

***Examining Systemic and Individual  
Barriers Experienced  
by Visible Minority Social Workers  
in Mainstream Social Service Agencies***

**A Community Project**



**Quantitative Report**  
**(Appendix B of Project Research Report)**

©

By

Kelly Tran

June Ying Yee, Ryerson University

Helen Wong, Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre

Axelle Janczur, Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre

Funded by

Department of Canadian Heritage

Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Ryerson University, Faculty of Community Services

**June 2006**

Without the financial support of the Department of Canadian Heritage,  
the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, this research study  
would not have been possible.

Further, we wish to acknowledge Ryerson University, Faculty of Community Services  
which provided matched funds for faculty release time thereby demonstrating  
how academic institutions support community based, participatory research  
that can lead to systemic change.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Profile of Social Workers – Census Data.....	2
What You Should know about This Survey.....	3
What the Respondents Revealed – A Demographic Report.....	5
Employment Patterns.....	7
Perspectives on Foreign Credentials Recognition .....	9
The Importance Held for Canadian Education Credentials.....	11
Assessing Canadian Work Experience.....	13
Communication Skills in the Hiring Process.....	16
Other Qualifications Required.....	18
Diversity in the Workplace .....	19
Screening Process.....	21
Barriers to Employment or Promotion of Visible Minorities .....	22
The Role of Regulatory Bodies .....	24
Conclusion.....	25
Reference .....	27

# **Examining Systemic and Individual Barriers of Visible Minority Social Workers in Mainstream Social Service Agencies: A Community Project**

## **A Profile of Social Workers – Census Data**

According to data from the 2001 Census of Population (Statistics Canada, 2003), there are an estimated 49,000 workers in the social work occupation in Canada. This profession is a female-dominated one, 4 in 5 social workers across the country are women. In 2000, the average employment income of a social worker in Canada was \$36,351, about \$5,000 higher than the average employment income of the general population age 15 years and over.

In the Toronto area, the number of social workers is estimated to be roughly 7,300. About 4 in 10 Toronto social workers are immigrants, most of them having lived in Canada for more than 20 years. In comparison, the overall proportion of foreign-born in Toronto, was 44% in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2003).

In 2001, 37% of Toronto's population was made up of visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2003). In some municipalities such as Markham, Richmond Hill, Mississauga and Brampton, visible minorities made up an even larger proportion of the population (Statistics Canada, 2003). In correlation with the diverse population of Toronto, visible minorities made up nearly one-third (31%) of those in the social work occupation. Census data reveal that 1 in 10 (11%) social workers is Black. Chinese and South Asian social workers each make up 6% of all social workers in Toronto in 2001.

The diverse workforce can be a reflection of the diverse community from which to draw a pool of social workers. It can also be a result of the desire of some who self-select to enter into the profession in order to serve the broader community. The diverse workforce is a growing reality, especially in Canada's largest city. However, within this diversity, there is a need to address issues of equity, access, promotion, recruitment and recognition of foreign qualifications.

### **What You Should Know about this Survey**

This survey will provide benchmark data on the issues surrounding access and promotion of visible minority social workers in Toronto. It provides key information on the opinions and viewpoints of a sample of social workers in this city. In addition, it provides information on the viewpoints of employers on the same issues. By comparing the two datasets, it is possible to examine the issues from both perspectives of the two key players; the worker and the employer.

The survey is a self-administered questionnaire. Respondents were contacted and encouraged to fill out the questionnaire and return it to the research team, but their participation was voluntary. Respondents are recruited from a number of different sources, including an existing network of internationally trained social workers, recent graduates from a university in Toronto and a posting on relevant websites, such as Charity Village. The pool of social work employers was drawn from a network of people who provided contact information for mainstream organizations. Mainstream

organizations which dealt specifically with a subpopulation, i.e. an ethnic community were not contacted.

It is inconclusive to determine the actual sample frame due<sup>1</sup> to the fact that the questionnaire was posted on a webpage with an unknown number of viewers. The number of surveys mailed out to social workers is estimated to be 300. The steering committee members provided employers' names and contact information as well as other existing contact lists for the 150 employers contacted to participate in this survey. Between August 2004 and January 2005, 37 social worker surveys were returned and 21 employer surveys were returned.

Due to the nature of the sample selection, this survey is not intended to be representative of the entire population of social workers and employers in Toronto. The social workers and employers who were contacted were not done so randomly. Not every social worker or employer in the Toronto area had an equal chance of being contacted to participate in the survey. Many could have been excluded from the lists because the lists are generated from networks and other contacts.

The survey results represent only the views of those who responded. Characteristics and opinions of those who responded and those who did not respond may be different. Thus, the data reveal only the opinions and experiences of those who took the time to respond to the questionnaire. A generalization to the entire population of social workers or employers in Toronto is not possible due to the survey design.

