

SUPPORT & INCLUSION FOR SUCCESS:

Identifying the needs of
racialized immigrants in
Durham Region

This qualitative research seeks to identify the needs of racialized immigrants in Durham Region, determine availability, appropriateness and awareness of services that meet their needs and identify best practices in supporting their identified needs to facilitate successful integration in the region.

ABSTRACT

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Thank you to the service providers who shared their experiences and observations working with the immigrant population. I thank you for your time and interest to inform the creation of a better space for immigrants to thrive in Durham Region and in Canada generally. I hope this study provides well needed insights and awareness to inform your work with individuals who have crossed oceans and countries to call Durham home. I hope this report will inform not just the local government but other levels and sectors to make the change needed.

Special thanks to Trent University where this research started and to Wilfrid Laurier University's Faculty of Social Work where I am now located as a member of faculty. It is my hope that academic institutions will become more immersed into the longstanding issues that so many immigrants and especially racialized immigrants continue to face in Canada, The social justice challenge equity and fairness for racialized immigrants require the commitment from institutions across our society.

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INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH QUESTION, AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This qualitative research seeks to identify the needs of racialized immigrants in Durham Region, determine availability, appropriateness and awareness of services that meet their needs and identify best practices in supporting their identified needs to facilitate successful integration in the region.

Research Question: What are the service needs of racialized immigrants in Durham Region and how are these service needs currently being met?

Project Aim:

- i. Identify the service needs of immigrants in Durham Region who are racialized;
- ii. Determine gaps in service and barriers to meeting their service needs.

Research Objectives:

- (1) investigate the service needs of immigrants who identify as racialized;
- (2) determine availability, appropriateness and awareness of services that meet their needs; and;
- (3) identify best practices in supporting their identified needs to facilitate successful integration of racialized immigrants in the region.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research seeks to determine the service needs of racialized immigrants in Durham Region and determine how their service needs are currently being met. It also seeks to determine availability, appropriateness and awareness of services and best practices to supporting their needs for successful integration in the region. Both racialized participants and individual service providers participated in this research either through virtual one-on-one interviews and/or focus groups. A total of 19 racialized immigrant participants shared their experiences in one-on-one interviews, 5 in focus group and 8 individual service providers shared their experiences in focus groups for this study. Grounded Theory was used to determine generalized patterns of experience and insights about the service needs, availability, awareness and appropriateness of services for racialized immigrants and best practices for supporting their inclusion and success in the region. Patterns that emerged were also noted for recommendations.

Identified service needs included childcare, housing, employment, transportation access to appropriate information and social services and healthcare. Issues of affordability were raised as barriers to accessing many of the service needs identified. Many participants noted the lack of awareness about some of these services and in some cases where services are available they noted the inappropriateness of services to meet their needs. Issues around racism, culturally safe services and spaces, being forced into survival jobs when they have the skills to seek more substantial positions were raised. Many of these findings are similar to the needs identified for other immigrant groups, however, this study provided insight into issues of discrimination and other issues that impact their access to these services.

Both racialized immigrant participants and service providers suggested best practices that include representation of individuals in service provision and other sectors in the region that are not only reflective of the makeup of racialized immigrant groups but also can identify with and better understand their experiences. Racialized participants pointed to their visibility and interest, being heard and attention given to how information is packaged and made available to them as considerations for best practice. Similarly, recommendations include specialized services options instead of the one-size-fits-all approach, safe spaces and overall community safety, opportunities for connection to their communities in the region, appropriate funding and resources, programming, employment opportunities that acknowledge their skills and credentials, affordable childcare and housing and organizational and government accountability. Some participants noted the role that faith-based organizations and churches play in their support in the region and recommends that these organizations should be considered for designated funding and included in services options as well.

BACKGROUND AND REVIEW

Research shows that social support is extremely important in the settlement experiences of immigrants, with positive impact on their health even when faced with systemic challenges. Lack of access to resources, disconnection between policies and programs, and service mandates that are narrowly defined, often interferes with the ability of service providers to meet the needs of newcomer immigrants. This is concerning considering the growing population of immigrants in Canada in general and in particular in smaller regions.

In 2016 alone, immigrants accounted for 24% (153,930 individuals) of the population in Durham region and significant increases are projected in this number for upcoming years (Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, 2021; Durham Immigration and Inclusion, 2020). Immigrants account for up to 75% of the population growth in Canada overall (sources). These numbers are significant considering that immigration accounts for approximately 90% of the growth in Canadian labour force and immigrants are instrumental for Canada to meet its labour demands (Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, 2021; Sullivan, Kathryn, 2016). While various researchers have sought to explore the experiences of immigrants in Canada, Australia, the U.S., and other countries (Arnosó et al., 2022; Hotek & Baker, 2004; Premji & Shakya, 2017; Kosny et al., 2017), gaps still remain in the literature on the service needs of racialized immigrants, and the support that they need to be successfully included in rural communities, especially in Canada.

Outcomes for racialized immigrant experiences in particular, have been compared to other groups such as non-racialized immigrants, racialized citizens, or non-racialized citizens. (Arnosó et al., 2022; Goldring & Joly, 2014; McAlpine et al., 2022); while other research focus solely on their overall experience (George & Chaze, 2009; MacDonnell et al., 2017; Premji & Shakya, 2017). Other research delve into issues to do with employment, health, challenges after migration, youth experiences, and rural contexts of their experiences (Cui, 2019; Jiwani, 2005; Goldring & Joly, 2014; McAlpine et al., 2022). While race, gender and language have been found to create barriers in employment search which increase challenges such as family stressors and financial burdens for immigrant women (Lightman, 2022; Premji, 2014; Premji et al, 2017; Khan & Watson, 2022), little is known about the types of services that are needed to ensure their success.

Among the key priorities identified in Durham Region's Immigration and Inclusion Community Plan for 2020 – 2024, is the interconnection of service providers across

sectors. Identified outcomes in the plan for multiple priorities, include the promotion of settlement related services to newcomers by agencies, organizations and institutions in the region. Since research specific to the service needs of the population in the region is lacking, it is unclear if service providers fully understand the needs of immigrants, let alone to interconnect services to meet these needs. As the number of immigrants in Durham Region and elsewhere in Canada continue to increase, and as the region itself continues to grow, developing a deeper understanding of their needs is a win-win for both immigrants, the region and Canada.

