A Matter of Integration or Discrimination? Tracing the (Political) Use of Evidence in the Politics of Foreign Credential Recognition in Canada

By

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ABSTRACT

A MATTER OF INTEGRATION OR DISCRIMINATION? TRACING THE (POLITICAL) USE OF EVIDENCE IN THE POLITICS OF FOREIGN CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION IN CANADA

Camila Rivas-Garrido
University of Guelph, 2017

The problem of foreign credential recognition (FCR) in Canada has been widely researched by academics revealing three main explanations: admission policy, institutional complexities, and discrimination. While the problem of FCR has been documented in academia, little is known about government approaches to this issue. Using the literature on evidence-based policymaking as a theoretical basis, this research explores what evidence is used and how throughout the policy process addressing the problem of FCR. The main findings are fourfold. First, politicians are highly selective in their evidence use. Second, the range of evidence presented to politicians ultimately has little demonstrable impact on final policy decisions. Third, politicians add their own non-academic explanations for the problem of FCR to control its conceptualization. Fourth, politicians exhibit a political use of evidence in selecting only those supporting their original policy positions. Thus, this use of evidence reveals an interesting, yet hidden, exercise of power by politicians.
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<tr>
<td>AIMGA</td>
<td>Alberta International Medical Graduates Association</td>
</tr>
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<td>CIMM</td>
<td>The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIC</td>
<td>Citizenship and Immigration Canada</td>
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<td>EBPM</td>
<td>Evidence-Based Policymaking</td>
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<td>FCR</td>
<td>Foreign Credential Recognition</td>
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<td>FCRP</td>
<td>Foreign Credential Recognition Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCRO</td>
<td>Foreign Credential Referral Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRSDC</td>
<td>Human Resources and Skills Development Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMA</td>
<td>The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEHPI</td>
<td>Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCASI</td>
<td>Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIEC</td>
<td>Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council</td>
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<td>WES</td>
<td>World Education Service, Canada</td>
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Chapter 1. Introduction

The failure of Canadian institutions to recognize the foreign credentials of immigrants presents an interesting and troubling puzzle to the Canadian economic and social landscape as immigrant earnings increasingly fall behind the earnings of Canadian-born workers despite the fact that immigrants are “arriving more skilled than ever before” (Knowles, 1997, p.253; Oreopoulos, 2011). The media and academia have paid attention to this issue as its bleak social and economic consequences range from underemployment and reduced earnings to chronic unemployment to increasing poverty rates among immigrants (Ferrer, Picot and Riddell, 2012; Guo, 2009; Reitz, 2005; Teisceria-Lessard, 2016). Indeed, this paradox has been widely documented in academic studies on immigration, labour market and racial/ethnic politics.

So far, the literature on FCR has focused primarily on the significant roles admission policy failures (McHale, 2002; Hawthorne, 2007; Ferrer, Picot and Riddell, 2012; Picot and Sweetman, 2012), institutional complexities (Watt and Bloom, 2001; Mata, 1999; Reitz, 2005; Reitz, Curtis and Elrick, 2014) and discrimination (Guo, 2009; Donaldson, 2007; Esses et al., 2007; Ditez et al., 2015; Khan, 2007) have played in explaining the FCR difficulties immigrants face in Canada. While these studies have offered much theoretical insight into FCR difficulties in Canada, we know less about the extent to which policy makers are aware of these explanations. This research addresses this omission by analyzing the use of evidence in the policy process on FCR issues.

Using the literature on evidence-based policymaking (EBPM) as the theoretical basis for this study, this research reveals four main arguments regarding the use of evidence. First, politicians are highly selective in their evidence use and demonstrate an incoherent use of the available explanations for FCR in identifying the root causes and solutions for this policy issue. Second, although politicians seek a diversity of explanations to better understand the policy problem, the
range of evidence presented to politicians ultimately has little demonstrable impact on final policy decisions. Third, politicians are not only selective in their evidence use but also add their own non-academic explanations for the problem of FCR in Canada to not only control how the policy issue is to be addressed but also to control how it is understood and conceptualized in the policy process. Finally, politicians overall exhibit a political use of evidence in selecting only those supporting their original policy decisions and pre-existing ideological orientations while ignoring and, at times, explicitly dismissing any evidence challenging these positions. Thus, this use of evidence reveals an interesting, yet hidden, exercise of power by politicians.

I pursue these four main arguments as follows. Chapter two outlines the theory behind EBPM and the conditions identified to be most conducive for a (non-political) use of evidence. Chapter three outlines my methodology including the case selection and analytical framework used to systematically analyze how and which evidence was used by politicians in the policy process on FCR. Chapter four provides a short historical overview of FCR as a social and policy problem in Canada. I then move to the case of my analysis in chapter five and provide a literature review of the main explanations for the problem of FCR according to academics. Chapter six investigates to what extent these academic explanations appear in politicians’ discourse on the policy issue at various stages of the policy process as well as before and after the Committee evidence meetings where experts presented all the available evidence on the issue to federal MPs. Chapter seven discusses the findings and analyzes what they reveal about the use of evidence by politicians. The final chapter reveals the theoretical, methodological, and wider social implications of my findings.
Chapter 2. The Use of Evidence in the Policymaking Process

As an important development arising out of the policy analysis movement, evidence-based policymaking (EBPM) is broadly defined as the “uptake of evidence in policy-making” (Newman et al., 2016, p. 2). In other words, we can speak of EBPM when social and scientific research is pursued and knowledge is utilized in designing new policies to reach better policy outcomes (Newman et al., 2016; Dobuzinski, Laycock and Howlett, 2007). As a phenomenon studied by both public administration and political science scholars, EBPM represents an effort (or at least the image of one) from policymakers to improve policy outcomes by “prioritizing evidentiary decision-making criteria” (Howlett, 2009, p.154; Nutley, Walter and Davies, 2007). The use of academic studies, knowledge, social science research or any other evidence available on a policy issue in the policymaking process is crucial to effectively match government policy expectations and understandings of an issue to its actual conditions and causes (Howlett, 2009). Thus, in an effort to minimize policy failure, the use of evidence is important to properly identify and understand all the crucial aspects of a policy problem, in particular: the main groups affected by the policy issue, the origins or root causes of the issue, the concepts/terms used to describe the issue and the range of policy choices available to effectively address the policy problem (Campbell, 2002; Head, 2008; Howlett, 2009; Howlett and Mukherjee, 2014).

Since the 1990s, governments in the United States, Australia, the UK, and Canada have expressed interest in increasing the use of evidence and social science research in the policy process as an attempt to create policies based on “what works” (Nutley, Walter and Davies, 2007, p.10: Dobuzinski, Laycock and Howlett, 2007; Newman, Cherney and Head, 2016). The use of evidence in the policy process impacts policymakers’ understandings of policy issues and, as a result, the way they address them (Head, 2013; Neylan, 2008; Landry, Amara and Lamari, 2001;
Daviter, 2015; Amara, Ouimet and Landry, 2004; Stevens, 2011). In the academic literature on EBPM, scholars have particularly focused on analyzing what evidence is actually being utilized by policymakers and how this evidence is used (Newman et al., 2016; Head, 2013; Neylan, 2008; Landry, Amara and Lamari, 2001; Daviter, 2015; Amara, Ouimet and Landry, 2004; Stevens, 2011). Indeed, the EBPM literature is largely interested in three main questions: what evidence is used, how is the evidence used, and what are the political processes that influence this use of evidence?

**What Evidence is Used**

First, EBPM scholars emphasize the importance of analyzing specifically what evidence is used in the policy process (Newman et al., 2016; Neylan, 2008; Stevens, 2011; Head, 2013). Indeed, the range of evidence available on a given policy issue can vary considerably and thus significantly impacts how the policy problem is seen, understood, and to be addressed. While certain pieces of evidence may support existing policy positions and reinforce the ideological orientations of policymakers, others may challenge these positions and thereby pose a threat to the political interests or ideologies of policy elites (Daviter, 2015; Stevens, 2011; Head, 2013). In his ethnographic study on the use of evidence in policymaking in the UK, Alex Stevens (2011) found policymakers to be overwhelmingly preoccupied with selecting only the evidence that fit in the particular “policy narrative” or “policy story” they were trying to tell of the policy issue at hand (p.241-5). Working within a governmental organization, Stevens (2011) found that the main preoccupation of policymakers was not to adequately address pressing policy problems through the best policy solutions possible but to control uncertainty regarding the scope and nature of the policy issue at hand. Policymakers effectively controlled this uncertainty by maintaining “policy narratives” and using only the evidence that matches the “existing narrative of government policy” (Stevens, 2011, p.245).
Due to the abundance of evidence available on a given policy issue, keeping in line with the policy stories thereby involved picking and choosing from the available evidence (Stevens, 2011). This selectivity involved choosing data and evidence carefully from different sources and explanations to fit the policy narrative and thus reduce the uncertainty that is inherent in addressing social problems through policy (Stevens, 2011). Stevens (2011) even noted the many hours he spent searching for data he could use to fit the policy story and how he ultimately manipulated the data so the policy issue at hand remained under control. Stevens’ (2011) example thus exposes how policymakers, at the very least, are selective in their evidence use as they choose certain pieces of evidence while ignoring others. This selectivity may therefore create an incoherence between the evidence used to understand root causes and origins of policy problems and the evidence used to identify solutions to the policy problems in the obsessive effort of policymakers to “get [...] the story to fit” (Stevens, 2011, p.245; Daviter, 2015).

Reasons for the selectivity of evidence stem from the ideological orientations of policymakers and impact the policy domains within which a particular policy issue will be placed. Brian Head (2013), for example, found the Indigenous policy domain to be “inevitably ideological and selective” due to the complexities surrounding Indigenous peoples as a historically racialized and marginalized population facing “persistent institutional inequalities” and social justice issues (p.399). Thus, policy domains involving historically marginalized populations, power relations and social justice issues, like the Indigenous domain, are more “turbulent” and influence policymakers to be more selective in their use of evidence (Head, 2013, p.399).

Stevens (2011) found this practice of carefully selecting the evidence to match policy narratives particularly pervasive in the policy realm of social inequality and injustice. What he notes as the “silent silencing of inequality,” Stevens (2011) exposed how much of the evidence on social
inequality as a cause for many of society’s ills was largely ignored and reduced to address its symptoms rather than origins (p.247). Policymakers failed to consider or learn from the evidence on the causes of social inequality and instead focused on addressing its symptoms through government programs (Stevens, 2011). As evidence of the failure of the enlightenment model regarding conceptual knowledge use (Weiss, 1977), ignoring the evidence on deeper social issues regarding social inequality and opting instead to address its symptoms is an important tactic by policymakers designed to “‘keep a lid’ on the effects of inequality, rather than doing anything to address its causes” (Stevens, 2011, p.249).

How the Evidence is Used
Regarding the reasons why policymakers employ a “selective, narrative use of evidence,” Paul Daviter (2015) highlights how politics plays a significant role not only in determining whether but also how evidence will be used (Stevens, 2011, p.237). Adding to the discussion in EBPM literature on the political use of evidence (i.e. the selection and use of evidence supporting a pre-existing policy decision) (Amara et al., 2004; Nutley et al., 2007), Daviter (2015) exposes how this political use involves both instrumental and conceptual dimensions determining not only how a policy issue is to be addressed but also how it is seen and understood. While a political use that is instrumental involves the overt application of concrete, technical knowledge supporting pre-determined policy decisions to address policy problems, a political use of evidence that is conceptual involves a more implicit application of conceptual knowledge supporting pre-determined positions, ideological orientations or political interests (Daviter, 2015). Thus, while some conceptual knowledge can serve in “challenging underlying assumptions and analytical concepts that structure policy choices” (Daviter, 2015, p.493), others can serve to reinforce these “fundamental assumptions” based on the particular policy narrative policymakers are following (Stevens, 2011, p.247). Conceptual
knowledge can thereby be utilized for political reasons to maintain what Daviter (2015) calls “issue control” over how a policy problem is seen, understood and, ultimately, addressed based on the scope and nature identified (p.496).