---

<sup>1</sup> A sample frame is a list from which respondents may be selected to be part of a sample.

Two key figures in the labour market are the employer and the employee. Looking at the same issues from two different perspectives allows for a comprehensive view of the factors that come into play in the access and promotion of visible minority social workers. For the most part, the survey posed the same type of question to each group. The question wording was slightly modified to reflect the specific group, but the core issue was addressed to both social workers and employers. This survey is valuable in the sense that the information collected will reveal the issues from both perspectives and may dispel myths or beliefs that one group has about the other. The information contained in the survey is intended to bridge the gap between perceptions and experiences of social workers and employers.

### **What the Respondents Revealed – A Demographic Report**

The social work profession is a female-dominated occupation. The respondents to this survey were no different. Of the 37 social workers who participated, 70% are women. Similarly, 67% of employers are women.

Self-identified visible minorities made up the majority of social workers – 86% reported that they are a visible minority. Among employers, the proportion was 38%.

Internationally trained social workers, especially visible social workers, were the target population, so it is likely that the high proportion of visible minority social workers is a reflection of the number of social workers selected to participate.

A part of the survey asked respondents to identify their ethnicity by picking from a list of grouped ethnic origins which also provided examples of detailed ethnic origins.

Respondents were asked to mark all ethnicities that applied to them. Most reported only one ethnicity, nearly three-quarters of social workers and 57% of employers. The most frequently reported ethnicity among social workers was South Asian (28%) either as their only ethnicity or that it was one of their ethnic origins. This was followed by an equal proportion who reported Caribbean or East and Southeast Asian (24%). British Isles origins, which included English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, or other British origins were reported by almost half (48%) of employers.

About 7 in 10 social workers were born outside of Canada. Conversely, 7 in 10 employers were born inside Canada. Just over one half of social workers who responded stated that their primary language was English, while more than four-fifths of employers who responded used English as their primary language.

In terms of education, the majority of employers had a Master's Degree (81%).

This is double the proportion of social workers with Master's Degrees (41%). However, a higher proportion of social workers reported having a PhD than employers, 16% vs. 5%. Most of the employers were educated in Canada (81%) while the proportion of social workers educated in Canada was 69%. Of the 37 social workers who participated in the survey, 41% of them had foreign education. Among the bachelor's degree holders, nearly two-thirds of the social workers with a bachelor's or a Master's degree obtained their

education in Canada. Foreign educated social workers came from as far away as India and the Philippines.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of survey respondents

	<b>Social worker</b>	<b>Employer</b>
	N = 37	N = 21
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	30%	33%
Female	70%	67%
<b>Age groups</b>		
21-25 years	19%	0%
26-30 years	11%	0%
31-35 years	16%	0%
36-40 years	19%	14%
41-45 years	19%	24%
46-50 years	5%	10%
51-55 years	5%	38%
56-60 years	3%	14%
Unknown	3%	0%
<b>Self-identified visible minority</b>		
Yes	86%	38%
No	11%	62%
not stated	3%	0%
<b>Place of birth</b>		
Canada	24%	67%
Outside Canada	68%	29%
Unknown	8%	5%
<b>Primary language is English</b>		
Yes	54%	86%
No	46%	14%
<b>Highest level of education</b>		
Bachelor	43%	14%
Masters	41%	81%
PhD	16%	5%
<b>Place where education attained</b>		
Canada	59%	81%
Outside Canada	41%	10%
not stated	0%	10%

## Employment Patterns

Among the 37 social workers in the survey, 59% were employed, 30% said they were unemployed and 8% reported to be underemployed. Among those who were either

employed or underemployed, 48% had been at their job for less than one year. Just under one half (48%) of the employed or underemployed social workers reported that it took them up to five months to find their current job.

The survey asked respondents to identify the nature of their work, whether it was permanent, full-time, part-time or contract. Respondents were asked to mark all that applied to their current work situation. One in 4 employed or underemployed social worker indicated that they were working in a full-time job, either alone or in combination with another class of worker response, for example, full-time employment only or permanent, full-time employment. Similarly, 1 in 4 respondents indicated that they had part-time employment, either alone or in combination with another response, for example, part-time or part-time – contract employment.

Among the unemployed, 45% have been looking for work for the past 5 months and 27% said that they had been looking for work for the past 6 to 12 months. Self-identified visible minorities represented a large share of the unemployed respondents – ten out of the eleven (91%) of unemployed social workers are visible minority. In addition, about half of the unemployed were Canadianeducated. It should be noted that this data draws from a very small sample size and therefore may not be a true reflection of the situation of all unemployed social workers. However, this benchmark data does paint a picture of the situation of some social workers in this city.