As one of the most vulnerable immigrant groups in Canada, racialized immigrants continue to face insurmountable barriers and challenges and in particular issues of discrimination and oppression (Taylor, 2018; sources). Therefore, identifying and meeting their service needs becomes crucial for them to settle, integrate and contribute successfully to host societies as well as in the community that they choose to call home. Purposeful measures and services need to be available and implemented to ensure that they can be successful.

This research study can inform government policies and funding initiatives, policy makers, service providers, universities and other stakeholders to determine the support needed to promote the successful integration and contribution of immigrants in the region. It can also provide insights to better support racialized international students in academic institutions in the region, many of whom choose to remain in Canada after completing their studies. Findings will also inform future studies on the population both inside and outside the region.

GROUNDING THEORY

This qualitative research draws on Grounding Theory (GT) to explore the concept of service needs among racialized immigrants in Durham to determine whether or not these needs are currently being met. Developed by Strauss and Corbin, GT has taken on different forms and meanings as researchers draw from it in unique ways (Cho & Lee, 2014; Martin et al., 2018). Selected for its flexible, yet rigorous analytic procedures and encouraged use of reflexivity (Charmaz, 2006 and Clarke, 2005), GT supports the development of theories from the interpretation of data that explains research observations (Engward & Davis, 2015; Walsh, et al., 2015). The goal of GT research is to develop a substantive theory, which describes specific types of experiences that can be generalized across more diverse patterns and a formal theory may or may not be the end goal (Cho & Lii, 2014).

Commonalities within the data tell the researcher what is important to focus on (Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009) and constant comparative analysis of both collected and

analyzed data are done during the research process to determine these commonalities (Cho & Lii, 2014). As a methodology, GT uses an inductive approach where data is collected for the purpose of developing theory, rather than testing an already developed theory (Ivey, 2017; Martin et al., 2018; Walsh et al., 2015). This allows researchers to better understand the experiences of research participants, because the experiences can speak for themselves rather than being interpreted - or perhaps misinterpreted - through the lens of existing theory (Charmas, 2006; Martin et al., 2018). Theoretical sampling and comparative analysis - or constant comparison - are two important principles used to guide research using GT (Cho & Lii, 2014; Walsh et al., 2015). Raw data is constantly compared with raw data as well as with analyzed (coded) data (Cho & Lii, 2014; Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009; Walsh et al., 2015). Comparison allows researchers to recognize unique and common qualities within the data, determine if emerging ideas and themes are in line with previous findings, and ultimately develop a theory about the phenomena being studied (Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009; Walsh et al., 2015). Regardless of the approach used in GT, the goal is to recognize codes that emerge from the data, engage in comparison, and determine which codes hold the greatest importance in allowing theory development and generalized patterns of experience (Cho & Lii, 2014; Ghezeljeh & Emami, 2009).

METHOD

Overview:

Data collection was done via zoom using one-on-one interviews and focus groups. The virtual platform was selected due to COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns based on Public Health guidelines. Data was collected over 10.5 months as initial response from racialized participants was very low. Response rate for one-on-one interviews with racialized participants became much higher than response rates for focus groups. Some of the more common reasons that participants mentioned for not wishing to participate in a focus group were that they felt uncomfortable discussing their experience in a group setting.

This is worth noting in data collection for future research with similar populations. The lack of face-to-face interactions to build trust with members of the researched population was also believed to be a factor that hampered the data collection progress as well. Differential access to technology/computers, internet access, hesitation around use of technology among other factors should be considered in future research as well. Response rates were higher among individual service providers out of all participant groups.

The number of participants for each focus group had to be modified to smaller numbers and the number of focus groups increased. In adjusting to zoom

environment it was determined that participants may not have ample time to share their experiences in larger groups on this platform, which may not have been a factor for in person sessions. The researcher was also mindful of the time commitment that participants agreed to and wanted to respect this as much as possible. The bulk of project resources had to be re-directed to recruitment due to pandemic limitations mentioned above.

Overall, over 90 agencies across Durham Region were contacted to participate in the study and/or distribute flyers and refer suitable participants for this study. Multiple virtual platforms were accessed for recruitment including Trent University's website, Metroland-Durham local newspaper and a social media strategy was implemented. Recruitment flyers were circulated widely by email and over 40 online postings (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook etc.,) were made and monitored regularly, inquiries about participation in the project were part of the outreach and recruitment plan. Workshops and information sharing opportunities about the research were completed with – Durham Local Immigration Partnership (DLIP) Committee, CAREA Community Health Centre staff, Durham Region Welcome Centre staff, Durham Community Partners in Diversity (CPD) committee, Service Canada, Ajax-Pickering Toastmasters, Whitby Diversity and Inclusion Committee meeting and other academic and community presentations completed during the recruitment phase of the research.

Data collection:

As noted prior, recruitment and data collection were done via zoom platform due to COVID-19 restrictions. The data collection method used includes one-on-one interviews with racialized immigrant participants and focus groups with racialized immigrant participants and individual service providers respectively. A total of 19 racialized immigrant participants participated in the one-on-one interviews and five participated in focus groups. 8 individual service providers participated in two focus groups. The focus groups for racialized immigrant participants and individual service providers were conducted separately.

One-on-one Interviews = 19 participants

One-on-one semi-structured interviews lasting 30 to 60 minutes conducted with each participant (19 total) who were born outside of Canada and live in Durham Region, identify as a member of a racialized immigrant group. All participants received a token of \$10.00 e-gift card as a thank you for their time.

Focus Groups with racialized immigrants

1 focus group was conducted with five individuals who live in Durham Region and identify as a member of a racialized immigrant group. Focus group lasted 2-

hours via zoom where participants shared their experiences about services and settling in Durham Region. All participants received a token of \$10.00 e-gift card as a thank you for their time.

Focus Groups with individual service providers

2 focus groups were conducted with 8 (2 x 4) individual service providers who work in the service sector in Durham, with at least 1-year experience providing service to immigrants, particularly racialized immigrants in Durham and fluent in English. Focus groups lasted 2-hours via zoom where participants shared their experiences providing service to immigrants in the region. All participants received a token of \$10.00 e-gift card as a thank you for their time.

