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**COMPARISONS OF EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS BETWEEN VISIBLE MINORITY  
AND ANGLO-SAXON WOMEN IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS**

BY

Harjeet Lamba

(Honours B.A., York University, 1992)

**THESIS**

Submitted to the Faculty of Social Work  
In partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Master of Social Work degree  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
1995

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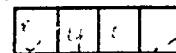
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### *Abstract*

*Minority groups tend to face disproportionately higher rates of unemployment, underemployment and restricted job mobility than non-minority groups. In recognition of the inequalities borne by these groups in the labour force, Judge Rosalie Abella produced a report iterating the most "efficient, effective, and equitable means of promoting employment equity". The federal Employment Act in 1986 was produced in response to the report. Four designated groups were identified: women, visible minorities, disabled persons and First Nations people. Due primarily to the weak enforcement mechanisms of the federal legislation, the impact of this Act has been insignificant. Ontario developed its own employment legislation in 1994 which has been short lived. One significant difference between the federal and provincial legislation was that the provincial version had more stringent enforcement mechanisms. A brief review of the Act is provided in the paper.*

*There is statistical evidence to support the need for the employment equity legislation. The focus of this study is on barriers experienced in the workforce by women in two different ethnic groups, Anglo-Saxon and visible minority, and in two different occupational categories, professional and unskilled/semi-skilled. The study endeavours to probe the interplay of ethnicity, gender and class as they impact on women in the workforce. Thirty-six interviews were conducted in total. Qualitative design, more specifically, elements of the naturalistic inquiry paradigm were employed for the study. The author argues that this type of design is most suitable for studying the multiple realities of people.*

*The author recognizes the complexities of defining visible minorities and the need to make more distinctions between and among the specific visible minority groups. However, the terms used were mainly to remain consistent with the Employment Equity categories of visible minorities. The broad categories in which visible minorities are defined is not a limitation of the thesis, but rather a limitation of the policy itself.*

*The study found that visible minority women, regardless of occupational categories, experienced similar barriers in the workforce. The barriers reported were more related to their culture and ethnicity than gender or class. Anglo-Saxon women also shared more common barriers with each other, irrespective of occupational categories. Furthermore, professional visible minority women encountered difficulty in securing employment at any level, whereas professional Anglo Saxon women were more likely to encounter barriers to advancement. The economic disadvantage experienced by both groups of unskilled/semi-skilled women limited their choices in the workforce.*

*Recommendations are made for implementing fair and equitable employment practices and policies for all women. Suggestions for working towards objectivity in recruiting, descriptions of jobs, screening, selecting and interviewing are made. Lastly, broadening the application of seniority rights to include part time, temporary and contract workers as well as more flexible seniority provisions would greatly improve the chances of all women in their eligibility for promotions.*



### Acknowledgments

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I would also like to thank individuals at the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre, Focus For Ethnic Women, Working For Work, Conestoga College and Waterloo County Board of Education in helping me to recruit participants for the study. Thanks also to external readers, Myrta Sahas, Saudia Gassim and Fran Manson who provided me with insightful feedback which I incorporated into the thesis.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank all the participants who shared with me their sometimes painful experiences in the workforce. Without their narratives, this research would not have materialized.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Minority groups tend to face disproportionately higher rates of unemployment, underemployment and restricted job mobility than non-minority groups. In recognition of the inequalities born by subordinate groups in the labour force, Judge Rosalie Abella was commissioned by the Liberal Federal government in 1983, to produce a report iterating the most "efficient, effective, and equitable means of promoting equal employment opportunities" (Abella, 1984,p.ii ). In Judge Abella's report, the term "employment equity" was defined as "strategy designed to obliterate the present and residual effects of discrimination and to open equitably the competition for employment opportunities to those arbitrarily excluded" (p.254 ). Four designated groups were identified: women, visible minorities, disabled persons and First Nations people. Notwithstanding the significant differences within and among the four designated, the overwhelming consensus was that these designated groups needed governmental measures to ensure an equitable workforce.

### **Definition of equality**

Equality, in the Abella report, is defined as being beyond freedom from adverse discrimination. True equality is seen as being achieved when differences are validated, legitimized and accommodated in the workforce. In fact, refusing to recognize differences and as a result not accommodating for these differences is viewed as discrimination itself (Abella, 1984).

Equality has different meanings and requires diverse strategies of fairness. For women, equality in the workforce entails the recognition of their changing roles as both worker and parent/homemaker. Equality means providing the education and training to compete in the

workforce. In practice, this equality is translated into active recruitment and training of women as employees, particularly in occupations traditionally held by their male counterparts. Furthermore, equality means equal pay, opportunities for promotions, participation in all levels of the workforce, accessible and affordable child care and flexible hours to accommodate parenting responsibilities.

The Employment Equity Act in 1986 was the federal response to the Rosalie Abella's report. The Act applies to Crown corporations and federally regulated businesses with 100 or more employees. It recognizes systemic and institutional barriers to employment for the four disadvantaged groups. Furthermore, the Act requires employers to survey their workforce in terms of representation of designated groups. This survey is then used to develop employment equity plans and goals. Annual reports are submitted to the federal government indicating occupational status and salary range on the hiring, promotion and termination of work for people from the designated groups. Close analysis of the federal legislation reveals that there are weak enforcement mechanisms for the legislation. Although employers are mandated to submit employment equity reports and a fine of \$50,000 is stipulated for employers who fail to do so, there are no penalties for non-compliance or non-implementation of the employment equity plans.

There is evidence to suggest that the federal legislation has made no impact on creating a more representative workforce. The 1991 Annual Report on Employment Equity of Employment and Immigration Canada rates the 361 respondents in their progress for a more representative workforce. In their ranking system, an "A" represents some improvement in the representation of the designated group, "B" reflects "no change", and "C" indicates deterioration in the representation of the designated group. The reports for visible minorities show that 27% of

employers received an "A" (i.e. showing some progress), 44% displayed no change, and 29% showed deterioration in the representation of visible minorities (McKenna, 1994).

Ontario developed its own employment equity legislation which came into effect September 1994. This was partly motivated due to the limited jurisdiction of the Federal legislation as well as its failure to yield any significant results. Although there are striking similarities in terms of principles between the Federal and Provincial legislation, the enforcement mechanisms in the Ontario legislation are much more stringent.

One of the main differences between the Ontario and the Federal legislation is that in the provincial Act duties to develop workforce surveys, review employment systems and develop and implement employment equity plans are legally enforceable. Failure to comply with any of the three aspects of employment equity results in compliance orders and fines of up to \$50,000. Furthermore, the Ontario legislation has designated an Employment Equity Commission to administer the Act and Employment Equity Tribunal to listen to charges of non-compliance and enforce solutions (McKenna, 1994). The Act itself will be examined in more detail below.

I launched this paper when the Ontario Employment Equity Act came into effect. However, the newly elected provincial conservative government announced in July 1995 that the Employment Equity Act will be repealed during the first session in the Legislature. The newly elected conservative government's election campaign erroneously labelled the legislation a quota law. The terms **numerical goals** and **timetables** have been used interchangeably with the concept of **quota**. Numerical goals and timetables are set according to the availability of qualified people in the labour force. They are reasonable and flexible. In contrast, quotas are imposed on an organization without any consideration of the availability of qualified people and the

organization's resources (Ontario Pay Equity and Employment Equity Guide, 1995). Nonetheless, the provincial government claims that they are "opposed to any form of discrimination" and that the legislation will be replaced by an "Equal Opportunity Plan" which will hire and promote individuals based on merit (News Release, Ministry of Citizenship, Cultures and Recreation, July 1995). At minimum, there seems to be a consensus among governing bodies that discrimination does exist for the designated groups. However, divisions exist in the strategies thought to be appropriate in eradicating discrimination.

### **PERSONAL BIASES**

I have a keen interest in policy and fundamental human rights issues. I hold the belief that the right to equal employment opportunity is a fundamental human right, just as one has the right to an education or shelter. It has always been difficult for me to fathom the preferential treatment one receives, provided that one belongs to a specific ethnic group or gender. A person's ethnic background, gender, class and other distinguishing factors are merely accidents of birth.

I have worked almost exclusively with minority groups during the last four years in many contexts, both in Canada and overseas. I am acutely aware of the issues faced by these groups. I have seen members from these groups excluded from many facets of Canadian life, and not only employment. The inadequacies of mainstream agencies only disappoint and discourage people from attempting to improve the quality of their lives.

Any form of discrimination, in my opinion, inevitably limits one's choices. Equality to me is about choices. When discrimination interferes with employment opportunities, it not only stunts professional growth but inevitably decreases confidence in one's abilities and, therefore, limits future opportunities.

I would like to believe that people are usually hired based on merit: this is idealistic more than it is realistic. If people were hired based on their qualifications, then there would be more women and other disadvantaged groups in administrative positions. The Ontario Employment Equity Act created an uproar about "quotas", even though the Act does not impose quotas on the employer. Even if the quota system was part of the terms of the Act, why was it perceived as offensive? Moreover, individual organizations such as Boards of Education that have set quotas for women to move into administrative positions. This did not create controversy to the same extent that similar legislation created for other disadvantaged groups. The message I have received is that achieving gender equity is considered more important than achieving equity across ethnic lines.

I believe that research is a tool that can guide and shape policies. Documenting evidence of different forms of discrimination is essential to building a case for equality. Because equality in employment takes different forms, one needs to consider the different experiences of women from different socio-economic classes and ethnic origins.

The study endeavours to probe the interplay of ethnicity, gender and class as they impact in the workforce. Two diverse groups of women, visible minority and Anglo-Saxon, were selected for the purposes of comparison. More specifically, barriers to employment and promotion as perceived by these women from different skill and education levels were the focus of the study. Currently, there is a lack of research that attempts to understand the interrelationships between ethnicity, gender and class. The research in this area has been very fragmented. These factors tend to be conceptualized in abstract terms without showing relationships in meaningful ways. This research intends to add to the body of knowledge that will



assist researchers to understand the interplay between the multiple realities.

The thesis has been divided into five chapters, this being the first one. In chapter two I will clarify key concepts related to this research such as "race", "minority" and "ethnic groups". Socio-economic characteristics of visible minority population as a whole in comparison with the non-minority population will be reviewed. Gender differences and individual differences among visible minority groups will also be highlighted. Existing literature focusing on barriers in the work force will be discussed. Throughout this section, many complexities in studying visible minorities will be illustrated as well. Lastly, in this chapter the Ontario Employment Equity Act will be reviewed to provide background information about its purpose and principles. Since the Act is on the verge of its demise, it is believed that the Ontario Human Rights Commission will assume more responsibility for investigating discrimination complaints. For this reason, I have presented two precedent setting cases addressed by the Human Rights Commission thereby raising the issues of systemic discrimination in hiring and promoting practices as they relate to gender and cultural factors.

Chapter three describes the research methods used for the purposes of this study and justifies the choice of design. The author argues that qualitative methods are most appropriate for studying participants' subjective realities of their experiences in the workforce.

Chapter four presents the findings of the interviews that were conducted according to themes which emerged in the interviews. Negative cases, that may not necessarily fit will also be presented. Participants are quoted heavily throughout the findings to prevent the researcher from distorting or misconstruing the perceptions of the participants' experiences. Using their own words will lend support to the trustworthiness of the research.

Lastly, chapter five analyzes the experiences of visible minority and Anglo-Saxon women in the different occupational categories. Recommendations for implementing equity and suggestions for improving policies pertaining to employment equity are made. The research in no way makes conclusive statements about the findings, but rather stresses the tentative application of the findings.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Before delving into the demographics of the designated groups, some discussion regarding concepts such as "race", "culture", "ethnic group", "ethnicity" and "minority" is warranted. Many writings use these concepts interchangeably, when in actual fact these terms have specific meanings.

### Clarification of Concepts

Physical anthropologists and biologists have originally referred to the term **race** as "a specific group of people who could be phenotypically isolated into distinct categories" (Anderson & Frideres, 1981,p.14). The implicit and explicit meanings associated with this term have been the basis for much confusion. While physical definition of race is certainly one element which characterises **ethnicity**, the most significant differentiating factor is **culture**. Culture is transmitted through learning rather than through biological heredity. Culture has been subdivided into two categories: material and non-material. **Material culture** is comprised of objects such as artifacts and the way in which these material objects are used in a given culture. **Non-material culture** encompasses beliefs, customs, values, languages, social institutions of a particular group of people.

This research has selected women from diverse **ethnic groups** in order to compare their perceived experiences in the workforce. Clarity of the definition for this term becomes increasingly important as governments identify vulnerable groups so that appropriate policies can be developed. In contemporary Canadian society, ethnic group has been defined in both subjective and objective terms. The objectivists assert that ethnic groups share common cultural characteristics and racial attributes. On the other hand, subjectivists emphasize self ascription or

ascription by others as the defining factors of ethnic groups. Isajiw (1974) combined the two terms and characterized an ethnic group as "an involuntary group of people who share the same culture or descendants of such people who identify themselves and/or are identified by others as belonging to the same involuntary group" (p.122). Certain characteristics such as race, religion, language and national origin form the **ethnicity** of the group. Gordon (1964) referred to ethnicity as "all of these categories (i.e race, religion, or national origin) having a common social-psychological referent, in that all of them serve to create, through historical circumstances, a sense of peoplehood" (p.27-28).

This paper did not select any specific ethnic group but rather classified such groups according to minority versus dominant definitions. The term **minority** has been conceptualized by various researchers. The notion of power seems to be a defining factor in this term. Gittler (1956) captured this element of power imbalances between the minority and dominant groups and defined **minority group** as members who experience a wide range of discriminatory treatment and who are assigned to positions relatively low in the status structure of a society; basically they are excluded from participation in the economic and political arenas of society. In contrast, **dominant group** is defined as "that collectivity within a society which has pre-eminent authority to function both as guardians and sustainers of the controlling value system, and as prime allocators of rewards in the society" (Anderson & Frideres, 1981, p.32). In other words, the dominant group has more power and status than the minority groups.

Two minority groups were selected for this study: women and visible minorities. The definition of visible minority is derived from Employment Equity Regulations that accompany the Employment Equity Act. It is defined as "people, other than Aboriginal people, who are non-

Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (Employment Equity Definition, 1991). Visible minorities are comprised of the following ten groups: Blacks, Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, Latin Americans, Other Pacific Islanders, South Asians, South East Asians, and West Asians and Arabs (Please See Appendix A for specific visible minority groups as defined by Statistics Canada). Visible minority women have a dual minority status, whereas the Anglo-Saxon women are part of the dominant ethnic group but belong to an oppressed gender. Similarly, the unskilled/semi-skilled visible minority women have a triple minority status because of their ethnic background, gender and economic situation, whereas the unskilled/semi skilled Anglo-Saxon women have a dual minority status.

Much of the data showing support for disproportionately higher unemployment and underemployment rates and restricted job mobility comes from information on socio-economic characteristics of the groups in question. Rosalie Abella used similar data in her report to support a case for equality. I have used statistics from the 1991 Canada census to show that the disproportionate rates have remained consistent over time. Thus, the following section will provide background information on the origin and composition of immigrants to Canada as well as the socio-economic characteristics such as educational levels, labour force participation rates, unemployment rates and selected occupations of visible minority and non-minority population in Canada. Finding meaningful data for Ontario proved difficult, thus most of the data is based on Canada as a whole. Gender differences and individual visible minority group differences will also be highlighted.

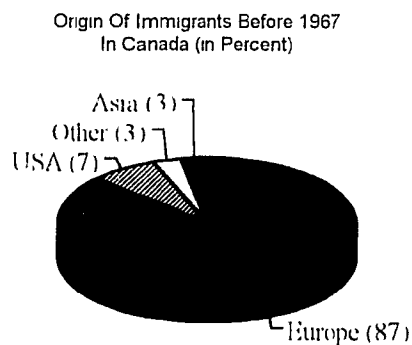
### Origin and Composition of Immigrants

The origins of immigrants have changed over time. Immigrants entering Canada prior to 1967 were primarily from Europe (87%), with fewer from the United States (7%), Asia (3%) and the Caribbean, South and Central America, Africa and Oceania (3%) (See Figure 1). Between 1981 to 1986, these demographics changed to 43% of immigrants from Asia, 29% from Europe, over 20% from the Caribbean, Africa and Oceania and 7% from the United States.

(See Figure 2) (Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1991).

The changes in immigration patterns have not only increased the size of Canada's visible minority population but the composition as well. The visible minority population represents 9.4% of the population aged 15 and over in 1991 in Canada and 13.0% in Ontario. The province of Ontario was the choice for settlement of 51.4% of Canada's visible minority population: an increase from 8.6% since 1986 (Statistics Canada, 1991).

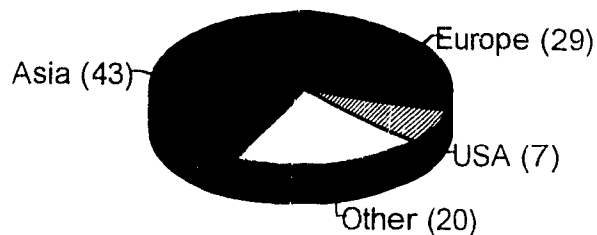
Figure 1



Source: Statistics Canada 1989

**Figure 2**

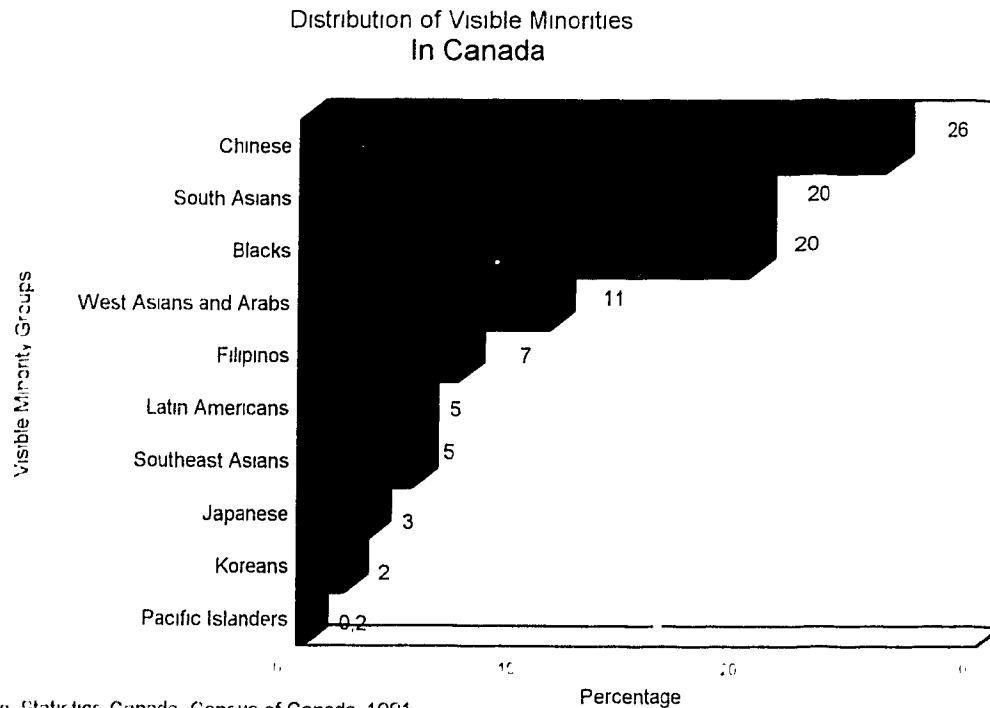
Origin Of Immigrants Between 1981 - 86  
In Canada (In Percent)



Source: Statistics Canada, 1989

In Canada, Chinese, Blacks and South Asians represented two thirds of the visible minority population in 1991. During the last decade, there have also been significant increases in other visible minority groups such as South East Asians and Latin Americans (Kelly, 1995). More specifically, Chinese adults are now the largest group of visible minorities in Canada accounting for 26% of the total visible minority population. South Asians and Blacks each account for 20%, West Asians and Arabs account for 11%. The next largest groups are Filipinos (7%), Latin Americans (5%), South East Asians (5%), Japanese (3%), Koreans (2%), multiple visible minorities (2%) and Pacific Islanders (0.2%) (See Figure 3) (Kelly, 1995).

Figure 3

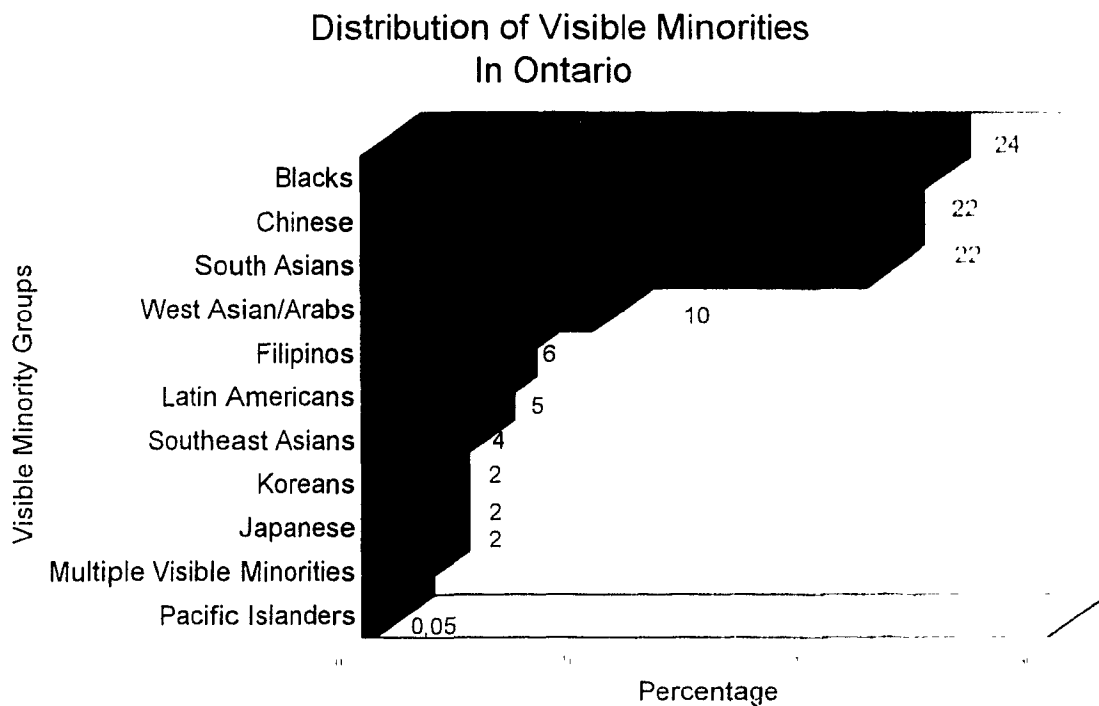


Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1991

Since the study is placed in the context of the Ontario employment equity legislation, it seems appropriate to present distribution of visible minorities in Ontario as well. There are similarities in terms of representation of visible minorities in Canada as a whole. Among the largest visible minority groups in Ontario are Blacks (24%), Chinese (22%) and South Asians (22%). The next largest groups are West Asians and Arabs (10%), Filipinos (6%), Latin Americans (5%), South East Asians (4%), Koreans (2%), Japanese (2%), multiple visible minorities (2%) and Pacific Islanders (0.05%). (See Figure 4) (Statistics Canada, 1991).



Figure 4



This study recruited participants in the Region of Waterloo which includes Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge. After Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa-Hull, this region is the fourth preferred place of settlement for visible minorities in Ontario. Thus, a significant number of visible minorities settle in this area. See Table 1 for the number of visible minorities in Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge (Statistics Canada, 1991).

Table 1

## Number of Visible Minorities in Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge

Visible Minority Group	Kitchener	Waterloo	Cambridge	Total
South Asians	3205	1750	1730	6685
Blacks	2830	1145	1625	5600
Southeast Asians	2435	795	910	4140
Latin Americans	2240	460	515	3215
West Asians and Arabs	1600	1055	810	3465
Chinese	1330	1620	685	3635
Filipinos	215	55	380	650
Japanese	140	265	130	535
Koreans	125	200	50	375
Multiple Visible Minorities	300	280	315	895
Total	14420	7625	7150	29195

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1991

The figures for educational levels, labour force participation and unemployment rates are presented after age standardization. Socio-economic characteristics of a population are affected by demographic composition of the population. In order to compare two or more populations, it is important to eliminate the effects of differences in age structure. Age standardization is the process by which rates are adjusted to eliminate the effects of age structure differences. In effect,

age standardization makes comparisons more purposeful (Kelly, 1995).

