

Chapter 1

Introduction

I was born in Italy and I have a certain experience. This experience is not something you can just park at the door, you cannot erase your DNA, you cannot do it genetically and you cannot do it culturally.

These are the words of 75-year old Marie who came to Toronto in the early 1950s, alongside approximately 460,000 Italians who immigrated to the city during this period (Tomasi 1977). Ultimately, her family's main motive for moving to Toronto was for a better life than in her hometown in war-ravaged, southern Italy. With little formal education and economic capital upon arrival to Toronto, Marie recalls the difficulties her family faced upon arrival:

We were quite poor in those days. My English was poor and so were my family's English [skills] ... my husband relied on finding work as a labourer with the railway company. It was a struggle, but now I look at my children and my grandchildren's [socio-economic] success, and I know that our struggles were worth it. With hard work, comes success.

The view that diligent effort equates to a higher standard of living is similarly echoed by Michael, an Afro-Jamaican who arrived to Toronto in the late 1970s. Michael and his wife, Leanne, came to the city with a similar intent as Marie's family, to forge a better life for themselves and their future family. Educated with a Bachelor of Engineering obtained from Jamaica, Michael searched for opportunities in his field for two years after arrival in the city. He was unsuccessful in this endeavour, with potential employers often being more fascinated by his English, laden with a heavy Jamaican accent rather than his human capital and work-related skills for the position.

Initially, it was a tough few years. While we did not starve, we were borderline there. My wife and I decided that in order to survive in this country we would have to take the risk of opening a small restaurant. My wife was a good cook and I had some business sense. After securing financing from extended family members and friends, we opened a Caribbean restaurant to serve the growing Jamaican and Trinidadian population in the neighbourhood. Today, with hard work and sacrifice we have one of most successful restaurants in the community.

Reflecting upon his initial struggles, both Michael and Leanne now in their late 50s, look at their son Paul for inspiration and reaffirmation of their decision to migrate

to Toronto. A recent university graduate in commerce, Paul, 22, is currently looking for work in his industry. Michael proudly articulates that his son will have an easier time to find a job than he did in Canada.

He does not have a Jamaican accent like me. He speaks like a Canadian and he has a Canadian degree from a well-respected university. He does not have to work in the community [ethnic economy] ... he can work anywhere in Canada or even the world .. and he will be employable.

The job search strategy of Paul reflects these sentiments:

... It is an option to use my parents' contacts in the community to get a job. I would rather not. If I was to be truly honest with you, I would say working there [ethnic economy] is like a step backwards. My parents have sacrificed a lot and so they expect a lot out of me. They don't want me to be working where they are [as small business owners in the ethnic economy].

Nevertheless, the ethnic economy still remains one of the most effective places to canvass for jobs for recent immigrants. Pablo, 32, who migrated from Ecuador a year ago, remembers his experience when he first came to Toronto:

I came to Toronto because my brother was here ... I looked for jobs everywhere .. in the local [ethnic] newspaper and asking my brother's friends. I graduated with a business degree in Ecuador, but I had no Canadian experience. I found a job at my brother's workplace in a South American restaurant. I have been there ever since, but I am hopeful that in the next year I can move to another job to use my degree.

The stories of Marie, Michael, Leanne, Paul and Pablo reflect the two modern waves of immigration (and their offspring's experience) to Toronto; a city where the majority of the 4.6 million population is a direct result of post-World War Two immigration from Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America and Asia. Commonplace among each immigrant wave are aspirations centered around the notion that upward economic mobility is available if the individual is willing to undertake hard work and strive for further education;¹ culminating with occupational outcomes reflecting this effort.

The city of Toronto, for its own part, has attempted to accommodate the various waves of immigrants and their cultures, through a variety of policies and initiatives,

1 One can potentially argue that this rationality/ethic of hard work, and the accompanying expectation of high returns to education in the labour market, is a heightened characteristic of modern capitalism. As Weber (1904) argues, the spirit of capitalism is greatly interlinked with an individual's duty to increase their wealth and economic prosperity. Further education combined with hard work is thus seen as a means to achieve this end.

which are supported and reinforced by federal and provincial efforts. Some examples of these include Toronto's Social Development (City of Toronto 2001a) and Economic Development Strategy (City of Toronto 2000); financial support for annual festivals and cultural events such as Caribana; and, through its international and inter-provincial marketing efforts to promote the city's ethnic diversity to lure tourists and potential migrants (see Reiss 2011). Toronto's conduct in managing ethnic differences is seen as so successful it is often cited as exemplary and a model for other urban centers (UNDP 2004).

While acclaims to this effect are warranted to a great extent, this book will suggest that there is a growing imbalance in the city when analyzing educational attainments and their subsequent occupational outcomes across immigrant groups, and particularly once a visible ethnic minority variable is introduced. Visible ethnic minorities groups are defined as persons who are identified as being non-Caucasian or non-white (Statistics Canada 2006b).² As discussed in the next chapter, due to changes in Canada's immigration system in the mid-1960s, visible ethnic minorities immigrated to Toronto to the extent that they represent nearly 40 percent of the city's present population. When statistically examining visible ethnic minorities' educational attainments in Toronto they outperform or are on a par with the non-visible cohort. However, when analyzing the visible ethnic minority demographics of those working in high status and high wage positions such as professional³ and managerial occupations (see Appendix 2 for list of occupational categories), the non-visible cohort are most prevalent. What accounts for this discrepancy? How far does visible ethnic minority status affect one's occupational opportunities? Is this a generational issue, with the next generation of visible ethnic minorities having returns to education akin to the non-visible cohort? And what steps, if any, can we take to improve this reality?