Indeed, Daviter (2015) goes even further and highlights how politics can even serve as a catalyst for the use of unsystematic evidence on policy issues where policymakers seek more policy authority and control over policy choices. Thus, in these cases, policymakers selectively use only the evidence supporting their own ideological perspectives on, or political interests surrounding, a particular policy issue. Beyond the need to “control uncertainty” in the policy process (Stevens, 2011, p.243), Daviter (2015) illuminates how the political use of evidence is also a manifestation of a more hidden, “second face” of power (Hacker, 2004; Bachrach and Baratz, 1962). Conceptual evidence can be used by policymakers to identify, and restrict, the scope and nature of a policy issue and thus prevent other potential causes or underlying issues from being addressed or even mentioned in the policy process. This power to prevent certain issues from being mentioned or discussed in the policy process through the use of conceptual evidence is an instance of the second face of power, as outlined by Bacharach and Baratz (1962). Depending on the policy story, policymakers include certain conceptual evidence supporting the causes they attribute to the policy issue and placing it within the policy domain most in line with their original policy decisions, political interests or wider ideological orientations (Stevens, 2011; Campbell, 2002).

While EBPM scholars overall remain fairly general in discussing the use of evidence as if all policy domains and issues are the same, there are some notable exceptions. Nabil Amara, Mathieu Ouimet and Rejean Landry (2004) found policy domains to be an important indicator determining the use of research in policymaking. They found the policy domains of language, culture, immigration, justice and native affairs to be particularly low in the use of evidence while
Policy domains of education and information, technology, social services, health and social security employed a higher use (Amara, Ouimet and Landry, 2004, p.93; Landry, Lamari and Amara, 2003). Michael Howlett (2015) also found the social and environmental policy area to rely on contested and “less quantifiable” data (p.177). Overall, however, EBPM scholars rarely zoom in on the use of evidence in specific policy areas.

**Conditions for EBPM: Politicization and Policy Capacity**

The literature on EBPM points to two main factors influencing the use of evidence. The first is the degree of politicization of the policy issue at hand (Howlett, McConnell and Perl, 2015). The politics surrounding a policy issue affects whether policy actors are primarily policy-driven or politics-driven (Howlett and Mukherjee, 2014). Policy scholars have pointed to the nefarious effects of politicization at each stage of the policymaking process (Howlett, 2009; Howlett, McConnell and Perl, 2015; Howlett and Giest, 2012; Howlett and Mukherjee, 2014). In the first stage of the process, when a policy issue first enters the agenda of policy makers, the level of politicization of the policy issue at hand can significantly alter the entire agenda-setting stage (Howlett, McConnell and Perl, 2015). In cases of highly politicized policy problems, blame avoidance and credit claiming often become more important motivations for policymakers than actual problem solving (Howlett, McConnell and Perl, 2015, p.423; Weaver, 1986).

In the policy formulation stage of the policy process, the amount of evidence, instrumental reasoning and systematic review involved can differ dramatically from one context to another (Howlett and Mukherjee, 2014; Howlett, 2009). Howlett and Mukherjee (2014) identify a spectrum of policy formulation types between design and non-design. Policy design involves the intentional process of creating rational policy solutions to an identified problem by gathering knowledge on the issue and applying useful instruments and tools in reaching “specifically desired
public policy outcomes and ambitions” (Howlett and Mukherjee, 2014, p.423). Non-design policy formulation types are irrational, interest-driven and based on political gain, political ideologies and/or blame avoidance (Hood, 2010; Howlett and Mukherjee, 2014; Weaver, 1986). Highly politicized policy issues, for example, will affect the political interests and ideologies of policymakers more than non-politicized policy issues and will thus inspire a more non-design type of policy formulation (Howlett and Mukherjee, 2014). The design type employed by policymakers will ultimately determine whether and how evidence will be used in the policy process.

Political processes equally impact the last stage of the policymaking process: the decision-making. Howlett and Giest (2012) note that policymakers are often bound by political considerations of bargaining and negotiation during this stage. As a result, their particular self-interests, political inclinations, and ideological worldviews limit their ability and/or willingness to consider all the evidence available on a particular issue and decide based on systematic review and technical cost-benefit analysis (Howlett and Giest, 2012). Thus, the degree of politicization of a particular policy issue impacts every stage of the policymaking process and ultimately determines whether and what type of evidence will be used in this process. One can extend this argument further to include the deciding role politics plays in determining how the evidence will be used. The more politicized the policy issue, the more the evidence will be used politically rather than non-politically (Head, 2013; Landry, Amara and Lamari, 2001; Daviter, 2015; Nutley, Walter and Davies, 2007).

The second factor determining the uptake of evidence in policymaking relates to the supply-side of EBPM, i.e. the qualifications and resources required for an effective use of evidence in policymaking (Howlett, 2009; Newman et al., 2016). This relates to the policy capacity of government to “access, process and transmit information for the purposes of making policy” (Newman
et al., 2016, p.5). More specifically, policy capacity is what policymakers require in accessing the appropriate “information or advice” related to “alternative policy choices” (Howlett, 2015, p.173) impacting “society at large” (Flynn, 2011, p.236). The policy capacity of governments in western democracies has been of particular interest to EBPM scholars noting the significant variation of policy capacity across time, place and government level (Flynn, 2011; Howlett, 2009; 2015; Oli-
phant and Howlett, 2010; Rasmussen, 1998).

The rise of neoliberalism and globalization in the late 1970s and early 1980s posed challenges to state policy capacity as government bureaucracies faced fiscal restraint and pressures for more public participation in policy decisions (Flynn, 2011; Howlett and Lindquist, 2004). This lead to an increase in governments outsourcing policymaking functions to external actors of the private sector such as think-tanks, universities and interest groups (Flynn, 2011; Howlett and Lind-
quist, 2004). As a result, policymakers today have more access to a “diverse array of information, research and analysis from […] alternative sources” in addressing social issues through policies (Head, 2013, p.401; Glor, 2001; Flynn, 2011; Howlett and Lindquist, 2004). Furthermore, today’s technological changes have created a greater demand for “new policy skills and capacities” (Head, 2013, p.401).

In terms of place, policy scholar Michael Howlett (2009) notes how the Canadian govern-
ment has particularly been working to re-energize its policy capacity following cuts in the 1980s and 1990s. Highlighting the increase in collaborations between state government and external pol-
icy information bodies such as university institutes and think tanks in the late 1990s, Howlett (2009) identifies this collaboration as an effort to “re-build federal policy analytical capacity in the new era of participatory governance” (p.166). Thus, specific to the context of Canada, the number and range of actors involved in the creation and dissemination of policy information has expanded
and now includes interest groups, think tanks, affected communities, NGOs, international organizations and others (Howlett, 2009).

The level of government is the final factor determining policy capacity. Subnational government bodies have a significantly weaker capacity than those at the federal level (Howlett, 2009; Oliphant and Howlett, 2010; Rasmussen, 1998). Specific to the Canadian context, the high policy capacity of the federal government involves the capacity to conduct “horizontal and holistic analyses” to policy problems (Howlett, 2009). With a much weaker policy capacity, provincial, territorial and local governments, on the other hand, are unable to conduct such analyses and thereby adopt a predominantly short-term focus in the creation and adoption of policies and programs addressing social issues (Howlett, 2009; Rasmussen, 1998).

To conclude, the degree of politicization of a particular policy issue and the government policy capacity ultimately impact policymakers’ willingness and ability to consider all possible evidence and alternatives in addressing policy issues. The politicization of a policy issue affects not only whether evidence will be used and what kind of evidence is included (the demand for evidence) but also how it will be used (politically or non-politically) in the policy process. The policy capacity (the supply of evidence) of government impacts which evidence will be presented, privileged and, ultimately, used to address policy issues and which will be overlooked or ignored by policymakers. This ability (supply of evidence) and willingness (demand for evidence) of policymakers to practice EBPM ultimately determines how certain policy issues will be addressed in identifying the main groups affected by the issue, the main causes and origins of the policy problem, the various terms and concepts used to describe the issue, and the possible solutions available to address it.
Chapter 3. Methodology

Case Selection

Few studies in the literature on EBPM look at the use of evidence in specific policy issues or areas. While EBPM scholars have analyzed the use of evidence in policymaking more broadly, few have traced the trajectory of evidence through the policy process of a single, concrete policy problem (Howlett, 2009; 2015). In other words, few studies have conducted in-depth, empirical analyses into exactly how the evidence is received and used by politicians at different stages of the policy process and whether or not the evidence made a difference in final policy decisions. This research will contribute to this theoretical gap by conducting an empirical analysis into the use of evidence in the policy process addressing the problem of foreign credential recognition (FCR) in Canada.

The policy problem of FCR in Canada serves as a useful case to study the use of evidence in the policy process since it meets the two main conditions favorable for EBPM to occur, as outlined in Chapter two. First, FCR issues fall within the larger political issues surrounding immigrant admission policies, national diversity and inclusion, and the economic integration of immigrants in Canada. As a nation of immigrants with “some of the most generous and inclusive naturalization and diversity policies in the Western world,” policy issues relating to immigrant economic inclusion exhibit a relatively low degree of politicization in the Canadian context, particularly when compared to other immigrant-receiving welfare states (Koning, 2013, p.153; 192). Furthermore, as the first country in the world to adopt a multicultural model of social integration as official policy (Ng and Metz, 2015; Banting and Kymlicka, 2010), Canada, in theory, exhibits a comparatively high level of inclusion for immigrants in the social and cultural realm. We can
thereby expect policy issues affecting immigrant communities such as FCR to exhibit a relatively low level of controversy or politicization in the social and political sphere.

Regarding the second condition of policy capacity, as an “advanced” and “rich” country with large “capabilities rivaling other national jurisdictions” of the developed world, Canadian governments exhibit a comparatively high policy capacity (Howlett, 2009, p.153;168; 2015; Howlett and Lindquist, 2004, p.240). The Canadian federal government has particularly been identified within EBPM literature as a government with a “reasonably high” political capacity “by historical and comparative standards” (Howlett, 2009, p.166). As outlined in Chapter two, lower government levels such as the provincial, territorial or local have a significantly weaker policy capacity (Howlett, 2009; Rasmussen, 1998). Moreover, through the work of the Standing Committees in the House of Commons, Canadian federal legislatures have access to a range of evidence from a myriad of sources such as community organizations, NGOs, government departments, universities and many other bodies whose experts may appear before parliament as witnesses in a committee study (Parliament of Canada, n.d.; Howlett, 2009). Thus, the Canadian federal government overall exhibits a high policy capacity for accessing, understanding, and ultimately using evidence in the policy process.

To address the gap in EBPM literature on empirical research analyzing the use of evidence throughout the policy process (Howlett, 2009; 2015), the policy problem of FCR in Canada thus serves as a useful case to study. As a policy issue with a low degree of politicization addressed by a government with a high policy capacity, the case of FCR in Canada comprises of the two main conditions favorable to a genuine, non-political use of evidence and thereby serves as a ‘most likely’ case in studying the uptake of evidence (Eckstein, 2011; Gerring, 2007). Since we do not know much about the use of evidence throughout the policy process addressing a specific policy
area, it makes sense to select a case where the conditions are most favorable to a genuine (i.e. non-political) use of evidence (Howlett, 2009; 2015; Eckstein, 2011). This case selection will thus serve to better elucidate whether and how the two conditions identified in EBPM literature affect the use of evidence at each stage of the policy process as well as in the final policy decisions addressing the problem of FCR in Canada (Gerring, 2007; Levy, 2008).