### **Age Structure**

Three quarters of the adult visible minority population in 1991 were under the age of 45, in comparison to less than two thirds of non-minority population. South East Asians, Pacific Islanders and Latin Americans are among the youngest of all visible minorities with 80% of the adult population between 15 and 44. Blacks, South Asians, Filipinos and West Asians and Arabs had between 70 and 75% of the adult population between the age of 15 and 44. The Chinese with 69%, Koreans with 66% and the Japanese with 60% were the oldest visible minority population in Canada in 1991 (Kelly, 1995)

### **Education Levels**

Visible minorities in general are more highly educated than non-visible minorities. In 1991, 33.0% of visible minorities over the age of 15 had not completed high school, 13.7% had obtained a high school diploma, 35.2% had some post-secondary training and 18.2% had a university degree. In comparison, the percentages for the total population were 38.2%, 14.8%, 35.7% and 11.4% respectively (Statistics Canada, 1991).

There are considerable differences among individual visible minority groups in terms of education. Among men, Koreans (36%), Japanese and West Asian and Arabs (each 28%) and Filipinos (26%) were most likely to have a university degree. Pacific Islanders (9%), Blacks (13%), Latin Americans (14%) and South East Asians (16%) were less likely to hold a university degree. Similarly, among women, 25% of Filipinos, 21% of Koreans, 20% of Japanese and, 17% of West Asians and Arabs had a university degree. The groups that were least likely to hold a degree were Blacks (7%), South East Asians (8%), Latin Americans (9%) and Pacific Islanders

(9%) (Statistics Canada, 1991).

Visible minority women were also more likely than other women in general to have some post secondary training and to have earned a university degree (Statistics Canada, 1991)( See Table 2 ).

Table 2

Education attainment of persons in a visible minority and other persons aged 15+ in Canada

Education	Visible Minority women	Visible Minority men	Other women	Other Men
< Grade 9	14.6	9.2	14.2	14.0
Grade 9-13	35.2	34.3	41.2	37.6
Some Postsecondary	17.3	17.9	13.9	13.1
Postsecondary certificate/degree	17.9	17.2	21.2	23.3
University degree	15.0	21.4	9.4	12.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1991

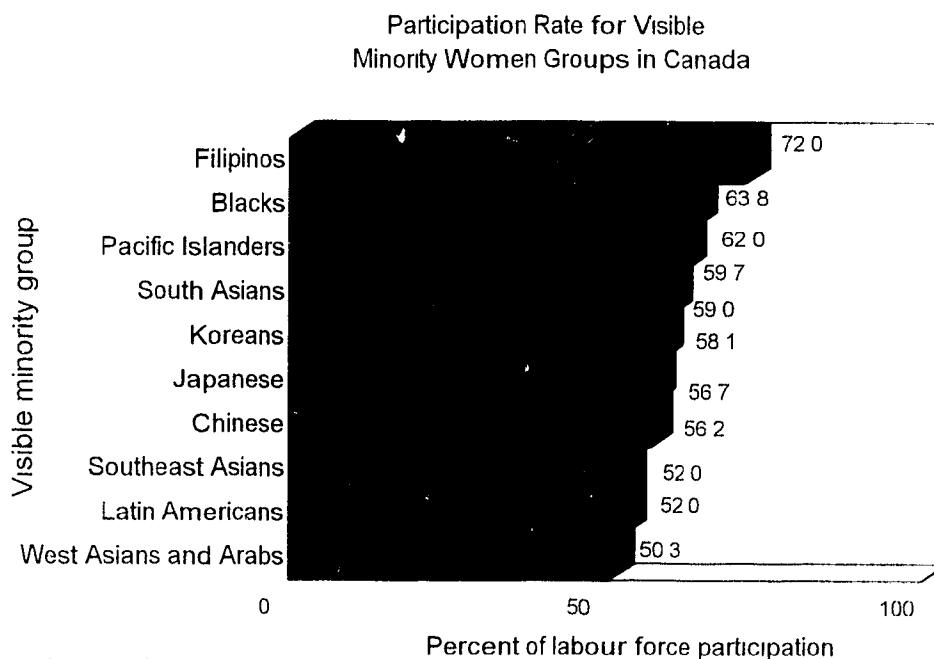
### **Labour Force Participation Rates**

After age standardization is taken into account, the rate for labour force participation was 66% for visible minorities and 68% for the non-minority population (Statistic Canada, 1991). There are differences in labour force participation rate among visible minority groups. Visible minority groups that had higher than average labour force participation rates in 1991 were Filipinos (75%), Blacks, South Asians, and Pacific Islanders (each 69%) (Statistics Canada,

1991).

There are gender differences in labour force participation. For women the rate was 62.1% compared to 77.4% for men. Individual differences among visible minority groups also exist. Among men, Filipino (79%), Pacific Islander (78%) and South Asian (77%) had the highest labour force participation rates in 1991. The least likely to be in the labour force were South East Asian, Chinese and Latin American men each with a labour force participation rate of 70% (Statistics Canada, 1991).

**Figure 5**



A similar pattern is found among women. Filipino (72%), Black (64%), Pacific Islander (62%) and South Asian (60%) women were most likely to be in the labour force. The lowest labour force participation rates were found among West Asian and Arab (50%), South East Asian

(52%) and Latin American (52%) women (See Figure 5) (Statistics Canada, 1991) .

### Unemployment Rates

The unemployment rate for visible minorities is 13% before and after age standardization. This is higher than that of the non-minority unemployment rate of 10%. Visible minority women experience higher levels of unemployment than other women. In 1991 13.4% of visible minority women were unemployed, compared with 9.8% of other women who were active in the labour force (Statistics Canada, 1991) (See Table 3).

Table 3

Unemployment Rates of persons in a visible minority and other persons by age in Canada

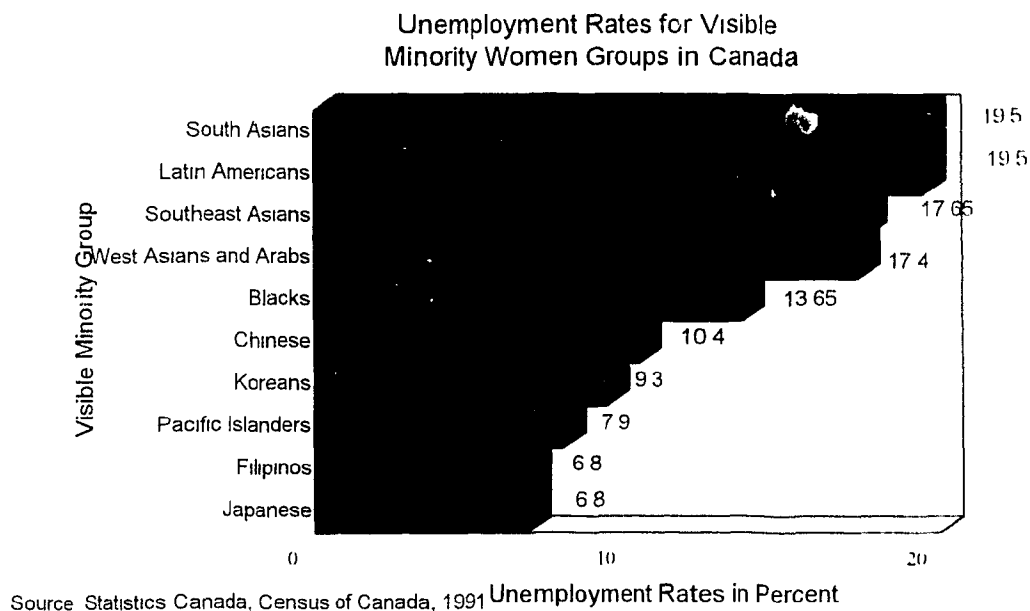
Age	Visible Minority Women	Visible Minority Men	Other Women	Other Men
15-24	17.7	19.2	14.2	16.2
25-44	12.7	12.1	9.4	9.3
45-64	11.3	9.8	7.7	7.5
Total aged 15-64	13.4	12.8	9.9	10.0
65 and over	14.2	13.7	6.1	4.8
Total aged 15 and over	13.4	12.8	9.8	9.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 1991

The highest unemployment rates were among Latin Americans (19%) and South East Asians (17%), West Asians and Arabs (16%) and South Asians (16%). The groups that had the lowest unemployment rates were Japanese (6%), Pacific Islanders (7%), Koreans (8%) and

Filipinos (8%) (Statistics Canada, 1991). See Figure 6 for differences in unemployment rates among visible minority groups.

**Figure 6**



### **Selected Occupations**

Despite their education, even for those between 25 to 44 years of age possessing a university degree, visible minorities are less likely to hold professional or managerial positions. Instead, visible minorities are in general clustered in lower-paying clerical, service and manual labour positions (Kelly, 1995).

During the 18 months prior to the 1991 Census, visible minority adults were as likely as non-minority adults to be employed as clerical employees (17%). However, visible minorities were more likely than non-minority adults to be manual labourers (16% vs. 13%) and service

workers (13% vs. 10%).

Both visible minority and non-minority women tend to hold sex identified jobs in the clerical and service sectors. Research shows that visible minority women hold more traditional occupations than non-minority women. These jobs are poorly paid, lack job security and tend to be part of the non-unionized sector of the labour force. Visible minority women are overrepresented in service, production and material handling occupations in comparison to non-minority, while being underrepresented in white collar occupations (Ng & Estable, 1987).

Other studies (Chud & Fortes, 1974; Arnopoulos, 1979; Ng and Das Gupta, 1980) echo Ng & Estable's results (1987) and support the finding that visible minority women are recruited to three kinds of services and industries. The first type is private domestic and janitorial services, sought by professional classes of people such as lawyers, physicians and academics. These positions tend to pay very poorly. The second type is lower end jobs in the service industries including restaurants, janitorial and cleaning services. Lastly, visible minority women are streamed into the manufacturing industries such as in the garment, plastic and retail sectors.

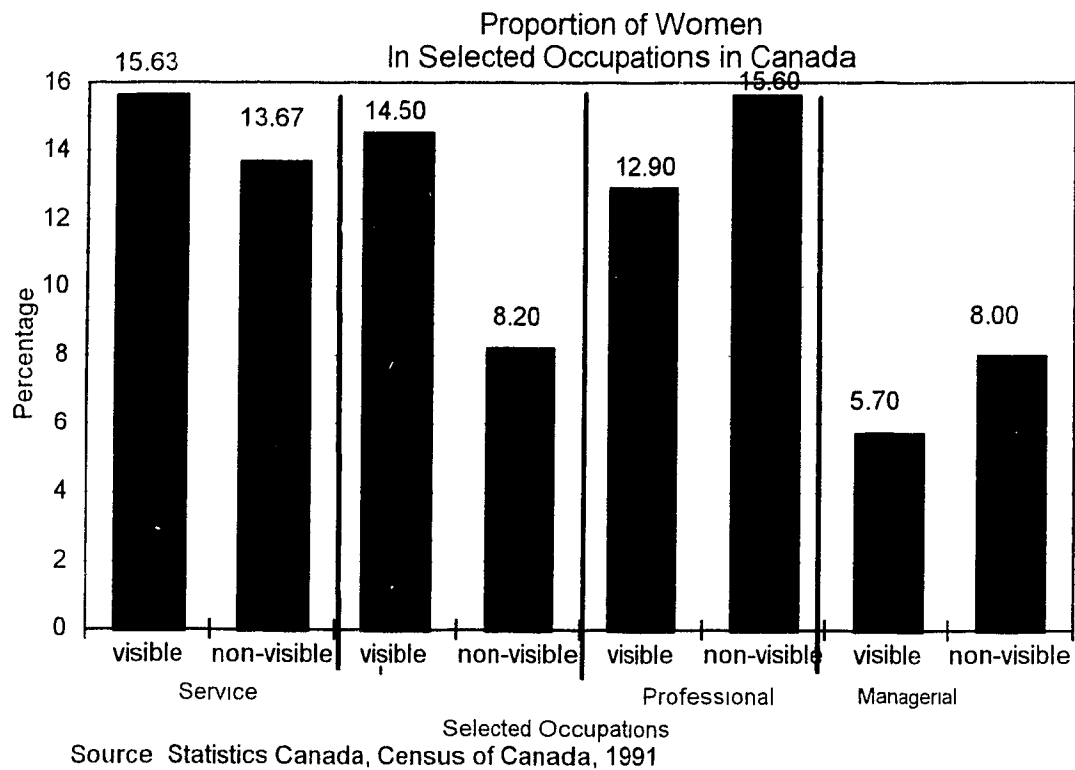
In 1991, both visible minority men and women were less likely to hold managerial occupations (8%) when compared to the non-minority population (10%). Among the visible minorities, 10% of the men held managerial positions while 6% of the visible minority women held such positions. However, visible minorities were as likely to be in professional occupations (13% after age standardization) as non-minorities. There were more visible minority men (14%) in professional occupations than non-minority men (11%). In contrast, non-minority women (16%) were more likely to be in professional occupations than visible minority women (13%). (Statistics Canada, 1991).



There are individual differences among visible minorities in terms of selected occupations. The groups most likely to hold manual positions were South East Asians (32%) and Latin Americans (29%). The groups least likely to be manual labourers were Koreans (8%), Japanese (8%) and West Asians and Arabs (10%). Filipinos were most likely to be in service positions (25%), and the least likely were Koreans (8%), Japanese (9%) and South Asians (9%). These patterns existed both for males and females (Statistics Canada, 1991).

There are significant differences among visible minority groups in terms of managerial and professional positions. Koreans (17%), Japanese (13%), and West Asians and Arabs were most likely to be in managerial positions. In contrast, Filipinos (3%) and South East Asians (4%) were least likely to hold managerial positions. In terms of professional occupations, Japanese (19%), Chinese (15%) and West Asians and Arabs (15%) held such positions. The least likely to have professional occupations were Latin Americans (8%), Pacific Islanders (9%) and South East Asians (10%) (See Figure 7 for differences between visible minority and non-minority women).

Figure 7



In sum, the visible minority population has increased steadily in Canada with Ontario as the primary choice for settlement. Generally, visible minorities are more educated than the non-minority population. Visible minority women are more likely than other women to have some post-secondary education. After age standardization, visible minorities have lower labour force participation rates and higher unemployment rates than the non-minority population. Visible minority women experience higher rates of unemployment rates than non-minority rates despite their higher educational qualifications. Visible minorities are less likely to hold professional or managerial positions and are more likely to be clustered in clerical, service and manual positions.

Women, in general, hold sex identified jobs but visible minority women hold more traditional occupations than non-minority women.

### **Variables Affecting Adaptation**

Next, since all of the visible minority participants in this study were first generation immigrants, it seems appropriate to review the complex issues involved in the process of adaptation to a new country. The Canadian Task Force on Mental Health of Immigrants and Refugees (1986-88) identified through their literature review, three variables affecting adaptation: **socio-demographic variables, conditions of exodus, and post-migration variables.**

**Age and gender** are two socio-demographic variables which affect adaptation. Adolescents, young adults and seniors are particularly vulnerable to the stress of immigration to a new country. Women are affected by pre-migration variable such as their role in their country of origin. Their roles tend to be more traditional than that of Canadian women. This obstructs their adaptation to the norms of Canadian women. Men are more affected by changes in occupational and employment status. Immigrants with high levels of education experience greater stress in adjustment. Also, the level of fluency in the host country's language appears to be positively correlated with positive adaptation.

**Pre-migration stress and migrating unit** are two conditions of exodus that affect adaptation. Refugees and immigrants come to Canada for different reasons. Refugees are forced to leave their home due to some form of persecution, whereas other immigrants may choose to reside in Canada. Thus, attitudes toward the country of origin and the political climate in one's home country influence adaptability. Moreover, for many the extended family of the ancestral country serves as a supportive network thereby making individuals who immigrate alone more

vulnerable to stress in the host country.

**Host society, socio-economic status, ethnic community and length of residence** are post-migration variables that greatly affect integration into Canadian society. The receptivity provided by the host country can affect adaptability. It can either encourage or hinder the process of integration. The extent to which socio-economic status is achieved is important. The nature and extent of support received by the ethnic community of the newcomer is also an important factor. Within the first year and a half newcomers experience difficulties relating to employment and housing. Several years after immigrating, continued loss of social status, inability to speak the language of the host country and differential acculturation rates within individual families all affect the integration process (Disman, 1988).

It is worth noting that there are considerable differences between visible minority groups in terms of adaptation. However, differences within visible minority groups also exist. Research is lacking in the area of studying differences among visible minority groups. Thus, in order to access information regarding the differences among the Latin American community I interviewed the Director of Cross Cultural Services in Kitchener. She has considerable experience in the area of settlement issues for refugees and immigrants. I learned that immigrants from Central and South America vary significantly. Central and South America are classified under Latin America in the Ontario Employment Equity legislation. In South America, for example, people from Chile, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay tend to be better educated than people from Central America such as Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. The people from Central America are more indigenous in which their customs have been mainly preserved whereas people from South America have been influenced by the influx of Europeans after World War II. Also, people from

South America came to Canada as refugees in the 1970's to escape political persecution. However, during the 1980's people from South America immigrated to Canada by choice so that they could improve their economic status. Thus, the reasons for immigrating changed as the conditions in their home country changed.

It is also interesting to note that people from Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay are not identified as visible minorities in the Ontario Employment Equity Act. Although they may experience similar barriers as people from Central America or any other visible minority group, they are not considered to be at a disadvantage as a result of their "race" or "colour". It is evident that the exclusion of this group of people from the definition of visible minority disregards their similar experiences in terms of integrating into Canadian society.

In sum, there are many factors that can facilitate or hinder the process of adapting to Canadian society. Research shows that immigrants and refugees integrate differently. The educational and status levels attained in the home country, support networks, reception by host country and language fluency are some of the critical factors that affect adaptation. The next section will specifically discuss barriers experienced by tradespeople and professionals from overseas.

### **Barriers for tradespeople and professionals from overseas**

A local report compiled by Naidoo et al. (1992) identified ethnocultural, language, counselling/moral, and employment counselling as employment barriers for tradespeople and professionals from overseas. Table 4 summarizes these barriers in more detail.

Table 4: List of Employment Barriers for Immigrant Tradespeople and Professionals

Ethnocultural	Racism; cultural differences in non-verbal and verbal behaviour; lack of cultural sensitivity; lack of employment equity in the private sector
Language	Insufficient language training programs to meet special needs; language tests that demand an unrealistic level of English; language tests that are culturally biased; insufficient number of qualified translators; insufficient staff to carry out equivalency determination; lack of oral tests, especially in the trades
Counselling/ Moral Support	Lack of mentors/guides to help foreign trained individuals integrate into the Canadian system
Employment Counselling	Lack of consistent appropriate employment counselling, especially in the individual's own language

Immigrants can experience downward economic mobility after immigration to Canada. This reality is ironic because most immigrants, particularly those who choose to reside in Canada, immigrate so that their standard of living can increase; people's image of Canada as the land of opportunity quickly dissipates. The downward mobility occurs regardless of educational level and previous work experience. However, women from the United States and Britain deviate from this norm: they usually achieve upward mobility after immigrating to Canada (Estable, 1986).

Numerous factors contribute to downward mobility. These include lack of recognition of previous education, training and work experience outside of Canada. Again, except for credentials obtained from United States and Britain, there is a tendency to dismiss all other foreign degrees. Generally an undergraduate degree is granted the equivalency of grade 13 in Canada. A Master's degree is considered the equivalent of only two years of post-secondary education at a Canadian university (Estable, 1986).

Estable (1986) noted that specifically South Asian and Caribbean women experienced

immense difficulty in receiving recognition of their foreign credentials. These two groups of women received lower salaries in comparison to their Anglo-Saxon counterparts, regardless of equal or better qualifications in terms of education or work experience. These factors lead women to become confined to the lower end of the sex-typed positions. The need to work and to supplement the family income lead women to quickly enter the labour force and become ghettoized into lower paying and low status positions. Institutional barriers accelerate a visible minority woman's entry into low status positions and then subsequently maintain it.

In sum, barriers relating to tradespeople and professionals from overseas include ethnocultural, language, lack of moral support and lack of employment counselling. There is the threat of downward economic mobility, particularly when foreign credentials are not recognized. There is research to support that some ethnic groups experience more difficulty in having their credentials recognized than others.

Thus far a discussion primarily about visible minority immigrants and refugees and barriers experienced in term of employment has been presented. Other areas which need to be explored are barriers to promotion and issues of class and gender regarding employment. There is very little research that includes ethnicity as a factor when analysing class and gender issues in employment. In this sense, the following review might be reflective of the fragmentation in the current literature.

### **Barriers For Advancement**

Research has identified certain barriers facing women who are upwardly mobile. First, the socialization of women can limit risk taking and consequently decrease aspirations for administrative positions. Family responsibilities place serious limitations on any aspirations for

high administrative positions women may wish to pursue. Also, stereotypical attitudes towards women can also exclude women from professions and indeed limit their access into management positions. Some of those stereotypical attitudes include such beliefs as women being emotionally unstable, women should stay at home and that they are unassertive and passive. In contrast, men are viewed as possessing characteristics such as competitiveness and directness that will make them better administrators. Moreover, lack of knowledge about the structure of organizations can interfere with women's aspirations for advancement (Valdez, 1992).

Moreover, lack of an informal network can also impede advancement in the workforce. The informal network helps build interpersonal relationships in which vital information about the organization's functions and structure can be shared. Women view informal networks as being associated with politics or gossip. Furthermore, the networks tend to be male dominated which further leads women to disassociate themselves from them (Valdez, 1992).

Establishing mentors and a support network have also been identified as paramount in order for women to succeed in their chosen profession. Mentors provide "special knowledge, opportunities, and skills necessary for upward mobility, including coaching, feedback and tasks and situations that develop the proteges' abilities" (Valdez, 1992). Career support networks consist of individuals who hold similar positions to oneself and possess the expertise to which one aspires. The primary purpose that a network serves is that it assists the protege with career planning while providing encouragement and praise for his or her achievements (Valdez, 1992).

Once again, it must be noted that these barriers did not take into account a person's ethnicity or class. The following is a discussion of class as it impacts women's lives in employment.



## **Gender and Class Issues**

In this section two studies examining the interplay between gender and class are presented. For purposes of this study, the term class is defined as "the real aggregates of people who share some characteristics and group interest, who favour each other in social relationships and who exhibit varying degrees of group-consciousness"(Cumbler, 1979).

Pollert's (1983) study examined the interaction of gender and class that tends to stream women into certain types of work. The focus of her research was on women manual workers. She examined the ideological and material processing of gender oppression which made women more vulnerable to capitalist control. This "weakening of resistance to capital control" has been referred to as "oppression shaping women's exploitation"(p.113). She found that working class women lived in two worlds; one in the male world of wage labour and the other in the world of home and family. The male ideology of managers and male workers justified women's subordination through stereotypical views of women as workers. A conflict between "having to work" for economic reasons and believing that their work as wage earners was temporary emerged for the working class women. She concluded by stating that the oppression of women led to class exploitation in the labour market.

Another study, looking at the hairdressing field, illustrated the way in which working class women were shaped in accordance with traditionally held expectations of careers and patriarchal control in the industry. Hairdressing is a predominately female occupation, however, the most prestigious positions in this industry are held by men. There were different views of what constituted "success" for men and women. A complex set of factors such as traditional expectations concerning careers for working class women, patriarchal control within the field and

male defined conceptions of success all shaped the views of the working class women. Both of these studies illustrated the way in which working class women obtained working class jobs, thus reinforcing the reproduction of gender and class divisions (Attwood & Hatton, 1983).