The research team engaged in reflexivity by writing down thoughts, observations, feelings or other reactions that were elicited while completing their research tasks. This took place during data collection, transcription, and analysis. Memoing was employed in two ways. First, memos were written during the interviews to capture any emotions or reactions that the facilitator experienced during the process. Second, it was used to note any participant reactions that contrasted the regular flow of the conversation. Examples include notes about extended pauses during the conversation or crying. The memos also included notes about what topics were discussed when these reactions took place.

Data Analysis:

Data analysis co-occurred with data collection, in line with GT principles. Members of the research team completed ongoing review of data to pull out themes. The identified themes were then reviewed and discussed as a team to determine recurring themes noted and theoretical sampling for further data collection. This was repeated until data saturation was reached. Line by line substantive coding and constant comparison of emerging themes was then completed. Transcripts were read, and initial thoughts and comments were made in the document using Microsoft word comment feature. Potential themes and subthemes were also noted in the comment section. Transcripts were reviewed in entirety to form a coding manual with a list of potential themes and subthemes that was developed further as each transcript was reviewed. The process was repeated for each transcript in line with GT and code manual updated as new information reveals itself from transcripts review. This allowed the researcher to make the code manual more precise and specific, as well as update the themes and subthemes to account for each transcript. Transcripts for one-on-one interviews and focus groups were coded separately and recurring themes extracted and highlighted based on research question. Themes were then arranged based on research question and research objectives.

FINDINGS

Demographics:

Racialized immigrant participants – one-on-interviews

Participants for the one-on-interview were between 18 – 50 years old, 15 identified as female and 4 as males for a total of nineteen. Participants reported having either a college diploma, 4-year university degree or masters degree or higher and identified backgrounds of African Canadian, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Asian and South Asian with 2 participants opting not to specify their backgrounds. 8 participants held fulltime jobs, 4 had part-time job, 3 were self-employed, 2 reported being unemployed and employment status of 2 participants were unknown. Annual income ranged from \$0 - \$90,000.00 plus annually with majority of participants reported earnings ranging between less than \$20,000.00 to \$50,000.00 annually and 5 participants reported income the higher income range bracket and 2 participants did not state their income. 11 participants reported being married, 5 not married and 2 did not indicate their marital status. 3 participants reported living in Ajax, 1 in Pickering, 9 in Oshawa and 2 in Whitby. 1 participant had moved to Scarborough for better housing options and amenities at the time of the interview and 1 moved to Windsor to purchase a home due to high prices in Durham. 2 participants did not state where in Durham they reside at the time of the interview.

Racialized immigrant participants – Focus group

Participants for this focus group were between 18 – 50 years old, indicated gender identity of 4 females and 1 male. Among the five participants, 1 participant reported having a college diploma, 2 participants with a 4-year university degree and 2 participants with a masters degree or higher. Participants identified backgrounds of African Canadian (4) and Hispanic (1). 3 participants held fulltime jobs, 1 self-employed and 1 reported being unemployed. Annual income ranged from \$0 - \$80,000.00 annually. 3 participants reported being married, 1 not married and 1 did not indicate their marital status. 1 participant reported living in Ajax, 3 in Oshawa and 1 in Whitby.

Individual Service Providers – Focus groups

8 individual service providers from not-for-profit agencies participated in 2 focus groups. Participants were between 35 – 48+ years old. 6 identified as female and 2 male 2 participants reported having a college diploma, 2 indicate having a 4-year university degree and 4 reported having a masters degree or higher. 3 participants identified backgrounds of Euro-Canadian/Caucasian, 2 African Canadian, 1 Hispanic, 1 South Asian and 1 Asian. 4 reported length of employment between 1 to 5 years, 3 5 to 10 years and 1 higher than 10 years. 3 reported managerial positions and 4 reported non-managerial positions and 1 did not specify. Income ranged between \$20,000.00 to

over \$100,000 annually for 5 participants with income for 3 participants unknown. 3 participants indicated that their organizations provided service across Durham Region while 5 indicated specific cities.

DRAFT

THEMES

Many themes emerged from the data, some of which are in line with re-settlement issues and insights noted in other research on immigrant groups (see Ali et al., 2012; Aydemir, 2011; George & Chaze, 2009; Hou & Beiser, 2006; Makwarimba et al., 2013). Diagram 1 outlines themes from one-on-one interviews and focus groups with individual service providers that capture emerging themes that connect to the service needs of racialized immigrants in Durham region.