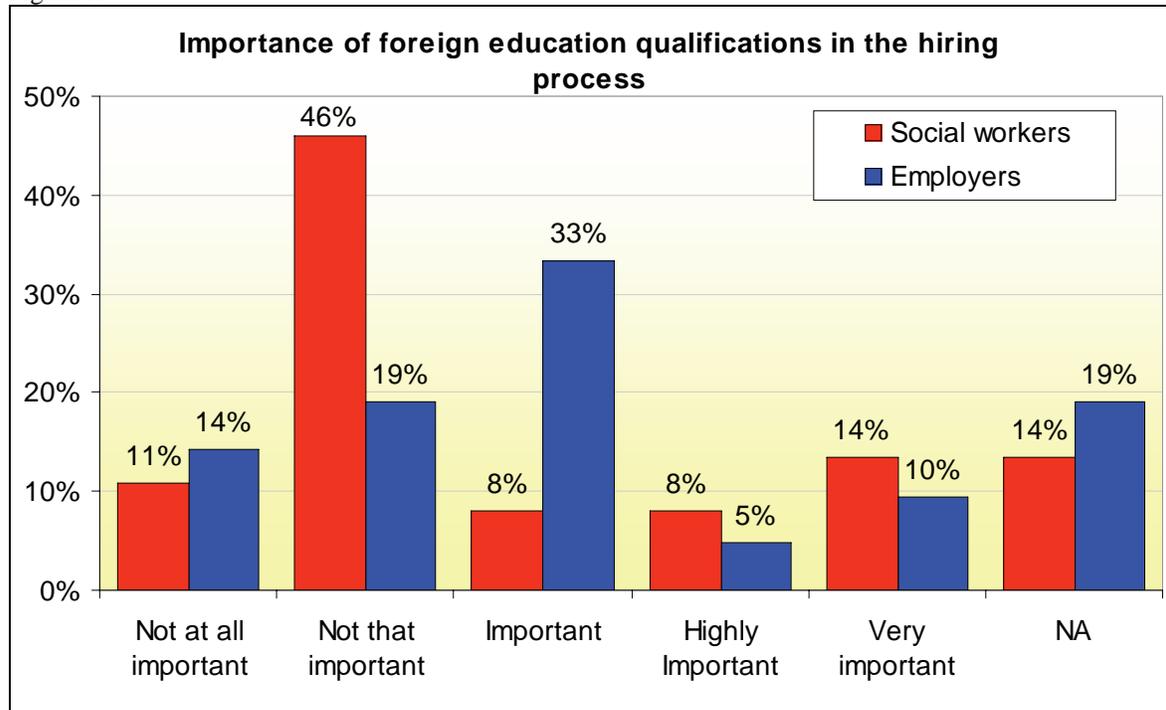
## **Perspectives on Foreign Credentials Recognition**

The survey asked both employers and social workers to assess the importance of a number of different components of foreign education or qualifications in the hiring process. The scale of five choices ranges from “not at all important” to “very important”. The same questions and scale were asked of employers and social workers.

In looking at the importance of foreign education qualifications in the hiring process, the majority of social workers (whether employed, underemployed or unemployed) indicated that they believed employers did not place much importance on foreign education qualifications. More than half of social workers (57%) said that it was either not at all important or not that important. In contrast, one-third (33%) of employers responding said it was not at all or not that important.

On the other end of the spectrum, about one-quarter (24%) of social workers responding believed that it was highly or very important in how employers assess foreign education qualifications, whereas, 15% of employers indicated the same level of importance. The majority of employers (80%) believed that internationally educated and trained social workers are equally qualified when hired into a job position.

Figure 1.



Most social workers further indicated that they believed employers prefer Canadian experience or qualifications over foreign qualifications. However, there were respondents who indicated that they believed employers preferred Canadian over foreign qualifications who answered “not at all important” as well as “very important”. It would appear that there was some confusion as to the wording of this question on the part of social workers.