2 Under Employment Equity legislation, a person is defined as an ethnic minority if s/he is neither Aboriginal nor European Caucasian. In the public use file of the Census, the visible ethnic minority variable is imputed to be a combination of ethnic origin, place of birth and mother tongues. And in most academic studies, the visible ethnic minority variable is flagged for persons who are entirely non-European in ancestral origin.

3 A professional is an elite class of occupations that have been accorded such status due to the fact the relevant occupational tasks demand a high proficiency or skill. (For more information, see Leicht and Fennell 1997.)

Objectives

Drawing upon statistical data, interviews⁴ and ethnography⁵ in late 2006 and 2007, and follow up work in 2009 and early 2010, the aim of this book is to investigate the relationship between the educational and occupational levels of visible ethnic minority members. Both indicators have been chosen as they serve as excellent markers for assessing future economic success and integration. Empirically, one of the most compelling universal expectations is future occupational achievements and financial success based on higher educational attainments. This has been reinforced by studies that show the economic value of an education, that is, the added value a high school diploma or university degree has on an individual's working life earnings and occupational prospects (see OECD 2004; Day and Newburger 2002). One may argue this is the result of meritocratic selection procedures, whereby an individual's achievements in education is the main criteria for occupational advancement (see Heath et al. 1992; Young 1958). This of course assumes that occupational outcomes are based solely on merit, which is often defined by educational attainment.⁶ Moreover, studies have also suggested the higher the education and socio-economic status, the greater propensity for the individual to socially integrate within the community (see Muiznieks 1999; Bagley 1984; Otto 1976; Sewell et al. 1969).

4 Interviews were preferred over survey methods for logistical and methodological reasons. The interview method provided a wider opportunity to probe relevant actors in a more open-ended, complex and in-depth manner than would be afforded through the use of a survey (see Mikkelsen 2005; Symon and Cassell 1998). Given the tendencies of participants to bottle-up or provide partial or "official" responses in light of the potential sensitivity of the research, interviews were the most effective method to elicit personal perspectives, motives and suggestions – which are best explained through descriptive language; to build rapport with the participant; and, to observe the feelings of the participant during conversation, i.e. facial expressions, hesitation, tone of voice (see Spradley 1979). Furthermore, from a logistical standpoint, the response rates for interviews are generally higher than a survey, adding to the appeal of using an interview method. Interviews also provided the best way to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for ethnic minorities' attitudes, preferences and behaviours throughout the educational and occupational processes.

5 Local and expert interviews were reinforced by participant observations in sites that allowed the author to gain a further insight into the educational and occupational experiences of ethnic minority members. This technique was adopted since it allowed the author to gain an insider perspective of the local processes, relationships, patterns and immediate contexts where ethnic minorities' daily realities unfold. In other words, participant observation was ideal for this research since it situated the perspective of the data findings attained from less contextualized methods, such as semi-structured interviews (see Robson 2002).

6 Young's classic book *The Rise of Meritocracy* (1958) demonstrates how class of origin and not always educational attainment, affects an individual's chances of gaining access to high wage and high status, managerial and professional occupations in a capitalist society. How far this extends to ethnicity in the context of Toronto will be explored throughout this book.

Measuring one's education attainment to occupational outcomes thus serves as a natural pairing to understand ethnic group socio-economic achievements.

There has also been relatively little scholarship explicitly examining the notion of an ethnic penalty, defined as the disadvantages ethnic minorities experience in the labour market compared to non-ethnic minority groups of the same human capital. Heath and Ridge (1983) look at this idea by making comparisons between two groups, "whites" and "blacks" in the United Kingdom. From their work, segmented differentials between "whites" and "blacks" suggest that this is a useful indicator to discern economic discrimination. Yet differentials within these racial⁷ groupings also suggest that it is only a rough indicator and ought to be refined and expanded if feasible, to differentiate between distinctive ethnic minority groups, for instance Hungarian-Canadian, Kenyan-Canadian, etc.