For more practical reasons, what makes Canada a particularly useful case to study is the acknowledgement of FCR as a significant issue and policy objective that policy actors have focused on and responded to (Guo and Shan, 2013; FLMM, 2009; CIC, 2013; ACESC, CICIC and CMEC, 2009; FCM, n.d.). While the successful economic integration of immigrants has been identified as an issue many receiving countries face (e.g. Kogan, 2004), FCR obstacles and barriers to immigrant economic integration has been particularly identified by the Canadian government as a significant social problem and a major policy challenge (see chapter four).

Although the issue of FCR has been on the radar of the federal government since the late 1980s, only recently have actual investigations into the origins of the issue been a part of government activities. While 2003 and 2007 were important years in which the government addressed the issue through the creation of the FCRP and FCRO (see chapter four for more on these initiatives), respectively, by 2009, the federal government recognized that many barriers remained and instructed the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (CIMM) to further investigate the issue to arrive at better policy solutions (CIMM, 2009a; Debates, 2009a).

In 2009, members of parliament (MPs) heard the evidence on FCR from experts in CIMM evidence meetings in the House of Commons, debated the issue in House debates, and produced a final report in which they presented their final recommendations to government on how to best address the issue (CIMM, 2009a;b;c;d;e;f;g;h; Debates, 2009a;b;c;d). Thus, 2009 was the year
where the most evidence was presented on the issue itself as politicians aimed to better understand, translate and identify the core causes and origins of this policy issue. It is an important year revealing how and which evidence on FCR was received by politicians and how they ultimately made sense of the issue in light of existing evidence on the problem. In 2011, the issue of FCR was taken up again by government in a study by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA). However, this time, the focus of the 2011 study had moved on from investigating the problem of FCR itself to focusing exclusively on the FCR process and identifying ways to accelerate and simplify it (HUMA, 2012). Thus, by 2011, the scope and conceptualization of this policy issue had already been decided on based on the evidence used by politicians in 2009. The scope of this research thereby centres on tracing the use of evidence throughout the FCR policy process in 2009 by analyzing the Evidence reports from CIMM Committee meetings, the 2009 CIMM final report, minutes from House debates where the problem of FCR was discussed and policy decisions regarding FCR from 2009. Because the evidence on FCR issues was presented to a Committee of MPs, this research focuses specifically on politicians as the main group of policymakers under study.

**Methods of Data Collection and Analysis**

To answer the research question of what evidence is used in policymaking and how, this study analyzes the discourse employed by federal politicians (MPs) discussing the problem of FCR at various stages of the policy process. This research employs two main methods to answer the research question. The first is a literature review of social science research and academic findings on the issue of FCR in Canada. A comprehensive review of the academic literature on FCR is
important to understand what we actually know about FCR based on the range of existing evidence available. Academic literature on the issue offers three different explanations for FCR (further outlined in chapter four), each of which identifies very different causes and origins of the policy problem and very different solutions for it. This research subsequently tests these academic findings against politicians’ discourses on the issue to determine what and how the evidence is used in policymaking.

The second method is a discourse analysis of 2009 government documents and reports including Evidence reports (i.e. the transcripts) from CIMM meetings in the House of Commons, transcripts from House debates on the issue and the final 2009 report by the CIMM on FCR. Discourse analysis is the study of a system of texts that determines how a particular social issue is seen, understood and addressed as a social reality (Halperin and Heath, 2012). It is an appropriate method to use in uncovering how politicians understand FCR, how they communicate the issue, who they believe the key stakeholders are, and what they consider the available, appropriate or feasible responses to this issue.

**Analytical Framework**

As discussed in Chapter 2, evidence serves as an important analytical tool for politicians to properly identify all the fundamental aspects of a policy problem such as: the main groups affected by the policy issue, the origins or root causes of the issue, the concepts/terms used to describe the issue and the range of policy choices available to effectively address the policy problem. These aspects contribute to politicians’ overall understanding of a policy issue and serve as important criteria to use in tracing the trajectory of the evidence explaining FCR issues throughout the policy process. The criteria thus serves as an analytical framework within which the evidence from all three academic (see chapter 5), and one non-academic (see chapter six), explanations for FCR is
analyzed at various stages of the policy process including: the existing evidence, the evidence presented by experts to MPs during CIMM Evidence meetings, the evidence received or internalized by MPs and the evidence used in the CIMM final report. Figure 1 presents a visual outline of the trajectory of the evidence in the policy process according to the criteria used to identify the various explanations for FCR issues. For a full outline of the criteria used to analyze these findings, see Appendix A: Tables.

Figure 1. Trajectory of Evidence in the Policy Process

- Existing Evidence
- Evidence Presented by Experts
- Evidence Received/ Internalized by MPs
- Evidence Used in CIMM Final Report

Explanations for FCR (1, 2, 3 and/or 4) according to the criteria: who, what, origins, and solutions.
The second level of analysis in this research examines the use of evidence in the politics of FCR by comparing politicians’ discourse surrounding this issue before and after the CIMM Evidence meetings. MPs discussed the issue of FCR throughout 2009 in both CIMM meetings and House debates. However, it was not until October 22 and 27 that MPs heard the evidence and main explanations for FCR problems in Canada from experts on the issue. Thus, analyzing and comparing the transcripts from CIMM meetings and House debates before and after the October evidence meetings\(^1\) reveal whether MPs actually made use of the evidence presented to them on this policy issue. Figure 2 presents a visual outline of this second level of analysis.

\(\text{Figure 2. Politicians’ Explanations for FCR Pre- versus Post-Evidence Meetings}\)

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\(^1\) Although official Parliament documents refer to all transcripts of Committee meetings as ‘Evidence’ reports, this research will use the general term of ‘evidence meetings’ to mean specifically the CIMM meetings on October 22 and 27 where experts presented all the evidence on FCR to MPs.
Chapter 4. Historical Background: FCR as a Policy Problem

The problem of foreign credential recognition in Canada affects most immigrants regardless of their stream of admission. Even economic immigrants, who, unlike refugee and family class immigrants, are selected and admitted into Canada based on their language skills, previous work experience, educational credentials and overall ‘adaptability’ to Canada, face significant barriers and delays in the recognition of their credentials and overall job skills (Ferrer, Picot and Riddell, 2012; Oreopoulos, 2011). Between 2001 and 2005, Statistics Canada conducted a longitudinal study that calculated the probability of the recognition of an immigrant’s credentials and previous work experience after four years in Canada according to a number of explanatory variables (HUMA, 2012). According to their findings, only 28% of immigrants reported that their credentials had been “fully or partially accepted” after four years in Canada (HUMA, 2012, p.33). Furthermore, being a women, an older individual, a non-economic immigrant or a member of a visible minority group significantly decreased the probability of an immigrant’s credentials and experience being recognized after four years (HUMA, 2012).

The effects of FCR issues among immigrant communities are significant and have contributed to an overall deterioration in the economic outcomes of newcomers (Ferrer, Picot and Riddell, 2012). Although the educational credentials of recent immigrants are on average higher than Canadian-born workers and are on the rise, recent immigrants are 2.5 times more likely than Canadian-born workers to be in low skilled occupations (Reitz, 2005; Ferrer, Picot and Riddell, 2012). Despite widely held institutional and governmental norms acknowledging the time and resources newcomers require to ‘successfully integrate’ into the Canadian labor market, workplace and wider society, immigrants’ economic and occupational outcomes fail to improve with time in Canada (Ferrer, Picot and Riddell, 2012). In an elaborate economic analysis, Ferrer, Picot and Riddell
(2012) found that even after spending eleven to fifteen years in Canada, immigrants were still “twice as likely” as Canadian workers to be in low-skilled occupations (p.8). This persistent inaccessibility to professional and high-skilled occupations have contributed to their underemployment, reduced earnings, vulnerability and comparatively low social mobility (Guo, 2009). FCR issues and the resulting negative economic outcomes of immigrants have increased poverty rates among immigrants as well as the inequality between immigrants and Canadian-born residents (Ferrer, Picot and Riddell, 2012; Guo, 2009; Reitz, 2005).

**Government Approaches to the Problem of FCR**

Even though the problem of FCR has been a significant obstacle to the successful economic integration of immigrants since the late 1980s/early 1990s, Canadian governments only began actively addressing the FCR process in the early 2000s (Guo, 2009; Guo and Shan, 2013; Reitz, 2005). More specifically, the Canadian government created several initiatives aimed at facilitating the complex and occlusive FCR process (CIMM, 2009a). The first is the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) which is administered by the HRSDC and was created in 2003 to address institutional barriers to FCR (CIMM, 2009a). The FCRP offers financial support to the main stakeholders responsible for FCR such as sector councils, regulatory bodies, immigrant-serving organizations, assessment agencies, professional associations, post-secondary educational institutions, and employers (CIMM, 2009a). The FCRP funds projects aimed at facilitating the FCR process and overall labor market integration of immigrants in both regulated and non-regulated occupations (CIMM, 2009a).

The second initiative by the federal government is the launch of the Foreign Credential Referrals Office (FCRO) in 2007 by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) (CIMM, 2009a).
The FCRO plays an information-providing and coordinating role by referring immigrants, both pre-arrival and post-arrival, to “appropriate credential recognition services” while working with provinces/territories, regulatory bodies and employers to avoid “overlap and duplication” in the FCR process and share best practices (CIMM, 2009a, p.4). A third initiative, specific to the health sector, where widely recognized labor market shortages exist, is the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative (IEHPI) (CIMM, 2009a). In 2005, the federal government “committed $75 million over five years” to this initiative (CIMM, 2009a, p.4). Administered by Health Canada, the IEHPI deals exclusively with the barriers faced by internationally-educated health professionals in integrating in the health care sector (CIMM, 2009a). IEHPI priorities include strengthening assessment processes, creating academic and clinical bridging programs and enhancing workplace integration programs (CIMM, 2009a).

**Academic Literature on Government Approaches to FCR Issues**

Despite the awareness of FCR issues by MPs and the abundance of government initiatives created as a result, few studies have focused exclusively on the Canadian state’s response and particular approach to FCR issues. Seeing as FCR difficulties have been linked to immigrant underemployment and an increased risk of unemployment, welfare dependence and poverty (Mata, 1999, p.4; Reitz, 2005), government responses are crucial to immigrant economic integration and their particular conceptualization of and approaches to this issue must be analyzed in comparison with the existing academic literature.

While the literature provides suggestions to the government’s role in solving FCR issues (Hawthorne, 2007; Donaldson, 2007; Reitz, 2005), few scholars focus on what policy actors have to say about FCR difficulties and which initiatives they have developed to address them. Probably most relevant is a study by Guo and Shan (2013), who provide a critical discourse analysis of two
recent government initiatives designed to facilitate the FCR process. Analyzing the discourse behind two “benchmark government documents” at the provincial (Fair Access to Regulated Professions in Ontario) and federal (the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications) level, the authors criticize the assumptions policymakers hold in conceptualizing and defining the problem of recognition in Canada (Guo and Shan, 2013, p.466). They note the neoliberal discourse employed in government initiatives addressing FCR as a complex procedural issue forming barriers to the “economic potential and prosperity of Canada” and how this framing ultimately excludes the voices of immigrants themselves while failing to effectively address the power relations and social inequality inherent in the FCR process (Guo and Shan, 2013).