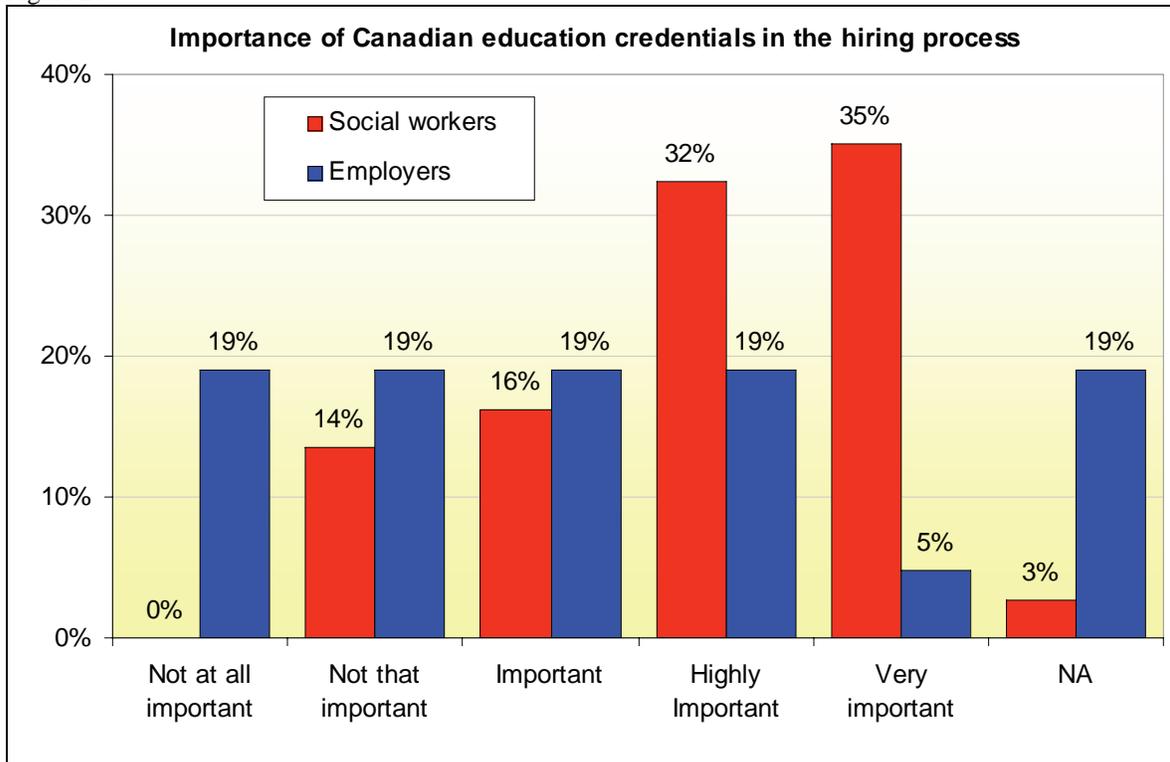
Employers who elaborated on their answer tended to indicate that as long as the foreign education was assessed or evaluated and was considered equivalent to Canadian qualifications, then it does not matter where the education was obtained. Many employers indicated that postsecondary education was a requirement in the hiring process, but whether or not that education was obtained in Canada or elsewhere was not relevant.

Responses to this question may be influenced by a number of factors, including the question wording itself. For social workers, the question was posed “In your opinion, how do employers assess foreign education qualifications in the hiring process?” whereas, for employers, it was worded “for you as an employer, how important are foreign education qualifications in the hiring process?” The slightly different wording may have affected the answers.

### **The Importance Held for Canadian Education Credentials**

Many social workers believe that employers place more value on education obtained in Canada than abroad. Two-thirds of social workers responding said that their opinion was that employers assessed Canadian education credentials as highly important or very important. Three in 10 social workers said that it was not that important or important. No social worker believed that Canadian education was not at all important to employers. Employers were divided on the importance of Canadian education credentials. It was fairly evenly distributed in answers. An equal proportion (19%) said that Canadian education credentials were either “not at all important”, “not that important”, “important” or “highly important”. Just 5% (or one respondent) said that it was very important.

Figure 2.



Some social workers indicated that they believed employers placed a greater premium on Canadian education than foreign education. Some felt that employers believed that Canadian education is better or above education from another country – with the exception of the U.S. or Britain. Some felt that Canadian education provided students with greater knowledge of Canadian issues, systems or structures, thus making for a more “employable” candidate. Some social workers who participated in this survey believed that employers discriminated against those with foreign education qualifications.

Employers who expanded on their answer often indicated that education was a necessary requirement for candidates and as long as the education was deemed to be equivalent to Canadian education, then it did not matter to their hiring process where the education was

obtained. Other employers said that it was work experience and relevant skills rather than education that played a more important role in their hiring process.