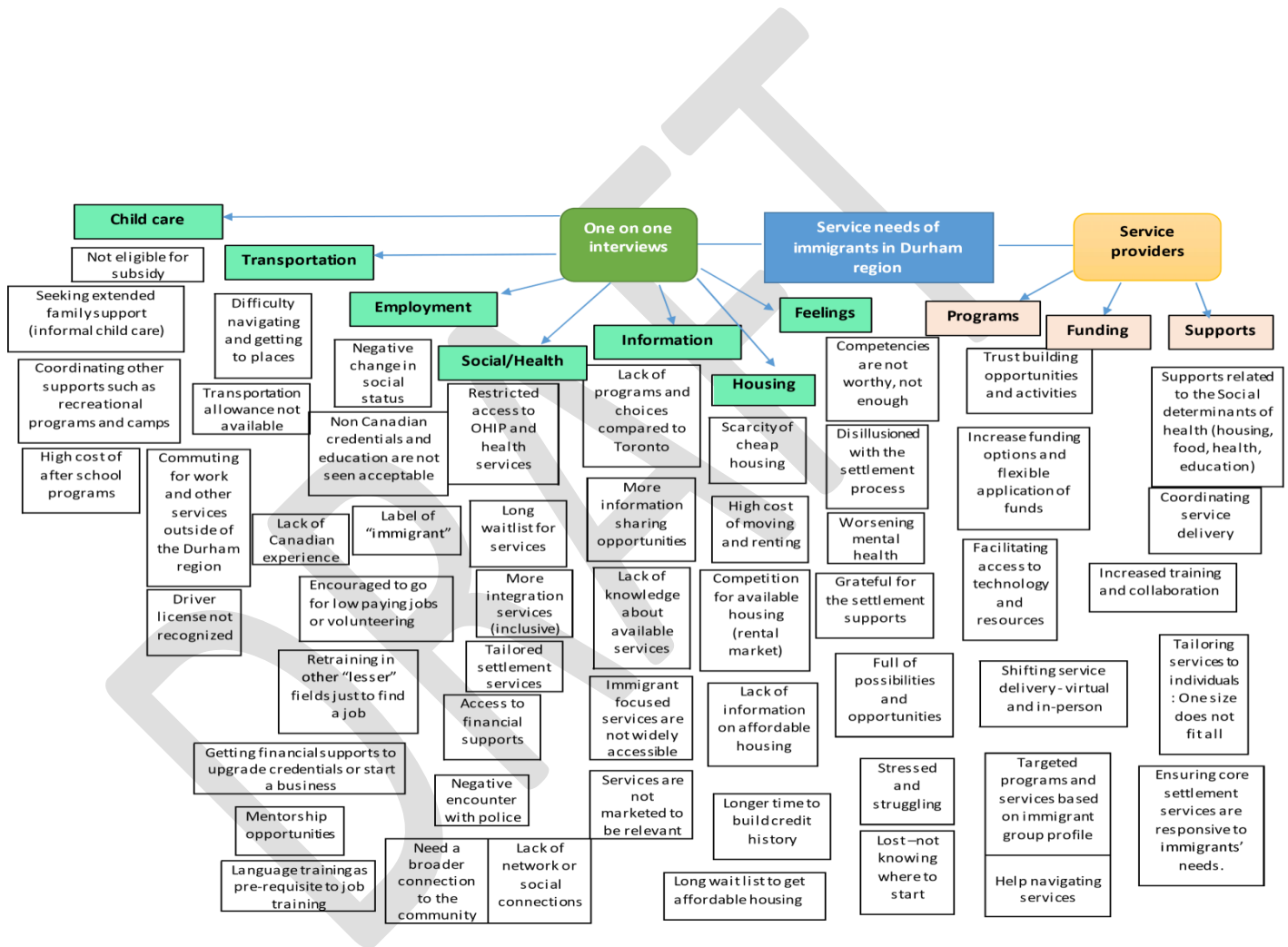
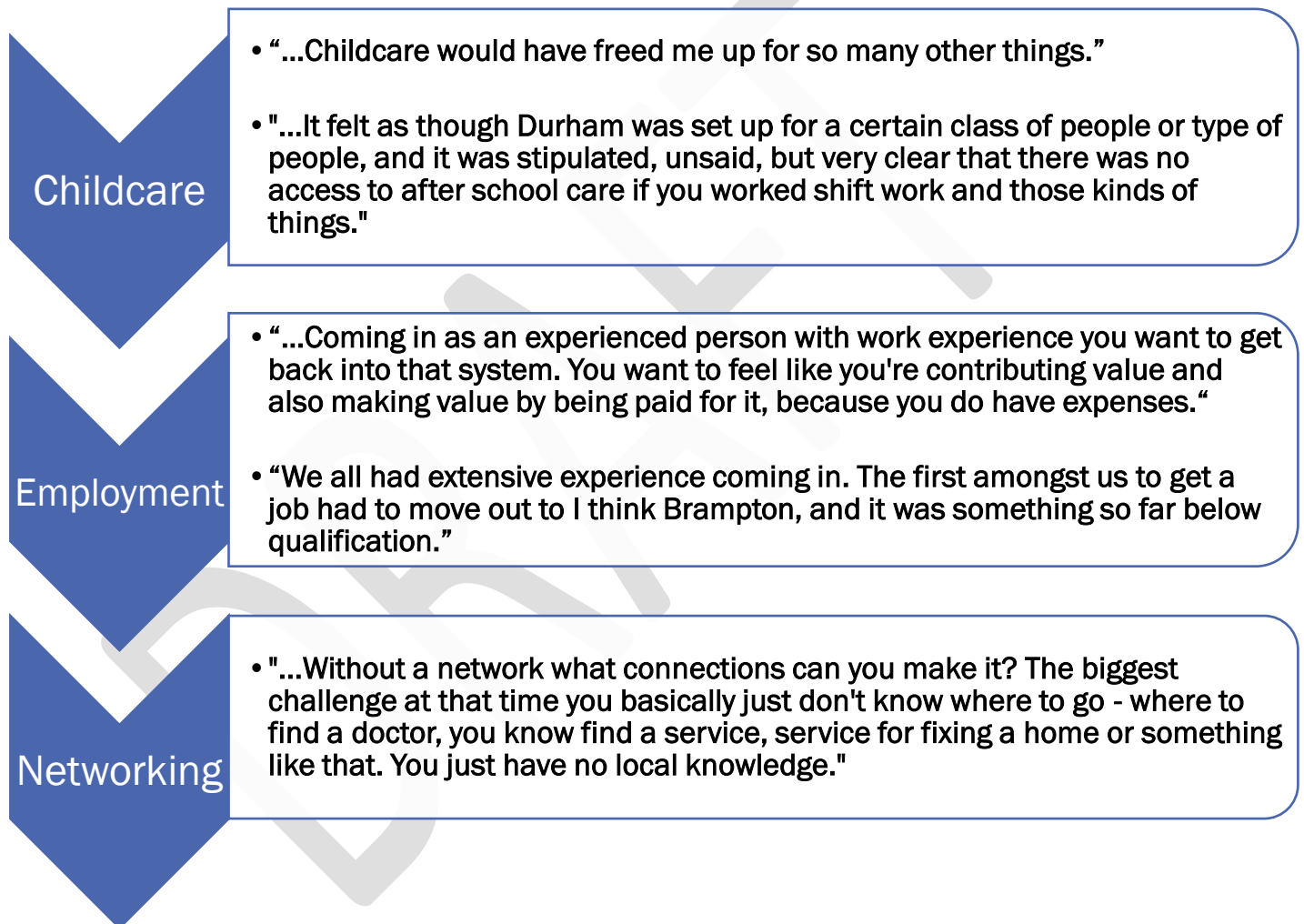


Diagram 1: Broad scope of findings (please zoom diagram to 120+ for clearer view)

The themes highlighted in this section for this report provide a sample of the broader findings across the data collected for the study overall. While many themes began emerging before data collection was completed (see diagram 1), the additional data from focus groups with racialized immigrants (missing from diagram 1) provided more depth and sharper insights into participants experiences. Some of the more common themes were selected for this report.