Guo and Shan (2013) provide an excellent overview of existing literature explaining FCR issues and a useful analysis of two government initiatives addressing the issue. Their critical analysis of the discourses in government initiatives addressing FCR further raises the question of the extent to which politicians are actually basing their policies on existing literature on FCR. However, their study does not investigate how politicians arrived at these initiatives, and more specifically, on what evidence they are basing their policy decisions, and how they do so. While several government initiatives and reports have arisen over the years in response to FCR difficulties, few studies have looked at the particular approaches politicians have employed to understand, define and address FCR issues in Canada. Most critically, we do not really know to what extent politicians are aware of and actually make use of the many empirical findings on, and theoretical explanations for, the roots of FCR issues in Canada, as identified in academic literature.
Chapter 5. Academic Literature on FCR in Canada

The problem of FCR in Canada has been a topic studied by social science researchers for several decades now. Indeed, as highlighted in chapter four, FCR issues have been on the radar of academics long before policymakers began addressing or even acknowledging the issue. Existing evidence on this issue includes a range of studies such as quantitative labour market and demographic data analyses, qualitative interviews with immigrants and employers, qualitative content analysis of existing initiatives addressing FCR issues and literature reviews of past studies researching this social problem and its impact on immigrant communities. By and large, the existing evidence falls into three main explanations for the problem of FCR, each with a specific understanding of the policy issue, identifying the particular groups affected, concepts used to describe the issue, its roots causes, and the appropriate solutions to address the issue.

**Explanation 1 – Admission Policy versus Labor Market Needs**

The first explanation, which I will refer to as admission policy, focuses on the difficulty of using immigrant admission policy to respond to the needs of the labor market. According to this explanation, FCR is broadly conceptualized as an issue with the labor market outcomes of immigrants in finding employment at their level of qualification. The main reason for immigrants’ difficulties in the labor market is the overall difficulty policymakers have in devising admission policies targeted at immigrants whose skills are actually needed in the Canadian economy and labor market (McHale, 2002). Understanding FCR, then, requires an analysis of the particular admission policy approach to evaluating immigrants’ foreign credentials as part of the selection process and how well this approach meets labor market needs or opportunities once immigrants arrive in Canada (Hawthorne, 2007; McHale, 2002; Picot and Sweetman, 2012).
While Canada’s immigration policy has been designed to respond to the state’s economic and labor market needs for the majority of the country’s existence, the eligibility criteria to determine skill-selected immigrants’ admission have evolved over the years (Ferrer, Picot and Riddell, 2012). Beginning in 1967, drastic changes were to made to the admission policy in formally abolishing the White Canada immigration policy which included race as a criterion in assessing an applicant’s eligibility for admission to Canada (Knowles, 1992 p.149). A points system was established ranking potential immigrants according to their education, employment prospects in Canada, age and knowledge of official languages (Knowles, 1992, p.149-50).

While the points system, created in 1967, has remained an important part of the immigrant selection process, its emphasis on certain skills has shifted over time in the continuing struggle to meet national labor market needs (Knowles, 1992; Ferrer, Picot and Riddell, 2012; McHale, 2002). The main shift in the points system occurred in 2002 with the passing of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) which replaced the focus on occupational shortages with an approach targeting human capital in general (McHale, 2002; Picot, Hou and Qiu, 2014). This approach, grounded in human capital theory, focuses on selecting immigrants with certain human capital characteristics that are believed to predict “long-run labor market success” (McHale, 2002, p.228). While it was adopted in response to the ineffectiveness of the pre-2002 approach in meeting “ever-shifting labor demands and supplies” (McHale, 2002, p.219), some scholars attribute continuing FCR difficulties to the failure of the human capital-based admission policy in meeting labor market needs (Reitz, 2005; McHale, 2002). These scholars point to the rise of the knowledge economy of today’s post-industrial era: as human capital becomes more and more important to all workers’ labour market outcomes, native-born Canadians’ rising education levels and overall skills
attainment have a negative effect on immigrant labour market outcomes (Reitz, 2005; McHale, 2002; Waslander, 2002).

Other scholars employing this admission policy explanation also point to the overall difficulty of the immigration system in responding to labour market gaps in an effective and timely manner (Picot and Sweetman, 2012; Esses, Bennett-AbuAyyash and Lapshina, 2014). Despite government rhetoric on the need for immigrants to fill labour market shortages, meeting labour market needs in time through immigration is actually very difficult given the volatility of the labour market and the long time it takes for immigrant intake levels to match “short-run” demands and gaps in the labour market (Picot and Sweetman, 2012). A concrete example of the negative effects a volatile labour market has on immigration policy is the IT bust of the 2000s which left most immigrants concentrated in computer science and engineering unemployed as immigration levels “overresponded” to premature government demands for IT workers (Picot and Sweetman, 2012, p.7). Moreover, obtaining reliable information capable of adequately forecasting labour market short-term and long-term trends is next to impossible as demands and shortages shift very quickly, particularly those “associated with commodity-based industries,” where shortages predominantly appear (Picot and Sweetman, 2012). Picot and Sweetman (2012) attribute this difficulty in meeting labour market needs through immigration admission policy to the main reason why the 2002 changes made to the points system removed occupational points and replaced it with a more general human-capital approach to the selection process.

Comparisons between the Australian and Canadian selection process for skilled immigrants have also been employed as evidence for this explanation for FCR. Hawthorne (2007) notes that the Australian model, where immigrants’ credentials are screened by the “relevant national or
provincial/territorial licensing body” prior to their admission into Australia, has secured employment for as many as eighty-one percent of skill-selected immigrants “within six months of arrival” compared to only sixty percent in Canada (Hawthorne, 2007, p.6). Thus, Hawthorne (2007) argues that the Australian model admitting immigrants based on a “pre-migration screening” of their qualifications particular to their professions has resulted in improved labor market outcomes for immigrants (p.6).

In sum, scholars invoking this admission policy explanation for the problem of FCR understand the issue as a disconnect between the immigrant selection process and the actual needs of the Canadian labour market. Since the points system and selection process only applies to economic/skill-selected immigrants, they are the main group of interest in studying the problem of FCR in Canada according to this explanation. FCR issues are conceptualized as a problem with the labour market integration of skill-selected immigrants and are measured by the economic outcomes of this particular immigrant class. The origins of the problem of FCR thus stem from an inadequate immigration admission policy unable to properly and timely bring immigrants to Canada with the skills needed by the labour market. According to this explanation, solutions to the problem of FCR must involve modifying the selection process to include the screening of immigrants’ credentials as part of their admission into Canada.

**Explanation 2 – Institutional Complexities**

The second main theoretical explanation for the difficulties surrounding FCR in Canada points to the barriers and obstacles in the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials due to the many complex procedures, time-consuming stages and non-collaborative actors involved (Reitz, 2005; Mata, 1999; Watt and Bloom, 2001). Within this explanation, FCR is more narrowly conceptual-
ized as an issue of skills recognition (Reitz, 2005). This explanation identifies four main stakeholders or institutional players involved in the FCR process: post-secondary educational institutions, governments at both the federal and provincial level, professional self-regulating bodies, and employers (Mata, 1999; Watt and Bloom, 2001; Reitz, 2005). The main mechanisms behind FCR difficulties this explanation points at are fourfold: (1) the number of veto points in the institutional recognition process, (2) the lack of collaboration between institutional actors, (3) the lack of information-sharing among stakeholders and (4) the overall difficulty immigrants have in navigating the system and FCR process.

The first mechanism is the number of veto points involved in the FCR process. Seeing as there is no national, authoritative body responsible for recognizing foreign degrees and work experience, each individual institutional player holds a significant level of authority in deciding both the “inputs and outcomes” of the assessment and recognition process (Mata, 1999; Watt and Bloom, 2001, p.32). Adding extra layers of institutional complexity to the issue, each actor in the FCR process follows its own evaluation process in assessing foreign credentials based on different standards and different procedures (Reitz, Curtis and Elrick, 2014). Thus, every institutional player offers a possibility for the recognition process to fail or prolong (Mata, 1999; Reitz, Curtis and Elrick, 2014).

The second mechanism is the lack of collaboration between the main institutional players (Reitz, 2005, p.9). Especially relevant in this context is the limited collaboration between the educational institutions that determine crucial qualifications to certain professions and the licensing bodies that determine “occupational access” to these professions (Reitz, 2005, p.9). In other words, having one’s degree in a particular profession recognized does not guarantee a license in the cor-
responding occupation (Reitz, 2005). The lack of cooperation between main stakeholders thus inhibits the FCR process and ultimately limits immigrants’ access to professional and regulated occupations.

A third mechanism contributing to the institutional complexities of FCR is the lack of information-sharing between relevant stakeholders involved in the FCR process (Reitz, 2005). The lack of information-sharing reduces the awareness of main stakeholders of the actual labour market value of foreign credentials (Mata, 1999; Watt and Bloom, 2001). Scholars argue that this “lack of systematic information” on foreign education systems and work experience equivalencies and lack of national standards evaluating foreign credentials often leads to “subjective” evaluation procedures, particularly on the part of professional associations and licensing bodies (Watt and Bloom, 2001, p.32; Mata, 1999; Guo, 2009). Thus, scholars positing this explanation argue that it is the “complex interactions” (Mata, 1999, p.5) between key institutional actors and the lack of information sharing between them that pose the most significant barriers to the FCR process contributing to the non-recognition of immigrants’ skills (Reitz, 2005; Watt and Bloom, 2001).

The last mechanism is the lack of information immigrants have on the assessment and recognition process (Reitz, 2005; Mata, 1999). Immigrants require information on work, the labor market, professional organizations, licensing bodies and so on to adequately maneuver the complex institutional procedures behind the FCR process (Reitz, 2005). Lack of awareness of the actual maneuverings of the Canadian labor market and the accreditation procedures involved create a significant barrier to immigrant workers seeking to effectively utilize their skills (Reitz, 2005).

In sum, the problem of FCR in this account is explained as the result of institutional complexities (i.e. transferable “foreign-acquired skills” that “would have productive value” in the Canadian labor market if they were recognized) and affects all immigrant classes (Reitz, 2005, p.3).
The number of veto points, non-collaboration between institutional actors, lack of information-sharing between stakeholders and the overall difficulties immigrants face in maneuvering the complexities of the FCR process are all evidence of the institutional discord underlying FCR issues in Canada (Reitz, 2005; Mata, 1999; Watt and Bloom, 2001). FCR is thus conceptualized within this explanation as an issue with immigrant skills recognition as procedural barriers and institutional complexities further delay the FCR process and ultimately fail to have immigrant credentials recognized, leaving their skills significantly underutilized in the labor market (Reitz, 2005; Reitz, Curtis and Elrick, 2014). This particular analytical framework to FCR posits the need for institutional change, in particular regarding the development of national standards for evaluating credentials, and cooperation between the stakeholders responsible for FCR (Reitz, 2005; Guo, 2009; Mata, 1999; Watt and Bloom, 2001).

