRY] need long term support as it is novel to most of them but resources are limited.” An Essential Skills Ontario (2015) study similarly found that organizations lack the capacity to meet the needs of clients who face multiple barriers. One of the study’s findings reported that funding does not accommodate the time required to prepare vulnerable clients for successful employment (Essential Skills Ontario, 2015). Funding was regarded as moving toward “higher achieving youth” and away from “vulnerable youth” (ibid). Further, funding was conceptualized as based on clients who enter and exit employment support services quickly, rather than those who need longer-term support (ibid).

Employment coordinators also identified financial-related promoters of accessibility to EPS for IRY. A CH/SC employment coordinator, Adisa, wrote that offering financial support through the provision of free bus tickets and offsetting childcare costs enhances the accessibility of their IRY-specific EPS. Employment service providers in Essential Skills Ontario’s 2015 study suggested that providing childcare to vulnerable service users is critical given that uncertainties surrounding childcare can inhibit employment support participation among clients with multifaceted needs. Furthermore, Adisa noted that paying for IRY’s police checks and connecting them to services such as *Dress for Success* (an organization that provides free professional outfits for work), enhances access to employment opportunities for IRY who need the support.

**Program Logistics**

Employment coordinators identified employment centre hours and days of operation as potential obstacles to IRY's access to employment centres. A SA employment coordinator, Tania, spoke of employment centres' limited hours of operations during the weekdays, which she noted are restricted to typical business hours, and thus, unavailable during the evenings. She also identified the common unavailability of weekend EPS provision in employment centres as another hurdle. In describing these two issues, she noted, "none of the youth agencies offering employment services operate after hours, i.e., evenings and weekends; this makes it inaccessible." Tania referenced the exception of her employment centre on one of the accounts above, though, by noting that access to her EPS is enhanced as it is offered on weekends.

**Health and Social Considerations**

A lack of family supports and experiencing health problems were other barriers identified by a CH/SC employment coordinator, Reem, to get in the way of IRY's access to EPS. When asked about how accessibility to EPS is enhanced, another CH/SC employment coordinator, Adisa, suggested that employment centre staff are able to link IRY with other supports contained within the broader CH/SC organization, including medical services, children and youth programming, mental health supports, housing supports, settlement programs, and accreditation services. It was unclear whether this capacity for referrals to other internal organizational supports was employed by the CH/SC employment centre staff, and whether there is a correlation with the use of these external (to employment) supports within an organization and access to EPS. However, as health problems were previously noted to be a barrier to accessing EPS for IRY by an employment coordinator, it is plausible that access to medical services could mitigate the barrier of health problems, and in turn, promote access to EPS. Amina, a SA

employment coordinator also wrote about encouraging IRY to partake in her agency's youth recreation program as a way of increasing access to EPS.

Essential Skills Ontario (2015) researchers assert that service referrals are an integral component of providing services to clients who face multiple barriers within the Employment Ontario Network. Some of the services that employment centre staff referred clients to consisted of housing, mental health/substance abuse counselling, newcomer services, legal services, and food and nutrition supports (Essential Skills Ontario, 2015). The Social Planning Council of Ottawa (2010) reports that IRY children's participation in child development and recreation programs is important for their social integration and academic achievement. Shields and colleagues (2006) identify the difficulty for IRY to access employment supports when they are struggling with meeting basic needs. Their employment service provider study participants argued for a more holistic approach to IRY unemployment, noting that not only should employment service providers talk to each other, but should also converse with other services providers, such as service providers in the realm of housing, to support IRY's labour market transition in an integrated fashion (Shields et al., 2006).

### **Immigrant and Refugee Youth's Use of Employment Programs and Services**

Employment coordinators' responses suggest that IRY may utilize EPS differently than Canadian-born youth. SA and CH/SC employment coordinators, respectively, pinpointed that IRY's lack of confidence, shyness, and unclear employment goals were qualities that acted as barriers for them in their ability to utilize EPS. A SA coordinator, for example, revealed that a lack of confidence and trust in their skills in general, and in their writing abilities in particular, inhibits IRY from engaging with EPS. Oguz (2013) has similarly contended that a lack of self-confidence can limit IRY's job search potential. In speaking about shyness, an employment

coordinator wrote that she noticed that some IRY were too shy to ask for clarification about advertised job opportunities. This turned out to be problematic, as employment coordinators in her employment centre would later find, for example, that IRY perceived certain job posts as exclusively intended for individuals who could speak English, whereas this was not actually the case. Such phenomenon could potentially lead to IRY missing job opportunities to which they could have otherwise applied. A CH/SC employment coordinator, Reem, said that IRY have unclear employment goals, making it difficult for employment centre staff to support them.

Employment coordinators also observed that IRY are less likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to utilize certain employment programs. As per the observations of MO and CH/SC employment coordinators, programs used less by IRY included the Federal Student Work Exchange Program, the Summer Job Services Program, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Programs, and other apprenticeship programs. In addition to employment programs, coordinators identified that IRY are less likely to take advantage of certain job search techniques and job information opportunities. For instance, IRY were reported by employment coordinators from all types of organizations to be less likely than their Canadian-born peers to partake in job search tools and techniques, such as job fairs, networking, volunteerism, cold-calls, and resume and cover letter-writing workshops. MO and CH/SC employment coordinators perceived that IRY were also less likely to engage with post-secondary information services and labour market information. Furthermore, a CH/SC coordinator depicted the IRY group as lacking the computer skills necessary to engage with her employment centre's employment supports. This finding is consistent with that of Shields and colleagues' (2006) in the Toronto, Ontario context, where they found that employment programs do not offer training on computer skills that are necessary to utilize employment supports.

A lower engagement among IRY with the employment programs and job search techniques and information noted above was, at times, reported to be tied to cultural barriers and a lack of knowledge of Canadian job search processes and strategies and labour market. For example, Adisa, a CH/SC employment coordinator, shared that, “through our programs we emphasize volunteerism and networking which we hear are not common in countries outside of Canada.” Tong (2010) found that living in a community consisting mainly of immigrants, compared to neighbourhoods that have access to the mainstream culture, renders immigrant children more likely to resist assimilation to social norms like volunteerism, thus demonstrating the role of cultural influence in practices taken up by immigrants. Reflecting the viewpoints of other employment coordinators, Reem, a CH/SC employment coordinator, put forward that, “... IRY are not familiar [with Canadian] job search techniques.” She also stated that, “[IRY have a] lack of ... comprehension skills to understand the [Canadian] labour market.” Further, Amina, a SA employment coordinator told that:

Some barriers that IR [youth] face in using our services is that they may not necessarily know how to navigate through information to find what it is that they are looking for. This was a skill we realized we need to work with them and help so they can carry it on and apply it in the future.