Service Needs of Racialized immigrants:



Racialized immigrant study participants identified a number of services and gaps, some relating to lack of childcare options especially for young families without extended family in the region/country. Many felt that childcare was a significant need that was unmet in current services and often when available was very expensive and unaffordable. Racialized immigrants agreed that available childcare services were not suitable. Services were found to be unaffordable, in one case, even with the childcare subsidy. Childcare options also did not meet the diverse needs of participants. One

participant noted that available options were not helpful for those working shifts, and another described the lack of flexibility in terms of payment and notice of termination, that prevented them from accessing childcare.

Participants also point to lack of access to employment – “Canadian experience’ and volunteering opportunities instead of paid positions, and lack of opportunities for networking especially in smaller communities in Durham. Common themes also point to issues with housing, transportation, social life and deteriorating health and overall lack of affordability to live in Durham Region that could be addressed if effective service and/or supports were available. Participants also pointed to the need for more racialized service providers in agencies and other sectors in the region.

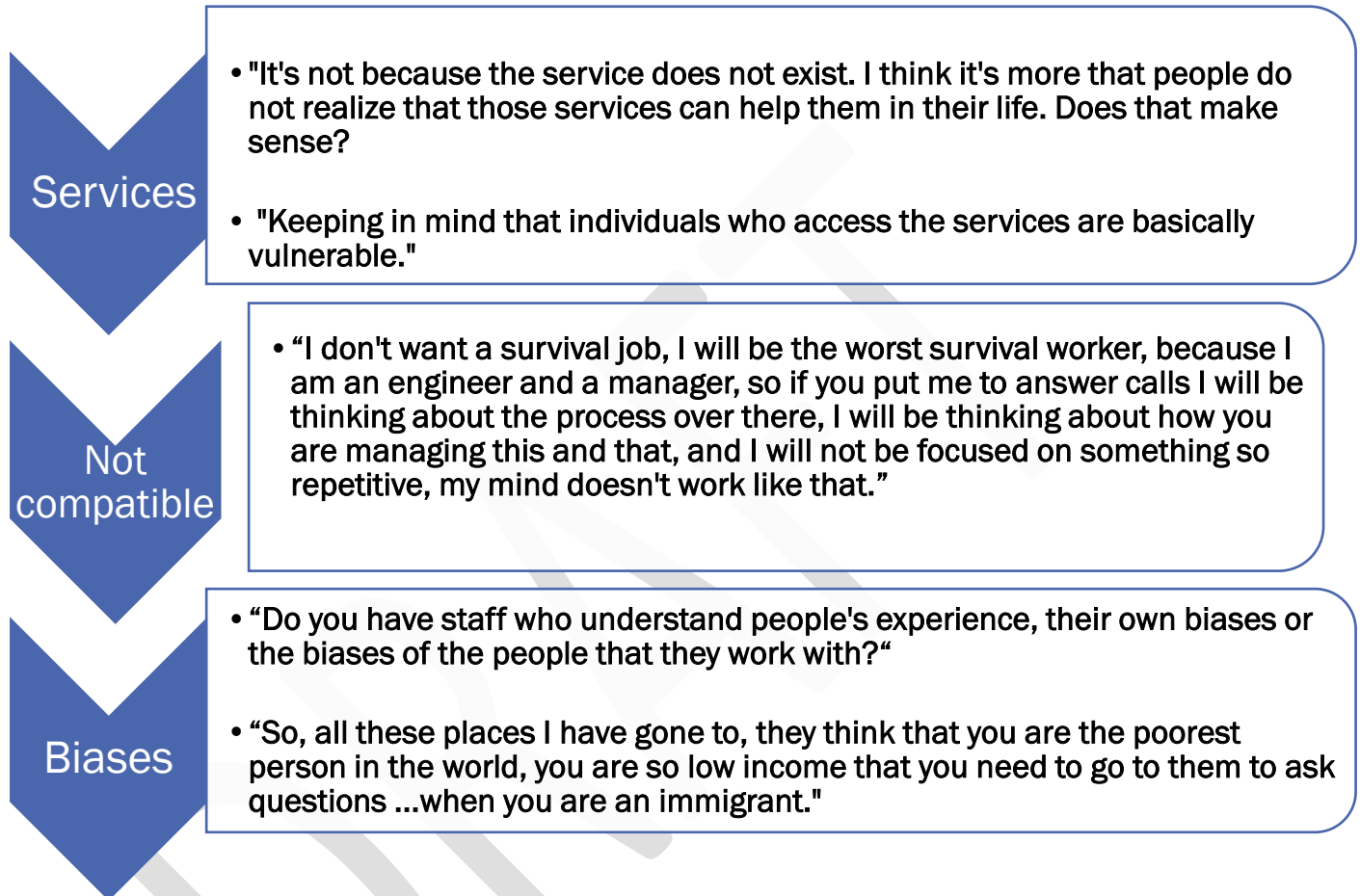
Individual immigrants pointed to the need for adequate information about services and resources. Many noted that available services are often not sought out because they do not know what they are about or even that they are allowed to access them. For example, many point to job search programs that they were suspicious about because while they read about these programs, they did not know if they were trustworthy. Many participants felt that connection and trust was needed in order to effectively provide information and resources to racialized immigrants.

On the other hand, service providers noted that cultural competency was needed in order to build relationships characterized by trust and connection with certain immigrant groups. Without trust, information was not effectively passed on and racialized immigrants remained isolated. Racialized immigrants also spoke to the difficulties of getting relevant information without being connected to a network. While some service providers note that additional programs were needed due to increased client use, accounts from racialized immigrants indicated lack of suitable programs and in other cases help was needed to successfully apply to and access many of the existing services.