**Explanation 3 – The Continuing Legacy of Racial Discrimination**

The third and last set of explanations for FCR focuses on the prejudice and discrimination immigrants of a particular national origin and ethnic background face in having their credentials recognized (Esses, Bennett-AbuAyyash and Lapshina, 2014; Bauder, 2003). According to this explanation, barriers to FCR are broadly conceptualized as the devaluation of the skills and human capital of nonwhite immigrants. The main reason for immigrants’ difficulties in the labor market is the continuing racial and ethnic discrimination and prejudice in governmental and labor market institutions involved in the FCR process (Bauder, 2003; Khan, 2007; Esses et al., 2007; Guo, 2009; Dietz et al., 2015). The main cause behind FCR difficulties, then, is the discrimination practiced by both institutional players in the FCR process and by employers in the hiring process.
This explanation for the FCR difficulties immigrants face offers a critical view of the issue and refers to Canada’s overtly racist past of race-based immigration admission policies and immigrant labour exploitation (Guo, 2009; Guo and Shan, 2013; Knowles, 1992; Basran and Zong, 1998). Critical scholars note that the decrease in immigrant earnings over the past thirty years despite their increase in credentials coincides with a drastic transformation in source countries of skilled immigrants (Hawthorne, 2007; Picot and Sweetman, 2012). While Western Europe and the United States were the main sources of skill-selected immigrants thirty years ago, Asia and Africa have become the main source regions of economic immigrants (Knowles, 2007). Thus, given the increase in visible minorities from developing regions entering Canada as economic immigrants, critical scholars point to racial discrimination and prejudice in various state and labor market institutions as a key factor inhibiting the FCR of immigrants today (Hawthorne, 2007; Guo, 2009; Donaldson, 2007).

While institutional explanations acknowledge that attitudinal barriers (that is, discrimination) may play some role in creating obstacles to immigrants’ FCR (Reitz, 2005; Mata 1999), critical explanations for FCR difficulties identify systemic barriers and non-neutral, discriminatory institutional practices as the primary obstacles immigrants face in the accreditation process (Guo, 2009; Man, 2004; Esses et al., 2007; Iredale, 2005; Guo and Shan, 2013; Bauder, 2003). In contextualizing Canada’s immigration policy within a history and continuing legacy of “social, racial and ideological control” (Guo, 2009, p.39), this explanation views institutional players and processes as non-neutral and biased according to race (Guo, 2009), place of origin (Bauder, 2003) and gender (Man, 2004; Iredale, 2005). Critical scholars thus argue that immigrants of a visible minority, who in fact make up the “vast majority of immigrants to Canada today” (Reitz, 2005, p.3), face significant discriminatory barriers in the Canadian accreditation process and labour market more
generally that systematically devalues their skills, thereby excluding them from “the most highly desired occupations” (Bauder, 2003; p.699; Khan, 2007).

In their study on labor market discrimination, Esses, Dietz, Bennett-AbuAyyash and Joshi (2007) argue that the “supposed poorer quality” of immigrant credentials have been used to justify discrimination based on racial and religious prejudice (p.115). Their empirical studies on discriminatory practices in the reviewing process of the resumes of both immigrants and native-born Canadians reveal how visible minority immigrant applicants were viewed significantly less favorably than both white immigrant and native-born Canadian applicants (see Esses et al., 2007). Esses et al. (2007) thus identify the problem of FCR as an issue with the intentional skills discounting of immigrants based on the “subtle prejudice” and discriminatory practices of employers and other actors involved in the FCR process (p. 116).

Further research supports these findings of discriminatory practices in the hiring process (Reitz, 2005; Esses, Bennet-AbuAyyash and Lapshina, 2014; Dietz et al., 2015). Employer’s “notorious demands” for ‘Canadian experience’ have been cited as a common example of discriminatory practices hiding prejudice, particularly given its “Catch-22 character”: immigrants require Canadian experience to find a job, yet they can only attain ‘Canadian experience’ through employment in the Canadian labor market (Reitz, 2005, p.10; Esses et al., 2007; Guo, 2009). In his study on the devaluation of immigrant labour in Canada, Bauder (2003) reveals how employers’ insistence on ‘Canadian experience’ have allowed employers to hire highly skilled immigrants for “sub-standard wages” merely due to their lack of ‘Canadian experience’ which was also required in recognizing foreign educational credentials (Bauder, 2003, p.712). Oreopoulos’ (2011) field experiment with resumes also reveals how employers’ concerns with immigrant language skills and
sufficient Canadian experience may in fact be underlying prejudice against immigrants of a particular background. In his study, Oreopoulos (2011) sent out thousands of randomly manipulated resumes to job recruiters in Toronto and found that even the foreign-named applicants listing fluency in English and French and Canadian experience in their resumes received significantly less callbacks than applicants with English names. Indeed, changing only the name of the applicant from an English name to “one with Indian origin” lowers the callback rate by 4.5 to 11.5 percent and by 11 to 11.3 percent for names with Pakistani or Chinese origin (Oreopoulos, 2009, p.160). When asked for reasons why employers hesitate contacting applicants with foreign-sounding names, recruiters “overwhelmingly” cited concerns with language skills (Oreopoulos, 2009, p.166). Given the significant differences in callback rates as a result of only changing the name of the applicant and the fact that workers with “foreign-sounding” names may themselves be Canadian-born (not immigrants), employers’ overall hesitations with hiring ‘immigrants’ may in fact be attributed to underlying racial bias and prejudice and not actual concerns with language skills (Oreopoulos, 2009, p.169).

The problem of FCR in this analytical framework is thus conceptualized as the institutional devaluation of immigrants’ skills and human capital in a labor market that systemically discriminates against them (Bauder, 2003; Khan, 2007; Esses et al., 2007; Guo, 2009; Dietz et al., 2015). The main group affected by FCR issues according to this explanation is thus nonwhite immigrants, also identified as racialized or visible/ethnic/religious minority immigrants (Li, 2004; Esses, Bennett-AbuAyyash and Lapshina, 2014). While the other two analytical frameworks identify the problem of FCR as a disconnect either between admission policy and labor market demands or between the various institutional actors in the FCR process, this analytical framework posits that lingering ideas surrounding national identity and belonging, nation-building and the racialization
of immigrant ‘outsiders’ to the Canadian nation and resulting devaluation of their skills and labor have contributed to the problem of FCR (Guo, 2009; Li, 1998; 2004; Donaldson, 2007; Bannerji, 2000). Solutions for FCR issues thus involve policy interventions in employer hiring practices to better detect discrimination and prejudice as well as raising awareness of these issues through workshops, campaigns and modifying human resource practices to emphasize immigrant inclusion in the workplace (Esses, Bennett-AbuAyyash and Lapshina, 2014; Dietz, Joshi, Esses, Hamilton and Gabarrot, 2015).

Overall, the available evidence on FCR difficulties in Canada suggests three main contributors to this policy issue, they are: admission policy, institutional complexities, and discrimination. All three explanations, summarized in Table 1, point to three very different origins at the root of the problem of FCR and imply three very different solutions to the issue. Although all three are acknowledged by most academic researchers, varying support for each framework was found. While researchers acknowledged that institutional complexities do indeed create barriers to the FCR process, most went deeper into identifying the origin of the issue as lying either in the labour market and immigration system or in racial attitudes and prejudice (Reitz, 2005; Picot and Sweetman, 2012). Indeed, only two articles were found in the literature review to focus exclusively on institutional complexities and procedural obstacles as the root cause for FCR issues (Watt and Bloom, 2000; Mata, 1999). The rest of the literature attributed FCR issues to larger systemic issues dealing with immigration and labour market policies or racial inequality, exclusion and justice. In the next chapter, these academic explanations will be tested against politicians’ discourse on FCR throughout the policy process as well as before and after the CIMM evidence meetings.
Table 1. Summary of Findings: Academic Explanations for FCR Issues in Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation 1: Admission Policy</th>
<th>Explanation 2: Institutional Complexities</th>
<th>Explanation 3: Discrimination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Existing Evidence</strong></td>
<td>Who: FSWs/skill-selected/ economic immigrants only</td>
<td>Who: All immigrant classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origins</strong>: Mismatch between Admission policy/immigrant intake levels and labour market needs/opportunities</td>
<td>Origins: Complex procedures, institutional obstacles, lack of information on FCR</td>
<td>Origins: Labour market exclusions based on race, ethnicity, discrimination, xenophobia, systemic barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What</strong>: Unsuccessful labour market/economic integration of immigrants</td>
<td>What: Slow, complex process, specific to the non-recognition of immigrants' skills</td>
<td><strong>What</strong>: skills devaluation of nonwhite immigrants, includes hiring practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solutions</strong>: Modify/update the selection process to match labour market shortages, include screening of credentials in points system</td>
<td>Solutions: Establish a national, authoritative body/approach to FCR, more funding, programs and services to help immigrants navigate the FCR process</td>
<td>Solutions: politics on employment equity, rights, equality, regulate hiring practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6. Discourse Analysis

Although the problem of FCR had been on the federal government agenda since 2003 with the creation of the FCRP, the Conservative government in 2009 recognized that many barriers remained and thus called for the CIMM to conduct a new study on this policy issue. Indeed, MPs from all major parties discussed FCR issues throughout 2009 in House debates and CIMM meetings both before, during and after the October CIMM Evidence meetings. A discourse analysis of transcripts from House debates and committee meetings from 2009 involves two levels of analysis involving politicians’ use of evidence on this policy issue. The first level of analysis involves tracing the trajectory of evidence on FCR throughout the stages in the policy process. The first stage, outlined in chapter five, involves all the existing, academic evidence on the problem of FCR and reveals three main explanations for the policy problem. The second stage involves analyzing the evidence presented by experts to MPs during the CIMM Evidence meetings held on October 22 and 27, 2009. The third stage analyzes MPs’ reception and internalization of the evidence presented during the October meetings. The last stage analyzes the evidence used by MPs in the CIMM final report on the problem of FCR. A complete summary of the findings from this first level of analysis is outlined in Table 3 on p. 52.

The second level of analysis involves comparing politicians’ explanations for FCR before and after the October CIMM Evidence meeting. Very little changes to MPs’ understandings of the policy issue were found, particularly across party lines, even after hearing all the evidence. Moreover, some politicians even presented their own explanations for the problem of FCR, which were neither supported by the academic literature nor by the experts whose advice they sought in the Evidence meetings. Support for this fourth explanation was found in both levels of analysis and is
further outlined in this chapter. Figure 3 summarizes this explanation and presents all the explanations for FCR communicated by MPs on this policy issue. Table 4 on p.59 presents a complete summary of findings from this second level of analysis.

**Figure 3. All Explanations for FCR Issues Argued by MPs**

### Explanations for FCR

#### Academic

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<th>Explanation 1</th>
<th>Explanation 2</th>
<th>Explanation 3</th>
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#### Non-Academic

**Explanation 4: Personal Responsibility**

**Who:** All immigrants  
**Origins:** Immigrants’ failure/unwillingness to integrate adequately to Canada  
**What:** Poor language skills, unsuitability to ‘Canadian standards’  
**Solutions:** Immigrants need to try hard and access programs, services available to help themselves better integrate, have their credentials recognized and find employment in Canada

### Analysis 1 - Tracing the Use of Evidence in the Policy Process

**Evidence Presented by Experts to Politicians**

The CIMM held two meetings in October 2009 where a total of twelve experts representing ten governmental and non-profit organizations presented their findings on the issue of foreign credential recognition in Canada. Representing organizations involved in different aspects of the FCR process, expert presentations provide evidence from all three explanations and vary in terms of their conceptualization of the policy issue, identification of the main stakeholders involved, overall
assumptions and understandings of the root causes of the problem of FCR and identification of possible solutions to this policy problem.