To further understand how IRY use EPS, I posed the question of whether there are EPS that IRY are more likely to use when compared to their Canadian-born peers. When asked this question, SA and CH/SC employment coordinators alike highlighted a notable higher level of general engagement among IRY in EPS when compared to Canadian-born youth. A higher level of engagement among IRY extended to various realms of employment supports. For example, a SA employment coordinator explained that compared with Canadian-born youth, IRY are more

likely to go to her employment centre, make use of the computers, and partake in workshops on a regular basis. At the same time, a SA employment coordinator shared that IRY were more inclined to ask for help on resumes and job interviews from individual employment coordinators. The discrepancy between the study's previous reports of a lower likelihood among IRY to attend resume and cover letter workshops, but of a higher likelihood for IRY to partake in workshops in general, can be mediated by the idea that IRY may be more likely to seek out individual support for resumes and cover letters than to obtain this form of support through workshops. A SA coordinator noted that IRY were more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to approach employment coordinators for support—but only on the condition that they perceived staff as willing to help them.

A CH/SC employment support staff, Adisa, indicated that as long as they are eligible, IRY tend to take advantage of numerous employment programs. She even stated that IRY, “seem more invested and determined in their future and career goals. They are involved, appreciative and [seeking] opportunities.” She further mentioned that, “It all depends on program requirements. If they qualify for more than one, chances are they want to participate in all [employment programs].” These ideas connote that although IRY are noted to face challenges in adopting Canadian job search processes and practices, they have strengths characterized by their perseverance in leveraging help and determination to find work.

Throughout this study, gender emerged as a factor based on differences from within the IRY group and use of EPS. Specifically, a SA employment coordinator observed that, “... a lot more males than female IR youth frequent our centre for job aid, workshops, etc.” Another SA employment coordinator countered this, though, by relaying that she notices no differences

among the genders in their use of her EPS. Thus, insight on gender and utilization of EPS remains inconclusive in this study.

### **Summary**

This chapter reported on employment coordinators' perspectives of the barriers IRY face in their labour market transition, the barriers the group faces in learning about employment centres, how they learn about employment centres, factors influencing access to employment centres and EPS for IRY, and how the group uses EPS. Throughout their depiction of the barriers IRY face in their labour market transition, learning about employment centres, factors which influence IRY's access to employment centres, and the ways in which IRY use EPS, employment coordinators identified facets of IRY's identities such as immigration status, student status, length of stay in Canada, language, culture, race, class, and ability that were implicated in these processes. Employment coordinators reported that IRY face discrimination, along with immigration status, cultural, religious, self-confidence, and accreditation barriers in their search for employment. Further, barriers for IRY in accessing employment opportunities also included a lack of social networks; focusing first on education, then work; a lack of Canadian education and work experience; and insufficient English language fluency. A longer length of stay in Canada was identified to mitigate some of the noted barriers.

Barriers employment coordinators indicated prevent IRY from learning about the availability of EPS included physical and organizational barriers, a lack of targeted outreach mechanisms, inaccessible outreach materials, a lack of resources for organizations to conduct follow-ups with youth referred to their agency, and a lack of Internet access among IRY. Employment coordinators perceive that IRY learn about EPS by word-of-mouth, professional referrals, print and electronic sources, and newcomer centres and sessions.

Not having a work permit and being a student were barriers in accessing EPS and employment centres. Far distance from employment centres, burdensome winter weather conditions, and unfamiliarity with Ottawa and how to navigate travel therein pose location and travel barriers for IRY. Being located on a bus route facilitates more convenient travel for IRY using the bus transit system. A lack of English language fluency among IRY is a barrier in access to EPS that are delivered in English. On the flip side, delivering EPS in multiple languages fosters access to EPS for IRY. Employment coordinators suggest that there is a lack of EPS that sufficiently meet the unique needs of IRY, and one employment coordinator shared that the delivery of her EPS is culturally sensitive, thus facilitating access for IRY.

Financial barriers to participating in EPS included the lack of awareness that EPS are free, the inability of some IRY to partake in unpaid employment programs/placements, the cost of bus tickets and snacks bore by service users, and the lack of sufficient organizational funds to support IRY's longer-term employment information needs. Monetary facilitators of access included providing free bus tickets, offsetting childcare costs, paying for police checks, and connecting youth to *Dress for Success*. Limited employment centre hours and days of operation restrict IRY's access to EPS, whereas weekend EPS provision facilitate access. As well, health problems and a lack of family supports were noted to inhibit access to EPS for IRY. Offering referrals to internal organizational services, including that of medical services, mental health supports, settlement programs, and accreditation services were noted to shape access to EPS for IRY. IRY were regarded as less likely than their Canadian-born peers to utilize various employment programs, job search techniques, tools, processes, and information. At the same time, they were regarded to be more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to demonstrate a high level of engagement with EPS and perseverance to find work.

Having presented the findings of the study (chapters 5 through 9), the next section captures my observations of the differences in employment program and service provision between the three types of organizations explored in this study and the unique features of each.

**Particularities in the Employment Program and Service Provision of Three Types of Organizations: Mainstream Organizations, Community Health/Service Centres, and Settlement Agencies**

Throughout the analysis of participant interview and survey data, I observed several differences between the employment program and service provision of the three types of organizations examined in this study: MOs, CH/SCs, and SAs. While due to the small size of the study, I am unable to make any conclusive statements on potential differences in service provision from the three different types of organizations, I assessed the differences that emerged based on IRY and employment coordinator responses. Similarities between the organizations are left unexplored because they are vast, and the related research goal is to explore whether there are differences in the way in which IRY experience employment service delivery between the three different types of organizations. The table in Appendix L, entitled, *Employment Programs and Services Offered by Different Types of Organizations*, was created based on the analysis of EPS that employment coordinators from different types of organizations marked as offering to service users. It shows no significant difference in the types of EPS provided by each type of organization.

Study findings suggest that IRY heard about CH/SC's EPS through the widest range of mediums, consisting of word-of-mouth communications, flyers, Internet research, and external referrals. IRY commonly learned about MO's EPS through word-of-mouth communications, and SA's EPS were typically heard about by IRY through internal referrals. Employment

coordinators from all three types of organizations indicated that IRY learn about their EPS through word-of-mouth communications. CH/SC and MO employment coordinators similarly highlighted partnerships with newcomer centres and schools as a way to inform IRY about their employment supports. CH/SC employment coordinators in particular identified newspaper advertisement, IRY walking into their organizations to access a service and then learning about available EPS, and community presence as mediums for IRY to learn about their employment centres. MO employment coordinators uniquely identified television advertisement as a way in which IRY learned about their EPS. SA employment coordinators distinctly indicated that IRY learn about their EPS through internal referrals, social media (i.e., Facebook), and advertisement through federal government sources.