### **Ethnicity, Class and Gender Issues**

The two studies reviewed above did not incorporate ethnicity as part of their analysis. Ng (1989) introduces the interplay of race, class and gender. Ng uses the term "race" to refer to people who are "immigrants from Non-Britain" (p.14). She argues that,

the examination of gender, race and class must be situated in the relations of a specific social formation, which have to do with struggles, by groups of people, over control of the means of production and reproduction over time. An examination of the history of Canada indicates that class cannot be understood without reference to ethnic and gender relations; similarly gender and race cannot be understood without reference to class relations (Ng, 1989, p.17)

She links gender, race and class relations with the development of capitalism in Canada. Ng (1988) discusses the way in which the state plays a role in establishing and maintaining the organization of the working class through various interventions and control mechanisms. Immigration policies are one such mechanism. The policies are usually developed to serve a dual purpose: to meet the economic needs of the country and to preserve Canada's white mainstream society (Ng 1988; Estable 1987). Immigration policies change periodically according to the needs of the country. Historically, different groups have emigrated from a variety of countries to fulfil the economic demands of Canada. For instance, central and eastern European labour was used for agricultural purposes and Asian labour was used to build the national railway system (Ng 1988; Ng 1989).

Moreover, men and women were treated differently. Chinese men during the early part

of the century were prohibited from sponsoring their families to Canada so they would not advance the "yellow menace". Ng (1989) also argues that women enter Canada under different conditions than men. Women immigrate to Canada as domestic workers, using temporary permits or under the "family class" category. After immigrating they are dependent on their spouses for their existence.

Interestingly enough, Ng (1988) examined the way in which employment counsellors reinforced labour market stratifications and social class divisions of women; reproducing women as a labour market category. "They become immigrant women when they immigrate to Canada and enter certain positions in the labour market" (p.g 15). The study analysed an employment agency's counselling and placement process. The researcher concluded that the employment agency benefited the economy by channelling immigrant women into a particular kind of labour. In fact, they reproduced labour market stratification and social class divisions when the employment counsellors matched qualifications of women with the needs of employers. After analysing the internal processes of one community based employment agency for immigrant women, the author commented on the employees' frustration with the barriers they encountered when seeking employment. Although the goal was to find a position with opportunity for upward mobility, the jobs often found paid minimum wage in manufacturing and service jobs. It was difficult to even place immigrant women in upgrading or training programs unless the women had high levels of literacy and numeracy skills.

Anderson and Lynam (1987) conducted a study exploring the work experiences of thirty-five South Asian and Greek women employed in the nonprofessional sector, specifically holding custodial positions. It was unclear from the study whether the participants were first, second or

third generation immigrants. However, there is the implication that the participants were first generation immigrants. Although the participants of the study anticipated moving upward economically, they deemed this impossible due to the circumstances surrounding their work and family life. It was difficult to move into a supervisory position because of their lack of English communication skills. The women viewed English language skills as the key to job mobility. However, after balancing work, child care and housework, there was little time or opportunity to learn the English language skills required to move out of janitorial positions. Acquiring English language skills would be at the expense of sacrificing the needs of the family. The income generated through their janitorial positions was essential to the economic livelihood of the family. Furthermore, the janitorial positions they held did not require English skills because they often worked in isolation. In addition, the women usually lived in densely populated areas with similar ethnic groups. As a result, they often spoke their own language at home and with people in their neighbourhood which decreased their chances for acquiring English skills. Thus, these two factors hindered the acquisition of English language skills. The authors concluded that South Asian women who worked in janitorial positions did not experience racism in the workforce. This finding was attributed to the uncompetitive and undesirable nature of the work performed. Visible minority professionals, on the other hand, are likely to experience discrimination in the workforce because they are competing for more desirable positions; jobs that the members of the white majority are not willing to share (Anderson & Lynam, 1987).

In sum, this study finds that women, visible minority and white non-English speaking women tend to start working in unskilled jobs, in this case janitorial positions, due to financial need. In fact, economic necessity and family obligations maintained their positions in the lower

strata of the occupational hierarchy. The researcher proceeds to argue that the change to improve the lives of visible minority and white non-English speaking women has been virtually non-existent. The reason for the lack of initiative on the part of the government to change policies that would help these women to secure employment and upward mobility is that they provide a source of cheap labour. There are employers who benefit from the menial and arduous labour of visible minority and white non-English speaking women. In this way, these women are at great risk for exploitation in the workforce. Visible minority women and white non-English speaking women are channelled into low paying jobs and consequently maintain their non-prestigious status as a result of systemic institutional barriers and the dominant groups desire to maintain the status quo (Anderson & Lynam, 1987).

The issue of class as it is woven into ethnicity has been absent not only in theoretical literature but also in the discussions surrounding the employment equity legislation. Stasiulis (1990) argues that employment equity will benefit a nominal number of professional and highly skilled visible minorities. It fails to address ethnoracial inequalities as they relate to class. He supports Ng's research by stating that "the history of importation of both cheap, unskilled, and professional and highly skilled immigrants from developing countries has produced a bi-modal occupational and class structure " (p.12) Employment equity legislation will be most appealing to the visible minorities in general who are members of the "professional" class. The employment equity legislation will tend to be disappointing because it targets upper and middle levels of management in the hiring and promotion of visible minority candidates according to the studies cited above; the legislation bypasses action for visible minority members engaged in low paying labour.

The Ontario Employment Act is supposed to address the inequalities shown in the literature. The focus of the Act is on **systemic discrimination**, defined as "a cumulative product of employment policies and practices that result in the exclusion of candidates from employment for reasons unrelated to their abilities" (Tebeje,1990). The basic terms of the Act will be reviewed next to provide the context in which the government planned to eradicate forms of discrimination from the workforce.

### **ONTARIO EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT**

Succinctly, the Ontario Employment Equity Act requires 17,000 public and private sector employers to examine the numbers of women, visible minorities, persons with disabilities and aboriginal in their workplace. After completion of a workforce survey, the employer must develop a plan stating the strategies to be used to increase representation of members from the targeted groups in their workforce. Timetables are set according to the size and nature of the work place. Failure to follow the terms of the act could result in a fine of a maximum of \$50,000. The following is a more detailed description of the Act.

#### **Principles**

There are five principles of the Employment Equity Act (See Appendix B for a full description of principles). The first principle is that the Act requires employers to consider, hire, retain, treat and promote members of the designated groups, free from barriers, systemic or deliberate. Secondly, targeted groups must be representative of the larger community in the workforce at all occupational categories. Thirdly, employers are also required to review and revise employment policies and practices discriminatory in nature against members of the designated groups with respect to recruitment, hiring, retention, treatment and promotion. The last two

principles assert that positive and supportive measures are to be implemented with respect to recruitment, hiring, retention, treatment and promotion of members of the designated groups.

### **Application**

The Act applies to broader public sector employers who have ten or more employees; also to private sector employers who employ fifty or more employees. Employees, as defined in the Act include , "a permanent employee, a seasonal employee and a term employee, and within those categories, includes an individual who is primarily working for an employer on a commission basis, a dependent contractor and such others as are designated in the regulations" (Bill 79, 1993, p5).

### **Obligations**

Employers are obligated to complete employment equity workforce surveys and collect other information to determine the representation of members of the designated groups in their workforce. This information is to be provided on a voluntary basis; thus it may not be accurate due to misinformation or lack of response from employees. Employers are required to submit employment equity plans (EEP) that include how they intend to eliminate barriers and implement positive and supportive measures. Each of these aspects of the plan must have specific goals and timetables (Bill 79,1993, p.8).

In some cases, promotions are often associated with seniority rights. The Employment Equity Act stipulates that "employee seniority rights with respect to a layoff or recall to employment after a layoff that are acquired through a collective agreement or an established practice of an employer are deemed not to be barriers to the recruitment, hiring, retention, treatment or promotion of members of the designated groups" (Bill 79, 1993,p.8).

## **Implementation and Enforcement**

The time permitted to comply with collection of workforce information, review of employment policies and development of employment equity plans varies according to the size and type of organization (i.e, private, public). The time lines for completing employment equity plans are the following: March 1, 1996 for broader public sector employees with 10 or more employees, private sector employers with 500 or more employees and the Ontario Public Sector; September 1, 1996 for private sector employers with 100-499 employees; September 1, 1997 for private sector employers with 50-99 employees.

The Employment Equity Commission may conduct an audit of an employer to determine compliance with the Act. The Commission (EEC) may order employers to comply with the terms of the Act. The EEC may apply to the Employment Equity Tribunal (EET) to determine whether the employer is complying with the regulations of the Act. Employment Equity Tribunal is composed of members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in council. Employees are necessary for the proper conduct of the Tribunal's work and thus, may be appointed under the Public Service Act (Bill 79, 1993, p.24).

The response to the Act varied tremendously. It ranged from accusations of reverse discrimination to recognizing the economic benefits of employment equity. In the following section, I will highlight some of the contentious issues pertaining to the legislation. It is anticipated that the Ontario Human Rights Commission will assume more responsibility for eliminating discrimination in the workforce once the Act has been repealed. For this reason, two human rights cases will be presented showing the systemic discrimination women and minorities experience in the workforce as well.



## **Employment Equity Issues**

The frenzy that has been generated over employment equity legislation is usually by people who lack an understanding of its principles. Employers who are defining the legislation based on quotas are misinterpreting the Act. Employment equity is not about hiring unqualified people; this would be a disservice to both the employer and the designated group. Another pervasive misinterpretation of the legislation has been that it is reverse discrimination; that it will limit opportunity for the mainly privileged group, white males. These widespread myths (i.e., reverse discrimination, quota law, and hiring unqualified people) damaged its credibility and ultimately resulted in its failure to gain acceptance from Ontarions as a whole, as evident by the recent election of a Conservative government which explicitly campaigned against the current legislation.

One cause of the Act's demise was a lack of education. Proponents of equity in the workforce articulate that in order to break down barriers in the workforce, "adequate and appropriate education" of employment equity and discrimination is the first step. Changes in attitudes among employers and employees are a prerequisite for the dismantling of discriminatory policies and practices in the workforce. In reality, employers concern themselves with surveys and reports, which often leaves very little time for educating themselves and the rest of their employees about the rationale and objectives of the legislation (Stasiulis,1990)

Employment equity is beneficial in many ways. A more representative workforce would discover new talents and ideas leading to a broader perspective. This perspective would eventually tap into different markets and client populations. The investment in a diverse workforce just makes good business sense. The argument for better business is twofold. First, Canada's population is becoming more racially diverse, so the company should also reflect the client base.

In other words, the company should resemble the market to which it is trying to sell to (McLaughlin, 1994).

Secondly, if one is not drawing from the widest labour pool, then "brightest and the best" may not be hired. Companies are realizing that profits can be gained by employing people with diverse backgrounds. To make companies more productive and competitive, some organizations are sending their employees to training workshops. From the business perspective, the approach of righting past wrongs pits people against one another. Presenting employment equity from a strictly business point of view eases the criticism (McLaughlin, 1994).

Even if employment equity is accepted as a business strategy, one contentious issue remaining is the issue of voluntary versus mandatory legislation; in other words how it will be enforced. Past experience with employment equity shows that change will not occur unless legislation is strictly enforced (Tebeje, 1990). However, employers have expressed their intense discontent with mandatory enforcement mechanisms and caution the government of a backlash if such mechanisms are forced. Businesses view mandating fair hiring and promoting practices as an intrusion into their affairs.

There are costs for both employers and government. Employers are finding it costly, in terms of monetary and human resources, to conduct workforce surveys, review policies and procedures for systemic barriers and implement their employment equity plans. Even the Human Rights Tribunal is reluctant to impose substantial costs on employers in recessionary times. So the issue of cost of accommodation (i.e. of the designated groups) must be considered in order to decide at what point it is an undue hardship for employers to adhere to the terms of the Act (McKenna, 1994). Another constraint will be funding for the administrative and enforcement

bodies in a time of fiscal restraint. Furthermore, currently the government's priority rests with reducing the national debt and not with advancing fair hiring and promoting practices (McKenna, 1994).

In sum, adequate and sufficient information about the benefits of a diverse workforce would have greatly increased the acceptance of employment equity. Support was needed not only from minority groups but non-minority groups as well. The widespread myths about reverse discrimination, hiring unskilled people and quotas dominated the debate around employment equity. The harsh economic climate and record high unemployment rates added to the negative attitudes toward the legislation. Perhaps, it was the just the right legislation at the wrong time. In light of the demise of the legislation, it seems appropriate to present one avenue remaining that investigates discriminatory employment practices. This is this subject of our next section.

### **Two Human Rights Cases**

On September 03, 1995, an article in the Toronto Star suggested that after the demise of the Employment Equity Act, the Ontario Human Rights Commission will have to combat workplace discrimination. The Employment Equity Act set up a mechanism to remedy workplace discrimination that was not as onerous as the procedures set out by the Human Rights Code. Nonetheless, human rights legislation is one of the avenues that is left to redress discrimination of any form (Hasselback, 1995). For this reason, two human rights cases dealing with racial and gender discrimination will be discussed. The cases exemplify the systemic barriers that prevent disadvantaged groups from obtaining employment and promotions.

The provincial and federal human rights legislation emerged in the 1960's to prohibit only intentional and overt discrimination. During the late 1970's, it was also recognized that

discrimination could be "systemic". Two human rights cases, *Bhandauria v Toronto Board of Education* and *Action Travail des Femmes de Quebec v Canadian national Railway Co. Ltd*, will illustrate the systemic issues of racial and gender discrimination in the hiring and promotion process.

In the first case, *Bhandauria v. Toronto Board of Education*, an extremely qualified teacher was continuously rejected promotions as an administrator due to his poor formal interview skills. The claimant filed a complaint on the grounds that the interview process was biased against him on the basis of his ethnic background. Specifically, the claimant stated that the formal interview was an unsuitable means to display desired personal traits and qualities that one would expect for a job. The complainant lost the case primarily because of lack of statistical evidence for underrepresentation of his ethnic group in the relevant position of the employer. If clear and sufficient evidence existed of systemic discrimination of the complainants' ethnic group, then the tribunal would have been obligated to order the employer to eliminate or reduce selection biases for promotions. However, in light of general underrepresentation of visible minorities in administrative positions in relation to their education and qualifications in Canada, human rights tribunals will be compelled to assume the necessary steps to accommodate individuals who are hindered by Eurocentric and patriarchal selection and promotion procedures (McKenna, 1994).

The second case, *Action Travail des Femmes de Quebec v Canadian National Railway Ltd*, raised the issue of remedial versus preventative measures as well as the issue of quotas. Employment equity does not order employers to set quotas. However, this concept, confused more often than not with affirmative action in United States, has been the source of much hostility in Canada. I believe the discussion of quotas is warranted in detail because of the

confusion between Canada's employment equity legislation and United States affirmative action policy. The quota system serves a purpose and is not as inequitable as people may assume. The following human rights case lends support for the quota system (McKenna, 1994).

In this case, the Human Rights Tribunal concluded that the employer had discriminatory hiring practices for women who wanted to enter unskilled, blue-collar entry level positions. The Tribunal ordered the Canadian National Railway to hire at least one woman for every four of the blue collar positions available until 13% of such positions were filled by women. The thirteen per cent figure was derived on the finding that women held thirteen per cent of blue collar jobs in Canada. In the geographical area of the respondent, women had only .07% of blue collar jobs.

The Supreme Court of Canada endorsed the Tribunal's decision for imposing quotas on the basis that the Tribunal had the authority to order a respondent to eliminate discrimination and develop preventative measures. However, the Federal Court of Appeal set aside the Tribunal's decision for imposing quotas on the basis that it was remedial and not preventive. The majority agreed that hiring quotas would remedy past systemic discrimination and women would gain as a whole, but concluded that the Tribunal was limited by the Act to provide only remedies identifiable to victims; the Federal Court of Appeal considered the Tribunal order to be directed to the disadvantaged group as a whole and not to the identifiable victim.

The Supreme Court of Canada rejected the Federal Court of Appeal's approach and maintained the argument that the Human Rights Act required the Tribunal's order of a quota to be preventive as opposed to remedial in nature. Chief Justice Dickson put forward three arguments for the quota order. First, he suggested that the quota system would combat discrimination which is often difficult to prove. He provided the example of foremen who

unintentionally exclude women from their work unit. Secondly, Justice Dickson argued that the quota system would prevent future discrimination by providing the opportunity for the excluded group to prove their abilities on the job while simultaneously dismantling stereotypes of the disadvantaged groups. Lastly, the quota system would create a "critical mass" of the excluded group in the workplace. The creation of a critical mass would eliminate problems of tokenism, marginalisation and harassment faced by individuals in small numbers who belong to a systemically excluded group. The critical mass concept plays a more important role in a system where hiring is based on informal referral by friends and relatives. The critical mass presence increases opportunities for marginalized groups and shatters the cycle of exclusion for underrepresented groups (McKenna, 1994).

Three features of this particular case warranted the quota approach. It is argued that in order to use the quota approach in future cases, these following features have to be present. First, the case provided distinct evidence of pervasive systemic discrimination against women. The systemic discrimination was so embedded that only a quota system would prevent future discriminatory practices. Secondly, the small number of women employed would further perpetuate the cycle of exclusion. Lastly, the employer was well aware of discriminatory policies and practices, and yet failed to assume responsibility to rectify the problem of systemic discrimination (McKenna, 1994).

Thus far, demographic information has been provided illustrating the underrepresentation of women (minority and non-minority) in higher occupational categories and overrepresentation in lower occupational categories. I have illustrated gaps in research that fail to analyse interrelationships between gender, ethnicity and class. A brief review about the main elements of employment equity legislation and the debate which it triggered was also presented.

I discovered that very little research had been conducted that explored barriers in the

workforce as interpreted by women from diverse ethnic and occupational backgrounds. Moreover, there was research to support the notion that women with dual status (e.g., visible minority) had different experiences in the workforce (Abella, 1984). By increasing our knowledge about the diversity among women and the way in which barriers to employment differ across ethnic and occupational groups, any policy pertaining to employment equity can be designed and implemented more effectively.

In this study, I will attempt to assess differences in barriers for women in obtaining employment and promotion based upon class and ethnicity. The following is the presentation of the methodology used for the purposes of this study.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine barriers to being hired and promoted as they are experienced by visible minority and Anglo-Saxon women in unskilled/semi-skilled and professional occupational categories. The design of the study is as follows:

		Ethnicity	
		Anglo-Saxon	Visible Minority
Occupation	Unskilled/ Semi-skilled	9	9
	Professional	9	9

#### Definitions

The occupations of women interviewed are classified according to the National Occupational Classification (NOC). Skill levels and types are used to classify the occupations. Skill level is defined according to the amount and type of education and training needed to enter and perform the functions of an occupation. Four skill levels have been developed:



Table 5

## National Occupational Classification Skill Levels

Skill A	University degree (Bachelor's, Master's or Post-graduate)
Skill B	Two to three years of postsecondary education at college, institute of technology or CEGEP OR Two to four years of apprenticeship training OR Three to four years of secondary school and more than two years of on-the-job training, training courses or specific work experience
Skill C	One to four years of secondary school education OR Up to two years of on-the-job training, training courses or specific work experience
Skill D	Up to two years of secondary school and short work demonstration OR on-the-job training

Source: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1993

The professional women fell into skill levels "A" and "B", whereas the unskilled/semi skilled women fit into skill levels "C" and "D".

The second attribute, skill type, is defined as the type of work performed. Ten skill types are identified in the NOC. The professional women were recruited from Management Occupations, Occupations in Social Science, Education, Government Service and Religion, Business, Finance and Administrative Occupations and Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport. The unskilled/semi-skilled were recruited from Occupations Unique to Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities, Sales and Service Occupations and Business, Finance and

Administrative Occupations.

Anglo-Saxon women are descendants of the British Isles, which includes islands of Great Britain and Ireland (Microsoft Encarta, 1994). This group of women were chosen because they were part of the dominant culture.

A policy or practice contains a **barrier** if there is a direct or indirect adverse effect on members of the designated groups. These barriers can be intentional or unintentional (Ontario Pay and Employment Equity Guide, 1995).

### **Research Design**

This research deals with exploring multiple realities of diverse women in the workforce. For this reason, the qualitative method and specifically the **naturalistic inquiry paradigm** proved to be more suitable than a quantitative design for exploring "multiple realities". The focus of the research was on the participants' interpretation of their experiences in the workforce (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In addition, due to the sensitive nature of the study, using the **human instrument** to gather information seemed appropriate. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) state, the "human instrument is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of that differential interaction; because the intrusion of the instrument intervenes in the mutual shaping of other elements and that shaping can be appreciated and evaluated only by a human" (p.40).

An inductive approach to analysing the data is more likely to identify multiple realities that are present in the raw data. In order to understand the factors that shape the participants' realities, it is important to refrain from imposing preexisting expectations on the phenomenon being studied. In this fashion, categories will emerge from the data itself (Patton, 1990). There is the assumption

that "**no a priori theory** could possibly encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.41).

Another element of the naturalistic design that proves to be more appropriate for this study is the **tentative application** of the findings. The sample consisted of an extremely diverse group of women. In this light, any interpretation of data will be done **ideographically** (in terms of specifics of the case ) and not in terms of "law like generalizations". Moreover, because realities are multiple and dependent upon "particular interaction between investigator and respondents (or object) that may not be duplicated", broad applications of the findings will be avoided in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 43).

### **Sample**

The sampling was **purposive** and **multistage** (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Cresswell, 1994). The purposive approach is used to collect as much information as possible about unique experiences of the participants. This type of sampling increases the range of data collected and simultaneously uncovers multiple realities.

As part of my preliminary feasibility analysis of my research, I contacted various organizations where professionals were employed as well as agencies providing services to a wide variety of ethnic groups. I found agencies such as Focus for Ethnic Women, K-W Multicultural Centre and Working for Work to be excellent links to visible minority women in the workforce. I sent a covering letter to my contacts within these organizations describing the purpose of the research and the characteristics (i.e, gender, ethnicity, work type ) of the participants I was recruiting (See Appendix C). I discovered a hesitancy to disclose the identity of employees by some organizations. Disclosing demographic information was considered an invasion of

employees' privacy. Moreover, human resource and employment equity officers could not disclose information regarding employees except for the purposes of employment equity research conducted by the commission as stated in Part III or IV (Bill 79,p.20).

While some supplied me with names of potential participants, others distributed information letters on my behalf (See Appendix D). Potential participants contacted me by phone. I screened the participants over the phone to ensure that they met the demographic criteria that had been established for the study.

With the exception of one participant, all of the professional visible minority and Anglo-Saxon women were attained from the Waterloo County Board of Education, Conestoga College, and Wilfrid Laurier University. For the professional occupational category I had more participants than time permitted me to interview.

The Anglo-Saxon unskilled/semi-skilled women were the most difficult to recruit. I did not receive one phone call from my initial attempts to recruit. In my subsequent attempts, I distributed seventy-five participant information letters to three temporary employment agencies. I did not receive one phone call. Managers at the centres stated that the letters were distributed and that the lack of response may be due to people's busy schedules. The snowball (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) approach was more successful in recruiting this group. I obtained a name of an individual, who might wish to participate, from a personal contact. This participant supplied me with more names, and hence the snowball was put into effect.

Women were selected on the basis of their occupation and ethnicity. Before committing to any participant, I researched their skill types and levels to determine their appropriateness for the research. Women either had to fit into one of the ten visible minority groups identified by

Statistics Canada or had an Anglo-Saxon background. Other immigrants were excluded on the basis that they were not "women of colour" or have an Anglo-Saxon background. Although non-English speaking immigrants may face similar barriers, such as lack of fluency in English and distinctive accents as the visible minority women, the culture is more similar to that of Anglo-Saxon women than to the cultures of visible minority group. In this sense, they experience different barriers and to differing degrees than both of these groups.

Participants who had been in Canada for at least four years were selected for the study. Research supports the finding that newcomers suffer downward mobility during the settlement period. In a literature review conducted by Edwards (1993), it was found that unemployment, underemployment, and loss of occupational status were common among newcomers, particularly from developing countries. Hence, some time was needed to make the transition into the Canadian workforce.

The participants were currently employed or had been employed in Canada for some time. Women were classified according to their occupational status in Canada regardless of a different occupational status in their home country.

Generally, sample size is determined by "informational redundancy or theoretical saturation" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constraints of time did not permit me to interview more than nine from each category. This seemed satisfactory, however, as themes were repeated in the interviews.