Table 2. Full List of Experts Presenting in the CIMM Evidence Meetings

| Alberta International Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA) | Shahnaz Sadiq |
| Alliance of Sector Councils | Tasnim Waqar |
| Council of Ministers of Education, Canada | Wendy Swedlove |
| Office des Professions du Quebec | Yves E. Beaudin |
| Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) | Christiane Gagnon |
| Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) | Amy Casipullai |
| World Education Services (WES) | Elizabeth McIsaac |
| Department of Citizenship and Immigration | Timothy Owen |
| Department of Health | Corinne Prince St-Armand |
| Department of Human Resources and Skills Development | Kathryn McDade |
| Department of Human Resources and Skills Development | Jean-Francois LaRue |
| | Silvano Tocchi |

Most experts support explanation two in arguing that the issue of FCR affects all immigrant classes regardless of how they entered Canada. Representing World Education Services (WES), an international non-profit organization offering services assessing immigrants’ foreign educational credentials, director Timothy Owen identifies FCR as an issue affecting seventy percent of working-age immigrants with “some post-secondary education,” regardless of the stream by which they entered Canada (CIMM, 2009b, p.2). Yves E. Beaudin of the Council of Ministers of Education, Christiane Gagnon of the Office de professions du Quebec and Wendy Swedlove of the Alliance of Sector Councils similarly argue that all immigrant classes are affected by FCR issues and highlight how the difficulties in maintaining high Canadian standards in the labour market while effectively utilizing the skills all immigrants are bringing to Canada, regardless of their class, is a continuing challenge (CIMM, 2009b). While the presentations by Shahnaz Sadiq and Tasnim Waqar of the Alberta International Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA) as well as Kathryn
McDade, director general at the Department of Health, deal specifically with the particular obstacles to FCR faced by foreign professionals in the health sector, they nevertheless also support explanation two by not differentiating between economic immigrants and those of the refugee or family class (CIMM, 2009b;c). As labour market experts, Jean-Francois LaRue and Silvano Tocchi of the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development particularly single out immigrants of all classes working in non-regulated sectors since employers have the final say on the recognition of credentials in non-professional occupations (CIMM, 2009c).

Support for other explanations are also expressed by experts in their presentations. Experts in particular employ explanation three to identify the particular struggles visible minority immigrants face in the FCR process. Amy Casipullai, coordinator at the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and Elizabeth McIsaac, executive director at the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), both highlight the racial discrimination non-white immigrants face in the labour market, thereby impeding their successes in the FCR process (CIMM, 2009b). Casipullai identifies lower-income and racialized immigrants as an important stakeholder group in FCR issues due to the labour market barriers they face (CIMM, 2009b). Corinne Prince St-Armand, executive director of the FCRO, is the only expert to employ the admission policy explanation in explicitly identifying skill-selected immigrants as a key group affected by this particular policy issue while also noting the prevalence of discrimination faced by certain immigrant groups (CIMM, 2009c).

In conceptualizing the policy issue of FCR itself, a majority of the experts interestingly broaden the issue of FCR to the wider problem with the economic integration of immigrants into the labour market. Employing the admission policy explanation, Casipullai, McIsaac, Prince St-
Armand, Swedlove, and LaRue all argue in their presentations that the problem of FCR be understood as an issue with the wider labour market integration and inclusion of immigrants who continue to face high unemployment and underemployment levels (CIMM, 2009b;c). Identifying the problem of FCR as a systemic issue in the labour market, LaRue identifies policy solutions to the problem of FCR as part of a “sound economic policy” by meeting the needs of the labour market and ensuring the effective utilization of immigrants’ skills, credentials, previous work experience and, especially, wider, overall competence (CIMM, 2009c; p.3). Casipullai, however, attributes these wider systemic issues with FCR and immigrant economic integration not to the economy or labour market but to even wider, social systemic barriers such as racism and xenophobia and thus centres on the explanation of discrimination in conceptualizing FCR issues as the wider, social skills devaluation of racialized immigrants (CIMM, 2009b).

Other experts present another conceptualization of FCR and employ the explanation of institutional complexities to argue that the remaining issue with this policy problem is not systemic but individual-based and simply requires a better harmonization and coordination of existing policies and services, rather than transformative, social policy change surrounding the labour market and economy (CIMM, 2009b). Owen, Sadiq, and McDade all highlight the strides made by previous governments in addressing this policy issue (in particular increasing the information on and capacity for FCR in Canada) and argue that remaining issues surround refining pre-existing programs and services through funding and information availability (CIMM, 2009b;c). Justifying the institutional complexities behind the FCR process, Beaudin explains the process of FCR as a legitimate procedure all immigrants must undergo in order to ensure the authenticity of educational credentials and defends the need for strict assessment procedures since it is easy for immigrants to obtain diplomas and transcripts from foreign institutions “without ever setting foot” in them.
Gagnon follows this defence for strict FCR procedures to ensure that the competence and skills immigrant workers match the high Canadian standards in the workplace (CIMM, 2009b).

In terms of identifying the origins and root cause of the issue of FCR, experts are divided and present very different explanations for this policy issue. McIsaac, Swedlove, Beaudin, and Prince St-Armand all make connections between immigrant admission policy and the needs of the labour market and argue that the origins of this policy issue stem from a discord between immigrant selection procedures and intake and the actual needs of employers and the labour market in Canada (CIMM, 2009b;c). Owen, Sadiq, LaRue and McDade note the root causes of FCR to be lingering institutional barriers and procedural complexities as a result of non-collaborative actors and a lack of information available to both immigrants and employers (Canada, 2009b;c).

Support for the explanation of discrimination, while not the main argument of most experts, interestingly came up in many of their presentations when pressed by MPs to explain why, as Prince St-Armand explains, “even with all the assistance,” collaboration and funding provided to address this issue, certain systemic barriers to immigrant employment remain due to employer discriminatory hiring practices (CIMM, 2009c, p.7). Beaudin, for example, acknowledges the propensity of racial discrimination in employer hiring practices in recognizing how implementing anonymous CVs “would prevent a lot of racism, if I can use the expression” (CIMM, 2009b, p.17). Other experts like McIsaac and Swedlove acknowledge the discriminatory practices of employers and attribute these practices to employers’ ignorance of and unfamiliarity with immigrant skills as well as a lack of awareness on the virtues of diversity in the Canadian workplace (CIMM 2009b). Casipullai, on the other hand, centres her entire presentation around discrimination and
attributes the problem of FCR to wider systemic issues surrounding social perceptions of immigrant social characteristics and their skills, qualifications and competence in the labour market (CIMM, 2009b). Casipullai thereby explains employer discriminatory hiring practices towards immigrants as a result of the lingering systemic issues with racism and xenophobia in Canada and not the unintentional unfamiliarity employers have with immigrant credentials (CIMM, 2009b).

Policy solutions for FCR issues also vary between experts who employ different explanations from those used to identify the origins of this policy issue. Despite attributing the origins of FCR issues to immigration admission policy, McIsaac, Swedlove, and Prince St-Armand all opt for the explanation of institutional complexities in identifying the appropriate solutions to this policy issue. They argue for a standardized national approach to FCR while providing more funding and services to employers responsible for this issue as well as individual immigrants affected by this issue (CIMM, 2009b;c). Beaudin is the only expert to explicitly note the need to make changes to the selection process of immigrants as an important step in ensuring that immigrant intake levels match labour market needs (CIMM, 2009c). Experts who originally employed the explanation of institutional complexities to identify the origins of this policy issue also use this explanation to identify the corresponding solutions such as: more funding and services to help immigrants maneuver the complex FCR process as well as establishing a national body to standardize and regulate the process.

The main solutions offered by experts who recognize the lingering racial discrimination responsible for FCR issues in Canada are to better modify employer hiring practices. McIsaac recommends implementing an immigration lens for HR professionals similar to the lens for women and racialized communities in the workplace (CIMM, 2009b). Swedlove recommends that the federal government provide more resources to help employers effectively integrate newcomers into
the Canadian workplace by raising awareness on the nature and virtues of diversity in the workplace (CIMM, 2009b). Beaudin merely acknowledges the prospects of implementing anonymous CVs in employer hiring practices (CIMM, 2009b).

As the only expert centering her presentation on discrimination, Casipullai exposes the lack of government data on the experiences of immigrants in the FCR process and wider labour market, particularly the experiences of those of a particular race, ethnicity and gender. Casipullai recommends that the data collected on FCR issues be disaggregated by race and gender in order to get a better picture of the actual barriers certain immigrant groups face in the FCR process and how this may differ for non-white and women immigrants (CIMM, 2009b). She also questions the “dangerous assumption” most government programs have on employers’ willingness to hire non-white immigrants and exposes the lack of attention government initiatives on FCR have had on dismantling labour market barriers and their overall focus on “improving the immigrant” and “building a better immigrant” instead (CIMM, 2009b, p.4). Given the “strong intersection between race and poverty” in Canada, Casipullai urges that more government data be conducted on the race and gender of immigrants facing FCR issues, unemployment and underemployment and recommends that the federal government provide financial incentives for employers to hire immigrants while more effectively complying with employment equity policies and practices (CIMM, 2009b, p.4).

All in all, the experts presented evidence supporting all three explanations for FCR issues as identified in the academic literature. Although most experts presented evidence supporting the explanation of institutional complexities, considerable acknowledgment of and support for the explanations of admission policy and discrimination in identifying the root causes and origins of FCR issues were also argued during the evidence meetings. The following stage outlines MPs’ reactions to and reception of all three explanations for FCR issues.
Evidence Received/Internalized by Politicians

During the October 2009 CIMM evidence meetings, MPs express different levels of interest and at times even hostility towards the explanations presented by experts. In identifying which immigrants are affected by the problem of FCR in Canada, MP Karygiannis (Liberal) expresses outright disdain for Casipullai’s conceptualization of FCR as an issue affecting racialized communities since most immigrants arriving in Canada today are from developing areas with a non-white majority (CIMM, 2009b). Karygiannis states that the CIMM and its members did not “appreciate where [Casipullai] was coming from” in mentioning racism and xenophobia while discussing FCR issues (CIMM, 2009b, p.6). Arguing how “things haven’t changed from previous generations when immigrants were coming in,” Karygiannis, as a member of the Greek community himself, states how his community and the Italian community also suffered racism upon their arrival to Canada (CIMM, 2009b, p.6). He thereby concludes that differences between immigrants today and previous cohorts do not exist and, although previous cohorts were “caucasian,” they nevertheless also experienced “negative reactions” and were “unwelcomed” in Canada (CIMM, 2009b, p.6). While Karygiannis admits that recent immigrants today are “visible minorities” with higher frustration levels, he maintains that all immigrants, regardless of race or country of origin, have “felt the same frustration” (CIMM, 2009b, p.6).

Nevertheless, certain MPs express support for the discrimination explanation. MPs Beaudin and St-Cyr (Bloc Quebecois) ask about anonymous CVs as a prospective tool for employers to use so they can focus on qualifications and not “personal information” in the hiring process (CIMM, 2009b, p.8). St-Cyr argues for this practice to better recognize how “discrimination remains a big problem in the hiring process” and cites an investigative article on the issue from the Journal de Montreal (CIMM, 2009b, p.17). He also argues that human resources officers
should delete all information “that would identify the person’s origin” from CVs to prevent employer discriminatory practices in the hiring process (CIMM, 2009b, p.17). St-Cyr even applies the discrimination explanation to the wider discrimination non-immigrants face in the labour market and notes how integration remains an issue even for “people who have lived here for much of their lives” or who were born in Canada and still cannot integrate “because of their name, among other things” (CIMM, 2009b, p.6). In discussing the prospects of creating an immigration lens for HR professionals to practice in reducing discrimination in the hiring process, Conservative MP David Tilson expresses concern with the idea of “creating categories of people” in the hiring process, “whether it’s education or colour of skin or nationality” (CIMM, 2009b, p.8).