### **Assessing Canadian Work Experience**

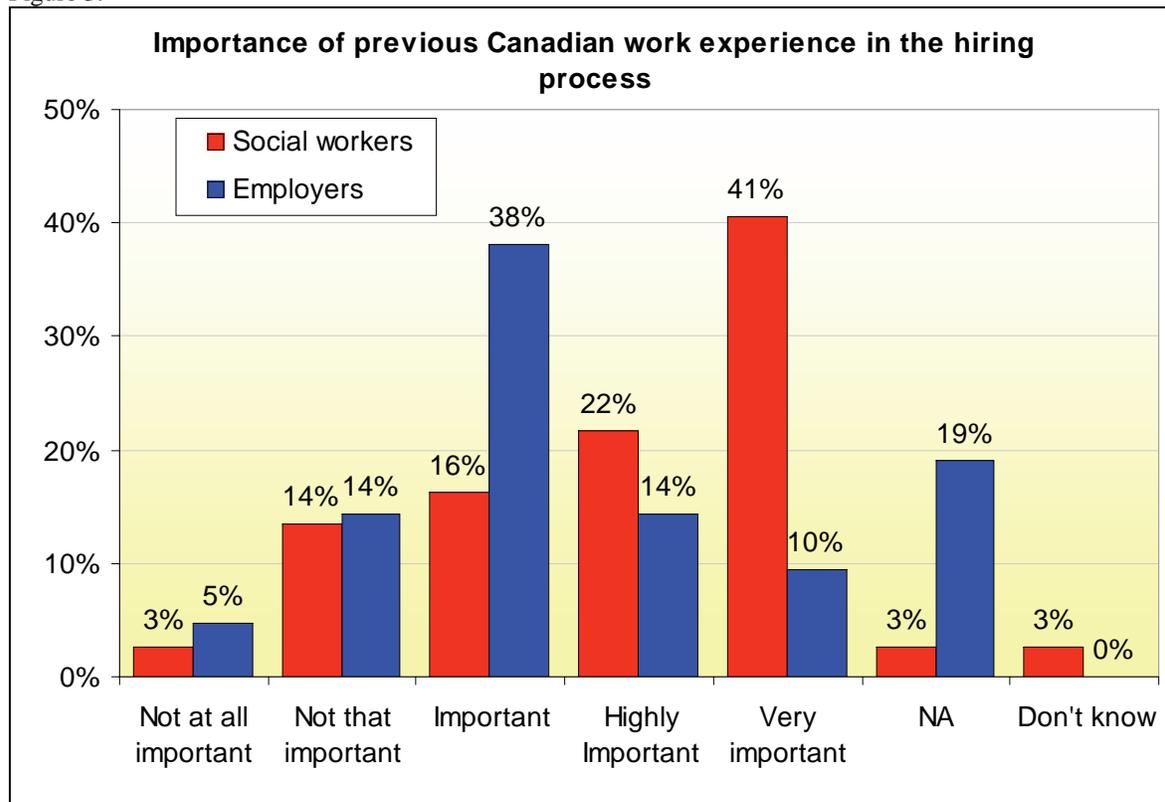
Education is an important requirement in any employer's hiring process, however, previous work experience is also an important asset in any potential candidate. Among immigrants, it is likely that many would have foreign work experience before coming to Canada. Whether or not this work experience is recognized is also an issue. It is understandable that immigrants with foreign work experience would want to come to Canada and work in the same field as their pre-migration occupation. No less, many would want to work in similar positions. The decision to migrate is often predicated upon making a better life for themselves in a new country, including finding gainful employment. However, for employers, it appears that there are some difficulties with recognizing foreign work experience, for example, employers may have problems with contacting former employers in other countries, or the nature of the work done in other countries is not familiar to employers in Canada.

The survey asked both social workers and employers to state the level of importance of previous Canadian work experience in the hiring process. A large proportion (63%) of social workers indicated that it was either highly important or very important. In fact, when social workers were asked to rank what they believed to be barriers to employment, a large proportion (60%) ranked Canadian work experience as the most important barrier.

In contrast, 24% of employers said that Canadian work experience was highly important or very important.

Many employers felt that previous Canadian work experience was important (38%) or not that important (14%). One-third of social workers felt that employers assessed previous Canadian work experience as either “not at all important”, “not important”, or “important”.

Figure 3.



While some social workers indicated that it was important for employers to assess Canadian work experience in the hiring process, they also felt that employers disqualified foreign work experience on the basis that Canadian experience was superior. Some social

workers felt that Canadian employers did not have a sense of the work done outside of Canada and place too much emphasis on local experience or used the requirement of Canadian work experience as a basis for discriminating against foreign workers. Other social workers indicated that Canadian work experience was important for employers to assess because it demonstrated that social workers understand or are aware of local issues, systems, standards and practices.