Employment centre days of operation emerged as a barrier for MO and CH/SC service users, who identified that their closure on weekends was a barrier to accessing EPS. On the other hand, SA service users were able to access employment centres on weekends. MO and CH/SC employment coordinators raised the need to partner with other SAs in order to gain access to potential service users, whereas SA employment coordinators did not identify this need. Positive experiences with staff were reported by service users of all types of organizations, who reported that staff were kind, sociable, and helpful. Some negative reflections of staff exclusively emerged from MO study participants, who reported that they were spoken to condescendingly and were not proactively engaged by staff. Employment coordinator participants recruited from SAs and CH/SCs reported that they lack the resources to provide financial incentives for IRY's participation in employment programs/placements. MOs, on the other hand, were identified as offering financial incentives for youth's participation in employment programs/placements by IRY service users. A time limit imposed on the use of computers at a MO employment centre

was a barrier, while unlimited time to use computers at a CH/SC was perceived as a facilitator of accessibility.

In addition to the different ways in which study participants wrote about or spoke of the EPS delivered through the different types of organizations, IRY identified components of employment program and service delivery that uniquely related to one or two types of organizations. Interview participants valued the diversity of cultural and racial backgrounds reflected in staff, the coordination of volunteer placements, and having employment coordinators act as job references for IRY as unique components of CH/SCs. Both CH/SC and SA employment coordinators referred to the possibility of referring IRY accessing their employment supports to other services (e.g., recreational services) that are provided by their overarching organizations. Unique aspects of service delivery from SA employment centres included reports that they offer employment programming on weekends and that they provide culturally sensitive programming. Components of EPS delivery that were unique to MOs consisted of the availability of walk-in one-on-one employment supports, the provision of employment packages, and the availability of numerous training opportunities and job fairs on a single day, which optimized the benefits youth received from one trip to employment centres.

The next chapter presents the recommendations that IRY and employment coordinators offered in view of ameliorating the IRY group's experience of navigating employment centres and EPS.

## CHAPTER TEN

## STUDY PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents IRY's and employment coordinators' recommendations on how they would enhance EPS for the IRY group.

**Outreach**

IRY study participants stated that word-of-mouth is an effective way to inform IRY about the availability of EPS. Youth also identified forums through which they believe EPS can be advertised to successfully reach the IRY group: Ontario Works; City of Ottawa; schools and universities; community centres; libraries; websites; social media forums; outreach workers; churches; radio; television; immigrant-serving organizations; and newcomer organizations, such as Reception House. In recommending ways in which EPS could be further promoted, employment coordinators proposed building relationships with cultural communities and local immigrant neighbourhoods through word-of-mouth communications. Liaising with parents to increase their awareness of EPS and their roles, functions, and benefits was identified as a way to encourage their youth's use of EPS. Employment coordinators highlighted the need to establish partnerships with programs/services that attract a large IRY population in order to promote their EPS in those forums. Settlement agencies in particular were identified as potential targets of such partnerships, while SA employment coordinators themselves did not highlight the need for these partnerships. To ensure effective outreach of EPS, coordinators also recommended preparing outreach materials in a range of languages that IRY can understand.

**Access to Employment Centres and Employment Programs and Services**

IRY and employment coordinators had a number of suggestions on how to enhance IRY's access to employment centres. An employment coordinator recommended waiving the

requirement of a valid work permit as a prerequisite to accessing EPS. IRY and employment coordinators alike recommended that newcomer IRY be matched with other newcomers to facilitate their access to employment centres. To further facilitate a more culturally competent environment in employment centres, IRY suggested hiring staff of first generation immigrant backgrounds, and employment coordinators recommended hiring staff with cultural competency training. Offering EPS on weekends and evenings as way to increase IRY's access to EPS was a recommendation that came from both IRY and employment coordinators. Employment coordinators and IRY alike proposed that drop-in or mobile EPS be offered within local immigrant and newcomer communities, both as a way of reaching this group directly and circumventing travel barriers. The need for increased resources to hire more workers and facilitators to offer employment programming in French was raised.

#### **Increasing Access to Job Information and Resources**

The importance of increasing IRY's access to job information and resources to facilitate their job search was a theme referenced by IRY and employment coordinators. The benefit of instituting designated career coaches/employment specialists in schools to help IRY discover the range of work options available to them both during school and upon graduation was identified. The recommendation for employment centre staff to converse with IRY about the barriers they may face in obtaining employment in Canada so that they may be aware was raised. This information was proposed as able to be conveyed through links to information on employment centre websites that respond to prompts such as, "common barriers known to be experienced by newcomers." The next chapter provides concluding remarks and areas for future research.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

## CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis aimed to contribute to the literature on IRY's experiences with formal employment supports and to provide further insights on their experiences with informal employment supports. More, the study set out to obtain information on the barriers and obstacles that IRY perceive and experience in transitioning into the labour market in Ottawa, and whether there are differences in the ways in which employment centres functioning out of different types of organizations (MOs, CH/SCs, and SAs) deliver employment supports. This study revealed that many of the barriers that IRY face in their transition into the labour market, as well as the factors that influence their access to employment centres and use of EPS, relate to intersecting aspects of their social identities based on length of residency, immigration status, education, class, age, race, ethnicity, language, culture, ability, and gender. Thus, policy makers, service organizations, and service providers occupied with the planning, devising, and delivery of employment and employment supports for IRY must consider that the group is heterogeneous and pay particular attention to their diversity.

For example, this research found that asylum seeker youth may uniquely face cumbersome wait times of up to several years before possibly being awarded with work permits, are limited in their access to a range of work opportunities based on stipulations noted on their work permits, and can face discrimination as a result of having SIN numbers that begin with a '9'. By the same token, asylum seekers can be hindered in their ability to access formal employment supports due to being unable to access some employment centres and EPS without work permits. In delivering employment services to this group, it may be advisable for organizations and service providers to apply trauma-informed practices and policies. In doing so,

the needs of those who may be more vulnerable, who may have experiences of trauma, and who may be marginalized by mainstream service delivery are more likely to be addressed. Trauma-informed practice principles in the delivery of services include, but are not limited to:

- acknowledging the potential of trauma in service users' lives;
- establishing emotional, physical, and cultural safety;
- developing trustworthiness and transparency about programming;
- providing choice and control (when possible) over service provision to service users to enhance safety and program engagement;
- focusing on relational and collaborative approaches to decrease power differentials between service users and providers;
- instituting collaborative approaches across sectors so that service users can seamlessly access the range of supports they may need in response to complex issues;
- applying strengths-based empowerment modalities, that—to offer a few examples—involve service users in organizational planning and staff training, and which incorporate service users' feedback in service provision (The Jean Tweed Centre, 2013).