MPs also express support for the explanation of institutional complexities. Following Prince St-Armand’s point on the essential, ultimate, and defining authoritative role employers play in the FCR and wider economic integration process, MP Chow (NDP) expresses interest in offering more financial incentives to employers to provide more work experience opportunities for immigrants (CIMM, 2009c). She notes that more federal financial resources and services must be provided to help employers create more work experience and bridging opportunities for immigrants to better integrate into the workplace (CIMM, 2009c). Particularly pertaining to the health sector, MP Chow also argues for the need for more financial incentives for hospitals to increase the internship programs available for new Canadians to “get their first job” in Canada and gain some “Canadian experience” (CIMM, 2009c, p.8).

Evidently, Conservative MPs like Dykstra and Minister of Immigration Kenney express support for policy solutions already underway by the Conservative government. MP Dykstra expresses significant interest in evidence from the institutional complexities explanation that ultimately supported the Conservative government’s pre-existing policy decision on this issue. He
notes the emphasis all experts place on the federal government’s role in addressing FCR issues and mentions several initiatives underway including the $50 million over two years for provinces and territories to address FCR barriers by implementing a Pan-Canadian Framework for the recognition of foreign qualifications (CIMM, 2009b). MP Dykstra also mentions other initiatives by the Conservative government intended to improve the FCR process such as offering FCR information services to pre-arrival, admitted immigrants from overseas and the availability of language training programs for immigrants (CIMM, 2009b). He ultimately concludes from expert presentations that the government has been working “in the right direction” and now, it is just a matter of “levels of detail” in addressing remaining issues with FCR in (CIMM, 2009b, p.10).

Overall, MPs expressed an overt contempt for the explanation of discrimination. Although this explanation was only argued by one expert in the evidence meetings, the disapproval and hostility at the *mention* of racism or discrimination that may be at play in understanding the problem of FCR is particularly revealing. MPs, particularly those from the Conservative party, overall opted for the explanation of institutional complexities supporting already made policy decisions. The following stage outlines which evidence and how MPs used in devising the CIMM final report on FCR.

**Evidence Used in the CIMM Final Report**
In November 2009, the CIMM released the report *Recognizing Success: A Report on Improving Foreign Credential Recognition* incorporating the evidence presented by experts in the October 22 and 27 Evidence meetings. The report provides important insight into which evidence was internalized by politicians in conceptualizing the problem of FCR in Canada and how this evidence was used in producing the Committee’s list of recommendations to better address FCR issues.
Given the diversity of evidence on FCR issues presented to the Committee by experts, policymakers had a range of choices to make in deciding which evidence to use to communicate and ultimately address the problem of FCR through report recommendations. Thus, this particular stage in the policy process is where much of the slippage lies in terms of which expert presentations and evidence was ultimately used by politicians and which evidence was ultimately ignored (see chapter seven). Some of the explanations for FCR argued by experts was lost in the final report as MPs evidently chose certain evidence and explanations for FCR over others.

The report presents varying support for the academic explanations of admission policy, institutional complexities and discrimination through its main recommendations identifying the who and what of FCR issues as well as the origins and appropriate solutions to this policy issue. Regarding which immigrants the CIMM report recognizes as the main group affected by this policy issue, the report’s recommendations recognize how the struggles with recognition may differ for “different groups of immigrants” and the recommendations somewhat vary according to the particular group targeted (CIMM, 2009a, p.5-6). The report acknowledges the need to extend FCR information and services to immigrants beyond the economic class who are also coming to Canada with skills and credentials of their own (i.e. family and refugee classes) (CIMM, 2009a, p.7). The report cites statistics from an academic article on FCR demonstrating that an important percentage of teachers and doctors arriving in Canada between 1991 and 2003 came as family class immigrants or refugees (Hawthorne, 2007 cited in CIMM, 2009a, p.7). Thus, largely following the institutional complexities explanation, the report recommends that the pre-departure FCR services being offered from overseas by the FCRO be expanded to “all immigration classes” (not just economic immigrants) at the designated priority locations of China, India, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom (CIMM, 2009a, p.7).
Citing the expert presentations by McIsaac and Casipullai, the report equally acknowledges the particular struggles low-income immigrants face in the FCR process due to their limited economic access to FCR programs such as training programs or licensing exams. The report cites McIsaac’s recommendations of creating more loan programs for immigrants in need of income support as they complete the FCR process in Canada (CIMM, 2009a, p.9). Referring to OCASI’s Amy Casipullai as “another witness,” the Committee acknowledges Casipullai’s arguments on the overrepresentation of recent immigrants in Canadian poverty rates and how much of these loan programs are inaccessible to low-income immigrants (CIMM, 2009a, p.9).

The report also makes use of some of the expert evidence from the discrimination explanation in recognizing that certain immigrant groups, particularly visible minority groups, face particular challenges that the federal government must act on through financial and employer-targeted measures such as ensuring employment equity (CIMM, 2009a). While admitting that not all immigrants are visible minorities, the report recognizes that fulfilling employment equity commitments toward visible minority groups can nevertheless “make a tangible difference in immigrant employment” (CIMM, 2009a, p.11).

The final immigrant group particularly recognized by the CIMM involves international medical graduates and the “special concern” for this group given the shortage of medical professionals in Canada (CIMM, 2009a, p.12). Citing the presentations made by Shahnaz Sadiq of the AIMGA and Kathryn McDade of Health Canada, the Committee commends the “valuable work” already underway in accelerating the FCR process for medical graduates and the development of a national assessment approach for medical professionals (CIMM, 2009a, p.12). They thereby recommend that the federal government support this work further by providing more funding to the
International Educated Health Professionals Initiative (IEHPI) for another five years and to transfer some of the funding directly to the Government of Quebec in contributing to their own FCR process (CIMM, 2009a).

Pertaining to the overall conceptualization of the problem of FCR in Canada, the report employs the explanation of institutional complexities in defining FCR as the education and job experience (i.e. credentials) immigrants have acquired from a foreign country and which need to be assessed and recognized against “the standards established for Canadian professionals” (CIMM, 2009a, p.1). The problem of FCR is further conceptualized as a “core element” of the labour market integration and employment success of immigrants in Canada (CIMM, 2009a, p.1). The skills underutilization and “untapped potential” of many immigrant workers in Canada thereby costs immigrants and taxpayers billions and ultimately threatens Canada’s “attractiveness” as a destination for highly skilled immigrant workers (CIMM, 2009a, p.1).

In identifying the origins of this policy issue, the report attributes much of the root causes of FCR to the many complexities involved in the FCR process and the “multitude of players” involved such as provincial and territorial governments, regulatory bodies governing professions, post-secondary institutions and provincially-mandated assessment agencies (CIMM, 2009a, p.1). Echoing what the experts argued in their presentations, the report identifies the particularly important role the federal government and employers play in the FCR process. Supporting the admission policy explanation, the report acknowledges FCR as an issue with immigration as well as labour market policy and thereby calls for a federal leadership role in addressing FCR issues (CIMM, 2009a).

Echoing the expert presentations of Owen (WES), Sadiq and Waqar (AIMGA) and McDade (IEHPI) in acknowledging the strides made by federal government initiatives such as the
FCRO, FCRP, IHEPI as well as an online portal providing information on FCR to prospective immigrants, the Committee identifies the main gaps in these current initiatives and provides recommendations in their report based on these gaps (CIMM, 2009a). Demonstrating an overall support for institutional complexities, the Committee identifies five main remaining areas for improvement in elucidating, simplifying and streamlining the lingering complexities of the FCR process. These five main areas for improvement include: “[…] expanding pre-departure foreign credential services, expanding opportunities to gain work experience, access to foreign credential recognition programs, employer-targeted measures, and credential recognition for international medical graduates” (CIMM, 2009a, p.5-6).

Considering the overwhelming attention to institutional complexities as the primary explanation for FCR issues, it is not surprising that the report also primary looks at this area for solutions. While it is true that the report makes some reference to admission policy and discrimination, its recommendations primarily focus on individual immigrants themselves in accessing the programs and services required for them to improve their own suitability for employment in Canada (CIMM, 2009a). Thus, responsibility for FCR issues is primarily left to immigrants in accessing the appropriate programs and services required of them in order to successfully integrate into the labour market (CIMM, 2009a). This preoccupation with immigrants as the main group responsible for solving FCR issues thus reveals how MPs of the CIMM apply their own, non-academic explanation attributing this policy problem to the personal responsibility of immigrants (see Figure 3 for a full outline of this explanation). The only other important actors targeted in the recommendations are employers. The role licensing bodies, regulatory bodies, educational institutions and the wider systemic, labour market issues involved in perpetuating the problem of FCR are largely unacknowledged in the report.
Recommendations based on institutional complexities mainly involve offering more pre-departure foreign credential recognition services, expanding opportunities to gain work experience, and increasing access to foreign credential recognition programs. The report particularly emphasizes the expert presentations of Swedlove (Alliance of Sector Councils) and Owen (WES) to argue for the need for pre-arrival admitted immigrants to “getting an early start” on the FCR process from overseas so they may arrive in Canada “employment ready” (CIMM, 2009a, p.7). The Committee also makes particular use of expert Elizabeth McIsaac’s (TIREC) presentation on the importance of Canadian work experience for immigrants to reassure “risk-averse employers” of their competence in the workplace by providing professional references from their first job in Canada (CIMM, 2009a, p.7). The report thereby recommends that the Government of Canada offer more financial incentives and support to employers in the form of tax credits, wage subsidies or direct funding to create more work experience opportunities for immigrants such as internships or practicums (CIMM, 2009a, p.7). The Committee identifies this recommendation as important in preserving “labour market principles such as fairness and qualified workers” (CIMM, 2009a, p.8).

To remove economic-based barriers to FCR programs, the report also recommends that the federal government create a loan program to help individual immigrants access these programs.

Although not a focus in identifying the main causes of FCR, some aspects of the discrimination explanation are also supported by the Committee in identifying “employer-targeted” recommendations (CIMM, 2009a, p.8). Echoing McIsaac’s and Swedlove’s presentation on the discriminatory hiring practices arising out of employer’s unintentional ignorance of and unfamiliarity with immigrant skills, the report highlights the need for two important tools to positively impact employer hiring practices (CIMM, 2009a, p.10). The first is the Employer’s Roadmap, a step-by-step guide developed by the Alliance of Sector Councils and intended for businesses interested in
hiring immigrants (CIMM, 2009a). The guide provides information to employers on the skills immigrants bring to the workplace and helps clarify employers’ sometimes misunderstood demands for “Canadian experience” in hiring practices (CIMM, 2009a, p.10). The second tool intended to improve employer practices in hiring immigrants is the anonymous CV. While the Committee acknowledges that this will not end all discrimination-related issues in the hiring process, they nonetheless recognize it as a “useful teaching tool” for employers to reflect upon and eliminate their “reflex of looking first at an applicant’s gender, age, address or ethnic origin” (CIMM, 2009a, p.10).

Another employer-targeted recommendation measure stemming from the discrimination explanation is that the federal government should “lead by example” in following employment equity commitments to hire and retain more visible minorities (CIMM, 2009a, p.11). The report also recommends that the available recourse be made for immigrants to dispute unfair hiring practices by employers. While certain recourses exist via the Canada Labour Code regulating hiring practices in federally regulated occupations and Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Committee recommends that an ombudsman’s office be created for prospective employees to “take their complaints” regarding employer hiring practices for occupations under federal jurisdiction (CIMM, 2009a, p.11).