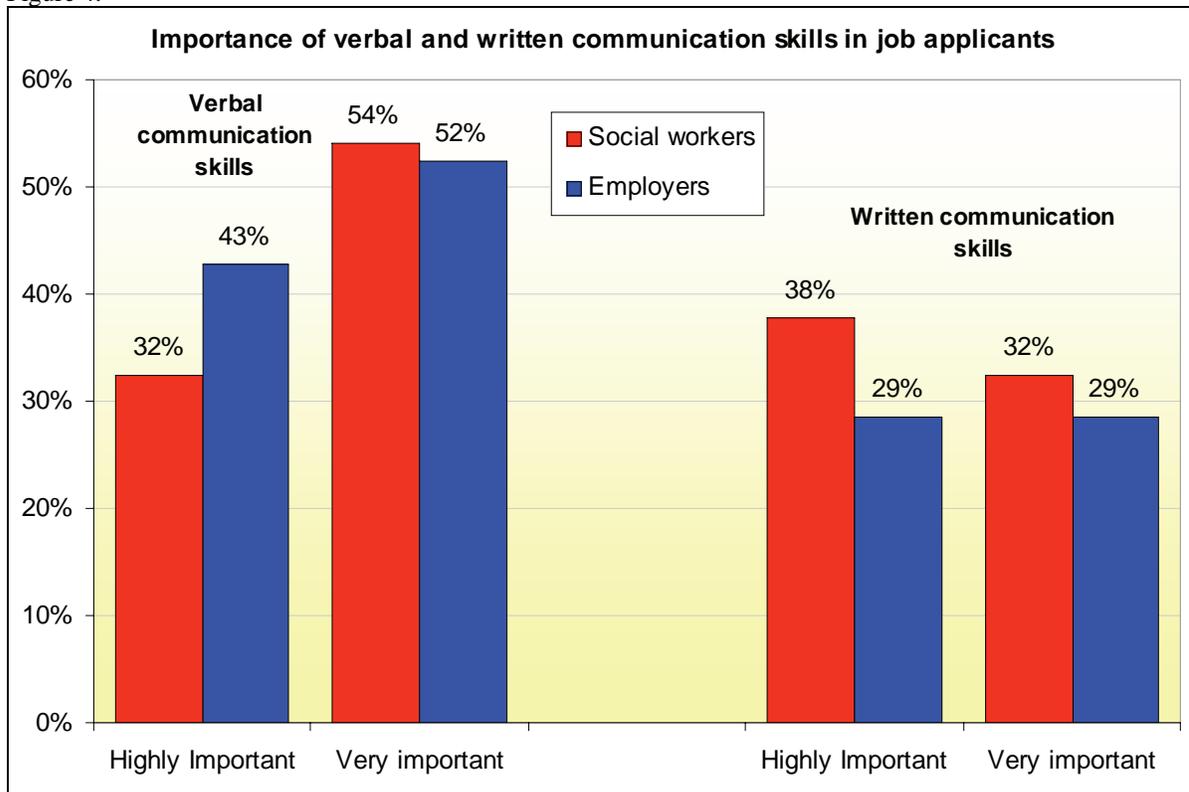
Employers elaborated on the issue of Canadian experience by indicating that it was important for social workers to be familiar with how the Canadian system works, that a theory-based knowledge was not sufficient, workers needed to have an understanding of the Canadian setting because in large part, the workers would be serving clients in Canada and dealing with the Canadian system. One employer said that it would be difficult to case manage or advocate if the social worker has less experience with the Canadian system than the clients do.

Employers who did not respond that Canadian experience was highly important or very important tended to indicate that it was not the Canadian experience per se that was important to them, but the knowledge and understanding of Canadian context or systems that was important. Some employers said that Canadian experience was only required for certain jobs. In positions that do not specifically require Canadian experience, the skills may be transferable, regardless of the place of development. In other words, what is relevant is the actual experience, rather than the place where the candidate obtained this experience.

## Communication Skills in the Hiring Process

Both social workers and employers agreed that it was either highly important or very important for job applicants to have verbal and written communication skills. In fact, 86% of social workers and virtually all (95%) employers said that verbal communication skills were highly important or very important. Similarly, 7 in 10 social workers believed that employers assess written communication skills highly, or very importantly. The comparable proportion among employers was 6 in 10.

Figure 4.



Most social workers agreed that verbal communication skills are crucial in the workplace, regardless of occupation. They believed that employees must be able to communicate

with their colleagues, management as well as clients. A few of the social workers who responded believed that employers used language skills as a screening tool in the hiring process, and that employers were able to assess language skills during the interview. Others felt that knowledge of another language is important in the workplace as it would assist in serving clients who may not be able to converse in English. In addition, some social workers felt that there was an onus on employers to provide additional language training or language support to their employees.

On the whole, the employers who responded agreed with social workers that verbal communication skills are critical. They stated that it was a necessary requirement in order to serve clients. One employer indicated, “Social work is all about communication. The top priority is communicating with the clients, so verbal communication in the language of the service (i.e. English or Mandarin or Portuguese) is the top priority.

Communication in English is the second priority.” In fact, when employers were asked to rank in order of importance the barriers to employment for Canadian and internationally educated social workers; proficiency of the English language was consistently ranked among the top three most important barriers.

In terms of written communication skills, both social workers and employers felt that written communication skills are important in doing the job due to some of the responsibilities involved, such as report writing, briefing notes, documentation, written proposals or filling out forms. A few respondents in both groups felt that it depended on the job, because some social work jobs require more administrative or office-related

duties, thus necessitating a good command of writing skills, while other jobs may not require as much writing.

### **Other Qualifications Required**

An open-ended question was posed to both social workers and employers, asking them to identify what other qualifications employers find important to a social work job position.