Length of residency was also shown to have a bearing on how individuals within the IRY group navigate labour market transitions and formal employment supports. For example, this study witnessed that IRY with shorter lengths of residency identify cultural barriers in navigating job search processes, face English language barriers, and can experience fewer access to social networks in their attempts to enter the Canadian labour market. In their navigation of formal employment supports, those with a shorter length of stay in Canada also noted experiencing culture and language barriers. This strengthens the need for employment supports that target the unique needs of IRY who lack access to strong social networks due to their short length of stay

in Canada. This group of service users may benefit from being matched with community members who can serve as a mentor, link them with employment opportunities, serve as job references, and constitute the development of a social network for them.

Socio-economic status also shaped access to formal employment supports where study participants referred to challenges with partaking in employment programs due to a lack of an income source, limitations with affording travel to employment centres, among other financial barriers. Study findings highlighting monetary barriers in IRY's access to employment supports—despite free employment service provision—favour social policies that promote a base income which would alleviate the barriers endured by IRY in accessing employment supports and navigating labour market opportunities (e.g., traveling to job interviews) without a source of income.

Racial discrimination was particularly noted to be faced by black youth. Experiences and perceptions of discrimination as an impediment to IRY's labour market transition, along with the many other barriers participants of this study indicated facing through no fault of their own (e.g., credential transfer, a lack of general and Canadian work experience), call upon the need for advocacy and political action. Theorists of the anti-oppressive framework posit that advocacy and political action are integral to restructuring the system in ways that ensure that all groups have equitable access to resources and opportunities (Baines, 2007). Offering anti-oppressive practice guidelines, Bates (2011) insists that service providers must maintain an appreciation for service users' social location, uniqueness of life experiences, and the ways in which the problems they face are "inextricably linked to larger systems of power, dominance, and inequity" (p. 160). In pursuit of equalizing access to resources and transforming oppressive relations, social service providers, alongside service users, can be benefited by developing allies and working with social

causes and movements to organize and mobilize large-scale, transformative changes (Baines, 2007). In effect, this work is necessary so as to unmask primary structures of oppression at a societal level (Carniol, 1992) and welcome the range of IRY identities into the labour market.

To further explore the themes that emerged in this study, a larger sample of IRY and employment coordinators would be suitable to support further insights that could contribute to the creation of policies and practice guidelines that can enhance employment program and service provision for IRY. Failing to engage in such tasks, we risk further marginalizing IRY by upholding their limited their access to employment opportunities and denying a smooth and equitable pathway to acquiring needed employment assistance. Engaging more employment coordinators and IRY from employment centres of different types of organizations (MOs, CH/SCs, and SAs) could foster increased understanding of the possible differences in employment program and service provision between the three different types of organizations. Future studies in this area could contribute to a stronger knowledge base of how to best support each type of organization in delivering employment supports to IRY service users.

Moving forward, it would be valuable to explore the types of jobs (e.g., permanent, full-time, part-time, insecure, low paid, and others) that IRY obtain through EPS, and on their own (without EPS support), for the purpose of better understanding the group's labour market transition experience. Wilkinson (2008) claims that capturing the IRY group's resettlement experience—including with respect to employment—can provide us with a better view into the course of their lives. Comparing the types of jobs IRY acquire with those secured by Canadian-born youth can be helpful in identifying the potential need for more equitable employment program and service provision for the IRY group. Research that assesses whether the jobs IRY

achieve are commensurate with their skills, credentials, and job interests, and comparing these cases with Canadian-born youth would also be important.

## APPENDICES

**Appendix A: Glossary**

Community Health/Service Centre (CH/SC): The definition of ‘community-based organization’ is used to describe the term ‘community health/service centre (CH/SC)’ for the purposes of this study. As per Vu (2008), the definition entails:

...a primary vehicle for providing services to local communities... Located in the community itself, [community-based organizations] are often familiar with the needs of local populations and the barriers to obtaining resources. Many CBOs have also established trust and rapport with community members so that clients feel more comfortable and confident seeking services” (p. 2).

CH/SCs are reported to offer a range of health, child and family, mental health, and human (e.g., education and employment) services (Vu, 2008).

Employment Centres: Employment centres capture the physical spaces service users frequent to use employment programs and services. In addition to attending employment centres in person, employment programs and services can be facilitated through phone, email, online databases, and employment workshops or job fairs hosted outside of the employment centres service users are associated with, among other forums.

Employment Coordinator: Employment coordinator is the term used to describe any staff member at employment centres who, in delivering EPS, help service users search for work.

Employment Programs and Services: Employment programs and services reflect the range of job search supports coordinated by employment centres that service users can draw on in their search for work.

(First Generation) Immigrant and Refugee Youth (IRY): In this study, immigrant and refugee youth (IRY) are defined as young people—aged 16 to 29—born outside of Canada and who immigrated to Canada through an immigration class.

Formal Employment Supports: Formal employment supports connote job search help facilitated through employment centres and the employment programs and services they offer.

Informal Employment Supports: In this thesis, informal employment supports refer to job search help provided through one's social networks and online and social media means.

Mainstream Organization (MO): Mainstream organizations are identified as providing services to a general population rather than based on eligibility factors such as ethnic group, catchment area, or length of stay in Canada (Vu, 2008).

Settlement Agency (SA): Organizations under the purview of 'settlement agencies' include settlement services, immigrant and newcomer agencies, and ethno-cultural community organizations. As stated by the Canadian Council for Refugees (1998), settlement services are known as specialized services that facilitate the full and equitable participation of newcomers to Canadian society. The services they provide place focus on the early stages of arrival as the need for support is deemed to be greater at that time (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998).

Settlement agencies offer a range of programs including counselling, health, youth, women's programming, and employment services. Settlement agencies are noted to act as a bridge between newcomers and society (ibid).

Unemployment Rate: The unemployment rate references the proportion of a population that is available and searching for employment, but who does not have a job (Statistics Canada, 2010).

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide**

❖ denotes probing question

### **Use of Employment Programs and Services**

1. How did you learn about this employment centre?
2. How would you have liked to hear about this employment centre/where do you think is a good place to let youth know about the existence of this employment centre?
3. How long have you been using employment programs or services from this employment centre?
4. What kinds of employment programs and services did you use from this centre?
5. What were some of the most useful employment programs or services for you?
6. What were some of the least useful employment programs or services for you?
7. What kind of work are you/were you looking for?