### **Interviews**

Demographic information was collected and an interview schedule was developed, pre tested and subsequently revised (See Appendix E). I found that the original interview schedule

was more applicable to unskilled/semi-skilled participants. Thus, similar but appropriate questions were formed for the professional women. Each participant signed a consent form which indicated that they understood the purpose of the study and that the interviews were confidential (See Appendix F).

The duration of each interview ranged from half hour to one and a half hours. Interview guide consisted of a series of open-ended questions about the barriers participants encountered in finding work and in subsequently obtaining promotions in the work place. Basically, as many parallel questions as possible were asked to each of the four groups of women. Permission was requested to tape record the interviews. All but five participants were agreeable to this. Four professional and one unskilled/semi-skilled visible minority women chose not to be recorded. The researcher believed that these women wanted to take extra precautions to ensure confidentiality. One interview with a professional Anglo-Saxon woman was not recorded due to the fact that the interview was conducted in a public setting. The tape recorded interviews were transcribed. The names of the person interviewed on the transcription were not recorded to ensure that anonymity was maintained. A list of actual and code names were kept separate from the transcribed material. The tapes were erased after being transcribed (See Appendix G).

### **Data Analysis**

As stated in the research design, an inductive approach to analysing the material has been used. The inductive approach is the process by which the researcher attempts to make sense of the data collected. This type of analysis is similar to **content analysis**, a process that makes embedded information more explicit. **Unitizing** and **categorizing** are two subprocesses of inductive data analysis approach. Unitizing is described as raw data that are "systematically

transformed and aggregated into units which permit precise description of relevant content characteristics" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.203). It is stated that the units are more useful when they are single pieces of information that are interpretable when they stand on their own.

The second subprocess, categorizing, is a process of organizing the previously unitized data so that descriptive information can be extrapolated. The units are organized into categories on the "basis of look-alike characteristics, which in the spirit of the naturalistic paradigm, may initially be only tacitly understood" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.203). These two subprocesses were used in that categories in this study were extrapolated from the data gathered.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) developed a set of criteria to enhance trustworthiness of a study: **credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability**. These terms are similar to "internal validity", "external validity", "reliability" and "objectivity". The terms used by naturalistic theorists will now be briefly defined, followed by the ways in which trustworthiness was achieved in this study.

Research is credible when the researcher has illustrated that multiple constructions have been represented adequately. For Lincoln & Guba (1985), credibility of the study is enhanced when the researcher understands and accepts the naturalistic inquiry paradigm. Specific techniques used in this study for improving credibility were triangulation, member checking and audit trails (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

**Triangulation** is a technique that is used to enhance the credibility of a given study. Triangulation involves the use of different methods and techniques to study a particular phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Patton 1990). In addition to my own analysis of the data, the results and discussion of the study were distributed to three members in the community with

in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon being studied. They were selected on the basis of their employment experiences relating to employment equity as well as their work with diverse ethnic groups. Their comments and feedback were useful in clarifying some sections and providing deeper insight into the analysis.

**Member checking** is another technique that has the potential to improve credibility. This is the process by which "data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.314.). Eight member checks were done on an informal basis with individuals who were interviewed for the study. I approached all participants who were not tape recorded for the member checks, as I believed that they had the greatest risk of being misinterpreted. They checked for factual and descriptive accuracy. Member checking provided participants an opportunity to correct any errors in my recording and to challenge any interpretations of the data.

**Thick descriptions** or heavy use of quotes were used to facilitate **transferability** of the study. The broad range of information, derived through purposive sampling, aided in the elaboration of concepts. It must be noted that it is the researcher's responsibility to provide the thick descriptions of time and context. However, whether or not concepts are applicable to other individuals is left entirely for the reader to decide.

The major technique used to establish dependability and confirmability were audits. Audits that assess the process of inquiry relate to the dependability of the study, whereas audits which examine the product (data, findings, interpretations and recommendation) are used to ascertain confirmability. The two co-chairs of this study acted as auditors for methodology and data collection aspects of the study; they monitored the design of the study to ensure that specific tenets



of qualitative design were followed accurately.

This study also used an **audit trail** to promote confirmability of the study. This study commenced one year ago and since that time, I have retained all correspondence relating to the study. These include my written fieldnotes, correspondence with contacts in the community, pre tested interview schedules, summaries of data, and construction of categories. This trail has assisted me to "attest that the product (mine) is supported by data and is internally coherent so that the bottom line may be accepted" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.318).

In sum, this qualitative approach seemed most appropriate for the purposes of studying the elusive and complex realities of women from diverse backgrounds. The focus of the research was on the meanings attached to their experiences and their interpretation of events. Techniques such as triangulation, member checking and audit trails enhanced the credibility of the study.

The next section presents the findings of the four categories of women. Thick descriptions were used to ensure that the participants experiences were captured in their own terms.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

Detailed employment and education histories were collected from each participant in order to determine their occupational categories. This information was grouped in broad terms so that their identity would not be revealed. In cases where only one participant from a particular country was interviewed, they were grouped with other single participants to maintain anonymity. Understandably, confidentiality and anonymity were of paramount concern, particularly for visible minority women from both occupational categories.

### **Unskilled/semi-skilled Visible Minority Women**

The visible minority participants in the unskilled/semi-skilled group were comprised of four South Asian women, two Latin American women, one Filipino woman, one West Asian and Arab woman and one Southeast Asian woman. All of the participants were first generation visible minorities in Canada . The residence of the women in this group ranged from four to twenty three years (See Table 6). All the women were married except for one who was widowed. The ages ranged from mid 20's to early 50's.

Table 6

## Unskilled/semi-skilled Visible Minority Women: Demographics

Visible Minority Group	# of participants	Mother Tongue	#of years in homecountry	#of years in Canada
South Asians	4	Urdu, Sinhalese, Punjabi	3 to 28	4 to 23
Latin Americans	2	Spanish	20 to 30	8 to 15
West Asians and Arabs; Filipinos; South East Asians	3	Arabic, Laotian, Philipino	21 to 33	4 to 11

Eight of the nine participants had completed high school, with five women completing postsecondary or other courses after high school (See Table 7). Two women spoke excellent English, while the others had fair English skills. The interviewer's perception of their English skills was better than the participants' own perception. English as a Second Language classes were pursued by most of the participants for varying amounts of time. Some of the participants felt compelled to quit English classes and seek employment due to economic hardships.

In Canada, seven of the nine women participated in job training programs for women at local agencies serving newcomers to the country. The training programs included job placements as labourers, sales clerks or homemakers. The duration of the training programs generally ranged from four to six months. For more than half the participants, the primary reason for entering training programs was because of their unemployment. By learning new skills the prospects of finding a job would be brighter.

Table 7

## Unskilled/semi-skilled Visible Minority Women: Education Profiles

Visible Minority Group	Education from Homecountry	Education from another country	Education from Canada
South Asians	Grade 6 to 12;	Nursing degree; started medical school	Administrative diploma; typing courses
Latin Americans	Grade 12; teaching degree from College; two years university		Nurse's Aid; Teacher's Aid;; Home Support Worker; Medical Secretary diploma
West Asians and Arabs; Filipinos; Southeast Asians	Grade 12; B.Sc.; started M.Sc.		Computer training; hairdressing school; small business training; interpreter training

Eight of the nine visible minority women interviewed were employed at the time of the interview. The participant who was currently unemployed had worked as a labourer in the past. Their skill levels were "C" (intermediate occupations) and "D" (labouring and elemental occupations) (See Table 8 for types of jobs held).

Table 8

## Unskilled/semi-skilled Visible Minority Women: Employment Profiles

Visible Minority Group	Occupation in Homecountry	Occupation in Canada
South Asians	Homemaker; student; receptionist; teacher	Unemployed; counter attendant (full-time); Payroll clerk (full time); Temporary Home Support Worker (part-time)
Latin Americans	Teacher; secretary; labourer	cleaner (part-time); home support worker (part time); Spanish teacher (part time); labourer (full time)
West Asians and Arabs; Filipinos; Southeast Asians	Homemaker; Lab technician; university instructor	Labourer (full time); restaurant worker (part time)

### Barriers For Unskilled/Semi-skilled Visible Minority Women

More than half of the visible minority women in the unskilled/semi skilled occupations stated that they had struggled in Canada in finding any employment. The most frequently reported barriers were ethnocultural, language and accent, and lack of Canadian experience by women from unskilled/semi-skilled visible minority groups. The least reported barriers included expense of returning to school, lack of Canadian references, Math and English tests for jobs, hirings based on favouritism and patronage and union rules. I will discuss the barriers listed in Table 9 in more detail below using the participants own words as much as possible.

Table 9

## Barriers For Unskilled/semi-skilled Visible Minority Women

Barrier	# of women who reported the barrier
Ethnocultural	6
Language and accent	5
Lack of Canadian experience	3
Lack of networks	3
Lack of experience	2
Lack of education	2
Discredited qualifications	2
Expense of returning to school to upgrade degree	1
Lack of references in Canada	1
Testing for jobs (e.g. Math and English)	1
Patronage and favouritism	1
Union rules	1

**Ethnocultural Barriers**

Six of the nine participants made references to ethnocultural barriers. Participants felt that they were discriminated against because of certain aspects of their culture such as different socialization processes, food and ethnic dress. One woman stated, "sometimes they just look at you and they don't like you...They look at your style, clothes and don't like your attitude". Another participant made reference to the food in her homecountry and the potential

discrimination. She stated,

I struggle everyday in my life. They call names and say go back home, and what are you eating. If you don't like it here then why don't you go back...People can put their nose up about the food.

The stereotypes among non-minority people in Canada about people from developing countries also posed problems in the workforce. One participant stated that Canadians think of visible minorities as a homogenous group. In reference to stereotypes, she responded,

Not all are like this. Some people ask if we have electricity in our country. We get so angry. We have more in our country. We are working so hard here. In (the country) we had servants. Some people think we are poor.

A majority of women in this group had difficulty reaching the interview stage. The participants applied for many jobs either related or unrelated to their field. When asked the reasons for not receiving interviews for the jobs, many replied that their name on the resume revealed their ethnic origins. They believed they were eliminated at the selection stage.

Even when interviews were granted, the style of the interview posed as a problem. In Canada, it was thought that one had to "sell" oneself in order to obtain a job. One respondent stated that " Here we have to sell ourselves... say I am a team worker, I am punctual...I have a big list memorized. In the country where I come from, they think you have a big mouth". Being assertive in interviews was in conflict with this individual's cultural values in spite of the fact that this individual learned interview skills in a training program.

Lack of assertiveness can be related to either gender or cultural factors. In the following citation, it is somewhat ambiguous as to which factor impacted on this particular participant. Lack of assertiveness was attributed to her upbringing. She stated in relation to her barriers, " Myself, my lack of experience, self-confidence, or the way that I was brought up. Being a girl, they

thought she doesn't know what she was talking about...I wish I was more assertive but I wasn't brought up that way." Moreover, marrying young also had a negative impact on this participant's educational goals. As a result of the lack of education, desirable employment was more difficult to secure.

### **Language and Accent**

Accent and language barriers were reported by five of the nine participants. These barriers were more pronounced among the women who had been in Canada between four to eleven years. For these women there was a lack of opportunity to learn English as they needed to start supporting their families immediately after immigrating.

One related barrier to employment for non-English speaking candidates was the mandatory Math and English tests required allegedly to assess skills and knowledge pertaining to the job. According to one participant, employers were requesting English and Math tests unnecessarily for some types of employment. She asserted,

I find that in many companies that I work, it has not happened to me but on the job application form, why do they have to have all the tests, right, like English and Math. Labour jobs, you don't have to use calculators or do any Math, so why do you have to have all of the tests for it. It discriminates for the people new in Canada, for people who don't have the education but need the job. I feel it is very difficult for them...It is very difficult for them to find work. So to test them in Math and English, it discriminates.

One older visible minority woman believed that she was "too old" to learn another language. She restricted herself to employment with employers from similar cultural background primarily because of the language barrier.

The foreign accent was also viewed as a barrier. One participant stated that "If you have accent, some people say pardon me and what did you say. They want somebody who really



speaks English without an accent."

For one participant, the accent was such a problem that she altered it to conceal her ethnic origins. She stated, "When I would phone I would change my accent. But when I went in person they would see me and tell me there is no vacancy. This particular individual believed her name was also telling of her origins, and consequently shortened her name to conform to Canadian society.

### **Lack of Canadian Experience and Discredited Qualifications**

Although some of the visible minority women were recognized as professionals in their home country, this study classified them according to the type of job they were performing in Canada. All of the participants with some post-secondary education from their home country commented on the fact that employers requested Canadian experience and Canadian educational qualifications. These women, considered professionals in their home countries, believed that their experience and qualifications were devalued in Canada. They were expected to repeat the educational requirements for their professions. As one individual stated,

When I came to Canada I tried to find something my area. I love to work in my area. But they told me it was impossible and told me to go back and study for four more years. I studied for four years there and I could not study four years more.

This participant had difficulty securing even volunteer work in her area of work. She stated, "I try to find work in (her field) or ...just volunteering". They said there is no space so I have nothing to do". She believed that volunteering was one way to gain Canadian experience.

Another participant had a very similar experience. She stated, "Unfortunately, it was very hard to look for job. They asked for Canadian experience. If they don't give me Canadian experience how can I have that experience". She talked about a time when an interviewer hired

a "Canadian for the job because he had (Canadian) experience", she reacted by stating, "Because they didn't try me yet, it wasn't fair. They should have tried me, didn't give me a chance or opportunity". She also found "it is difficult to go and get an equivalent in (her field) because of the expense for books, projects and experiments".

Another potential problem for one participant was the lack of related job references. She indicated that her interviews were positive but the problem was "They ask for reference related to jobs in your own field. I don't have related job references in Canada".

Another participant found it unfair to ask for experience when the job clearly did not require it. She stated,

"Some jobs don't need experience, they can be trained. It's not right to ask for five or ten years. Every job you can get trained and can learn. They ask for too much experience. Especially for labour. Even if you have the experience, every job is different. Having the ability to learn is more important".

She believed that asking for Canadian experience for labour jobs was unrealistic, especially for entry level positions.

### **Lack of Networks**

Some of the participants expressed the lack of networks as a barrier to finding employment. Three participants stated that "it is who you know and not what you know". Participants have noticed that employers advertise themselves as an "equal rights employer". However, most of the participants expressed mistrust in employers' commitment to equal rights for all individuals. One participant stated that "Employers usually have someone in mind for the jobs, but they need to post the job because of union rules".

### **Other Barriers**

Networking in the community to build allies who could potentially assist with finding employment is a different concept than hiring based on patronage or favouritism. One could have sufficient and appropriate networks in the community, however, the person who is hired could be someone who is known on a personal level to the potential employer. One participant noticed that an individual in her organization received a promotion because the supervisor and employee were friends. The participant stated,

...the only reason she got the job was because the supervisor and her were friends. It was the same job I had applied for six months ago. I didn't get the job because they said I didn't have the experience in this department. This person got the job because they were friends.

This participant did not feel comfortable socializing with colleagues after work. She believed that this prohibited her from forming friendships with people who could advocate on her behalf for a position.

For some visible minority women it is Canadian experience that is problematic, but for others it is experience in general. Moreover, one participant believed that lack of experience was just a rationale for not wanting to hire a person. In her case, she believed she was qualified for a position that became open, however, she was rejected on the grounds of insufficient work experience for this position. In the end, the person who was hired actually had less total experience than the participant.

Lastly, exclusion from the bargaining unit proved to be a barrier as well. One participant had been struggling to attain a full time or permanent position within her organization. She said that unionized employees were considered for jobs before non-union members regardless of

experience; the hiring was based on inclusion rather than experience and qualifications.

Unskilled/semi-skilled visible minority women experienced a range of employment barriers in the workforce. The following are other important themes such as promotion, mentors, underemployment, exploitation which emerged from the interviews.

### **Promotions**

Seven out of the nine women had never applied for a promotion. Only one participant had ever received a promotion. The participant who had received a promotion was no longer holding this position as she left the organization when the management changed. She felt that her work was no longer being valued or appreciated.

Simply, many of women did not apply for promotions because of the lack of opportunity. One participant stated, "No, I never had that chance. I should be thankful I have a job...I feel I don't have a diploma or degree so I can't really complain". Similarly, two participants stated that they "had not been in the position long enough to apply for a promotion" or that "there weren't any openings".

In addition, for many of the women, there were extended periods of unemployment as well as holding positions for brief periods of time. The employment history of most of the women showed an erratic pattern of jobs mostly due to closures of manufacturing plants and businesses; in other words circumstances beyond the participants' control.

One woman had been with a company for six years and expressed an interest in a position that had slightly higher status and pay. She believed that she was qualified because she had been in the department longer than anyone else. She informed the supervisor that she was interested, however, the supervisor as she asserted "discouraged her and didn't take her seriously." The

participant has not pursued any other promotions since this event.

Similarly, another participant had applied to "lots of them" but was refused because as she claimed her "English skills were not good enough" and also "people who interview, sometimes they have people in mind, but they just post the job" and also that "they take the people they get along with".

### **Mentors**

Mentoring has been viewed as a strategy for upward mobility for men and women. The mentoring relationship grants the opportunity for both mentor and mentoree to advance their professional careers and grow personally (Hayes, 1989). The mentor can "coach, protect, and give exposure, visibility, and challenging work assignments to a protege in order to teach the ropes of organizational life and to prepare the protege for advancement" (Hayes, 1989, p.43).

In light of the definition of mentoring, six of the nine women stated that no one guided or advised them in their line of work or encouraged them to develop their careers. Although some participants reported some support and encouragement from fellow co-workers, friends outside the workforce and family, this still did not constitute a mentoring relationship because it lacked the facilitating process.

In regards to the lack of support, one participant stated,

I don't think so. If you want to move up, people are not very happy. I don't care what people think, I just do it for myself...Some people are nice, and they encourage me to learn. That's why I go to school.

Many of the participants equated mentors with friendship. This was evident in one participant's response as she stated that she could not "find a really good friend" because people were "really busy".

When a mentoring relationship existed, it was usually with people who were sensitive to the needs of the visible minority community. Two participants recalled the time when an employee from an ethnic-specific centre encouraged and assisted them to find employment. One stated, "the co-ordinator at the centre gave me a good recommendation letter and she talked to people about me. The teachers from the training program helped too". Likewise, for the other participant, "There was nobody in my place of work that supported me but only at the centre."

For some of the women, encouragement to strive to greater depths came from other visible minorities and family members. As one participant stated, "support came mainly from her children and family; I was so angry and frustrated for many years that it brought my self esteem down. I tried to bring up my self esteem through volunteer work."

In sum, there were very few mentors in the lives of unskilled/semi-skilled visible minority women. When mentors existed, they were either people from ethnic-specific agencies or friends and family members.

### **Underemployment**

Underemployment is defined as "an employment condition where workers' acquired skills exceed their job requirements; worker are overtrained relative to the work that they perform" (Glyde, 1975, p.1). It became evident during the course of the interviews that a significant number of women, particularly women who had been professionals in their home country, considered themselves to be underemployed.

The professional women wanted to continue with the same profession as in their homecountry. These participants had applied to positions in their own fields, but were unable to find work primarily due to lack of Canadian experience and lack of Canadian qualifications. Their

disillusionment and desperation to find a job led them to enter training programs with the goal to acquire new skills. These training programs were open to both professional and unskilled women which essentially streamed both groups of women into the same type of occupations. The disappointment with training programs was more pronounced among women who were considered professionals in their home country. One professional from overseas stated,

Labour jobs are jobs that Canadians don't want. Why are we streamed into these lower positions? Why do immigrants have to have the worst jobs? Why can't they be trained in computers?

Another participant expressed her need to be challenged in her work. She stated,

I am using some of my skills, but it is not enough. It is only 2.5 hours per week. But it is something, for me. I keep going and never give up. It is not easy to look for job in Canada. But if you really want something, you have to have the courage to look and say this is what I want. I always dream to be a teacher in Canada.

It is unclear whether the participant found securing employment difficult due to the current economic climate, ethnocultural or gender factors. However, this participant highlighted the ethnocultural factors throughout her interview.

Another participant was satisfied with the fact that she was employed, regardless of the type of job. She stated,

Sometimes I feel underemployed, but I have to forget about (her profession in homcountry). But the way the situation is with some many people with degrees and being unemployed, I am doing pretty good considering the way the economy is right now.

In contrast, visible minority women who had only secondary school education were content with their current labour positions. They believed that they were using their skills and education to the fullest capacity. For example, one participant who was a labourer in her homecountry, trained as a sewer in Canada. She stated that, "I was in training for a sewer, and that is what I

am doing now".

### **Exploitation**

Another recurring theme during the interviews was that of exploitation in the workforce. Four of the nine women identified conditions that were unlawful. One woman worked for nearly 100 hours and was told that she was in training and therefore would not be paid. She resigned and reported this company to the Ontario Labour Board. Another woman started work below minimum wage and was told by management that she would receive an increase in pay within two to three months after starting work. The employer not only refused the increase in pay but demanded that she work extra hours.

Another participant viewed her situation in a training program as being exploitative. She stated that "she doesn't like to do work placement without money. I worked more than their employees and I didn't get paid. Their employees go to the washroom and speak together all the time. But we have to work and work for nothing. So, it was difficult for me". This woman considered her situation as exploitative because she worked more diligently and arduously than the paid employees, even though her placement was unpaid. All three of the women eventually resigned from the exploitative positions.

One participant viewed inadequate training as an exploitative situation. As a result, she was working overtime without pay in order to learn the tasks of the job. She stated, "I found it difficult last week and I resent it... I've been putting in a lot of extra hours, I don't even take my breaks or lunches or anything. I think that if someone else was in my position, they would have walked out because of the high pressure work and the ridiculous training".

Another participant spoke about the preferential treatment given to non-minorities within



her organization. She asserted that "sometimes in factories, you might have to work with a Canadian. They will get the easier job, they don't ask them to work hard. They give special preference for Canadians. They don't treat minorities as equals in the same positions".

### **Employment Equity Effectiveness**

In response to the effectiveness of employment equity legislation for visible minorities, the majority of the unskilled/semi-skilled visible minority participants were pessimistic. However, they felt it would be more effective for "white" women for gender based equity issues.

Another participant stated that "Equal opportunity is just put down to cover themselves, that's all". In other words this is the politically correct way of advertising, however, it was not believed that it was actually practised. The responses from this group in relation to this question elicited vague responses, partially because some of the women did not understand the principles of employment equity or felt they were not sufficiently informed to respond accurately.

### **Unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon women**

Anglo-Saxon women in the study had their origins in England, Ireland and Scotland or a combination of the three countries. Three of the participants immigrated to Canada in the late 1960's, the remaining participants were born in Canada. Some participants did not wish to state the number of years in Canada as it would have revealed their age. Instead they felt more comfortable providing a general range. This is the reason some of the information in Table 10 may be general. Five of the women were married, two were single, one separate and one divorced. Their ages ranged from late 20's to mid 50's.

Table 10

## Unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon Women: Demographics

Ethnic Origin	# of participants	#of years in homecountry	#of years in Canada
England	2	2 and 26	29 and 27
Scotland	3	One lived in another country prior to immigration to Canada	28 to 40
Scotland and Ireland	3	Born In Canada	29 to over 40
Other	1	Born In Canada	39

With the exception of three, all of the participants were educated in Canada. One of the participants had not finished her college degree from England. The other participants' qualifications were recognized and began working in their line of work shortly after immigrating to Canada. Five of the women had finished high school and some of these women took diploma courses from college. Three of the participants had their grade 10 diploma (See Table 11).

Table 11

## Unskilled/skilled Anglo-Saxon women: Education

Ethnic Origin	Education from Homecountry	Education from another country	Education in Canada
England	High school; key punch operator course		Grade 12; hairdressing school
Scotland	Educated in Canada	High school; accounting	Grade 10 and 12; RNA; business training; income tax preparation
Scotland and Ireland	Educated in Canada	----	Grade 10; two grade 12; two years of university
Other	Educated in Canada	----	Grade 10

Two of the participants were not employed during the time of the interview. They both worked as labourers for some time in Canada. One left her position to assume responsibilities for her children, while the other retired early due to health difficulties. Nonetheless, they both had significant contributions to make about their experiences in the workforce. Table 12 lists types of occupations held by women in this category. What is important to note is that in general, these women's occupations correspond with the skill levels "C" and "D" as classified by National Occupational Classification (NOC).