Many racialized participants point to issues of discrimination and racism that they encountered in the region that deterred them from accessing services. For example, some participants who identified as Black shared encounters of racism when trying to find housing. One participant spoke about an encounter looking for housing and having the potential landlord single out her child for making noise when she was actually playing with other children who were White. The landlord expressed concerns about renting to her as a result. The participant described her confusion as it felt that the potential landlord was reprimanding her while the other children were still playing loudly in the space. The participant said that it took a long time to make sense of what

had happened. She also noted that she became very skeptical about seeking help as a result of this encounter.

Availability, appropriateness and awareness of services to meet needs:



Availability

Based on participants' accounts, some of the resources available were simply not appropriate for their needs. A few participants noted that the lack of availability and appropriateness of services was unique to their experiences in Durham. They had much better experiences in Toronto. Both services providers and racialized immigrants were in agreement that there was a lack of availability and appropriateness of existing childcare services.

Both racialized immigrants and service providers also acknowledged that employment programs were available. However, some barriers to access did exist. For example, one participant noted that little information was available to apply to a particular program, and they were only able to apply because of their connections with others who had successfully applied. Other barriers were also noted. For example, one participant

mentioned that a government program that provided grants for professional licensing, while available, it was still very costly to apply and not affordable for all. The impact of COVID-19 on access to especially employment supports was noted as well as limited access to services that moved online, which did not immediately return to in-person after the pandemic.

All groups agreed that little affordable housing was available. Among racialized immigrants, a few participants noted the lack of availability in Durham specifically, which they believed was in contrast to other areas. Among the service provider focus group, it was noted that some affordable housing did exist and that COVID-19 impacted access to housing supports.

Individual immigrants reported that social wellbeing and health services were not available. This was due to long waits, lack of affordability, and lack of space. A few immigrants reported not being able to access health supports in a timely manner, such because of delays getting health cards or cost to purchase prescription drugs. Food was difficult to access for those on low incomes and cultural foods were either not available or took too long to find. Participants desired safe spaces to connect with other members of their community but felt that such space was not available.

Individual service providers' responses indicated that a number of appropriate social and health services existed, while a few important gaps remained. However, racialized immigrants offered mixed responses. For example, one participant described service that was not culturally supportive which made this service inappropriate for them. Another recalled being treated like "the poorest person in the world" when trying to access social and health services which negatively impacted their experiences and again did not consider this service available because it could not meet their needs.

Appropriateness

In general, racialized immigrants did not feel that available services appropriately met their needs. Some felt that the services were too general and did not meet their individual needs. Participants reported attending workshops that were not targeted to individual skills, and being pressured into survival jobs rather than supported to find employment that matched their skills. Aside from being too general, some reported that the available services were simply not the right fit. While resume writing was offered for example, some participants did not find it particularly helpful in advancing employment outcomes. It was noted that working for free was not a viable path to employment for all, because not all could afford to work without pay.

On the other hand, it was noted that services such as OW was offered as income support while looking for work but was not all participants were referred to the program. One participant noted that it covered their needs, and they had no complaints, despite noting lack of clarity around the expiration of the noted service. Another participant noted that they did not need charity but instead needed help to find a way to support themselves. This was framed as a cultural difference and lack of understanding of what was needed or appropriate. One participant also noted that service provider biases impacted their experience in receiving service. In contrast, a service provider, despite acknowledging that biases can impact service, expressed the belief that culturally aware employment services are available. Service providers also acknowledged that their services did not meet all of their clients' needs, but also expressed the belief that other appropriate services were available.

Awareness

Overall, individual immigrant participants and service providers acknowledged that there was low awareness of information and resources needed by racialized immigrants. Many racialized immigrants seemed to be aware of some employment programming, even if they did not access them. Many indicated that they were not necessarily familiar with the whole range of services, but usually knew that resume writing and interview skills help were available in some community agencies. Similarly, many indicated awareness of while others indicated that they did not need this service but had idea that such service existed. Many who needed the service and were aware, struggled to access (availability) this service. For example, lack of space and long waitlists were noted that prevented racialized immigrants from accessing childcare. A few participants noted having access to more services in Toronto, before moving to Durham Region. One racialized immigrant noted that they were able to access childcare because they immigrated directly to Oshawa, rather than moving from another area in Canada.

Some racialized immigrants pointed to biases on the part of service providers and low expectations of immigrants as a factor that deterred them from using services. Many described barriers to receiving required information and accessing necessary resources due to lack of knowledge and awareness about certain services. Difficulty navigating social services, and language barriers or lack of access to online content because of technological barriers were also noted in some cases where individuals were aware of service.

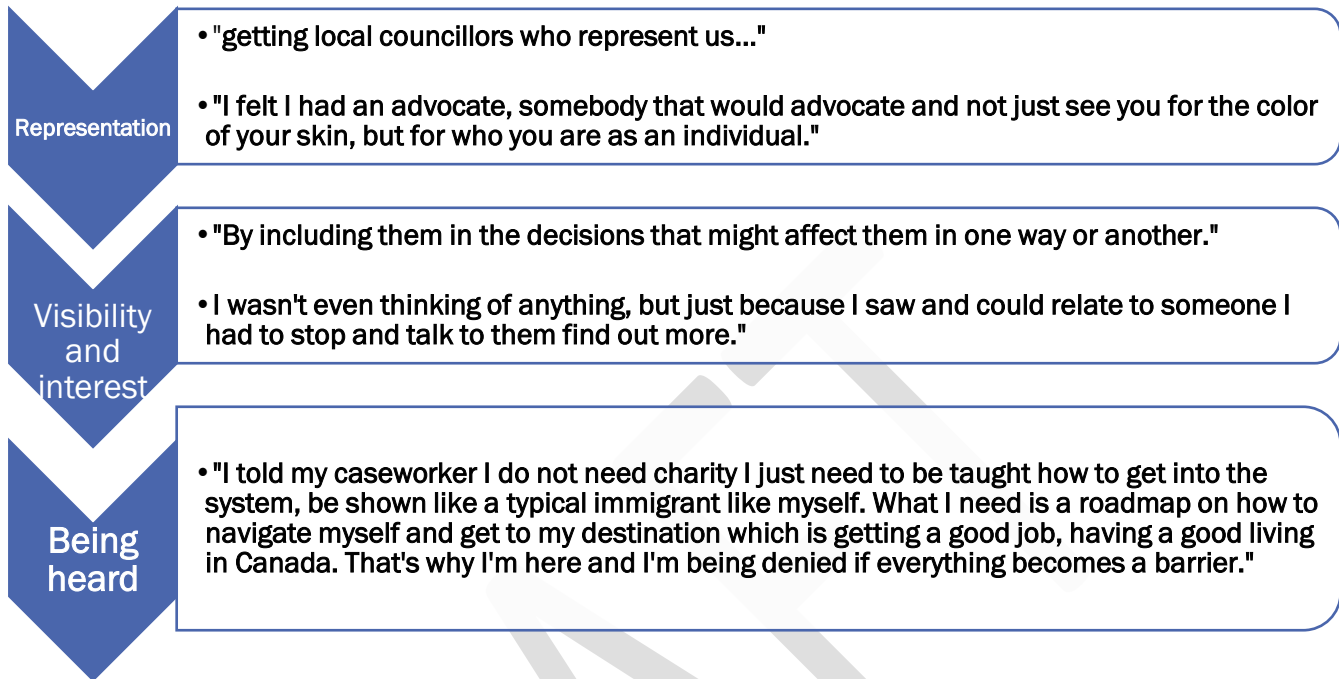
Service providers pointed to lack of representation within services and language as barriers to awareness as well. Services providers mentioned several strategies used to promote awareness and information sharing along with online portals and service