### **Accessibility of Employment Centres and Employment Programs and Services**

8. What was your general impression of being at the employment centre and accessing and using their programs and services?
  - ❖ What do you like about coming here?
  - ❖ What do you not like about coming here?
  - ❖ How do you generally feel while using the employment programs and services at the centre?
  - ❖ What was your experience like?
  - ❖ How do staff and other service users relate to you?
  - ❖ Feel free to share anything that stood out for you when using the employment programs and services at the employment centre.
9. Was there anything that made it difficult for you to access the employment centre or use its programs and services (some examples include language, location, hours of operation, financial, cultural, etc.)? Please explain.
  - ❖ Did you experience any inconveniences and/or barriers in accessing the employment centre and using its programs and services?
  - ❖ Is there anything that you would have liked to see, or something that, looking back, would have been helpful for you to access the employment centre and use its programs and services?
10. On the other hand, what made it easy for you to access the employment centre and use its programs and services?
11. Would you recommend this employment centre and its programs and services to other immigrant and refugee youth? Please elaborate.
12. (*\*If they stopped using the services\**) Could you talk about some of the reasons you stopped using programs and services from the employment centre?

### **Experience with Past Employment Centres and Employment Programs and Services**

(*\*Now, we will turn our focus to your experience with past employment centres\**)

13. Have you used employment centres other than the current one?
  - \* If no, “how come you have not used other employment services in the past?”  
Move on to question 24.
  - \* If yes, continue on to question 14.
14. How did you learn about that employment centre?
15. How long did you use the employment programs or services from that employment centre?
16. What kinds of employment programs and services did you use from that centre?
17. What were some of the most useful employment programs and services for you?
18. What were some of the least useful employment programs and services for you?
19. What was your general impression of being at the employment centre and using and accessing their programs and services?
  - ❖ What did you like about going there?
  - ❖ What did you not like about going there?
  - ❖ How did you generally feel while using the employment programs and services at the centre?
  - ❖ What was your experience like?
  - ❖ How did staff and other service users relate to you?
  - ❖ Feel free to share anything that stood out for you when you were using the employment programs and services at the employment centre.
20. Was there anything that made it difficult for you to access the employment centre or use its programs and services (some examples include language, location, hours of operation, financial, cultural, etc.)? Please explain.
  - ❖ Did you experience any inconveniences and/or barriers in accessing the employment centre and using its programs and services?
  - ❖ Is there anything that you would have liked to see, or something that, looking back, would have been helpful for you to access the employment centre and use its programs and services?
21. On the other hand, what made it easy for you to access the employment centre and use its programs and services?
22. Would you recommend this employment centre and its programs and services to other immigrant and refugee youth?
23. Could you talk about some of the reasons you stopped using programs and services from the employment centre?

### **Social Networks**

24. Do you know of any other people who use or have used employment programs and services? Please explain.
25. In your search for employment, have you sought or received support from other sources besides employment centres? Some examples include family, friends, partners, family friends, teachers, guidance counsellors, and peers, among others.
  - \* If yes: how did they help you?
  - \* If no, how come you have not sought or received support from other sources?

26. What messages do you receive from your family and/or close networks about work and employment?
- ❖ How is work prioritized for your family or close networks? For example, is it more or less important than school?
  - ❖ How attainable is work thought of being? For example, is it easy or difficult to find work?
  - ❖ Feel free to share any messages that you receive from your family or close networks about work.
27. Have you found employment help through online or social media means such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Workopolis, among others?
- \* If yes, how did they help?
  - \* If no, how come you did not seek employment help from these sources?
28. How did those who knew (such as your family, friends, family friends, and others) respond to your use of an employment centre?
- ❖ Did people who knew, support or not support your use of an employment centre?
  - ❖ What did they like about your use of an employment centre?
  - ❖ What did they not like about your use of an employment centre?

### **Broader Labour Market Transition Experience**

29. Outside of your experience with employment centres, do you experience any obstacles or barriers in your search for work?
- \* If yes, continue on to question 30.
  - \* If no, continue on to question 33.
30. Can you tell me about the obstacles/barriers you face?
31. How do you overcome the obstacle(s) and/or barrier(s), OR How do you deal with the obstacle(s) and/or barrier(s)?
32. I asked about your family's and close networks' opinions, but I also wonder what you think about the concept of work and/or employment?
- ❖ Where is work situated among your priorities? For example, is it more or less important than school?
  - ❖ How attainable is work? For example, is it easy or difficult to find work?

### **Summary**

33. If you were going to make employment centres and their programs and services more useful or helpful for immigrant and refugee youth, what would you add, remove, or modify?
34. Are there any other issues or barriers that you noticed when accessing or using employment programs and services that you would like to share?
35. Are there any other things that made it easy for you to use or access employment programs and services?
36. Are there any final thoughts that you would like to share?



**Appendix D: Research Interview Participant Recruitment Email**

Dear [name of employment centre] service users,

This email serves to forward on to you information about a study being conducted by a Carleton University Master of Social Work student, Hatav Shalileh, about first generation immigrant and refugee youth and how they use and navigate employment services. She is interested in hearing about first generation immigrant and refugee youth's experiences and perspectives of using employment supports.

To participate in this study, you must be:

- born outside of Canada
- 16-29 years old
- able to express yourself in English
- currently using or have used services at [name of employment centre] within the past 12 months

Participation in this study is voluntary and offers no benefit to employment opportunities. It does not matter whether or not you are currently employed. As a token of the researcher's appreciation for your participation in the study, you will be awarded with **\$15.00**.

If you are interested in speaking about your experiences in an interview for about 1 hour, please contact her directly at [hatavshalileh@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:hatavshalileh@cmail.carleton.ca). The researcher will then send you more information and coordinate with you a time to get together.

This study has undergone an Ethics Review Protocol at Carleton University. If you have any questions or concerns, please email [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca) or call the number 613-520-2517.

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

*(Signed by employment coordinator)*

## **Appendix E: Research Interview Participant Letter of Invitation/Information**

**Title of Research Project:** Exploring First Generation Immigrant and Refugee Youth's Use of Employment Services in Ottawa: An Examination of Three Types of Employment Service Organizations

**Date of Ethics Clearance:** September 29, 2015

**Data Collection Expiration Date:** May 1, 2017

Dear (name of prospective interview participant),

This letter invites your participation in a Master of Social Work thesis study conducted by Hatav Shalileh and supervised by Dr. Behnam Behnia. This study explores immigrant and refugee youth's experiences of navigating employment services. This letter provides information on various aspects of the study so that you can decide whether you would like to participate.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to explore immigrant and refugee youth's use, access, and navigation of employment services through three different types of organizations: community health/service centres, mainstream organizations, and settlement agencies. This research aims to conduct face-to-face interviews with immigrant and refugee youth and administer a survey to employment service providers to gain more information on this topic.

Twelve youth from various employment organizations are expected to be recruited in order to explore how they access different employment organizations in Ottawa. To participate in this study, you must be born outside of Canada, be within the age range of 16-29 years old, be able to express yourself in English, and must currently be using or have used services at the employment centre that you are recruited from within the last 12 months. It does not matter if you are currently employed or not.