Table 12

## Unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon Women: Employment

Ethnic Origin	Occupation in Homecountry	Occupation in Canada
England	Key punch operator	General Labourer (full time); Fast food supervisor (part-time)
Scotland	Accountant	Day Care Provider (full time); Currently Homemaker, previously labourer (full-time); self employed (income tax preparer and tax consultant)
Scotland and Ireland	----	Waitress (full time); Accounting Clerk (part-time); Receptionist (part-time)
Other	----	Home Day Care Business (full-time)

**Barriers for Unskilled/semi skilled Anglo-Saxon Women**

A variety of barriers were reported by women from this group. Age, lack of experience and education were the most frequently reported barriers by unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon women. The least reported barriers were geographical confinement, union rules and dependency on references. Table 13 summarizes different barriers encountered in the workforce.

Table 13

## Barriers for Unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon Women

Barrier	# of women who reported the barrier
Age	5
Lack of experience	5
Lack of education	4
Leave From Work	4
Lack of affordable child care	3
Current economic climate	3
Over qualifications	3
Other Women	3
Geographical Confinement	2
Union Rules	1
Reference Dependency	1

## Age

The theme of age discrimination dominated some participants interviews, particularly for those who were between the ages of mid 40's and mid 50's. One participant shared her thoughts about her experiences:

If you went for an interview, they would hire you no matter how much experience I have because you are young. It doesn't matter how much experience I have. It (young people) looks better on the eye...the inexperience is definitely a benefit. They can train them the way they want to. You know the old saying, can't teach a dog new tricks. Older people have children, they are going to be called because their kids are sick.

The participant believed that if she was dismissed from her current position, which took six months to secure, another position in this field would be difficult to obtain. She replied "the

workforce is pretty intimidating, especially at my age. The girl I work with said can you imagine if we lose our jobs here. She says nobody is going to hire us. We have our age and weight against us".

Another participant has been in Canada since the late 1960's and has been successful in achieving her "career goals" until she reached an age beyond fifty. She stated, "this is the first time in my life that I have run into problems" and attributed the challenges of finding employment to her age. She articulated that "People don't want to employ people of my age group, because they feel we are too old and we are too costly on the medicals. We are too old to join life insurance policy, we are prone to Alzheimers and we are very sickly".

Another participant debated the issue of employers preferring younger employees. She believed that a barrier may have been her age..."but it is hard to get a sense in the interview, why you are not getting hired."

### **Lack of Experience and Education**

More than half of the women stated that lack of experience and education restricted and confined them to a world of unemployment or positions in the lower strata of the occupational hierarchy. This response was common among women who had grade 12 or less education and among women who lacked diverse work experiences. Moreover, some of the participants were pessimistic about obtaining employment that would provide an adequate standard of living even after obtaining further education. One participant indicated that, " In order to upgrade, I would have to return and take my ECE (Early Childhood Education diploma). The way the government is going that is not going to be any good. They don't want to pay reasonable wages. It is kind of dead end job."

One participant returned to high school after withdrawing in grade eight during her adolescent years. She recently received her grade 12. However, she still believed that lack of experience was a major barrier. She asserted that,

When an application goes out, employers have their choice of very skilled people. So, the skilled people will get the jobs before someone who went back to school and got an education but doesn't have the experience... They are going to hire someone with experience before they hire someone without experience...When I got out of school, I really didn't have any experience except office experience from work co-op and with the choices they have, they are not going to choose me over someone with five years of experience in the clerical positions.

Even after contemplating returning to school some of the participants were undecided about the focus of their studies. Participants with school aged children could only return part-time or attend evening classes to accommodate the needs of their families.

Another participant returned to school to obtain her grade twelve diploma. However, she was unsuccessful due to a number of reasons. She asserted,

I tried going back but it was too hard and I was working full time and going to school three nights a week. It was too much. I gave up on it after one and a half months. I didn't have enough confidence in myself, I think was the biggest problem. The guy I worked for said what is the difference if you got your grade ten or grade 12. You have a job, you'll be here forever sort of thing.

### **Lack of Affordable Child Care and Leave From Work**

As stated previously, lack of affordable child care can be a barrier to further education. However, it can be a barrier to working itself. For one participant " Day care was expensive" in which case she " had to change (her) hours to fit the family." Often, it was the women who had to alter their work schedules to accommodate the needs of the family. Another participant had a similar experience, she asserted, " If I go back to school, it would be at night. I work during the

day. I wouldn't be able to do that right now. When she (the child) starts school, I could get a babysitter half time which would cut costs."

Moreover, after staying home and assuming responsibilities for children and housework, some women found it difficult to re-enter the workforce after a period of absence. As one woman stated, "if I was to go back to work now I don't know if I could. I haven't worked for so long".

Two of the participants had been out of the workforce for ten years. One participant attempted to re-enter her profession but encountered great difficulty. As a result, she began to apply for positions which were not equal to her qualifications. She thought "I was out for a while so I'd start at the bottom and work my way up again".

In sum, the women left the workforce to attend to the needs of their families. This leave of absence proved to be a barrier. It appeared that the longer one was absent from the workforce, the more difficult it was to re-enter.

### **Over qualifications**

Employers regarded some of the participants to be over qualified for the positions they wished to obtain. In fact, this was such a recurring theme for one participant during her job interviews that she "was thinking of fibbing on (her) resume and say I have just a grade 12 and this is all". Another participant had similar experiences which she recalled with great detail,

"a lot of them said the qualifications were too high, they would keep me on file. I am in files all over the place. ...It has been subtly told to me on a number of occasions that I am over qualified. Because I have done so many interviews with people and sat with so many people, you know the body language. And when you are being interviewed for a job who is less qualified than you are, they have a tendency to be antagonistic in their attitudes towards you. You know you are not going to get hired because you know more than they do...I don't push my expertise on anybody, if anything I will understate it rather than overstate it. And even the resume is understated.



In addition, this participant stated that she "could not afford to upgrade herself as it would make her even more over qualified."

### **Other Women**

The theme of other women as barriers to employment also emerged. Three participants believed that there was competition among women in the workforce. As one participant stated,

Women have the capacity to exploit other women. If a man asked you to do something, he would at least thank you. Men take it for granted that they can do these things and they are going to be there. Men progress and take it for granted, so it is easy to be generous. Women have to fight hard and long so there is more competition among women.

Another participant spoke about the competition among women, particularly when one is more qualified than the other. She stated,

Try and interview a woman who is in a position of authority after pay equity and ask her how many women she has helped up the ladder since she has been there. How many women as qualified as she is did she allow to reach her level. Women don't promote women. This is the problem. Women will not promote women particularly when she knows the woman she is promoting is better qualified than she is. Men are more apt to promote women.

Women were believed by one participant to possess inferior abilities in adjusting to new experiences. She stated,

I don't think women adjust as easily as men to new experiences and to being uprooted. I'm very sexist in my ideas. It's the nature of the beast, just the way they are. I think it is just an inbred nature, women are different than men. It think it is part biological and part environmental. I found when I was training, I found that if I had to train a man, it was much easier than to train a woman for the same job.

### **Economic Climate**

Three of the participants linked their poor employment prospects with a negative economic climate. Some of the middle aged women experienced more success in attaining employment in

the past. As one woman said "one of the advantages in the past was good economic times".

Another woman recalled her opportunities of the past, as she stated,

"in the 70's, I felt there were no barriers to any employment, particularly in the industry. When you got into a place, there was always room to move up...They would train you and send you on courses. It wasn't a problem...I feel a lot more barriers now.

Another woman recollected the period of time when she applied for employment. She stated that she applied in "an extremely bad period of employment. Your letter would have been one of 200. To even get an interview was good".

### **Other Barriers**

Three barriers stated least frequently among this group of women were lack of dependable references, confinement to a specific geographical area and hiring unionized employees within the organization.

As a result of leaving on negative terms with one employer, one participant lacked dependable references. In interviews, she was asked, "Why would you leave a job that was paying x number of dollars to work for minimum wage"? She was suspect for leaving her position.

One women indicated that employment was offered on two different occasions in cities outside her current geographical area. She rejected both of the offers as her husband had an established business in the current geographical area. The second job offer entailed travelling and overtime which translated into less time for the family. These factors were considered in her the decision making process.

Another participant who is currently employed part-time had been applying for full time positions within the same organization. She stated that preference was given to unionized

employees as a result of the collective agreement. She believed this was a barrier to securing full-time employment.

### Promotions

Six of the nine women asserted that they had received promotions during their employment. The number of promotions ranged from one to six. One woman had never applied because "there were no opportunities and that (she) would have to go back for upgrading". Two of the participants applied but were rejected for promotions. One of the two stated,

"I have applied for a few...It is who you know and your experience. In a company that size, people know people. If a position comes open, you have to be qualified for the position, and know what to do or be able to be trained to do it. But it doesn't hurt if somebody knows you".

Another participant asked "to go on certain machines (this position would have been added responsibility and increase in wages) but was turned down. The person who got the job was friends with one of the workers".

Others were more fortunate in moving up the occupational ladder. One participant received "six promotions in total" in which case she "would get more responsibility and more money." She believed herself to have "worked (her) way up." and "thought if you work hard enough and if you are dedicated enough, they are going to see what you can do."

Another participant who viewed herself as an aggressive employee simply demanded a promotion. She stated,

"even when I did St. John Ambulance course, I didn't do that without a raise. As far as I was concerned, that deserved a raise. Like anything I did, I would approach them and say I was worth more because I had more skills. Then I would get a raise."

While some hoped that their diligent work habits would lead to a promotion, other received

theirs automatically. One participant received two promotions during her career and indicated that "they were just given to her".

Another participant had a very interesting perspective on promotions. Her promotions had always been "automatic". She stated,

"I've gone from entry level to top position in three and a half years. They promoted me because I could do the job...Any place I have ever worked I have always started at the bottom and worked myself to the top. This is what I like doing.

This participant preferred to receive promotions based on her abilities and skills and believed that "the person who gets the promotions is not always who deserves the promotion". She recalled an occasion when she was offered "100%" raise and rejected this offer due to the offensive attitude of the employer. She stated,

They always paid the man more because the man had a family to support and the wife was only working for pocket money. So they judged women's wages accordingly. You could have the guy's job, that was not a problem, but you didn't get his salary. When I was manager of credit, I was the only woman, and the guys asked one day what I got paid. So I told them. The following day I was offered 100% raise. I asked if I was worth it? They said yes. I said why haven't you been paying me up to now. They said we oil the squeaky wheels first.

This participant resigned from her position the same day. She said that "I'm paid to do a job and I don't get paid to butter up the boss. It is not part of the job description. You'll find that a lot in Canadian work places".

### **Mentors**

Six of the nine unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon women said that they had mentors, all of whom were from similar cultural backgrounds. Three stated that the mentors had been female and the other three had male mentors. One participant had also one male South Asian mentor.

One participant " Had a lot of encouragement, all along the way" and was "actually paired

up with them (mentors)". Another participant recalled an individual who encouraged her to strive for her potential. She stated,

...she noticed I had managerial potential and she pushed for me to go for managerial training. If the boss went on holidays, I was to be in charge. I began training in payroll, staffing schedules and the rest of it. When the position came open (for manager), I didn't even apply for it.

Another participant considered her current supervisor as her mentor. She responded to this question by stating, "Yes, my current boss. She talks to me and I feel comfortable with her and I can talk to her about the job without being intimidated". She believed the management style of her supervisor empowered and motivated her to perform effectively. A teacher, for this same participant, had advocated on her behalf for employment. She stated, "She would converse with the potential employer and tell about you. She always go for good points. She was a friend".

### **Underemployment**

Five of the nine women believed they were using their skills and knowledge to their fullest capacity whereas four stated they were underemployed. One participant had dropped to front-line work after many years as an administrator in her field. She said that "after being in the business for so long...I know the ins and outs. I could give a lot more to it if they give the chance."

Another participant accepted a job which did not match her skills and experiences after some period of employment. She "knew she was applying for basically a receptionist type of job. But the rate of pay is equal to what I was doing. I knew I could do more. I was doing more at my other jobs. Computer skills are not being utilized here."

Similarly, another participant after returning to school, believed that she had much more to offer than her current position permitted. Currently, the work was repetitive and she would

like to use more of her computer skills.

### **Exploitation**

The theme of exploitation surfaced with this group as well as with the previous group of women. Four of the nine women believed that they were exploited in the workforce. One participant recalled, in one of her positions, the way in which she worked 50-60 hours in one week when she was salaried at 40 hours. Her employers "expected reports on Monday morning" when she "could not start them until the production came to a halt on Friday". However, she took responsibility for the exploitation and stated that "she allowed herself to be exploited". Another participant stated that she had,

definitely been exploited... and it doesn't get you anywhere. I've always been told if you offer to do a little bit more that it will get you somewhere. But it didn't and I don't know who it does work for, but it didn't work for me. I began to feel used. Nobody thanked you for it.

She also asserted that due to the lack of rewards in the past, she was less willing to offer her skills in areas that fell outside the realm of her current job description.

Another participant had a somewhat different type of exploitation. She was expected to do the work of her supervisor. Her supervisor expected her to write the reports due to his lack of English skills. This was not part of her job description but she felt compelled to oblige. She stated,

...he could speak English. But when it come to writing it I used to do it. I used to write the reports by hand. I used to write them quite a bit. I did this on top of my work. I had to fit it in during my lunch hour or my break. At the time I could have kicked up a stink. Then we didn't have a union, and now we do.

### **Employment Equity Effectiveness**

Views on employment equity were as diverse as the women themselves. Some of the participants were opposed to the principles of employment equity, while others debated certain aspects of the policy such as voluntary versus mandatory. Some of the quotes below were based on the participants' interpretation of the policy, which may not be consistent with the actual employment equity policy. For example, it was stated by participants that a person may "be getting hired because she is a woman" and that by imposing this policy "it doesn't get the employer the right person". Employers may "feel pressured to hire people that might not have been qualified for the job".

Some of the participants believed that mandatory employment practices would create further barriers. As one woman commented, "Maybe education is the key. As soon as you tell somebody you have to do something, they get their backs up. Don't tell me what is best for my business." Another participant concurred with this view as she stated,

I don't think it should be legislated. We are enlightened enough that it should be happening on its own. Employment equity can't be effective if it is legislated. It would cause more barriers.

One woman had very low expectations of what the policy would accomplish unless drastic changes were made in the position of women. She commented, "Unless a company is completely owned and operated by women, I don't think it will ever be fair. It's a man's world."

Another participant offered the view that,

Employment equity didn't serve the purpose it was put in place for. Employment equity never worked. It still doesn't work and it will never work. It won't work because attitude of women isn't focused to make it work. Women can get any job they want to providing that they know that they will be the first woman. They are going to have to fight to get in. It is part of growing up. Men have to fight exactly the same as women to get in

women's position...Women never pushed hard enough to get it. I proved that we could get the job. I proved it three times.

This particular individual recognized discrimination against women in the workforce. However, she felt the discrimination could be overcome if women asserted their rights more rigorously.

### **Advantages To Obtaining Employment**

The theme of "successes" in the workforce mainly applied to Anglo-Saxon women from both occupational categories. Identifying barriers assists employers to remove them so that a more equitable workforce can be created. However, recognizing some of the advantages a person has in terms of employment can be equally revealing. This question was developed mainly because some of the participants stated that they had not experienced any barriers to employment or promotion. Thus, I thought it would be informative to listen to some of their successes.

The participants who believed they were fortunate to have received employment attributed their successes to their personality, skills and abilities and networks. One participant stated that she "became employed with no trouble. Personality, attitudes and I don't take a lot of things for granted". Another participant had similar views, she stated that she received her current job because of "...her) attitude and because (she) was very positive, honest, upfront, not shy, outgoing. A positive attitude that says to the employer that this girl is the girl for the job".

Five of the participants spoke about their networks in the community that assisted them in securing employment. One woman stated that she obtained her labourer position because her "mom works there". Another woman said that,

"the lady I started with needed a babysitter so she lined me up with the employer. So I got to look after her kids. A lot of it is you know people and you can get in...so I phoned



them up (employer) and they came out and interviewed me and I got the job.

However, it must be noted that during her search for child care work, Canada was in a boom period where work was readily available. Another participant recalled similar experiences, she stated,

...a lot of it as I found, is not what you know but who you know. It is so true. ...I got this job because I am very good friends with the VP of the company so that is how I got into this particular company...I knew somebody, or I had a friend who was in there or someone had said that there was a job coming up and it wasn't going in the paper and to go down at a particular time and put in a resume. Basically all the jobs I got was because I knew somebody. This was just luck of the draw.

Similarly, two other participant obtained their jobs as a result of using their networks

One participant obtained her current job because the manager in the restaurant, who she had worked with in the past "heard (she) was unemployed and that's how (she) got the job." Another participant used her network system and stated that "somebody helped me to get in". She said the following about her friend,

The girl I went to school with was doing this part time position. She got in full time. She phoned me up and said there was a position available and said to apply for it. I went down and applied. I don't think she got me the job but helped me definitely in getting the interview. Since her and I did the same course and she excelled, the supervisor thought I would be good too.

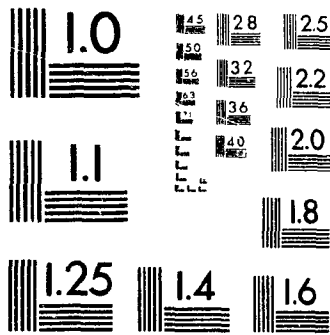
In contrast, one participant asserted that "networking" was an imposition on her friendship.

She had the following to say,

Advocacy is an imposition on my friendship or what I call my network. I never impose on anybody like that. It is against my work ethics. I have people who say use my name for a reference. But no way. I have an extremely good network, but I use them for other people. If I call for favours it is for other people. It should actually work like that, a network should work like that. You shouldn't use your network for jobs. My qualifications should speak for themselves. ...I feel I would have to work three times as hard to prove I can do the job on somebody else's recommendations. I don't want it to be handed to me. I work for what I do.

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PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET  
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PRECISION<sup>SM</sup> RESOLUTION TARGETS

In sum, the unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon women reported a wide variety of barriers in the labour force. The most frequently reported barriers were age, lack of experience and education, whereas the least reported were geographical confinement, union rules and dependency of references. Some of the women had undoubtedly struggled to find employment that matched their qualifications and experiences. Still, many positive employment experiences emerged from the interviews.

### Professional Visible Minority Women

The group of professional visible minority women were comprised of four South Asian women, three Black women and two Chinese women. All were first generation immigrants to Canada. Their residence in Canada ranged from 8 to 45 years (See Table 14). Their ages ranged from 30 to 55 years old. Seven women were married, one divorced and one separated. The participants had one or two children with ages ranging from nine to thirty one.

Table 14

#### Professional Visible Minority Women: Demographics

Visible Minority Group	# of participants	Mother Tongue	# of years in home country	# of years in Canada
South Asians	4	Tamil, Sinhalese English	Range between 22 to 29	Range between 20 to 27
Blacks	3	English	Range between 6 to 37	Range between 8 to 22
Chinese	2	Mandarin English	Range between 3 to 27	Range between 17 to 45

Three of the participants received their education in their home country. One participant

was compelled to repeat the same degree in Canada due to lack of recognition of her foreign credentials. Most of the participants post-secondary education was completed in Canada (See Table 15).

Table 15

## Profession Visible Minority Women: Education

Visible Minority Group	Education in Home country	Education in Canada
South Asians	B.Sc., secretarial school certificate; high school	B.A; B.Ed.; M.Sc.; M.S.W.
Blacks	B.A; BEd	B.A; B.Ed.
Chinese	Business diploma from college	B.A; B.Ed.

All of the participants were employed at the time of the interview. Although they were employed on a full time basis, at the time of the interviews, there were many barriers to attaining full time work. See table 16 for the occupations of these group of women.

Table 16

## Professional Visible Minority Women: Employment

Visible Minority Group	Occupation in Home country	Occupation in Canada
South Asians	Secretary; researcher and professor; homemaker	Teacher (full time and long term contract); Specialized Secretary (full time); librarian (full time)
Blacks	Student; teacher	Teacher (part time); Librarian (full time)
Chinese	Secretary	Teacher (full time); computer systems clerk (full time)

**Barriers For Professional Visible Minority Women**

Only two of the nine women stated that they had not experienced any barriers to attaining employment. They experienced periods of unemployment and rejections from employers but they felt that these were not due to cultural or racial barriers. One participant had totally assimilated herself into Canadian culture. This participant was raised in Canada and no longer practised her cultural traditions. She believed that "when you come to Canada you ought to follow the Canadian way. Being Canadian is more important than whoever you are". In fact, her minority status helped her find a job as a teacher. Another participant also did not sense discrimination or any other forms of barriers to employment. She held a position at the top of her category.

The remaining seven women expressed detailed accounts of various forms of discrimination. Among the most commonly stated barriers were: nepotism, patronage and favouritism, ethnocultural factors and accents. Conversely, age, over qualifications and other

women were the least stated. Table 17 summarizes these barriers.

It is also interesting to note that many of the visible minority professionals struggled to obtain full time employment. One participant with eight years of teaching experience in her home country and an equivalent B.Ed. qualification in Canada received a position in a specialized field of teaching after five years. Another participant after twelve years upon graduation, was still part-time. The only positions that were offered were short term contracts, maternity leave contracts but never permanent positions. One participant thought that it was "possible to work under long term contracts for your entire teaching career." After listing her barriers, she finished by stating, "These were barriers to permanent employment but never barriers to temporary positions."

Table 17: Barriers for Professional Visible Minority Women

Barrier	# of participants who reported the barrier
Nepotism/Patronage/Favouritism	5
Ethnocultural	4
Accents	3
Lack of Canadian experience/discredited qualifications	3
Lack of Networks	3
Age	1
Over qualifications	1
Other women	1

### **Nepotism, Patronage and Favouritism**

Some participants in this group perceived the interviews as just a formal procedure. They

felt that candidates were preselected. One participant stated that "ninety percent of the time they know who will get the job. The employee is in good terms so he or she will get it". Another participant had a similar view. She stated, "I figure they had pre-selected for the position, think it was a waste of time to advertise it".

One participant said the following about one interview,

later found out that it was someone they knew who got the job and that is why networking is so important. I later found out that they were buddies from university and they were having a good chuckle about me. They thought it was hilarious that they had already picked out who they wanted and they were required to interview three people and I was just one of the other two.

The interview for the participant was "very intimidating", and one in which there were "no friendly faces". She stated, "I came out of the interview feeling very badly. It was not an experience of growth for me because I just felt deflated". In sum, many participants in this group felt that interviews were a necessary procedure, often masking the preselection of candidates.

The preselection of candidates were done on the basis of knowing the candidate on a personal level in terms of a "good friend" or a "relative". To illustrate this point, at least three participants recognized "nepotism" as a concern. One participant stated,

Nepotism is another barrier. It is very common. For example, there was a daughter of a woman principal and she knew the vice principal of the interviewing team. The vice principal had a mock interview with the candidate before the real job interview. She got all the jobs.

Again it was commented by another participant that "nepotism is common in this field (i.e. teaching)." As another participant stated, "I think it is who you know. If you know someone in a position of power or your family name is well known in the county then positions are made available to you and I'm not sure how they do it."

If nepotism was not the barrier, then hiring people who were friends of administrators was regarded as problematic. One participant thought that "people in power positions were choosing people they knew...friends or representatives that they thought were appropriate for the job especially for ( a specific type of teaching position )."

When one participant inquired about her prospects of obtaining full time employment, an administrator responded "You're damn lucky you have a job". The participant stated that this administrator ""ran the entire department choosing her friends only for the jobs. She has since left the department not by her choice but I think a number of people noticed her biased practices. ...When she was in power, women who were white were getting in even without qualifications."

In sum, hiring based on nepotism, patronage and favouritism were regarded as barriers for professional visible minority women in terms of obtaining desirable or full time positions.

### **Lack of Canadian Experience and Discredited Qualifications**

Some of the participants arrived in Canada with degrees from their home country. The chances of finding employment in their field and at the level in which they left were slim. One participant stated that because she "didn't have Canadian experience she had to take an entry level position". Even after residing in Canada for some time, she was unsuccessful in attaining the level of status she once possessed in her home country.