Answers from employers ranged from requiring employees to have a broad understanding of guiding principles (i.e. community development principles or anti-oppressive perspectives) to having previous experience dealing with certain groups or communities. Other specific skills mentioned by employers included listening skills, knowledge of a non-official language, problem-solving skills, multi-tasking and crisis prevention/intervention skills.

In terms of what social workers believed employers found to be important qualifications in the social work job position, many social workers stated that they believed employers saw work experience, especially from Canada, as an important qualification. Specific qualifications that social workers believed employers looked for included computer skills and a driver's licence. Some social workers listed personal suitability skills such as reliability, punctuality, organizational skills or empathy.

Both groups agreed that experience is an important part of the social work position. Social workers maintained that Canadian work experience was highly valued by employers. The answers to this question mirrored the answers to the question posed on

how they believe employers assess the importance of Canadian work experience. For employers, many stated that previous relevant experience was important; they did not specify whether this experience had to be from Canada. However, some of the experience that employers said was important, such as working with specific groups or communities, is based in Canada. While employers did not explicitly state that Canadian experience was important, it is assumed that the specific experience required would come from Canada.

### **Diversity in the Workplace**

Access to job postings may be a barrier to employment for those who are not able to get it. If positions are posted internally, then a pool of candidates from outside the organization are shut out of the process. Similarly, if positions are advertised through word of mouth, then those without the networks or contacts are not included in the selection process.

In order to attract a wide variety of job applicants, employers must use different methods to post job openings, such as using employment-oriented websites or post in mainstream, alternative or ethnic newspapers. However, one employer stated that the response rate from job postings in ethnic media have been low in the past, perhaps due to the audience that the ethnic media tends to reach – an older audience, rather than younger people who may be in the market for a job. Other employers state that budget constraints restrict their recruitment process and therefore, they mainly use internal postings or word of mouth.

Social workers felt that employers should post job openings in a number of different sources such as the ethnic media, sending out postings to immigrant-serving agencies or community associations. A number of social workers stated that while employers may post job openings, they question whether or not they are able to get the job. They felt that job openings may be widely available, but the actual position or the screening process is a barrier to them. They felt that the experience or job requirements in the job posting itself limits their chances of being hired due to the fact that employers required specific skills, qualifications or Canadian experience.

In terms of diversity in the workplace, some social workers stated that they believed employers only want a minimal level of diversity, for example, employers hire only a few minorities in their organization or hire visible minorities as tokenism. Some social workers expressed that while they believe employers may have a diverse workforce, they question whether minorities get promoted or state that minorities are mainly in the front-line or lower paying positions. A few social workers believed that the workforce was diverse because it is a reflection of the larger population; for example, Toronto is a diverse city with many different ethnic groups, therefore, in order to serve the diverse clientele, it is necessary to have a diverse workforce.

Employers felt that hiring in the area of diversity was important to address the needs of the diverse client base. One employer said that while it was their goal to hire a diverse workforce, it was difficult for them to find qualified workers from certain ethnic communities. It was difficult to reflect in their workforce the entire population due to the

heterogeneity of the community. The dilemma of wanting to reflect the diversity of the community while also trying to recruit qualified workers was a challenge for them.

Some employers indicated that there was no formal strategy for hiring in the area of diversity, while others had implemented employment equity practices and have been working towards their targets. A few employers indicated that the business or profit motive was a driving force of the hiring strategy and therefore, there was no business case for hiring in the area of diversity or it was an organizational burden done only when they were obligated to do so. Some employers observed that they did not see a diverse workforce in management positions or decision-making positions in their organization, a similar observation made by some social workers.

### **Screening Process**

Different employers may use different tools to screen potential candidates once applications or resumes have been received. There appears to be a lack of understanding of the screening process that employers use on the part of social workers. Many social workers indicated that they did not know how employers assess candidates, that it would greatly assist them in finding employment if they did know the process. Although some who expressed an opinion stated that it was based on experience and qualifications, they believed that the process begins with a review of the resume and cover letter. Some respondents believed that race played a role in the screening process, for example, one respondent believed that employers try to determine the race of the person by looking at names, places of prior employment or previous work with specific ethnic communities.

Similarly, another social worker stated that they believed employers look at the person's name, country of origin, skin colour, language barrier and Canadian qualifications to guide their hiring process.

Employers on the other hand, indicated that skills and experience were the main guiding factors in the screening process. A number of employers who responded said they assessed resumes according to whether or not candidates met the requirements (i.e. education, experience, skills) in the job postings. Most employers emphasized that they assessed candidates based on the skills listed in the resume and whether or not the skills or experience were in accordance with the skills required for the position. Race or skin colour was not mentioned as a factor in the screening process, however, as it is a sensitive issue and many do not want to appear to be biased or have discriminatory practices, it is to be expected that most or all would not indicate such a thing in a survey.