provider referrals. While some participants acknowledged becoming aware of some services through one or more of these avenues, others point to “word of mouth” as the avenue through which they learned about service. However, the experiences among racialized immigrants still reflected low awareness in many cases. Many point to support through faith-based organizations and networking through local churches that provided the support that they needed.

A number of participants reported that they were unaware that affordable housing options existed in Durham Region. While some reported that they were unaware and would have benefited from those services, two participants noted that awareness would not have impacted their access, as other factors aside from affordability were their main consideration for housing. Others agreed that available housing was not appropriate due to high costs, or ineligibility due to lack of timeframe residing in Canada and lack of established credit. A service provider noted that virtual house viewing was not an appropriate solution for all clients during the pandemic.

While immigrants did not seem to be aware of all the services mentioned by service providers, they generally did have some awareness of health and social services. While service providers acknowledged a gap in medical services, they listed a number of social services and supports that were available. This included programming designed to combat loneliness, cultural celebrations, and trauma-informed services. Service providers and immigrants focused on somewhat different aspects of health and social services. One service provider mentioned being “amazed” by all the services available, yet there was a clear gap in awareness among participants. It was noted that stigma operated as a barrier to accessing services for mental health supports even if some participants were aware of such service. Religious groups were considered key in providing safe spaces for racialized immigrants which mostly service providers believed fill that gap.

Best practices to support identified needs for successful integration in region:



Racialized immigrant participants identified tailored services as an important consideration to meeting their needs. For example, racialized immigrants described looking for services tailored to specific groups such Black community, or recent immigrants which would help to provide necessary information and promote their inclusion and success in Durham Region. Participants noted that it is important that the method through which information is provided is also considered in tailored service provision and not just the content provided. Trust and representation were also highlighted, and one participant shared their experience accessing critical information because the individual not only looked like them but was able to understand the nature of what was required. Many pointed out that if immigrants do not have a trusting relationship with service providers, they may not open up about their various needs, and could miss critical resources.

Service providers also noted that inclusion and success of racialized immigrants is also connected to the information that service providers and community members receive. One service provider described their efforts to educate the community about immigrant experience of being away from their loved ones who did not migrate with them and the emotional turmoil that can cause. This was made even worse during COVID-19, when people were not allowed to see their relatives and many were struggling with the loss of loved ones who were in other countries.

Another service provider noted that even if their organization does not provide the service needed, they talk about their programs and invite them to make an appointment with a settlement worker or an orientation worker who can help explore their needs further. They encouraged individuals to build a plan; even if it is a plan around what the individual or family need at the moment and whether or not that might require a referral. The service provider saw this as an opportunity to have a conversation or connect with participants or just to engage them in conversation. As one individual service provider noted,

“I would say, like that is a huge thing in helping people you know to navigate the system and even for referrals...At least for us having the knowledge of what else is available can be helpful.”

A number of participants noted that they felt that the presence of racialized persons within a company or organization increased their chances of securing employment. One participant noted that when they finally secured a job after countless applications and interviews, it was because someone of a racialized background was present on the interview team and understood their overseas experience. The participant did not have “Canadian experience” and was able to prove themselves in the position but needed the opportunity to do so first. The participant felt that they were given a chance to show their skills and expertise in the area, which is all they were asking for. Many participants suggested that when racialized individuals do not feel represented within services, it has a negative impact on their level of trust with the organization.

Other participants mentioned services such as ESL classes to not only help with their English speaking and writing skills but also to network with others. For some this interaction helped to alleviate some of the isolation that they felt. Even though they would have welcomed a more integrated service that considered services in their language in the first place, they welcomed the opportunity to engage with others.

Others spoke about networking and support they received through faith-based organizations. A number of participants noted that this was their primary source of information and integration into the region. They felt that information from a church for example was trustworthy and they did not feel like they were being judged. Instead, they felt welcomed and that others were genuinely interested in their wellbeing in Canada. Some also said they were connected to employment through their church as a result of networking. Many felt that some of these non-mainstream services should be funded to help support racialized immigrant communities in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Interest

- "...A barrier that we have to keep acknowledging and addressing in our community is racism and that does not fall on racialized immigrants to unpack and address it. It is really about where we see it as a community [region] and can acknowledge and confront it. This has to be collaborative work. As organizations we have to constantly ask ourselves what it is that we are missing and what are we doing in a systemic manner that is creating uneven access and opportunities for inclusion...?"

Humility

- "...We need to always be learning, we always need to be listening and learning what are we doing, what does meet the needs of immigrants and newcomers in the community, but also where might we have blind spots or have gaps; some things that we are aware of, and we just haven't been able to fill."

Voice

- "I don't need fish, I need a net because if you give me fish, I will keep coming back for more fish. I will never be independent. When you leave me a net, I will fish on my own, and I will keep catching a better, fish myself each time."