One participant taught for nine years in her home country, but had to enter an unrelated profession that provided little job satisfaction and professional growth. She eventually obtained the same degree in Canada, but identified the lack of Canadian experience and discredited qualifications as two of her most prevailing barriers. She stated, "There is a problem when your qualifications and experience are not Canadian. You end up washing dishes. The problem with



small places, is that people stick with what they are comfortable with. People tend to patronize people outside of Canada".

### **Ethnocultural Barriers**

Participants identified many aspects of their culture that were the basis of discrimination in the workforce. It was stated by one participant that "job descriptions fit more the white women's experiences" and that "at some point the minorities are screened out of the process".

Another participant elaborated on this theme,

Visible minorities might not participate and get the qualification they ask for because they have been discriminated against. There are certain situations that are not welcoming because of accent, colour. There are a lot of systemic things that shut you out.

The differences in appearance tended to be a disadvantage to obtaining employment. One participant stated that, "There are many people who don't feel comfortable with different people. It is the way you look. There is a sense that people think you can't cope and they watch you... this is a conservative community". After experiencing immense discrimination in her field she "advises that people dress like mainstream; if you look different, people don't hire you".

This theme of "not fitting in" emerged once again as one participant recalled a position which she applied for,

I had applied for one position and the director told me the reason. She said to me that I wasn't given the job because I wouldn't fit into the office. I don't know what she meant, to me it didn't make sense. It was like we have our own little thing and you don't quite fit our standards.

The potential employer also told the participant that "she would not be happy there". The participant stated that "she reserved the right to determine what makes me happy".

One participant mentioned inappropriate and somewhat offensive questions she was asked

during interviews in reference to her home country, she stated, "I've been asked questions like you know you have to drive to get there. Oh well, we have really bad winters. They usually don't ask a man as to how he is going to get to work or anything like that." Specific questions such as "Where have you come from, what country have you come from" were asked repeatedly. This participant also believed that her Anglicized name may have "opened doors even though it does not look like I have moved far". She said,

I have used my name to my advantage because when I would make phone calls and send in applications and because when I speak you cannot tell what country I am from. I think that has really been an advantage. If I used my maiden name that would not have happened.

Another aspect that may be a potential barrier was the socialization process of some visible minority women. One participant commented on the unassertive style of interacting she was taught at home,

In my home country, women were taught to wait their turn to speak and be careful how you express your views so you don't come across as being domineering or overly aggressive. It is better to wait for more people to be on your side if you have something controversial to say or things like this. No one ever came out and said that to us, but it was an understood part of culture.

This participant indicated also that conflict was avoided in her culture. She stated,

We avoid conflict as much as possible and we are very passive in dealing with any situation whether career or whatever. If I was to stand up to someone for example that would be seen as not appropriate behaviour. In Canada, that has in some way hindered me because for many years I sat back following every rule.

She provided examples from her career in which her silence "backfired". She remained silent, "When the principal didn't grant me an interview because he said he was going to give it to two male staff members" and "didn't question anything when another teacher got the Special Education job with far less educational qualifications." .Participants in retrospect stated that many

practices should have been questioned. These practices certainly were not regarded as ethical or logical.

### **Accents And Language**

The accents of teachers were considered a "problem". It was believed that accents would create communication problems and that children should learn from people with their own accent.

One participant recalled when she first applied for a teaching post,

I was told that white children at the school were learning speech and accent. The visible minority teacher would have communication problems. They didn't want the children to acquire the foreign accent. Visible minority teachers were not considered as acceptable teachers no matter how well they taught.

It was pointed out that certain types of accents were viewed as more favourable than others. For instance, the South Asian accent was much less acceptable than a Black accent. As one participant stated, "Black (accent) is different because they hear the accent on T.V.; a lot of Blacks on T.V., they get use to it. The Indian accent is not heard as much." In fact, the accent became such a problem for one participant that she had to "deliberately change her accent to fit in". She felt that she had fewer problems since this change.

Another participant also claimed that accent and language can be a potential barrier for visible minorities. She stated,

Language might be a barrier, because not all visible minorities have English as a first language. I think this society is geared towards people who speak English as a first language. Even if visible minorities have learned the language, it might be argued by employers here that you can't teach them the nuances of the English language. They are going to know the basic construction and those kind of things but they are going to argue that they can't be taught the subtle difference. I think those excuses are often used.

When one participant applied for a full time position at least five times, she attributed the rejections to being overqualified and because her employer thought "she couldn't communicate

professionally" referring to her accent . After multiple rejections, someone told her that she was a "bloody embarrassment" to the system. Colleagues anticipated that she would "give up after two years but she kept going on". She finally became "fed up" and has stopped applying for full time positions and was contemplating an early retirement. Furthermore, even if the cultural barriers were not present, age became a barrier to permanent employment as the years progressed. She asserted that her place of work "does not like older employees; it's an unspoken rule". The employer is hesitant about providing a pension for employees who have not worked the required number of years as a permanent employee.

### **Promotions**

Seven of the nine women have never received promotions for various reasons. Two participants did not feel qualified for promotions and thus refrained from applying. One stated that, "there were positions open for supervisors and managers but I didn't feel qualified to apply for those positions". Another participant stated,

I have not been in a position long enough to apply for a promotion. I have not expressed an interest in it very much. As an immigrant I will be different from Canadians raised here. So I have a disadvantage because I come from a different system. I don't want to move up the ladder.

Two participants stated they simply were not interested in promotions due to the added responsibility and style of communication which may be in conflict with her own. "There are cultural differences in the way communication is delivered, here it is adversarial. In Asia, it is collaborative. It is very lonely being a visible minority teacher. I don't want to be promoted because of the added responsibility, long hours, little support and cultural differences". She has been outspoken in the past and believed that she would not be granted a promotion

because "weak feminine women receive promotions".

Another participant reiterated this view and stated "Never been interested in promotions. There are anti-white male promotions, men are kept back and white women are moving up. Unhappy teacher don't get promotions. They don't choose anyone who is outspoken".

Lastly, two participants, who repeatedly applied for promotions, were rejected. They both grieved their rejections and were consequently successful in obtaining their promotions. Their grievances will be discussed in more detail below.

In sum, in order to obtain a promotion, the applicants had to lodge a formal grievance. Promotions were fewer for visible minority professional women than their Anglo Saxon counterparts, and they appear to have taken longer to achieve them.

### **Disputes**

One interesting recurring theme which arose during the course of the interviews with visible minority professional women was labour grievances concerning the participants. The grievances occurred after many years of rejections for lateral positions as well as rejections for positions with added responsibility. The lateral positions were viewed as an opportunity to gain an array of experiences and expand their knowledge in their field. It was hoped that by working in different areas, they would be qualified for promotions in the future. Many felt that they were being denied opportunities to expand their horizons and in effect their opportunities for advancement.

Two of the nine participants, after applying to numerous positions within the organization grieved their rejections for promotions. Both cases were successful. For one participant the union advocated on her behalf. She stated, "They always had an excuse not to give me some of

the jobs I applied for, however I felt qualified for the job. The excuses were legitimate but not appropriate." For another participant, the story was the same. This participant was a non-unionized member, thus grieved her rejection for promotion to Employment Equity Officer within her organization. She had been rejected many times in the past for promotions. However, she was "not satisfied with the rationale" for one particular position. The participant stated,

The position was given to someone else and the person I thought should not have had the position. I should have been given that position because I had 19 years of experience and this person had five. I had performed all other functions in the job I needed a little bit of training and I felt that time should have been invested in me. So I complained.

### **Mentors**

Six of the nine women reported that guidance and mentors were absent in their profession. Although support and encouragement were received from senior administrators, however, there were no mentors in the sense that facilitation of professional growth was absent. The support provided was usually when conflict arose between the participants and their superiors; intervention was made to reach a resolution.

Two reported support from white females who were in superior positions. One stated that white males have guided her in the profession. One participant responded,

Yes, in fact, a couple of them. When I changed jobs, the assistant was sort of like a mentor, and she trained me. I was like her assistant and helped her...Another employee had my classification changed to a higher classification and that is why I am at the top of my category".

It was stated that there were very few visible minority women in leadership positions. Thus it was very difficult to find role models in their place of work. For these reasons mentors from their own cultural background were difficult to find.

### Underemployment

Six of the nine women did not believe they were underemployed. They believed they were using their experience and education to the fullest capacity. The remaining believed they were underemployed. One participant stated that "her ability is not being used to the fullest. It has to do with the controlling and domineering style of the supervisor". She witnessed similar employment practices with other employees who were from a variety of different ethnic origins. After "doing this job for many years and not getting other jobs", the participant was contemplating leaving the position and perhaps becoming self-employed until retirement. She stated, "Why should I put in all this effort when it won't get me anywhere. I don't want to pursue a degree because it will not get me anywhere".

Another participant stated that she was highly qualified, however was still after many years unable to secure a permanent position. She concealed her qualifications from her colleagues because she believed it to be "unprofessional" to disclose such information as education. Similarly, she was also contemplating an early retirement.

Another participant compared herself with her white counterparts who graduated with the same degree. In comparison to her non-minority colleagues she lagged behind in terms of professional gains, she stated,

It seems lots of people around me seem to be obtaining their goals. I don't know what I'm doing wrong. (someone she knows) has been able to get a full time permanent contract within two years of his career and he has attained his career goal. I am still struggling and our education is comparable. Other than the fact that the people who are in power positions have a certain characterization of this county and maybe need to broaden their views and be educated that other people can do the job as well.

She also alluded to the fact that the hiring practices must be biased because the visible

minority employees within this organization fail to be representative of the school community population. She stated, "if you take as an example (name of school), the population of students must be at least 20%, yet the staff does not represent that in any way."

Furthermore, not only do visible minorities professionals fail to obtain permanent full time positions or promotions, but when they secure positions, they may be positions "that nobody else wants". One participant stated,

I was considered for only jobs absolutely no other staff member wanted. And that sounds kind of ...bad to say. It was jobs like 33 students in grade 1 with 25 boys and 8 girls after 2 classes of French immersion were skimmed off the top and no teacher assistant to help me. That would be the job I would be offered and it would not be a permanent job, it would be one year contract job.

The participants in the visible minority professional group, who were in the teaching profession, tended to specialize in French, English As a Second Language (E.S.L), and Special Education.

One participant attempted to find an explanation for this pattern,

"Visible minority teachers tend to enter specialized areas of teaching because there are more vacancies. The accent is not a problem as an E.S.L. teacher. These are the kinds of jobs they get. They have to have special talents. They have to have more talents. These are the jobs mainstream women don't want. If you are different, you have to be better. You can't get an ordinary job".

So, the jobs for visible minority teachers were either "unwanted jobs" or jobs with less competition. It is worth noting that in current economic times, when there are very few jobs in the teaching profession, there is competition for jobs in every teaching area. The participants in this category entered their profession in a prosperous period when many choices regarding employment were available.

### **Employment Equity Effectiveness**

Although there were differing views about the effectiveness of employment equity, the



overall consensus was that the policy was needed but that it may not benefit everyone equally. Again as with the previous group of women, employment equity was at times misinterpreted. This is the primary reason two of the participants did not agree with the principles of employment equity. One participant stated,

I don't know how effective it will be but I am concerned about a policy like employment equity. I don't want to be hired because I am a visible minority but because I was the best person for the job. It is usually the men who complain at great length about how they are being discriminated against. Anglo are more suspicious of visible minorities because they perceive favouritism, and visible minorities feel the awkwardness and what their colleagues might think of them.

Another participant stated that her department was quite equitable but could not speak for other parts of her organization. She stated that it was equitable for "women but not visible minorities and it could be because they have not applied." She also indicated that attitudes regarding visible minorities were changing, she stated,

When I first started working I guess discrimination wasn't really open. It was there, but it wasn't open. I am finding it open more and more. I am treated like anyone else, because I have been there for so long they accept me like the fixture in the place. But, I notice that when someone different comes in...minority stuff comes up. Stuff like minorities taking their jobs away.

Five of the nine believed that employment equity will be more beneficial for white women than for visible minority women because of their unity and strong political women's movement which excludes visible minority women.

One participant described the potentially different effects of the policy, she stated,

It think it is going to be more effective for women. Visible minorities, I think we are going to get a lot of flack because people are going to look at women who have worked so hard to get where they are today and people are going to point fingers at them and think you got the job because of employment equity.

Another participant echoed the same view, she stated, "employment equity will probably

be easier for white women to achieve. It is just a feeling. Past can't change. For us there is double discrimination".

They believed it is creating a backlash against visible minorities due to the misperceptions of the legislations. Most participants were not hopeful that it would achieve equality, however, at the very least it will create an awareness of the inequalities in the workforce. One participant stated that it will not be successful because "powerful people are white males. There is a genuine belief, even common among visible minority people, that employment equity means giving jobs to less qualified or inferior people". Thus, the misperceptions even by the targeted groups appears to impede the positive effects of the policy.

#### **Professional Anglo-Saxon Women**

The professional Anglo-Saxon women were either born in Canada or had been in Canada for twenty nine years or more (See Table 18). The ages ranged from 35 to late 50's. Four women were married, three divorced and two widowed. Eight women had children with a range of one to three children who were from two to thirty five years old.

Table 18

#### **Professional Anglo-Saxon Women: Demographics**

Ethnic Origin	# of participants	# of years in home country	# of years in Canada
England	7	4 to 25	Over 29
Other	2	None	Over 30

All of the professional Anglo-Saxon women received a significant amount of their education in Canada (See Table 19). Two women who received their Business and Secretarial

diplomas from their home country encountered no problems in having their credentials recognized in Canada.

Table 19

## Professional Anglo-Saxon Women: Education

Ethnic Origin	Education in Home country	Education in Canada
England	Business Diploma; Secretarial Diploma	Certified Professional Secretary Designation; B.A.; M.S.W.; B.Ed., M.Ed.; Specialists in Special Education, and Guidance; Diploma in Learning Disabilities; Principal Qualifications
Other	Educated in Canada	B.A; B.Ed.; M.Ed.; Specialists in Guidance and Special Education and English as a Second Language

All of the women were employed full time at the time of the interview except for one who was a permanent part-time employee. Three participants were in positions of added responsibility (i.e. middle and upper management) (See Table 20).

Table 20

## Professional Anglo-Saxon Women: Employment

Ethnic Origin	Occupation in Home country	Occupation in Canada
England	Secretary	Secretary (full time); Instructor (full time); Teacher (full time); position of added (full time and part time)
Other	----	Counsellor; position of added responsibility

**Barriers for Professional Anglo-Saxon Women**

Lack of networks, more specifically exclusion from Old Boy's Network and leave from the workforce were two of the most frequently reported barriers by professional Anglo-Saxon women (See Table 21 for list of complete barriers). Age and geographical confinement were the least reported barriers. Although the Anglo-Saxon women discussed barriers they encountered to employment, it should be noted that seven of the nine women considered themselves as having ample employment opportunities and choices. For this reason some of their successes, as with the unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon women, will be discussed in a later section.

Table 21

## Barriers for Professional Anglo-Saxon Women

Barrier	# of women who reported the barrier
Lack of Networks	4
Leave from Work	4
Lack of Experience	3
Age	2
Geographical Confinement	1

**Lack Of Networks**

Four of the nine professional Anglo-Saxon participants, specifically in the education sector, believed that lack of sufficient and appropriate networks was one of the most significant barriers to advancement and to lateral positions; entry level positions were not as difficult to secure. More specifically, exclusion from the Old Boy's Network seemed to be a problem. As one participant stated,

...in the teaching profession, it really is the Old Boy's Network. It is who you know and who you network with outside the system. By the very nature of any bureaucracy, those who are known are the ones that are advanced.

Similarly, another woman felt that she "didn't get the job and there was much a sense that it was the Old Boy's Network and they would be uncomfortable with women joining the administrative groups."

Similarly, another participant concurred that "generally, it is not set up to be gender biased so that any person ...depending on qualifications and experience will be paid the same and will have the same opportunities for advancement. However, the Old Boy's Network still applies."

She experienced the exclusion when she " applied for ...position that came open ...and the two males and I had applied for it. Two males got it and I didn't. One of the two people had letters of complaints registered with...But because he was a friend of (administrator), he got the job."

Moreover, the Old Boy's Network tended to have a strong presence during the job interviews as well. One of the participant's noticed that a woman, present on the interviewing team, had very little influence in the decision making process. She had the impression that "people who were respected tended to be male and they were listened to more than the females"; the woman may be part of the interviewing team. however, she had no voice in the selection process.

Two of the participants had been part of an interviewing team which favoured males in the selection process. One rationale for selecting the male candidate for one job over the female candidate was the following that "They said that she was married and her husband was a (name of profession) so she didn't need the money and therefore, she shouldn't have the job". This was the "criteria why men were to be hired. Even though employment standards are contractual and non-gender biased, when it comes down to personality, you can't escape that. People have their biases and they use them provided they can pass the regulations in appearing to be fair." She stated that, "It comes down to personalities that will determine biases of whatever form, religious, gender, race.... we know that you can rationalize anything, as long as it appears that you have followed the regulations."

Another participant stated that people have a "predetermined idea of the type of person they want for the job. Hire people similar to them; even in appearance sex, race and colour". Interviews are usually a "formal process because generally the interviewers know who they want.

The successful candidate is better connected to the interviewing team".

### **Leave from the workforce**

Four of the nine women stated that a leave from the workforce due to family obligations had been a potential barrier in which case two participants found reentry difficult. After an absence of five years, one participant observed that "all the equipment had changed". She began working for temporary agencies as a way to gain experience until she secured a permanent full time position. Similarly, another participant articulated, "It is very difficult to get back into this field, so this is a barrier to women. They are out of date on current practices and jargon. This makes it harder to get back into the workforce." One of the participants took a leave of absence and returned part-time due to family obligations. However, she has been searching for a full time position for two years. She stated that this was "unfair to women and they are penalized for staying at home. This is common, stuck with low salary, single and child. There are no societal consequences for men".

Another participant stated that the absence in the workforce had a negative impact on her pension and seniority. She stated,

When you talk about barriers, it makes a difference in terms of pension because you can't retire as early as men who worked their whole career. If you have done part time teaching you don't get the same credit as men who did full time teaching. So you are always five or ten years behind the ladder in terms of credit. You get part time credit and you stay home with kids, so the men are accumulating five years and mom is accumulating two years.

She believed that often men are in positions of authority because they have accumulated "full time credit for their work".

### **Lack of Experience**

Three of the nine women felt that lack of experience had been a barrier, not to finding employment, but rather to promotions. One participant had applied to positions of added responsibility seven times and attributed her failure to lack of experience. She stated that one "needs to demonstrate and give examples of leadership for the positions. You already have to have the experience of being in added responsibility before you have the opportunity." She found that the current position lacked opportunities to demonstrate leadership qualities. In spite of this lack of opportunity, she believed that she had demonstrated adequate leadership capabilities. The problem was in the recognition of her leadership style. She stated,

Part of the barrier comes from the hierarchial view of leadership that tends to be male oriented. Collegial leadership skills are devalued. There is not much room for people solving problems in a collegial way. Females have different leadership and problem solving styles. The process screens out different and innovative problem solving methods.

Another woman had applied for positions for added responsibility more than ten times and discontinued applying multiple rejections. She attributed her lack of success to "jumping the ranks" and not "paying her dues". She stated,

I made the error of assuming that what I was currently doing would be comparable to (job she applied for) and therefore I jumped the ranks and applied. People are bitter about that and at that time there weren't very many women in leadership positions. I was able to get that intuitive feeling that I made the wrong move...One of the things said to me was that it was good to get experience every step of the way. It was not written down anywhere.

Another participant concurred with the above participant. She had applied for a position of added responsibility and she formed the impression that "There is an unspoken rule that you have to go through 23 interviews before you get the job; you have to pay your dues".



## **Age**

Two of the participants indicated that age was a barrier to employment and promotion. Both of these women were over the age of fifty years. The first interviewee stated that she had not struggled much until recently and only discovered this to be problem when someone had pointed this out to her. She stated,

A travel agent said that he would never hire me because of my age. Even at Manpower, I was told how many working years I had left and I would not appeal to most employers. I stopped going there because of the disheartenment. There was so much emphasis placed on age, which was something I had not even thought about. He said that if I had a chance of getting a job, I would get it in the first month or none at all.

Moreover, the participant stated that changing careers altogether would prove even more of a challenge.

## **Other Barriers**

The least reported barriers was geographical confinement. For one of the participants the only barrier she identified for herself was a geographical one. She stated that she had a "lot of choices ... the only thing is that I haven't been free to take another job in another community (due to husband's business). So perhaps, a disadvantage had been that I felt geographically confined."

## **Promotions**

Five of the nine women had received promotions in the past, some of them had been automatic. Two of the participants had not applied because they were not interested in moving up the ranks within their profession.

One of the participants stated that she "doesn't want to be promoted and would like to stay in the classroom". Another participant stated,

I haven't applied..you lose holidays for one thing, lose the security of your job, benefits

of the union and autonomy. I wouldn't apply, but if I was asked I might apply and assume they think I was competent enough to take the position.

The women stated that they started having difficulties, particularly when they started applying for promotions. One participant had applied over ten times for a promotion. The barriers for this woman were the same as barriers to obtaining employment. She stated that "they usually know who they want". She also "always called ... and asked if this was a true job or if they have already selected a candidate because I'm tired because I don't want to go through the process when you have already selected."

Another participant in the same predicament applied for an administrative position seven times and was currently exploring her employment options in another geographical area. She stated " It seems as if they are trying hard; it appears fair. It's the systemic discrimination that is difficult to detect."

There was a sense that an outspoken and vocal person could easily become "blacklisted" in the professional community and thus despite their qualifications and experience, promotions would not be granted. One "outspoken" woman was rejected for an administrative position that she had already assumed the responsibilities for in an indirect way. This experience was neither recognized nor was appreciated. She also found "white women not sending the elevator down" after mentoring white women herself.

### **Mentors**

Seven of the nine women stated they had an equal number of male and female mentors in the past. Four women stated that their mentors had been white males. Two of these women also had white females as mentors. One of the participant's mentors was from the visible minority

community in this region.

One of the participants who had not been mentored replied "not formally and it is a heavy duty job that asking would be a burden". The ones that had been mentored achieved their career goals and recognized the mentor relationship as key to their success.

One participant stated the following about her mentor,

Yes one of the (employee superior to her) was very encouraging. He use to come with an interesting project and let you run with it. Pushed you a little and helped you when you needed it. He certainly encouraged me to apply for positions.

Another participant commented on the support and advocacy received from her former employer that eventually enabled her to secure employment. She stated,

If anything came open it was usually part time. There were people who advocated. They would give me the name. It's just like they would give your name to people who were hiring. Like the job I have now. (Her former employer) phoned when he found out I had an interview; he gave terrific references.

Another participant stated that her "administrator promoted her and really encouraged me to get my (degree)". Another participant believed she too had been mentored. She stated that an administrator "encouraged her to apply for promotions and she asked people to tell her what she should know." So in effect, this participant sought her mentors.

The mentors were in positions of authority and they eventually assisted some of the participants in obtaining positions of added responsibility. These participants were encouraged to obtain qualifications that would eventually lead them into positions of added responsibility.

### **Underemployment**

Seven of the nine professional Anglo-Saxon women believed they were using their skills to their fullest capacity. One woman stated she had felt underemployed in the past, but had just

recently received employment in her profession. Two of the nine did not perceive themselves as fortunate. Two of the participants have obtained higher qualifications and have applied for appropriate positions over the last decade, but have yet to achieve their career goals.

### **Employment Equity Effectiveness**

Although more than half of the participants approved of the principles of employment equity, it was believed that it would be a long time before they made any noticeable impact. The backlash against the designated groups will obstruct positive results. The problem also lies in "terms of acceptance and internalizing the whole process".

It was also believed that "employment equity will be effective only if it is legislated. It has to have big penalties. It won't happen unless they are forced to change". Similarly, another participant echoed this view,

I can see a backlash for both groups. As I said the administration is heavily dominated by men and I can see them saying that if we have to hire those women, I am not going to do it. I'll only do it under recourse.