### **Barriers to Employment or Promotion of Visible Minorities**

Some employers noted that one of the barriers to the hiring of visible minorities is their ability to recognize foreign education, training or experience. Because it is difficult to assess qualifications from countries or education systems that may be vastly different than the Canadian system, the challenge for employers is to find a way to recognize these credentials and make them equivalent to Canadian standards. Other employers acknowledged that systemic racism or discrimination might play a role.

A large proportion of the social workers who participated in the survey indicated that they believed racism or discrimination is a barrier. Some believed that internationally trained social workers with different accents or foreign training may be treated differently in the workplace. Social workers consistently believed that while some employers may hire minorities, they do not promote minorities, or minorities are under-represented in management positions.

Social workers recommended a variety of different options for addressing the barriers to employment or promotion of visible minorities. Among the most frequently cited recommendation was simply having an employer provide opportunities for minorities or just giving minorities a chance. That is to say, trying to recruit from a larger pool of candidates with diverse backgrounds, providing additional training, creating networks of minority groups and promoting anti-racism or promoting diversity and cultural awareness in the workplace. Some social workers believed that implementing formal policies to hire minority social workers would assist in removing barriers. Social workers believed that the promotion process should be open and transparent, based on seniority or qualifications.

Employers believed that moving away from a word-of-mouth recruitment process to one which minorities have access to would be a strategy to assist visible minorities. Thus, placing job postings in more accessible places such as the Internet or doing outreach to internationally trained social workers would assist minorities in gaining employment. Having a transparent hiring practice could ensure that visible minorities have a chance.

Some employers said that providing training and taking risks would also assist minorities in the workplace. Formal policies that require the hiring of minorities is implemented as practice at some agencies. These policies may open the door for more minorities in the workplace.

### **The Role of Regulatory Bodies**

Regulatory bodies such as the Ontario Association of Social Workers (OASW) or the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW) can play an important role in assisting visible minorities, especially those who are internationally trained. Social workers suggested that they could advocate on their behalf, that they could create awareness among employers in the role that visible minorities can play in the workplace. Specifically for internationally trained social workers, they suggest that the OASW could assist with access to information about credentials recognition, accreditation and re-training.

Employers believed that social workers who belonged to the OASW showed dedication to the profession, that it provided valuable networks for social workers. However, there were a few employers who said that they did not know of the benefits for potential social work employees to be a part of the OASW, or that there was no direct benefit to the position that they were hiring for. In terms of membership with the OCSWSSW, the potential employees would be able to call themselves “social workers”. Membership with the OCSWSSW was a requirement for some positions, but not all positions.

## **Conclusion**

It is evident that the issues around access to employment, hiring practices, promotion and diversity in the workplace are complex. It is understood that immigrants are making up an increasing proportion of the workforce and that recent immigrants are coming from countries outside of the traditional European source countries. The general population is becoming more diverse and issues surrounding diversity in the workplace are difficult to ignore.

The social work occupation is one that deals directly with the community and serves clients who have a wide variety of ethnic, religious, economic, social and demographic backgrounds. A workforce profile should ideally reflect the demographic profile of the larger community. However, this continues to be a challenge for many occupations, social work included.

This study was aimed at exploring issues surrounding the barriers to employment access and promotion of visible minorities. It looked at the perspectives of both employers and social workers. The study found that there were differing opinions on the importance of Canadian experience between employers and social workers. Social workers felt that employers placed a high value on Canadian experience over foreign experience, while employers on the whole, indicated that they viewed foreign experience as equal to Canadian qualifications. Social workers appeared to not understand the perspective of employers when it came to the screening process. Many social workers believed that race or ethnicity played a role in the screening process, while the employers tended to

emphasize that skills or qualifications were their deciding factors. Both social workers and employers agreed that communication skills were important in the workplace.

In an attempt to unpack some of the issues that social workers, especially foreign-trained workers, face in the Toronto labour market, the study found that there is still a need for access to information and awareness of opportunities. Social workers need to be aware of the constraints and challenges that employers face when having to recognize foreign training or experience as well as systemic issues such as budget constraints and policies in practice. Employers need to be aware of the challenges that visible minorities face in terms of gaining access to networks, job postings, information and assistance in finding and maintaining gainful employment. This study reveals that there are some disconnects in terms of what social workers believe employers are after and what employers feel they are looking for in hiring visible minorities. By informing both parties of these issues from the other's perspective, it is hoped that this survey will bridge the gap and assist in the promotion of an equitable, diverse and dynamic workplace.

## Reference

Statistics Canada. 2003. *Canada's ethnocultural portrait: The changing mosaic*. Ottawa, Ontario: Minister of Industry. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 96F0030XIE2001008. Retrieved July 25, 2005  
(<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/etoimm/pdf/96F0030XIE2001008.pdf>)