### **Procedure**

The interviews are to last about 1 hour. They would be held either at: a) the organization that you are using or have used employment services from, b) Carleton University, or c) at a quiet public location of mutual convenience to yourself and the researcher, such as a coffee shop. The researcher hopes to conduct interviews between September and late October.

You can decline to answer any question(s), revoke any response(s) or withdraw participation in the study at any time during the interview. If you wish to revoke your participation or any response(s) after the interview, please let Hatav Shalileh know up until **(date 30 days after interview)** so that the information can be discarded.

At the end of the interview, you will be awarded with \$15 dollars as a token of appreciation for your contribution. Withdrawing your participation during or after the interview will not affect this reward.

Upon your request, the researcher will provide you with a copy of your interview transcript.

### **Data Storage and Privacy**

The student researcher and research supervisor will have access to the data after the interview. To protect your identity, during the interview I will not mention your name or the name of the employment organization that you are using or have used, and I would instruct you to do the same. Your demographic information (such as age, gender, and name of organization) will be collected on a separate sheet of paper

before starting the interview and audio-recording. Your interview audio file will be assigned a non-identifier (numeric code) to enhance confidentiality. You can request to see the copy of your transcribed interview. The audio-recording of the interview and the hard-copy of the transcripts, the demographic information and consent form will all be kept in locked file cabinets in three separate locations.

In the final report, the researcher ensures confidentiality by not using your name, the name of the organization you are using, and any other personally identifying information whenever she quotes you. Moreover, to protect your identity, the data will be aggregated with other interviewees' responses. The researcher will take every step to ensure that no participant is identified by their response. The only limits to confidentiality include if harm to self or others is disclosed during the interview, in which case this information will be reported to the authorities.

### **Use of Data**

The interview data will be presented in a final thesis report and a presentation to a four-person thesis committee (consisting of the research supervisor, second reader, external examiner, and committee Chair). The researcher may present the findings of the study in academic journals, conferences, and/or in other forums. Adherence to confidentiality will be maintained in all of these cases.

### **Benefits/Risks**

Benefits to participation in this study include the opportunity for you to share your experiences using employment services. Your information will help other immigrant and refugee youth and their communities by removing barriers to employment services and enhancing service delivery to this population.

A risk to participation may include encountering unpleasant emotions as related to your experiences. A list of counselling resources will be available to you. If you feel emotionally unwell during or after the interview, I will stay with you until you let me know that you are okay. We will stop the interview at any point that you feel uncomfortable to continue and the information that you provide will be discarded if you so choose.

## Appendix F: Research Interview Participant Consent Form

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in the Master of Social Work research study entitled: *Exploring First Generation Immigrant and Refugee Youth's Use of Employment Services in Ottawa: An Examination of Three Types of Employment Service Organizations*. The purpose of this study is to explore immigrant and refugee youth's experiences and perspectives of using employment services from various different organizations. The study also explores service providers' insights into providing employment services to service users.

I understand that I am agreeing to participate in an interview asking questions about my experiences and perspectives in using employment services. I understand that I can ask any questions and clarify any concerns that I have about the research to the researcher (e.g., questions regarding the research goals, methods, researcher's obligations, and my rights). I understand that the interview will take place in a public location of mutual convenience to me and the researcher. I understand that I have the right to not respond to any question that I am uncomfortable with throughout the interview. I also understand that I can revoke any responses or completely withdraw my participation in the study up until **(date 30 days after interview)**. I understand that if I feel emotionally unwell during the interview, the researcher will provide me with a counselling resource list and stay with me until I indicate that I am okay.

I understand that the interview will last about one hour and will be audio-recorded. Should I choose not to have my interview audio-recorded, the researcher has my permission to take notes instead. I understand that the information I provide for this study will be safeguarded by password protecting interview data on a USB, and by storing consent forms, interview transcripts, and demographic information in three separate locked file cabinets. I understand that my interview transcript and demographic information will be numerically coded to maintain confidentiality.

I understand that anonymity is assured as no personally identifying information will be used in the report and my information will be aggregated with responses from other participants. I understand that in the final thesis report, I may be quoted word-for-word, but my name and the name of the organization that I am using will not be used but will be replaced with a pseudonym to protect my identity. I understand that the researcher may use the findings of the study for future research presentation and publication purposes. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity considerations apply in all of these cases. Upon my request, I understand that I can receive a copy of my transcript.

I understand that upon completion of the interview, I will be provided with \$15 dollars. I understand that if I chose to withdraw from the study during or after the interview, I will still keep the \$15 dollars. I understand that all data pertaining to the study will be destroyed after being kept in locked file cabinets for 5 years (until 2020) for future research, publication, and presentation use.

I understand that participating in this study offers no benefit to employment.

### Questions

This project has been approved by the research ethics protocol at the Carleton University Ethics Review Board. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the University Research Ethics Board representative, research supervisor, and/or student researcher below:

**Carleton University Research Ethics Board A Representative:** Dr. Louise Heslop (telephone number: 613-520-2517; email: [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca))

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Behnam Behnia (telephone number: 613-520-2600 x 2665; email: [behnam.behnia@carleton.ca](mailto:behnam.behnia@carleton.ca))

**Researcher Contact:** Hatav Shalileh (email: [hatavshalileh@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:hatavshalileh@cmail.carleton.ca))

I agree to have the interview audio-taped: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to allow the researcher to take notes during the interview: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If needed, I will allow follow-up contact by the researcher: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to receive an electronic copy of the final thesis: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

- If so, please provide your email: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix G: Demographic Information

Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your year of birth? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What gender do you identify as? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please check off your admission class: Immigrant \_\_\_\_\_ Refugee \_\_\_\_\_
4. How do you define your ethnic/racial background? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How old were you when you arrived to Canada? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How long have you lived in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you speak languages other than English? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. If yes, what other languages do you speak? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What is your marital status?
  - Single
  - Married or Common-law
  - Widowed
  - Separated/divorced
  - Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is the highest level of education you completed (please check all that apply)?
  - Elementary School
  - High School
  - College Diploma/Certificate
  - University Undergraduate Degree
  - University Master's Degree
  - University PhD Degree
  - Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
10. In which country was your highest level of education obtained? \_\_\_\_\_
11. If you are currently in school, which of the below are you currently engaged in?
  - Elementary School
  - High School
  - College Diploma/Certificate
  - University Undergraduate Degree
  - University Master's Degree
  - University PhD Degree
  - Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
12. What is your current employment status (please check all that apply)?
  - Employed full-time
  - Employed part-time
  - Unemployed
  - Enrolled in a training program
  - Student
  - Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
13. What is the highest level of education between your parents?
  - Elementary School

- High School
- College Diploma/Certificate
- University Undergraduate Degree
- University Master's Degree
- University PhD Degree
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

14. Which country was your parents' highest level of education obtained in? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Can you please list the names of the current and past employment centres you have used?

a) Current: \_\_\_\_\_

b) Past: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix H: Employment Coordinator Survey

Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participating in this study. Please note that the result of this survey will be made confidential by combining its information with that of other survey respondents. Your name and the name of your organization will not be reported in the study report when I reference you.