Resources

Participants emphasized tailor resources based on groups and service providers, to nurture trusting relationships. Many felt that it was important for the region to recognize that it is necessary to understand that immigrants' success is dependent upon the information that service providers and other community members access, just as it is dependent on the information that immigrants can access. One participant noted that,

"...talk about resources, it would be programming that fits every status every, person's condition and if you're talking about resources in terms of do you have, staff who understand people's experience, their own biases or the biases of the people that they work with."

Information

They also identified the need for information that would allow them to take charge of the direction they were going in, rather than information that would help them follow a pre-defined path. As this research and others have shown, a pre-defined path for

racialized immigrants do not often lead to inclusion or success. If racialized immigrants can access the information and resources that they actually need, their chances of inclusion and success will increase.

Programming

Racialized immigrants also called for the provision of compassionate, culturally appropriate, and safe programming and services. This includes services that consider cultural needs and the racialized immigrant experience. One participant spoke about finding compassionate and safe supports within their church and suggested that immigrants find places where they can receive group support that make them feel comfortable. Another participant noted that,

“...my major support was church, so I mean if you can find somewhere as an individual to be associated with who can give you that support that can help you move from point A to point B. I recommend that you do that.”

Part of this provision of safe and compassionate programming includes tailoring programs to meet the needs of various groups. This could include the provision of prayer spaces beyond interest groups, or the presence of social service providers who speak various languages.

Safety and community connection

Similarly, service providers talked about providing safety and community connection for racialized immigrants. The idea was not only to allow people to be supported in a community environment, but also to provide opportunity for immigrants to safely process their experiences. Another member of the focus group acknowledged that service providers can also benefit from information about immigrant experiences by learning from their lived experiences. This can be done by creating spaces for conversations and understandings about their needs and support. Based on the accounts of some service providers, the inclusion and success of racialized immigrants is dependent not only on the information and resources that they receive, but on the information and resources provided to other community members and social service workers.

Employment

Recommendations for employment includes ensuring that work is available and meaningful, while addressing barriers to employment. Many participants noted that representation helps address barriers of racial nature, but tokenism is to be avoided. To increase availability of work, it will be important to create more avenues to meaningful work. Meaningful work based on participants feedback, would be connected to the skills that individuals already have, or create avenues to provide new

opportunities of interest, rather than streamlining them to seek survival jobs. Participants also envisioned avenues to meaningful work as provision of opportunities to successfully obtain work that is suitable for the individual's credentials and/or education. A service provider echoed this sentiment, stating that there should be some way to help with transitioning credentials.

During individual interviews, some immigrants discussed other considerations. For example, one participant suggested longer probationary periods to allow racialized immigrants to adjust, while another participant suggested more connections were needed for certain industry unions, to allow racialized immigrants access to different types of employment that they are interested in. Finally, racialized immigrants discussed the importance of addressing barriers to employment such as racism in both employment and childcare which were identified as barriers to a successful job search.

Childcare

Both racialized immigrants and individual service providers provided several recommendations for childcare. These include, recommendations for tailored childcare to meet unique needs, and more flexible options for access and more affordable. Both availability and affordability of childcare must be addressed so increasingly tailored options can be access and effective. Study participants agreed that addressing childcare issues is an important step to ensuing the inclusion and success of racialized immigrants within Durham Region. A service provider noted that some seniors hoped to have children integrated into their programing, as they saw it as an opportunity to spend quality time with family, rather than to take a break from family. Alternative options should be considered as part of the solution but with proper planning, supervision and funding where needed.

Housing

Recommendations suggested also include help for racialize immigrants to overcome barriers to accessing housing. One suggestion made to do this is to provide representation and build trust, as distrust based on lack of representation is a barrier to accessing existing housing options. Also included in the recommendation is the need for "humanizing services" to be provided. That includes providing services that fit individual groups rather than a one size fits all. According to participants, this means prioritizing opportunities for connection and making efforts to build trust. Attending to various sources of knowledge that can allow service providers to deliver the services that are needed and using methods that are effective.

Organizations

Service providers reflected on the nature of the organizations themselves and noted that in order to make sure that immigrants receive the needed information and resources, they need more knowledge and funding. Many felt that organizations were not funded to meet the needs of entire communities and while efforts for collaborative services have been happening across the region, more funding is needed to bolster programs to meet the needs of racialized immigrants. As one service provider noted,

“You know, it always goes to what you have to do instead of what you'd like to do so, I think, so many times, the bottom line is just budget ... and what your funders want, where the budget is and choosing priorities, one thing over another. It's a policy that says, we have to train everyone in CPR and First Aid but there's no policy that says, we have to further education about cultural training or cultural sensitivity, right? So you get stuck in that thing of all your money going to that what we have to do instead of what we should be doing to move forward”

It was also noted that organizations would need to work together in order to meet racialized immigrant's needs for information.”

Many of the ideas suggested by both participants and individual service providers who contributed to the study, focused on frontline services. However, in order for many of these ideas to become a reality the region will have to play an instrumental role in attending to the service needs of racialized immigrants in the region. Be it through streamlined funding, policy initiatives, working with and incentivizing employers to offer more opportunities to racialized immigrants as this will be crucial to their success. Employers can offer paid internships so that individuals can afford their basic needs while they settle in the region instead of focusing on “Canadian experience” which is counterproductive. Revamping current services to ensure that racialized immigrants can access customized services to better meet their needs is also important.

City Council needs to step in to rally the relevant levels of government to address barriers around childcare, housing, healthcare and access, so that racialized immigrants can be better supported to thrive. Otherwise, the region and other rural areas across Canada will continue to miss out on the contributions that racialized immigrants can offer. As noted in this research many racialized immigrants are capable, willing and ready to work and many are highly skilled. A few participants have already moved from the region once they gained their footing due to ongoing barriers they encountered in the region. This is major investment into their new communities and a loss for the region. In order to remain competitive, the region will have to do

more to retain its immigrant population. Supporting racialized immigrant groups can set the tone for support across immigrant groups and communities and the region at large. By meeting the service needs of racialized immigrants and ensuring availability, appropriateness and awareness of the services in the region, racialized immigrants can be poised for successful integration and contributions. This is crucial for the viability of the region and will strengthen its foundation as a community.

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