Two of the participants stated that employment equity is creating anger in the white community because of the misperceptions about the legislation. In this regard, employment equity will be more effective for white women than visible minorities. The reason given was "People are afraid of anyone who is different and don't feel comfortable. People think in terms of groups and not individually. There is no emotional connection with visible minorities". In contrast, one participant believed that since "women have made strides it will be easier for visible minorities. It won't take as long".

### **Advantages to Obtaining Employment**

It is interesting to note that many of the participants in the Anglo-Saxon professional group

had considered themselves fortunate in terms of career choices and development. Many of the women had connections and networks in the workforce. One participant, when she was searching for a job, made her "rounds" quite regularly to places where she was searching for a job. Outstanding references were provided from individuals who were reputable in the community.

A few of the participants stated they did not have to attend an interview and were hired because of connections. One participant who wanted to return to the workforce full time, stated, "a friend who worked (in the organization) told me about the positions opening within the organization and I just applied". She had obtained a position of authority and attributed her success to "having had variety of experiences" and having "a particular skill they were looking for at that time."

Three participants stated they received jobs because their style was similar to the dominant culture; they had similar attitudes and values that "fit in" with the dominant culture. Their physical appearance was commented on at least four times. It seems that the appearance of the individual played a vital role in obtaining employment. People have "a predetermined idea of type of person they want for the job. Hire people similar to them; even in appearance sex, race and colour."

One participant seemed to have all the qualities employers sought, she stated,

...not so much my degree but my organizational skills, competence, intelligence and the ability to get along with everyone...I make good eye contact and respond to verbal and non-verbal cues...I look normal, I am not odd looking but look healthy, normal, confident and have a good level of self-esteem...I think people look to see if you will fit in the organization. When we interview here, we look for the fit in similar values, values is a big one and similar attitudes. Similar attitudes and similar values. Those are the two biggies.

In contrast to the accents of the visible minority women, an English woman believed that

her English accent was a benefit. She stated, "You know how bosses like to have a window in their office, it gives them status and they feel like they are climbing up the executive ladder. Well, the (English) secretary is something like that too. This is what I sense." In this respect, the participant believed that her English accent provided status to her supervisor.

In sum, the unskilled/semi-skilled visible minority women attributed their employment barriers to ethnocultural and other related barriers such as lack of English skills and their distinct accents. They had very few promotions and mentors in the workforce. Participants who were considered professionals in their home country, were particularly discontent with their employment status and as a result felt underemployed and exploited.

Among the unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon women, the most frequently stated barriers were age, lack of experience and education. They seemed to have more promotions and mentors than their unskilled/semi-skilled visible minority women counterparts. However, some were quite limited due to their economic status from pursuing other employment or further education.

Professional visible minority women related their employment barriers to hirings based on nepotism, patronage and favouritism, ethnocultural factors, accents, discredited qualification, and lack of Canadian experience. They had struggled to find full time permanent work. The two women who eventually obtained promotions had to file a formal grievance in regards to the unfair hiring practices. Similarly, the professional Anglo-Saxon women reported lack of networks, but a specific type of network (i.e Old Boy's Network), in order to move upward on the occupational hierarchical ladder. They also reported leave from work and lack of experience as significant barriers to employment.

The next section will discuss the findings and draw comparisons in relation to ethnicity and

class. Limitations of the Ontario Employment Equity policy will be discussed as well as presenting supportive and positive measure for implementing equity in the workforce based on the experiences of the women in this study.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Since this is an exploratory study using qualitative methods, the ensuing discussion in no way implies that the conclusions of the study are definitive. The discussion is limited to "those categories, their properties and dimensions, and statements of relationship that exist in the actual data." (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 112).

The three external readers who were used for enhancing the trustworthiness of the study supported the findings. They have extensive experience working with women from diverse backgrounds and in many ways are advocates of equality for women. Their helpful suggestions have been incorporated into the discussion.

The data revealed that visible minority women, regardless of occupation, shared more common barriers with each other than with women from their own occupational category. The overlapping barriers were the following: **ethnocultural, accent, lack of Canadian experience, discredited qualification, hirings and promotions based on patronage, favouritism and nepotism and lack of networks.**

Similarly, Anglo-Saxon women shared more common barriers with each other than with women in their own occupational categories. The overlapping barriers between professional and unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon were the following: **lack of experience, age, leave from work, and geographical confinement.** The two common barriers among professional visible minority women and Anglo-Saxon professional women were **age and lack of networks.** The two common barriers between unskilled/semi-skilled visible minority and Anglo-Saxon were **lack of experience and union rules** (See Table 22 for summary of barriers).



**Table 22: Summary of Barriers For All Women**

Barrier	Prof. Visible Minority	Unskilled/ semi- skilled Visible Minority	Prof. Anglo-Saxon	Unskilled/ semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon
Ethnocultural	4	6	---	
Language and accent	---	5	---	
Only accent	3	---	---	
Lack of Canadian experience and discredited qualifications	3	5	---	
Expense for school	---	1	---	-
Lack of Canadian reference	---	1	---	
Tests	---	1	---	---
Patronage/Nepotism Favouritism	5	1	---	
Union Rules	---	1	---	1
Lack of networks	3	3	4	
Lack of experience	---	2	3	5
Age	1	---	2	5
Over qualifications	1	---	---	3
Other Women	1	---	---	3
Leave From Work	---	---	4	4
Geographical Confinement	---	---	1	1
Lack of education		---	---	4
Lack of child care	---	---	---	3
Current economic climate	---	---	---	3
Reference dependency	---	---	---	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>33</b>

Analysis of the findings reveals that the visible minority women perceived factors relating indirectly and directly to their **culture** and **ethnicity** as being more salient in limiting their employment opportunities than **gender** regardless of occupational categories. Numerous references to their ethnicity and culture background were made such as food, dress, socialization process, and discredited qualifications. At times it was ambiguous whether the participants referred to barriers in terms of "race", in its purest definition. For example, when a woman stated that she was not hired because "she would not fit in", this could apply to her physical appearance and/or cultural values and norms. Moreover, individuals trying to conceal their distinct foreign accents and who considered themselves to be fortunate in having an Anglicized name also indicated that they believed their culture and/or race was a barrier to employment. Hearing an unfavourable accent on the phone or seeing a name that is distinctly "Chinese" or "South Asian" on a resume conjure stereotypical images of the ethnic group or "racial" group, which may ultimately be a disadvantage to obtaining an interview.

Interestingly enough, the Anglo-Saxon women made **more** references to "**physical appearance**" as a factor in obtaining employment than visible minority women. For example, the statement "a predetermined idea of type of person they want for the job...in appearance, sex, race and colour." indicated that the Anglo-Saxon women were aware of the preference for employees who resemble them in many ways. The implication was that employers preferred to hire employees who have similar cultural and racial attributes as well as similar gender.

Visible minority women from both occupational categories experienced more obstacles in securing employment, whereas the Anglo-Saxon women did not experience as many obstacles.

Furthermore, the timing of difficult periods in employment also varied; professional Anglo-Saxon women experienced more barriers when applying for promotions; unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon experienced more barriers past their middle adulthood and especially after leave of absence from the workforce. Both groups of visible minority women started experiencing barriers early on in their attempts to secure employment, including entry level positions. They seemed to have been excluded from equal participation in the workforce which would have led them to secure positions sooner and make them eligible for promotions. Promotion into supervisory and management positions were often a distant and often unattainable prospect for visible minority women.

Women from unskilled/semi-skilled occupational categories were limited by their economic situation in pursuing further education or changing jobs for ones that were more challenging. While some women from these occupational categories took a leave of absence due to lack of affordable child care, others resigned to raise their own children as they felt it was their duty to stay home during the formative years of their children. It appeared that women from this occupational category seemed to be more traditional in their roles as women and carried the bulk of child care and housework responsibilities. However, this may have been especially true of visible minority women who were from societies which were more traditional in their attitudes toward women.

The women engaged in work in the lower strata of the occupational hierarchy, who were considered professionals in their home country, painted an entirely different picture than women who had limited educational qualifications. Although it may not be obvious from the educational and employment tables from the findings chapter, the detailed employment and educational

histories of these women revealed that their socio-economic status dropped after immigrating. These women were waiting for an opportunity to upgrade so that they could practice their profession once again. This group of women believed that their current type of work was only temporary and that it would eventually change for the better. However, at the same time they considered themselves fortunate to even have a job.

In addition, the visible minority unskilled/semiskilled women realized that it would be very difficult to leave their current job for economic reasons. Their economic status and dual work day made it difficult to find time and energy to increase their fluency in English. Moreover, the training programs which they attended streamed them into areas of work outside of their educational training. They indicated that finding appropriate and relevant training programs for professionals from overseas was a problem. All these factors contributed to their marginalization in the workforce. This research is consistent with previous research conducted by Estable & Ng (1987). It appeared that women were ending up ghettoized in these low status positions with little opportunity to change or move upward within their organization.

In the literature review, Anderson and Lynam (1987) stated that women in the lower strata of the occupational hierarchy do not experience discrimination because they are not competing for desirable jobs. Their study was conducted in the mid-late 1980's, during prosperous economic times in Canada. A reason why unskilled/semi-skilled women experienced discrimination was because of poor employment prospects in Canada. Although technically there might not be a recession, the unemployment rates are still quite high. Thus, in times of scarce jobs, there is more competition even for the unskilled/semi-skilled types of jobs in which all forms of discrimination are bound to surface.

Hirings based on patronage, favouritism, and nepotism were indirectly linked to the concept of "networks". Networking is presumably a strategy that opens doors to employment at all levels. Women who were hired because they were known in organizations, professional circles, or the community tended to network appropriately and sufficiently. In other words, people who network get known. Visible minority professional women stated that employment opportunities were lost because of hirings based on patronage, favouritism, and nepotism. The visible minority women were less inclined to network as they felt uncomfortable with this process and viewed it as "socializing". For example, one visible minority woman indicated that she preferred to secure her job by "working hard and being productive. Never wasting time in "idle chatter". For some, the idle chatter may be work related that could lead to a promotion. She did not see "visible minorities moving upward" and thought that "people who get promoted are people who socialize after work". The implication is that visible minorities within their organization tended not to socialize after work and thus decreased their employment opportunities for lateral positions or those of added responsibility. Relationships with superiors tended to determine promotions. It appeared that the visible minority women believed that high employment performances were expected of them, while the lower performances of non-minority employees were overlooked.

Similarly, professional Anglo-Saxon women also indicated that they lacked networks, however, a specific type of network, the Old Boy's Network. Moreover, they specifically provided examples when "two males got the job...because they were friends of the administrator" and "people who were respected tended to be males" and "they (men) would be uncomfortable with women joining the administrative groups". It appeared that the professional Anglo-Saxon

women seemed to have appropriate "women networks." In contrast, the professional visible minority women talked about their exclusion from networks in general, implying female and male networks. The implication was that factors other than gender were at play for visible minority women.

In spite of the overwhelming number of references to culture and ethnicity in terms of barriers, there were also common gender based barriers among the women. The professional women felt intimidated by a strong presence of men on the interviewing teams. In addition, the participants indicated that the interviewers had a "predetermined idea of who they wanted", usually preferring to hire people similar to them in "race" and "gender". In this regard, Anglo-Saxon women are more similar in terms of "race", whereas the visible minority professional faced dual discrimination.

One of the external readers found it interesting that there were very few commonalities between the dominant and minority women. She expected visible minority women to experience more gender based barriers. From her work experiences, it is gender that seems to limit professional visible minority women in their careers. She has seen visible minority men move up the occupational hierarchy quicker than visible minority women. This led her to believe that all women experience gender discrimination. This study is not implying that gender was not a factor in shaping the experiences of visible minority women, it is merely stating that visible minority women from both occupational categories related their barriers to cultural and ethnic factors. It is important to reiterate that the study focused on the **subjective meanings** of the participants experiences in the workforce. These factors may have overshadowed any other factors which may have been at play.

As stated, visible minority women did not tend to have the networks to the extent that Anglo-Saxon women had formed. As first generation immigrants, particularly the more recent newcomers, the informal network in the community may be nonexistent. Due to cultural differences, networks with the broader mainstream society may not have developed. Moreover, the lack of appropriate and sufficient networks could have resulted from not participating in mainstream society due to mistrust, discouragement, belittlement and intimidation experienced during their search for a job, interviews and interactions with colleagues and authority figures. Moreover, other ways of exclusion included providing these women with fewer choices such as jobs that "no one else wanted". They had less opportunity because they were not provided with a range of diverse experiences that are typically required for positions of added responsibility. This applied to the professional Anglo-Saxon women as well. Mentors in this respect would have played a vital role in facilitating and supporting career advancement. However, there were fewer mentors for visible minority women, particularly mentors from similar backgrounds. The absence of mentors was partially attributed to the fact that there were very few visible minorities in positions of added responsibility.

Two of the visible minority women indicated that overall their work experiences had been positive. One of these participants did not identify herself with her ethnic group. This participant immigrated to Canada at a very young age and obtained her professional degrees in Canada. Moreover, it appeared from her narrative that she has attempted to "follow the Canadian way". She explicitly stated that "I wasn't maintaining the traditions. It wasn't important to me, I didn't feel connectedness with Chinese people". She differed from the rest of the participants in the respect that the others who immigrated to Canada brought with them a strong commitment to

maintaining their cultural identity. To a large extent, some of the other participants had already established careers in their home country, whereas this participant lived in Canada most of her life and as a result strongly identified with the Canadian culture.

This is an interesting aspect because in the second phase of employment equity, employers are required to conduct workforce surveys which are voluntary, confidential and anonymous. The standard question which is asked of visible minorities is the following (Ontario Pay and Employment Equity Guide, 1995):

"For the purposes of employment equity, a person is member of a racial minority if because of his or her race or colour, the person is in a visible minority in Ontario. The fact that a person is an Aboriginal person does not make him or her a member of a racial minority. Based on this description, do you consider yourself to be a member of a racial minority? Yes or No.

It requires employees to self identify themselves, thus taking the objective definition of **ethnic group**. This participant did not regard herself as a visible minority, although, she belonged to a visible minority group identified in the Employment Equity regulations. A combination of objective and subjective definition for the purposes of employment equity would have proved to be more useful in identification of ethnic group.

Two of the Anglo-Saxon women stated that they were less likely to face gender discrimination because of the nature of their work. Both of these participants specialized in areas that were dominated by women; women were traditionally accepted more in these settings. They concluded that they experienced fewer problems as a result of the absence of competition with males.

Both groups of Anglo-Saxon women reported age as a significant barrier. The unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon women reported age as a barrier more frequently than any



other group of women. This is partly due to the fact there were more older women in this category. However, the area of work in which age discrimination emerged was also a significant finding. For example, the women who reported age as a barrier were in occupations such as service and sales (e.g. waitressing, counter help). These two occupations are very public oriented and in which employees interact with customers on a frequent basis. It was believed that younger females might attract more customers than older women in these jobs.

The professional Anglo-Saxon women, specifically the ones applying for promotions, found employers less willing to promote after the age of fifty. The fact that they were applying for promotions in their 50's was linked with leave from work. Qualifications for promotions usually included demonstration of leadership skills and requiring the incumbent to have a diverse range of experiences. Thus, leave from the workforce to take care of children delayed the readiness for promotions from the perspective of the employers.

In sum, visible minority women perceived their employment barriers in relation to their culture and ethnicity, whereas the Anglo-Saxon women identified experienced more gender related barriers. However, it is false to assume that the visible minority women did not experience gender discrimination. The gender variable impacts women's lives unequivocally. However, contrary to mainstream feminist theory, for visible minority women, gender may not be the most salient variable in their lives. Race or class may be more of a determining factor in their identity than gender.

### **Policy Implications and Recommendations**

Qualitative research has a variety of different ways that it can serve the policy maker. Walker (1985) asserts,

What qualitative research can offer the policy maker is a theory of social action grounded on the experiences--the world view--of those likely to be affected by a policy decision or thought to be part of the problem (p.19).

The purpose of qualitative research can be divided into four categories: contextual, diagnostic, evaluative and strategic (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). This study is concerned with the evaluative and strategic purposes. The evaluative element is defined as assessing the effectiveness of policy, program or plan. In this study, the evaluative component was the comparison of employment barriers of four groups of women: unskilled/semi-skilled visible minority and Anglo-Saxon women, professional visible minority and Anglo-Saxon women. The strategic aspect of qualitative research for policy purposes refers to identification of innovative theories, policies, plans or actions.

Although the Ontario Employment Equity Act has not been in place long enough to quantitatively measure its effects, respondents offered their views on the effectiveness of employment equity. The responses from the participants indicated that employment equity would not benefit women and visible minorities equally. Specifically, the legislation would be more beneficial for women from the dominant culture than for visible minority women. There was dual discrimination experienced by visible minority women. Similarly, triple discrimination based on gender, race and class could impede the positive effects of employment equity for visible minority women. Anglo-Saxon unskilled/semi-skilled also seemed to have faced economic and gender barriers.

It has been argued that certain characteristics of the organization and the Human Resource Management (HRM) department contribute directly or indirectly to the achievement of a representative workforce. It has been suggested that achieving employment equity is likely to be

more successful in the following situations (Andiappan, Crestohl and Singh, 1989; Hitt and Keats, 1984; Marino, 1982):

- \*certain industries
- \*larger organizations
- \*highly formalized and centralized organizations
- \*absence of seniority policy
- \*influential HRM
- \*EEP is supported by other HRM programs and practices

It is debatable whether the presence of unions help or deter the goals of employment equity. Some believe that unionized organizations have better HRM programs and practices, while others believe that unions impair the achievement of a representative workforce by demanding that certain practices be maintained. Supporters of unions argue that unions are important in making employment equity work. Unions can advocate for employment equity as part of a broader anti-discrimination campaign. Unions can reach out to the designated groups and promote anti-discrimination in the workplace through publications and skills training.

The theme of exploitation emerged from the data by visible minority and Anglo Saxon women in the unskilled/semi-skilled occupations. Many researchers have investigated the relationship between treatment in the workforce and types of work. What is clear is that women tend to be segregated in traditional occupations that tend to be the lowest paid, most insecure and unorganized (Ng & Estable, 1987). It can be argued that women in these sectors will least benefit because of the non-unionized characteristics of the organization. Only one of the visible minority women in the unskilled/semiskilled occupations was promoted while many verbalized detailed accounts of discrimination in the workforce. Stasiulis (1990) also argued earlier in the paper that employment equity would benefit professionals more than women in low status positions.

Nonetheless, the lack of progress for women in the unskilled/semi-skilled occupations cannot be directly linked with non-unionized characteristics of the organizations since I did not ask the participants about unions in their workplace. What is clear is that they lacked advocates in the workforce, particularly visible minority women, who could help them to assert their rights when necessary. It could also be that because of poor English skills, they may not have been aware of any avenues for redress within their organization. Learning English becomes even more of a priority. If they were aware of avenues for redress, then the question becomes, why do they not pursue these options?

This illustrates that any policy that targets women and visible minorities must take into account ethnicity, gender and class differences. "Race, class and gender are enmeshed in each and the particular intersections involved produce specific effects" (Kline 1989,p.43). There is not a single source of oppression for visible minority women. Much of the current feminist theory has been developed by women who are part of a privileged race and class and seldom include experiences of women living at the margins. Consequently, feminist theory lacks the broad analysis that encompasses a whole range of human experiences. In the literature review, I discovered that assumptions of current feminist theories were applied to all women. Moreover, gender was usually treated separately from the issues of race and class. Women who are not white and middle class experience various forms of discrimination concurrently. For visible minority women, their ethnicity may form the basis of their experiences and knowledge. In this way, their ethnic and racial background may be the most salient factor that impact on their lives.

Feminist theory has relied on the "notion of common oppression as the basis for determining common interests and concerns on the part of all women" (Kline, 1989,p.47). The

emphasis on commonalities is another way to marginalize and exclude women with diverse experiences and interests. Admittedly, the concept of common oppression has been valuable, but one must always analyse the purposes to which the term is used. Oppression of women must be explained in terms of a variety of different experiences. Failure to do so is in itself a form of oppression.

The visible minority women's movement views the tendency to ignore the implications of their experiences as a manifestation of eurocentricism (Kline, 1989, p.48). It has been suggested that "white privileged feminists deny differences among women, focusing instead on sources of common oppression, in order to justify, whether consciously or unconsciously our own power to direct feminist theory and decide on political priorities in our particular interests" (Kline, 1989, p.48). In effect the focus on commonalities serves two functions: conceals experiences of women exposed to class and race oppression and reinforces the race and class privilege of white middle class women (Kline, 1989).

In this sense, any new policy designed must not foster further distrust between the privileged and the underprivileged. A policy designed to create equalities in the workforce must in itself be free of inequalities. The recommendations will be made for general policy implication since employment equity is expected to be replaced by an "Equal Opportunity" legislation. The following recommendations are made on the assumption that governmental intervention is required in order to achieve equity in the workforce. However, the author recognizes that the current prevailing ideology of the conservative government is in direct conflict with the idea of governmental intervention. Moreover, other factors such as the current economic climate and the negative sentiment toward visible minorities due to increased competition for scarce jobs will also

have an impact on the development and effectiveness of any policy designed to eradicate inequities in the workforce (McKenna, 1994).

Any new legislation has to be stringently enforceable. There are some avenues in place, however either they are not enforceable or the process for redress is lengthy and gruelling. The Ontario employment equity legislation assumed a very systemic approach to eradicating discrimination that was preventative in nature as opposed to remedial. Other avenues of redress for racial discrimination in the workplace are not as preventative. Along with the human rights legislation, 35 % of Canadian workers are covered by collective agreements and 50% of these collective agreements have a "no discrimination" clause (McKenna, 1994). It is possible that issues of discrimination may increasingly become issues of collective agreement arbitration.

The following are very specific recommendations for eradicating the systemic barriers reported by women in this study.

1. First, some of the unskilled/semi-skilled visible minority women believed that employers may ask for language requirements that were unnecessary for the job in question. In this sense, employers language requirements may discriminate against people on the grounds that their first language was not English. The language requirement should be **reviewed for fairness and objectivity**. If English language is required, then it could be offered in more workplaces since some of the women have stated that they do not have the time to take English classes. The employer may not wish to incur the costs, so I would suggest Boards of Educations, who are currently offering E.S.L. to reorganize the location of their classes to include more workplaces. It is a matter of **redistributing their resources** and choosing the best possible location that would access a number of people who would not otherwise have time to learn English. The classes could

be offered during lunch hour and after work, provided that child care is available. Moreover, English as Second Language teachers could be available to act as resources within the workplace. Also more classes could be offered during the weekends and evening classes with the option of child care. Similarly, classes could be offered to specific ethnic groups in neighbourhoods where they tend to concentrate, especially for those who are not employed.

One of the external readers pointed out that she knew of a woman who took E.S.L. classes for a few years but she did not learn to speak English adequately until she was individually tutored. The failure to learn was not due to this individual's lack of skills or interests, but attributed to the poor quality of E.S.L. classes. Thus, more **quality** English training programs are needed and women have to be encouraged to take English at advanced levels so that fluency in English can ultimately be achieved. This fluency in English would also make more visible minority women eligible for promotions in the future and in this way, employers would be able to achieve a more representative workforce.

Another external reader offered the view that language was the single greatest barrier for non-English speaking people to attaining employment. It is not the actual culture or ethnic background but the high level of English skills which is required of teachers and postsecondary instructors.

2. In relation to "Canadian qualifications and experience", certain procedures need to be in place to ensure that qualifications from overseas are **consistently and fairly** evaluated in order to determine their Canadian equivalency. Moreover, the criteria established for the job should be relevant and reasonable. In this way, employers would not be disregarding individuals with foreign credentials who may be highly qualified.