1. Please write the name of your employment centre: \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long have you been in your current job at this organization? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please check off the employment programs and services that your program offers from the list below.
  - Posts for jobs, job fairs, networking opportunities
  - Job search training
  - Career counselling/advising
  - Matching skills/experiences
  - Interview support
  - Resume and cover letter templates and samples
  - Resume writing help
  - Cover letter help
  - Access to printers, photocopiers, fax machines, phones
  - Internal (or referral to external) skill development/job training
  - Connections to paid internship or apprenticeship program
  - Connections to unpaid volunteer, internship, or apprenticeship program
  - Coaching or mentorship programs
  - Peer mentoring
  - Bilingual (French and English) employment service provision
  - Translators services; if so, for which languages: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Referrals to employment related services
  - Referrals to non-employment related services
  - Testing or validation of foreign credentials, skills, and/or foreign work experience
  - Culturally competent/sensitive training for staff
  - Follow-up with service users on job search endeavours
  - Connections and linkages with newcomer communities
  - Links to community partners (schools, governments, other organizations, etc.) to enhance immigrant/refugee youth employment success
  - Culturally representative staff
  - Child care
  - Other, please specify:
    1. \_\_\_\_\_
    2. \_\_\_\_\_
    3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Outreach**

4. In your opinion, how do immigrant and refugee (IR) youth learn about your employment centre?

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5. What are some barriers for IR youth in learning about your employment centre?

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6. In your opinion, how can your employment centre enhance its outreach to IR youth?

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**Use and Access of Employment Programs and Services**

7. What are some of the barriers faced by IR youth in accessing and using your employment programs and services?

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8. How does your organization enhance the accessibility and use of your programs and services for IR youth?

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**Differences in Navigation of Employment Programs and Services between Immigrant and Refugee Youth and Canadian-Born Youth**

9. Comparing IR youth to Canadian-born youth, are there certain employment programs or services that are used more by the IR youth group? If yes, please elaborate:

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10. Comparing IR youth to Canadian-born youth, are there certain employment programs or services that are used less by the IR youth group? If yes, please elaborate:

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**Differences among Immigrant and Refugee Youth Groups in Navigating Employment Programs and Services**

11. In your work with IR youth, have you noticed any differences in the group as related to their job search (e.g., differences based on immigrant or refugee status, gender, race, ethnic background, education, length of time lived in Canada, occupational background, family composition, among others)? If yes, please elaborate.

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**Recommendations**

12. If you were to improve the employment programs and services you provide, how would you make them more useful for IR youth?

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**Summary**

13. Do you have any other comments, thoughts, or suggestions related to IR youth and employment programs and/or services, or IR youth and employment access in general?

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## **Appendix I: Employment Coordinator Letter of Invitation/Information**

**Title of Research Project:** Exploring First Generation Immigrant and Refugee Youth's Use of Employment Services: An Examination of Three Types of Employment Service Organizations

**Date of Ethics Clearance:** September 29, 2015

**Data Collection Expiration Date:** May 1, 2017

Dear (name of prospective survey participant),

This letter invites your participation in a Master of Social Work thesis research conducted by Hatav Shalileh and supervised by Dr. Behnam Behnia. This study explores immigrant and refugee youth's experiences of navigating employment services and gauges employment service providers' experiences supporting this group. This letter provides information on various aspects of the study so that you can decide whether you would like to participate.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to explore immigrant and refugee youth's use, access, and navigation of employment services through three different types of organizations: community health/service centres, mainstream organizations, and settlement agencies. This research aims to conduct face-to-face interviews with immigrant and refugee youth and administer a survey to service providers to gain more information on this topic.

This study is interested in your support on three levels. First, the researcher wishes to gauge if you are able to help with the recruitment of immigrant and refugee youth for interviews from your organization. A recruitment email and recruitment posters have been prepared in case you are okay with forwarding on a recruitment email to your service-users and posting recruitment posters at your facilities. Second, the researcher would like to administer a three-page survey to you as you hold valuable experience in providing employment supports to immigrant and refugee youth. The three-page survey gauges your perspective on immigrant and refugee youth's experiences in utilizing services at your employment centre, asks about what kinds of services you provide, explores whether you see differences in immigrant and refugee youth's and Canadian-born youth's utilization of your employment services and asks about any ideas you may have for enhancing future employment service provision for this group. Third, if available, the researcher will ask if you are able to provide space (a room) for the researcher to conduct interviews with recruited immigrant and refugee youth from your employment centre. For the purposes of confidentiality and anonymity, if you are able to provide space for the interview, it would be requested that the room is not in close proximity to the employment coordinator who might help with recruitment.

### **Procedure**

The researcher seeks your aid in sending an email to all service users at your employment organization in attempts to recruit immigrant and refugee youth for the study. The inclusion criteria for interviews with immigrant and refugee youth are explicitly stated in the recruitment email. The same information is provided in the recruitment poster, which if allowed, would be posted in your facilities.

The three-page survey requires about twenty minutes to complete. The researcher will email you the consent form and survey for your completion. The researcher will pick up the completed survey and consent form in person upon being notified of their completion.

You can decline to answer any questions while filling out the survey and revoke responses or completely withdraw participation after submitting the survey up until **(30 days after date on consent form)** by letting me know at [hatavshalileh@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:hatavshalileh@cmail.carleton.ca).

### **Data Storage and Privacy**

Upon survey completion, the student researcher and research supervisor are the only people who will have access to your survey. Your survey will be numerically coded to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. The completed survey and the consent form will be kept in separate locked filing cabinets. Prior to being destroyed, the data will be locked and stored for 5 years for possible future research opportunities.

In the final report, the researcher ensures confidentiality by not using your name and the name of the organization whenever she quotes you. Rather, quotes will be identified pseudonyms. Moreover, to protect your identity, the data will be aggregated with other interviewees' responses. The researcher will take every step to ensure that no participant is identified by their response. The only limits to confidentiality include if harm to self or others is disclosed, in which case, this information will be reported to the authorities.

### **Use of Data**

The interview data will be presented in a final thesis report and a presentation to a 4-person thesis committee (consisting of the research supervisor, second reader, external examiner, and committee Chair). The researcher may present the findings of the study in academic journals, conferences, and/or in other forums. Adherence to confidentiality will be maintained in all of these cases.