In the Canadian context, drawing from nationwide statistical data, Kunz et al. (2001) conclude that although visible ethnic minorities are the most educated groups, the benefit of higher education is often offset by their ethnicity. Her team statistically observes that even among those with a post-secondary education, visible ethnic minorities nationally have higher unemployment rates than those who are not members of a visible ethnic minority group. Moreover, visible ethnic minority university graduates are less likely to hold managerial or professional jobs. For visible ethnic minority immigrants they face the double jeopardy of being both 'ethnic' and 'foreign'. While Kunz et al.'s study distinguishes between Canadian and foreign-born, similar to Heath and Ridge (1983) they do not examine specific ethnic groups. This task is adopted by Galabuzi (2001) who statistically observes that in spite of comparable average educational attainments, ethnic minority groups' labour market experiences nationally are plagued by barriers to access, limited mobility in employment, and discrimination in the workplace. While both studies statistically illustrate an ethnic penalty at the national level, they do not provide very specific, sociological or otherwise, explanatory reasons for this phenomenon rooted in detailed interviews and ethnography. In fact, this is a common trait in studies examining potential ethnic penalties. Several statistical and econometric approaches involving various data sets and time series have been used over the years to evaluate whether visible ethnic minorities are at a disadvantage in the labour market compared to the non-visible cohort (see Pendakur and Pendakur 2004; Stelcner and Kyriazis 1995). Seldom is a disciplinary dimension rooted in fieldwork tracing first-hand educational (delineated by primary, secondary and tertiary levels) and occupational (from the job search, hiring and promotion process) experiences

7 The term 'race' has a questionable descriptive and analytical value. While the term appears in the literature and discourse on ethnicity, there are two principal reasons why it may be inexact to speak about 'races'. First, there has always been interbreeding between human populations that it would be meaningless to talk of fixed boundaries between 'races'. Second, as Cavalli-Sforza et al. (1994) argue, the distribution of hereditary physical traits does not follow clear delineations.

added to the conversation. Moreover, given the focus of the majority of studies is at the national level, it is a valuable project to observe whether these results differ when analyzing the phenomenon at the micro-level, notably in an urban, multicultural agglomeration such as Toronto.

This book will thus examine the relationship between educational attainments and occupational outcomes between different ethnic minority groupings in Toronto utilizing quantitative and qualitative analyses (see Appendix 1 for methodological considerations). The quantitative part of the book examines ethnic minority groups' educational attainments at primary, secondary and tertiary school levels; and how this relates to occupational attainment and income. The empirical analysis underpinning this research is based on 59 interviews and subsequent follow-up interviews (up to two years later from the initial interview) with local ethnic minorities inquiring about their educational and occupational experiences. The interviews examine topics such as perceived barriers to educational attainment; ethnic-stereotyping in the workplace; affirmative action; job-search, hiring and workplace promotion experiences; and more broadly, inter- and intra- ethnic group interactions. Local interviews are supplemented by long-term observations and consultations with government institutions, local academics, corporations, businesses and ethnic minority stakeholders such as ethnic associations and NGOs. The overall objective of the qualitative analysis is to explain the statistical findings examining educational attainments and its relationship with occupational outcomes for ethnic minority groups.

Outline

Having contextualized the parameters, the book will proceed in five segments. In the first segment the historical experiences of the two modern immigration waves to Toronto will be examined. The changing idea of ethnicity, from 'ethnic' to 'visible ethnic minority', and the interactions and representations of ethnic groups will be discussed through the lens of the two immigration waves. Moreover, the development of the various ethnic enclaves and economies in Toronto will be explored.

The second segment will examine the educational process for visible ethnic minorities and the various programs designed to assist in improving their educational attainment. Drawing upon interview findings and statistics, this segment will analyze and discuss visible ethnic minorities' experiences in the primary, secondary and tertiary school levels. A conversation on the notion of education as human capital investment, and the operations of inter-generational education transfer are also presented.

The third segment will look at the occupational experiences of visible ethnic minorities. It will present the major policies set up to support ethnic equity in the labour market. Furthermore, it will highlight and discuss the narrative derived from interviews on the job search, hiring process, and workplace advancement both from

the perspective of the employee and employer. Statistical outcomes for visible ethnic minorities in the occupational market is thereafter presented and analyzed.

In the fourth segment, we will see that a systematic understanding of social processes, such as the interactions of ethnic minority groups, may explain potential advantages and disadvantages they may face in the labour market. Here, the idea of discrimination, an individual's social network, a firm's working culture, and a community's social trust are introduced as potential factors to explain the ethnic penalty.

Finally in the last segment, the prospects for the next generation of ethnic minorities will be discussed. As a preview, it will be argued that the labour market success of the next generation is predicated on ethnic minority group's current level of integration. As such, the present education and labour market experiences of ethnic minorities will strongly influence future generations' potential for economic success. As a corollary, this segment will discuss steps for improving the integration, education delivery, and labour market outcomes of visible ethnic minorities; with a strong emphasis on examining the utility of potential macro-policy interventions.

In short, the book aims to present a systematic examination of visible ethnic minorities' experiences from schooling to the job search, to the hiring and promotion process. The interviews with individuals and employers, rich ethnography, and statistics are used in such a manner that the reader can vividly comprehend ethnic minorities' life course experiences from education to the labour market; and equally important, understand the operations and causes of potential ethnic penalties. Furthermore, it is envisioned that notwithstanding the book does concentrate on the Toronto case in-depth, the experiences explored and lessons learned throughout the book will have cross-jurisdictional application to other multi-ethnic communities.⁸

⁸ The experiences of the P.R. China, Taiwan, Australia and the United States are briefly presented in Appendix 3 to illustrate the commonalities and variations of potential ethnic penalties in other multi-ethnic jurisdictions.