3. There could be separate training programs for women who have been out of the workforce and for professional women from overseas. One of the external readers pointed out the **training programs for professional women need to be specific and need oriented**. Currently, all professionals are grouped together, men and women, with diverse occupational backgrounds. Each profession has their own unique jargon in which the professionals would requiring specific information about recertification and evaluations. In this way, professionals will be prevented from being streamed into occupations in which they might feel underemployed.
4. Many of the women in the unskilled/semi-skilled group indicated that economic barriers prevented them from returning to school for upgrading and obtaining full time work. The **expansion of quality subsidized child care**, offered during various shifts (i.e morning, afternoon, evening, midnight), is the most important support for women who work, wish to work or attend school or which to attend school. Some of the women stated that the interruption of their jobs constituted a major barrier to female equality in the labour market. The child care can be community based or employment based.
5. Other ways to improve women's choices for school or employment and in effect economic status of women, are based on the European model. **Parental leave** would provide men and women a certain number of days' leave from the job to care for children. **Flexitime and job sharing** would allow adaptation of working hours around family schedules. Both of these measures would provide support to cope with their dual job at home. In this way, more men could be encouraged to share more equitably the work in the home.
6. All women seem to be concentrated in occupations traditionally held by women. In order to address this problem, one needs to **expand programs to train women in non-traditional jobs** as well as providing more incentives to enter into these occupations.



7. In creating a more equitable workplace for everyone, **anti-racist education and training** are needed for all employees at all levels of the organizational hierarchy. It is particularly important that senior management support anti-racist training and education, so that employees will receive the message that racism is unacceptable in this organization. Anti-racism training is usually referred to "raising white people's consciousness of racism in all its manifestations and at helping them define and then undertake action aimed at countering these" (Dominelli, 1988). However, I would extend this training for all ethnic groups and not just "whites". Racism exists between minority and dominant groups, but it also permeates among different ethnic minority groups. Anti-racist training is viewed as a supportive measure that helps to increase awareness about systemic racism within the organization and in the broader society. Dominelli suggests seven strategies that prevent people from realizing that racism exists (Dominelli, 1988). She refers to these strategies as being used by the dominant culture, however, I would suggest that anti racism training and education be delivered to all employees. They are the following:

- a. Denial: People don't believe that racism exists. View it as personal prejudices held by few extremes or irrational people.
- b. Omission. People fail to see the relevance of "race" in most situations.
- c. Decontextualization. Racism exists in general terms but does not pervade every day activities or interactions.
- d. The colour blind approach. Minority groups are treated as if they are the same as dominant groups.
- e. The "dumping" approach: The responsibility of eradicating racism is "dumped" on minorities when in fact it is everyone's responsibility.
- f. The patronizing approach: The dominant culture's way of performing is considered superior. This training will help people to realize that other ways are equally valuable.

g. Avoidance: Acknowledge that racism exists, but are afraid to confront it.

This type of training is considered supportive because it not only benefits the minority group in question, but all the employees within the organization to realize that racism is an enormous problem which limits opportunities for certain ethnic groups.

8. Many of the participants indicated that the actual recruiting, screening, interviewing and selection processes were discriminatory in a number of ways. The key is to work towards objectivity in these areas. The following are some recommendations for employers when seeking candidates for jobs (Gibson & Harvey, 1995).

### **Recruitment**

In order to reach members of the designated groups employers may need to advertise outside the organization, locally and provincially, and in women's and ethnic community papers. The advertisements should inform the candidates clearly about how to apply and how to get more information about the job. For example, applicants may be screened out because they have not filled out an application form even though it was not stated in the job advertisement; screening out applicants who have not provided a covering letter with their resume even though the job advertisement does not indicate that this was required; screening out applicants because their resume was chronologically based as opposed to skills based. Moreover, the language in the advertisements should be free of culture and gender biases (Gibson & Harvey, 1995)

The application forms should comply with relevant human right or employment standards legislation; only job related information should be asked on the forms.

### **Job descriptions**

The job descriptions need to be current and accurate. The responsibilities central to the job need to be emphasized accurately. The description of the job needs to be divided into skills and knowledge the employer is seeking. These requirements should not focus on personal attributes which are subjective and may not necessarily be related to the job.

### **Screening**

The screening procedures should be as objective as possible. An objective screening procedures evaluates all candidates consistently using the same criteria and mechanisms to rationalize screening decisions. The following are ways to make the screening process more objective (Gibson & Harvey, 1995):

- \*screening criteria have to be clearly defined
- \*screening sheets completed for all applicants
- \*rate all applicants according to the same criteria
- \*screening criteria have to be directly taken from the job advertisement and must reflect only job related qualifications

### **Selection Criteria**

Selection criteria should ensure that the person is being selected at the entry level position not at the level of a fully functioning job incumbent. If the selection criteria implies that only those who have experience for the job will be hired, the employer is at risk of excluding people who may have the potential to carry out the responsibilities of the job. Participants indicated that they were not even given the opportunity because they did not have the experience; but they may have had inherent skills and abilities to perform the job on an ongoing basis. Moreover, credentials should only be required for those positions which are a legal requirement for working in Ontario.

## **Interviewing**

Members of the designated groups should be part of the interview panels, and when possible not in a tokenistic way. It is imperative that the members of the designated groups have their equal share of power in the decision making process. Also, when English is not a requirement for the job, provisions should be made for providing language accommodation to candidates

## **Interview Assessment Objectives**

It is important to keep in mind that interviews should measure the applicant's ability to perform on the job and not to measure the applicant's interviewing skills. The following are suggestions for improving objectivity in interviewing (Gibson & Harvey, 1995):

- \*document all interviews
- \*all applicants should be asked the same scope of information
- \*interviewers should be aware of different interviewing styles which may be appropriate for certain ethnic groups
- \*understand that a person's lack of interview skills in a structured environment might not be the best assessment tool to measure skills and knowledge for a job
- \*develop other assessment tools to measure applicant's suitability (other than interviews).

## **Ways to Improve Chances for Promotions**

One major criticism with the Ontario Employment Equity Act has been the exemption of all seniority practices. In fact, one significant role of the Act was to address systemic discrimination in cases such as those involving seniority. The "requirement that complainant in seniority cases first succeed under Human Rights Code makes it almost certain that all but the most flagrantly discriminatory of these practices will remain unchallenged" (Dulude, 1995).

This exemption will have an adverse discriminatory impact on women and visible

minorities. Women who take leave from work are at a disadvantage in terms of gaining seniority rights within an organization. It is possible that the women may have to return to an entry level position after returning. The level of job depends primarily, as indicated by narratives of the respondents who identified leaves from work as a barrier, on the length of absence. The longer one is absent from the workforce, the more difficult it may prove to return at the level one left. The re-entry is also dependent upon the nature of work.

The seniority system limits women and visible minorities in a number of ways. In the study, approximately half of the unskilled/semi-skilled women were part-time, temporary or were hired on a contract basis. Collective bargaining agreements prevented them from applying for positions within the organization: employees who were part of the bargaining unit were given priority for jobs in the organization.

To address the problem of workers not having the opportunity to build up seniority, seniority benefits could be **extended to include temporary, part-time, and contract workers**. Moreover, women and visible minorities in ghettoized jobs may not have the seniority provisions to move to another sector of the workplace. In this case, seniority should be **transferrable throughout the organization and across bargaining units to allow for more flexibility** for workers to move into other areas within the organization. When women and visible minorities have built up seniority, this should be an important consideration in promotions. Lack of experience can no longer be an excuse for refusing promotions since training could be provided as necessary (Allan, 1988).

A **seniority-based lifetime recall rights** for all workers would guarantee that any employment gains made by newly hired employees are acknowledged during recessionary times

and layoffs. Moreover, seniority rights could be **broadened to apply throughout the whole organization**, where workers have the right to "bump down" during layoffs, women will not be the first laid off as is the case currently because of their lack of seniority (Allan, 1988).

Various types of mentoring programs would ameliorate the problem of underemployment as well as the lack of women from diverse backgrounds in administrative positions. Formal and informal mentoring programs could be designed (Gordon, 1994). The mentoring program could be adopted according to the learning styles of the mentorees. People from some cultures may feel more comfortable with formal mentoring which tends to be structured and systematic and driven by the organization's needs. Conversely, some may feel more comfortable with informal mentoring programs which are mentoree driven and focus on common interests of the organization and mentoree. In both cases, the mentor acts as a role model in the field, which visible minority women so often lack. The mentor can be someone within or outside the organization and may or may not be a person from the same ethnic group. It might be helpful to find a person who is from a similar ethnic background, but if an individual is not available to mentor, then a member from the dominant culture could act as a mentor. What's more important is that the mentor be genuinely interested in inspiring the mentoree to meet her chosen goals and provide support and encouragement to the mentoree. Moreover, mentoring has typically been considered elitist in that it nurtured high potential employees' skills and abilities rather than discovering or developing untapped talents throughout the workforce. Thus, it is imperative that mentoring programs exist for women from all occupational categories within the organization. The unskilled/semi-skilled Anglo-Saxon women had fewer mentors than the professional Anglo-Saxon women. By choosing only people who share a similar vision as management, the opportunities for people with differing

but equally important views are limited (Gordon, 1994).

### **Limitations of the Study**

One of the limitations of the study was that there may be a bias in the selection of participants. Visible minority women in unskilled/semi-skilled were recruited from training program from various centres serving the multicultural community. Women enter training programs because they have experienced difficulty in finding employment.

Another limitation of the study is the categorizing of visible minorities into broad categories. However, since this study was placed in the context of Ontario Employment Equity legislation, this was consciously done to remain consistent with the terms of the Act. So, in effect, this may not be a limitation of the study, but rather a limitation of the policy itself. Visible minorities are a heterogeneous group. There is not only diversity among visible minority groups but within them as well. As indicated in the literature review, there are considerable differences among individual visible minority groups in terms of labour force participation and unemployment rates and occupational status. I have shown their heterogeneity wherever possible.

Another limitation of the study may have been that, due to my visible minority status, the Anglo-Saxon women may have been reluctant to speak openly about their experiences. Some people may feel more comfortable sharing their experiences with people from similar backgrounds. Conversely, visible minority participants may have been more willing to openly share their employment experiences.

### **Research Implications**

The literature review has suggested that different visible minority groups experience different levels of success in the workforce. This study compared women from minority and

dominant groups. It would be interesting to study specific visible minority groups in terms of employment barriers. In this way, unique aspects of their culture or ethnicity will emerge.

Also, in future studies, one could compare different generations of immigrants. Do first, second and third generation visible minorities experience the same problems and to what extent? Second generation visible minorities will not have the distinct foreign accents and will have been to a certain extent assimilated into Canadian society. Thus, in many ways they will be different than first generation visible minorities.

This study did not include non-English speaking immigrants from European countries. In future research, one could look at the experiences of this particular group of women and compare them with visible minority or Anglo-Saxon women.

This study did not focus on any particular occupation. There may be characteristics of particular occupations that hinder or facilitate implementation of employment equity policies.

Most importantly, more research needs to be conducted on evaluating the effectiveness of employment equity policies. The implication from this research was that there may be uneven benefits for women with dual or triple minority status. All women need to be treated as equals to each other and not just as equals to men.

### **Conclusions**

The Ontario Employment Equity Act was designed to achieve an equitable workforce as efficiently and effectively as possible. The findings of the study show that women with dual or triple minority status experience different and additional barriers in the workforce. There are some common barriers among women, however, visible minority women perceived their barriers were intensified as a result of their culture. The unskilled/semi-skilled women lacked opportunities



to improve their employment status. In this way, any employment equity policy must take into account the diverse experiences of women. In addition to child care, flexitime, parental leave for all women, rethinking the way foreign credentials are evaluated and delivering quality English language classes in workplaces are very specific needs of visible minority women. Language is the key to employment and job mobility. Equality will truly be achieved when the unique needs of diverse visible minority women are incorporated into the development of employment equity plans.

The question, "What is reality and who defines it" becomes very important in the development and evaluation of policies. Unfortunately, the "reality" which receives more attention is the reality of the dominant culture. This study illustrated that there are multiple realities of visible minority women from different occupational categories, which may or may not necessarily be the same **perceived** reality as women from the dominant culture.

By ensuring all members in society have equal opportunities for employment, education and livelihood, the entire country benefits economically and socially. When a significant fraction of the population is marginalized or ignored, then future economic/social potential is lost forever. An inclusive workforce that values diversity is in the collective interests of society.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Specific Visible Minority Groups**

### Specific Visible Minority Groups

Blacks include African Black, Barbadian, Ethiopian, Ghanaian, Haitian, Jamaican, other Caribbean, other West Indian, and Somalian.

South Asians include Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, Tamil, East Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Singalese and Sri-Lankan

Latin Americans include Latin/Central or South Americans but excludes persons whose place of birth was Argentina, Chile, Paraguay or Uruguay.

Pacific Islanders include Fijian, Polynesian and other Pacific Islanders

Southeast Asians include Vietnamese, Burmese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, Malay and/or Indonesian

West Asians and Arabs include Afghan, Arab n.i.e., Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Iraqi, Kurdish, Lebanese, Maghrebi n.i.e., Moroccan, Palestinian, Syrian, Turk, and/or West Asian n.i.e.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991

**APPENDIX B**

**Principles of Employment Equity**



### Principles of Employment Equity

1. Every Aboriginal person, every person with a disability, every member of a racial minority and every woman is entitled to be considered for employment, hired, retained, treated and promoted free of barriers, including systemic and deliberate practices and policies, that discriminate against them as an Aboriginal person, as a person with a disability, as a member of a racial minority or as a woman.
2. Every employer's workforce, in all occupational categories and at all levels of employment, shall reflect the representation of Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, members of racial minorities and women in the community.
3. Every employer shall ensure that its employment policies and practices, including its policies and practices with respect to recruitment, hiring, retention, treatment and promotion, are free of barriers, both systemic and deliberate, that discriminate against Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, members of racial minorities and women.
4. Every employer shall implement positive measures with respect to the recruitment, hiring, retention, treatment and promotion of Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, members of racial minorities and women.
5. Every employer shall implement supportive measures with respect to the recruitment, hiring, retention, treatment and promotion of Aboriginal people with disabilities, members of racial minorities and women which also benefit the employer's workforce as a whole.

**APPENDIX C**

**Letters to Referring Organizations and Individuals**

Harjeet Lamba  
104A Northlake Place  
Waterloo, On  
N2V 1B1

February, 1995

Conestoga College  
Marg Smith  
299 Doon Valley Drive  
Kitchener, On  
N2G 4M4

Dear Marg:

I spoke with you on the phone today regarding my research project as a Master of Social Work student at Wilfrid Laurier University. I have enclosed a partial thesis proposal so that you may better understand the purpose of my thesis. The research on labour force participation of visible minority reveals that there are different barriers between white and non-white women. Moreover, there are class differences in terms of labour force participation. I am interested in identifying factors that prevent visible minority women from finding and obtaining a promotion in their workforce.

There are many gaps in the research regarding employment for visible minority women. By conducting this research, I will be filling one such gap. This research will have policy implications as it relates to the employment equity legislation. The findings of this research can assist employers to develop the positive and supportive measures that will ensure equal opportunity and participation in the workforce for visible minority women. The research also provides an opportunity to add to the existing body of knowledge; theory development is essential in furthering the opportunities of the designated groups. Documenting the personal experiences of visible minority women using the qualitative method will act as catalyst in this process.

As I stressed in the method part of my thesis, the participants responses will be kept confidential and their identity anonymous. I will not disclose any information in the body of my paper that will reveal the identity of the participants. I will also explain the purpose of research and gain consent for their participation. I would appreciate your assistance in locating visible minority women who are employed in low-income occupations such as clerical, janitorial and labourer and/or in the professional occupations (teacher, vice principal, principal etc.). Certain types of occupations may be only applicable to your organization.

I will contact you again within one week upon mailing of the partial thesis proposal. I hope that you will be able to assist me in locating participants for my research.

Sincerely,

Harjeet Lamba

Similar letters were also sent to the following individuals representing organizations and institutions:

Waterloo Regional Education and Employment Equity Network  
Edith MacDonald  
Freeport Hospital  
3570 King Street East  
Kitchener, Ontario  
N2A 2W1

Waterloo County Board Of Education  
Human Resource Department  
Marcia Smellie  
51 Ardel Avenue  
Kitchener, ON  
N2G 3X5

Waterloo Regional Roman Catholic School Board  
Chloe Callender  
91 Moore Avenue  
Kitchener, ON  
N2H 3S4

Working For Work  
Bobbi Stewart  
165 King Street East  
Kitchener, ON  
N2G 2K8

OSSTS  
Pam Constable  
540 Riverbend Drive  
Kitchener, ON  
N2K 3S2

WC/WTA Office  
Building 4, Ed Centre  
51 Ardel Avenue  
Kitchener, ON  
N2G 3X5

Olsen Staffing Services  
Ms. Jamieson  
305 King Street West  
Kitchener, ON  
N2G 1B9

Kelly Temporary Services  
Susan Herringer  
101 Frederick Street  
Kitchener, ON  
N2H 6R2

Conestoga College  
Marg Smith  
299 Doon Valley Drive  
Kitchener, ON  
N2G 4M4

CORE LITERACY  
Melinda McCoy  
25 Frederick Street  
Kitchener, ON  
N2H 6M8

Manpower Temporary Services  
Linda Curry  
7 Duke Street West, Suite 304  
Kitchener, ON  
N2H 6N7

**APPENDIX D**

**Information Letter to Potential Participants**

April 10, 1995

Dear Potential Participant:

I am a Master of Social Work student at Wilfrid Laurier University. I am conducting a research study supervised by Dr. Anne Westhues and Dr. Josephine Naidoo. I am writing this letter to request your participation in this study.

The purpose of the research is to identify employment barriers visible minority women and Anglo-Saxon women experience in the following occupational groups: janitorial, clerical and teaching professions. These positions can be in any level (entry level, middle level or management level). Statistics Canada defines visible minority groups as the following: Blacks, Chinese, South Asians, West Asians and Arabs, Filipinos, Southeast Asians, Latin Americans, Japanese, Koreans, Other Pacific Islanders. If you consider yourself to be a member of the visible minority population or Anglo-Saxon, I would appreciate your participation in this study. I am incorporating race and gender in this research because there is much diversity amongst women as a group.

The method I am employing in the study is qualitative. I wish to interview you and listen to some of your experiences in the workforce. The interview will be set at a time most convenient for you. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential and your identity anonymous. Once the Master's thesis is completed, you have the option of receiving a summary of the results and an individual meeting to discuss the results. The result will be available in August, 1995.

By providing information and sharing your experiences you will be providing insight into workforce barriers for women. Research in this area is lacking. More research needs to be conducted from the women's point of view. This research will contribute to the body of literature. This research has the potential to inform local agencies and raise awareness in our community about the employment barriers women experience. Ultimately, I hope this research will have some impact on programs and policies regarding employment. Research is a tool that can be used to truly achieve employment equity in the workforce.

I would encourage and would appreciate your participation in this study. If you would like to participate or would like more information about the study prior to participating, please do not hesitate to call me at (519) 888-7971.

Sincerely,

Harjeet Lamba

**APPENDIX E**

**Demographic and Interview Schedules**

## Demographic Schedule

**Residency Data**

1. Country of origin \_\_\_\_\_
2. Length of residency in home country \_\_\_\_\_
3. Mother tongue \_\_\_\_\_
4. # of years in Canada \_\_\_\_\_

**Family information**

5. Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_
6. Age bracket \_\_\_\_\_
7. # of children \_\_\_\_\_
8. Age of children \_\_\_\_\_

**English skills data (only applicable to some participants)**

9. Level of English fluency (if known) \_\_\_\_\_
10. Own perception of English skills  
(e.g. poor, fair, good) \_\_\_\_\_

**Employment and Education data**

11. Education in home country \_\_\_\_\_
12. Education in Canada \_\_\_\_\_
13. Work experience in home country \_\_\_\_\_
14. Work experience in Canada \_\_\_\_\_
15. Title of current position (job description) \_\_\_\_\_
16. Type of job (i.e. seasonal,  
part-time, contract, full-time) \_\_\_\_\_
17. # of years in current position \_\_\_\_\_



Interview Schedule (Adapted depending upon the group of women)

1. What is your educational background? Where did you receive your education (Canada or overseas)? When did you receive education?
2. What are the jobs you have held in your home country and in Canada? (paid, volunteer). How long were you in each position?
4. Questions about periods of unemployment: Why did you leave your job? Was it your choice to stay at home? What were the nature of your duties while you were absent from the workforce (These questions were formed after chronicling employment history of each participant).
5. Questions relating to job search: How did you look for work? How many resumes did you send? Did anyone help you with your job search? Did you get any interviews? How many interviews did you receive? Did you feel qualified for these positions? What were your impressions about the interviews? Did you receive any feedback about the job interview. If so, what was the response?
6. Do you consider yourself as having struggled to reach this stage of your profession? If not, what were some of the advantages to obtaining employment? Why do you think you got the jobs that you did?
7. Do you consider yourself as being underemployed? What job would you like to obtain?
8. What are some of barriers you experienced in the workforce? Why do you think you did not get the jobs you applied for? Why do you think you did not get any interviews or few interviews?
9. Did you take any training programs to help you become more qualified for jobs? If so which training programs? Did the training programs prepare you for the workforce? Explain.
10. Would you like to go for further training or back to school? Explain.
11. Have you ever received encouragement or support by someone who could guide you in the workforce (mentors)?
12. Has anyone advocated on your behalf for work?
13. Have you ever applied for a promotion? If no, why not? If yes, what obstacles did you encounter in your pursuit for receiving a promotion? How many promotions have you received? How long did it take you to get these promotions? Would you consider applying for promotions in the future?
14. How effective do you think employment equity legislation will be for women and visible minorities (after explaining the goals of employment equity).

**APPENDIX F**

**Letter of Consent**

Dear Participant:

This letter is to request your participation in a Master of Social Work research study which I am conducting. This research attempts to seek the perspective of women in two occupational categories. The study endeavours to compare work experiences of visible minority women with work experiences of non-visible minority women. Your insights into the workforce experience could prove useful in developing programs and policies that are more fair and equitable. I am placing the study in the employment equity legislation context. Since September 1994 certain organizations are required to hire and promote visible minorities so that their employment equity goals can be met. Your experiences can help to identify areas in which employers need to focus their attention.

I will interview you at a time most convenient for you. I may request a second interview for any clarifications. I will audio-tape the interview with your consent. The interview will be approximately one to two hours.

During the course of the research you will be asked to share your personal work experiences that have been discriminatory in nature. I understand that experiences of discrimination based on gender, race, class are difficult to share with others. You have the freedom to refuse to answer any questions at any time due to the sensitive nature of the research.

I would like to assure you that information collected from you will be kept confidential and your identity anonymous. I will be transcribing the tapes. Only my thesis supervisors will have access to the tapes. The supervisors will not have access to your name. I will code the tapes so that your identity will not be revealed. Once the tapes are transcribed, they will be erased. The transcribed material will be kept in a safe and secure place where I only have access.

The finished thesis will contain general views and ideas with quoted material to add to the depth of the research. If any material in the final body of the research (quoted or non-quoted) appears so that others may identify you, then the material will not be used in this context. By providing information and sharing your experiences you will be providing insight into workforce barriers for women. If you decide to participate, you have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time, and any information obtained from you will be destroyed after your notification to withdraw. Once the research is finished, I will prepare a summary of the research that will be distributed to participants upon request. If you wish to have a copy of the summary please check below with the consent form. I will also provide the opportunity to meet individually with participants to discuss the results. The summary will be available at the end of the summer 1995.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions or require any clarifications about the research at (519) 888-7971. You may also contact my thesis supervisors at Wilfrid Laurier University, Anne Westhues or Josephine Naidoo at (519) 884-1970.

Sincerely,

Harjeet Lamba

Please retain the letter and return the signed consent form to me.

I would like to volunteer to participate in the research study described in the letter of consent: Barriers which prevent two different occupational groups from finding employment and obtaining a promotion in the workforce. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

Please check below if you would like a copy of the summary of the research.

I would like a copy of the summary of the research \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX G**  
**Ethical Considerations**

### Ethical Considerations

Due to the very sensitive nature of the study, precautions were taken so that the identity of the participants would not be revealed. Consent to participate in the study was obtained. Participants had the option of withdrawing from the study at any point. They had the option of being tape recorded. The transcribed material was coded to protect the identity of the participants. The information provided was kept strictly confidential. In the findings section, I grouped categories together so that their precise demographical, educational, and employment information were not revealing. General themes and categories were derived from the data and the identity of the participants was not disclosed in the findings section. I offered to provide participants with a summary of the results once the study is completed so that they have the opportunity to read the outcomes.