### **Benefits/Risks**

Benefits of participating in this study include the opportunity for you to share your experiences of providing employment services to immigrant and refugee youth. Your information will seek to enhance the capacity of employment organizations in supporting immigrant and refugee youth communities.

Risks to participation are minimal, however the small sample of employment service coordinators providing services out of the same type of organization may be concerning. As explained, this concern will be mitigated by identifying quotes with pseudonyms and not real names, and by aggregating results by organization type and not identifying the specific organizations that participate in the study.

## Appendix J: Employment Coordinator Consent Form

### Consent

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in the Master of Social Work research study entitled: *Exploring First Generation Immigrant and Refugee Youth's Use of Employment Services in Ottawa: An Examination of Three Types of Employment Service Organizations*. This study's purpose is to explore immigrant and refugee youth's experiences and perspectives in using employment services in six different organizations. This study also explores service provider's experiences and insights in providing employment services to immigrant and refugee youth.

I understand that I am agreeing to complete a survey which takes about 25 minutes asking questions about the services and programs that my employment centre offers, how immigrant and refugee youth use them, what kind of outreach is offered, what can be enhanced, and whether there are differences among immigrant and refugee youth's and Canadian-born youth's use of the employment services. I understand that I can ask any questions to clarify any concerns that I have about the research to the researcher (such as the research goals, methods, researcher's obligations, and my rights). I understand that I have the right to not answer any question in the survey that I feel uncomfortable with and that I can revoke any response after providing it and/or completely withdraw participation from the study until **(Date 30 days after date of signed consent form)**. I understand that helping with recruitment as a third party and providing space for interviews is up to my discretion and the ability of the organization to do so. I understand that if I am able to provide a room for the researcher to conduct interviews with immigrant and refugee youth, the researcher requests that the room not be in close proximity to the employment coordinator who is helping with recruitment, for the purposes of anonymity and confidentiality.

I understand that the researcher will provide me with the survey and consent form through email and pick them up in person when notified of their completion.

I understand that the survey will be confidential and identified by a number. I understand that if my responses are quoted in the thesis, they will be identified by a number and not by my name or organization. I understand that my responses will be aggregated with that of other employment coordinators. I understand that the name of my organization will not be used in the thesis, but only referenced in relation to the *type* of organization. I understand that the survey and the consent form will be kept in separate locked filing cabinets.

I understand that the researcher may use the findings of the study for future research presentation and publication. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity considerations apply in all of these forums. Upon my request, I understand that I can receive an electronic copy of the thesis. I understand that all data pertaining to the study will be destroyed after being kept in a locked file cabinet for 5 years (until 2020) for potential future research, publication, and presentation use.

### Questions

This project has been approved by the research ethics protocol at the Carleton University Ethics Review Board. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the University Research Ethics Board representative, research supervisor, and/or student researcher below:

**Carleton University Research Ethics Board A Representative:** Dr. Louise Heslop, telephone number: 613-520-2517 or email: [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca)

**Research Supervisor:** Dr. Behnam Behnia, telephone number: 613-520-2600 x 2665 or [behnam\\_behnia@carleton.ca](mailto:behnam_behnia@carleton.ca)

**Researcher Contact:** Hatav Shalileh: [hatavshalileh@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:hatavshalileh@cmail.carleton.ca)

I agree to forward a recruitment email to service users in my organization for this study:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I permit the researcher to post recruitment posters throughout this facility: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I am able to provide a space for the researcher to conduct interviews with recruited participants from my organization: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If needed, I will allow follow-up contact by the researcher: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to receive an electronic copy of the final thesis: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

- If so, please provide your email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Employment Coordinator Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix K: Immigrant and Refugee Youth Research Participant Demographic Table**

Name	Gender Identification (W=woman M=man)	Time Lived in Canada	Age of Arrival to Canada	Age	Admission Class	Educational Involvement	Employment Status	Highest Level of Education among Parents
Thierry	M	4 months	17	18	Refugee	Currently in high school	Student	University undergraduate degree
Keyon	M	5 months	19	20	Refugee	Completed high school	Unemployed	--
Aisha	W	5 months and a half	23	25	Refugee	Completed high school	Employed part-time and enrolled in a training program	University undergraduate degree
Maysa	W	6 months	19	21	Refugee	Currently in high school	Student	High school
Carene	W	1 year	15	16	--	Currently in high school	Student	University master's degree
Hannah	W	1 year and 7 months	24	26	Immigrant	Currently in university undergraduate program	Student	University PhD degree
Barak	M	5 years	11	17	Immigrant	Currently in high school	Student	College diploma/certificate
Ali	M	9 years	9	18	Immigrant	Completed high school	Employed part-time	College diploma/certificate
Sally	W	10 years	16	28	Immigrant	Completed university undergraduate degree	Employed part-time	University master's degree
Zarifa	W	15 years	8	23	Refugee	Completed College Diploma/Certificate	Employed	University undergraduate degree

## Appendix L: Employment Programs and Services Offered by Different Types of Organizations

Services	Organization Type		
	Mainstream Organizations	Community Health/Service Centres	Settlement Agencies
Posts for jobs, job fairs, networking opportunities	II	III	III
Job search training	II	III	III
Career counselling/advising	II	II	II
Interview support	II	III	II
Resume and cover letter templates and samples	II	III	III
Resume writing help	II	III	III
Cover letter writing help	II	III	III
Access to printers, photocopiers, fax machines, phones	II	III	III
Internal (or referral to external) skill development/job training	II	III	III
Connections to paid internship or apprenticeship program	II	III	II
Connections to unpaid volunteer, internship, or apprenticeship program	I	III	III
Coaching or mentorship programs	--	III	II
Peer mentoring	--	II	--
Bilingual (English and French) employment service provision	II	II	III
Translation services		II (Arabic, Somalia, Mandarin, Spanish, Creole, Romanian, different African dialects)	II (Arabic, Amharic, Somali, Tigrigna, French, English)
Referrals to employment-related services	II	III	III
Referrals to non-employment related services	II	III	III
Testing or validation of foreign credentials, skills, and/or foreign work experience	--	II	Bridging; I
Culturally competent/sensitive training for staff	II	III	III
Follow-up with service users on job search endeavours	II	II	II
Connections and linkages with newcomer communities	II	III	III
Links to community partners (schools, governments, other organizations, etc.) to enhance IRY's employment success	II	III	III
Culturally representative staff	II	III	III
Child care	I	II	--
Other	--	Job-matching placement with and without incentives; referral to counselling and health services; pre-employment services; literacy and basic skills referrals; training supports; supports for clothing; supports for workplace accommodation needs; workplace culture training; newcomer settlement program	--

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