All in all, the final CIMM report recognized the relevance of all three explanations in communicating the problem of FCR in Canada. It is however evident that MPs overall favored the explanation of institutional complexities, particularly in identifying the appropriate solutions for this policy issue. Politicians also added their own non-academic explanation of personal responsibility in devising their main policy recommendations. Moreover, along with final report, Conservative members of the CIMM included their supplementary opinion of the report. Conservative
politicians mainly expressed concern with report recommendations stemming from the discrimination explanation and intending to help reduce the systemic and individual barriers immigrants face in the labour market (CIMM, 2009a). They viewed any policy initiative designed to encourage employers to hire a “new immigrant” over an individual who has been in Canada for longer as “unacceptable” (CIMM, 2009a, p.22). Particularly, they viewed financial incentives for businesses to hire more immigrants as unfair “disincentives that disadvantage one Canadian over another” (CIMM, 2009a, p.21). They further opposed any appeal mechanisms designed for prospective employees to dispute hiring practices, viewing it as a “radical change” to the Canadian employment market and refer to it as a “misguided” idea since they disputed that it relates to the subject of FCR in Canada (CIMM, 2009a, p.21). They thereby also strongly opposed the creation of an ombudsman to oversee and investigate complaints over employer hiring practices and dismissed it as an “unreasonable” and “unprecedented” interference into government and private business hiring practices (CIMM, 2009a, p.21).

Table 3. Summary of Findings: Trajectory of Evidence in the Policy Process

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<th>Stages in the Policy Process</th>
<th>Admission Policy</th>
<th>Institutional Complexities</th>
<th>Discrimination</th>
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Analysis 2 - Comparing Politicians’ Explanations for FCR Pre-and Post-Evidence Meetings

Politicians’ Discourse on FCR Issues Pre-Evidence Meetings

In the months leading up to the October 2009 CIMM evidence meetings with experts, the issue of FCR was well on the policy radar of politicians as they discussed their views on the issue and identified the main areas of interest to be addressed by policy. At this pre-evidence stage of the policymaking process, MPs primarily support institutional complexities as the main explanation in identifying who is affected by FCR issues. Representing the Conservative government’s view of the issue, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney acknowledges FCR as an important issue “for new Canadians and the entire economy” and identifies all immigrant classes as the main group affected by this policy issue (Debates, 2009a, p. 169). In his proposed Bill C-425: an Act Respecting the Recognition of Foreign Credentials, MP Paul Dewar (NDP) broadly focuses on all “foreign-trained professionals” as the main group affected by the problem of FCR (Debates, 2009b, p.4734).

MPs also communicate support for the explanation of institutional complexities in conceptualizing FCR as an issue with time given the long and complex stages involved in the FCR process. Dewar’s proposed Bill C-425 on FCR identifies the issue as a complex and elusive process
to be simplified and streamlined through the coordination and standardization of all foreign credential practices in Canada (Debates, 2009b, p.4734). Minister Kenney follows this explanation and highlights the need to speed up the integration process of immigrants by providing “pre-integration” services to already admitted immigrants from overseas so they may “hit the ground running” once in Canada (CIMM, 2009e, p.4). However, Minister Kenney also goes further in communicating the Conservative government’s conceptualization of FCR as a wider issue with integration and multiculturalism in Canada. He argues that only a “deeper” multiculturalism, as opposed to a “superficial” kind, where immigrants are “responsible to Canada and Canada […] [is] responsible to them,” can adequately address this issue and ensure “successful and rapid” integration of immigrants (CIMM, 2009e, p.4).

Different explanations for FCR are also communicated by MPs in identifying the origins of the issue. While MP Dewar and Minister Kenney both identify the many actors, stakeholders and veto points involved in the FCR process as an important impediment to the efficiency of the process, Minister Kenney invokes the non-academic explanation of personal responsibility to identify the integration failure of immigrants as the main root cause for FCR issues. In communicating the issue to parliament during a CIMM meeting, Minister Kenney, citing a study by COMPAS, argues that the principle reason why employers do not hire immigrants is because of their poor language skills (CIMM, 2009d). Thus, the origins of FCR, according to Kenney, stem from immigrants’ poor language skills and lack of participation in language training programs (CIMM, 2009d). Minister Kenney identifies immigrants’ lack of participation in language programs and licensing bodies’ practices as the main causes for the “lack of opportunities for foreign-trained professionals” (CIMM, 2009e, p.9)
What is particularly interesting in this pre-evidence stage of the policy process is the discrepancy between explanations used to identify the origins of the issue versus the explanations used to identify the appropriate solutions to the issue. Minister Kenney employs institutional complexities in identifying three main policy solutions for FCR such as: providing pre-arrival assessment of immigrant credentials and pre-arrival information services on FCR to elucidate and accelerate the process, standardizing FCR practices at the national level, and increasing immigrant participation in language programs (CIMM, 2009d). However, Minister Kenney also employs the admission policy explanation to identify an important solution to this policy problem: matching immigrant intake levels with the economic opportunities available in Canada (CIMM, 2009d). Minister Kenney does not go further in explaining specifically how the federal government can go about matching immigrant intake to economic opportunities. He further highlights that the expected policy outcomes of federal initiatives are not to increase the successful recognition of immigrants’ credentials but to provide immigrants struggling with FCR with a “clear answer from the relevant professional bodies within a year of their applications” (CIMM, 2009d, p.6).

Following the institutional complexities explanation, MP Dewar’s proposed bill identifies financial support for and information services on FCR as important solutions to the policy issue since much of the FCR and integration barriers foreign-trained professionals face is due to the complexities of the process itself (Debates, 2009b). Bill C-425 would have also ensured the need to hold all actors and stakeholders involved in the FCR process accountable through the enforcement of a standardized national approach to the process that is “transparent, objective and impartial” (Debates, 2009b, p.4734). The bill was created with input from members of the immigrant community and was read the first time on June 17, 2009 (Debates, 2009b). It has since not proceeded to a second reading. During a CIMM meeting, MP of the Liberal party Maurizio Bevilacqua
also supports the explanation of institutional complexities in arguing for the need to provide funding and programs to streamline the FCR process (CIMM, 2009d).

Overall, this pre-evidence stage of the policy process on FCR involved the release of two key policy solutions by the Conservative government in 2009: committing $50 million over two years to “accelerate credential recognition” by working with provinces and professional bodies as well as the development of a “national action plan for credential recognition” between provincial and territorial first ministers and then-Prime Minister Steven Harper (Debates, 2009a, p. 21). Both policy solutions employed the explanation of institutional complexities to address the problem of FCR. Despite these two pre-existing, pre-evidence policy decisions, Minister Kenney nevertheless officially called for the CIMM to officially “study this issue,” resulting in the CIMM evidence meetings held in October 2009 (CIMM, 2009e, p.9).

Politicians’ Discourse on FCR Issues Post-Evidence Meetings
In the CIMM meetings and House debates where FCR was discussed following the October Evidence meetings, MPs essentially argue for the same positions and explanations they previously communicated in the meetings and debates leading up to the evidence meetings. Nowhere is this more evident than in Minister Kenney’s discourse again employing personal responsibility as the main explanation identifying the who, the what, and the origins of this policy issue as well as its solutions. Employing the institutional complexities explanation, Minister Kenney reiterates his support for the Conservative government’s original policy decision of committing $50 million to help organizations responsible for the FCR process and developing a Pan-Canadian Framework with provincial premiers to standardize FCR practices (Debates, 2009c).
In identifying the origins of this policy issue, Minister Kenney employs the same non-academic explanation of personal responsibility that he previously expressed in the CIMM meetings leading up to the October CIMM evidence meetings and again argues that the origins of FCR issues immigrants face today stem from their poor language skills. He states: “There is a lot of data showing that the reason we see a much higher unemployment rate among immigrants in Canada is their limited knowledge of our official languages” (Debates, 2009c, p.6292). Citing the same study by COMPAS research group, Minister Kenney argues that the main reason why employers do not hire immigrants is because they are concerned with immigrants’ language ability (Debates, 2009c). Although economic immigrants are required to have linguistic ability to immigrate to Canada, family class and refugee immigrants are not (Debates, 2009c). Thus, as the federal government provides “additional services” for language skills, these immigrant classes must themselves be obligated to “make a real effort” in learning the official languages of Canada (Debates, 2009c, p.6292). Identifying FCR within the wider “positive integration” of immigrants in Canada as opposed to “cultural assimilation,” Minister Kenney notes that the key for immigrants to fully benefit from all the economic, social and cultural opportunities available to them in Canada is through language (Debates, 2009c, p.6292).

Like Kenney, Liberal and NDP MPs employ the same explanations for FCR issues they identified in pre-evidence meetings despite having heard all the evidence from experts. When it comes to solutions, MP Bevilacqua again argues for the need to streamline the FCR process and address the institutional complexities and obstacles in the process (CIMM, 2009f). MP Chow, like her fellow NDP MP Dewar in the pre-evidence meetings, recognizes the delays in the FCR of immigrants due to the institutional complexities involved and argues for the need to push for more FCR services being offered to admitted immigrants from overseas to accelerate the process.
Chow further acknowledges that more funding must be provided to provinces and businesses so they may offer more job experience opportunities to immigrants (CIMM, 2009h).

In the end, it can be argued that the evidence meetings did little to nothing to impact the final policy decisions of federal politicians in addressing this policy issue. On November 30, 2009, following the CIMM evidence meetings and final report, the Conservative government went ahead with its original decision to create and implement the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications. Using the $50 million promised by the Conservative government for budget 2009, the Forum of Labor Market Ministers implemented the Pan-Canadian Framework in phases where priority was given to specific regulated professions in the first three years (HUMA, 2012). Subsequent phases of the Framework will include more regulated professions where the FCR process will be overseen and limited to a “one-year standard” waiting time for accreditation (HUMA, 2012, p.3). Under federal leadership, the Pan-Canadian Framework works to facilitate the foreign qualifications recognition (FQR) process and coordinate all activities and players involved in the process (HUMA, 2012).

All in all, MPs from the three major political parties all argued for the same explanations for FCR before and after the October CIMM evidence meetings. Members of the Conservative, Liberal and NDP parties all essentially made little use of the evidence from expert presentations. Conservative politicians particularly maintained the same explanations for FCR, both academic and non-academic, in supporting their original policy decisions addressing this issue.
Table 4. Summary of Findings: MPs’ Explanations for FCR Pre-versus Post-Evidence Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Admission Policy (1)</th>
<th>Institutional Complexities (2)</th>
<th>Discrimination (3)</th>
<th>Personal Responsibility (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Evidence Meetings</td>
<td>Solutions: Kenney</td>
<td>Solutions: Bevilacqua, Dewar, Kenney</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>What: Kenney Origins: Kenney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Evidence Meetings</td>
<td>Solutions: Kenney, Dykstra, Bevilacqua, Chow</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>What: Kenney Origins: Kenney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who: Kenney</td>
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Legend:
Conservatives Liberals NDPs

Legacy of 2009 Discourses on FCR
Since 2009, politicians’ understanding and conceptualization of the issue of FCR has not changed although ways to address it had become somewhat different. In 2011, this policy issue had been taken up again by HUMA. This time however, HUMA’s focus was not on FCR itself but on simplifying and accelerating the process and thereby identified this policy issue as a matter of institutional complexities from the outset (HUMA, 2012). While the term ‘credentials’ was replaced with ‘qualifications’ to fully encompass the knowledge, competence, education, work experience, and skills immigrant workers attained internationally, HUMA for the most part maintained the same conceptualization as in 2009 of FCR as a policy issue costing Canadian taxpayers and inhibiting the economic prosperity of Canada (HUMA, 2012). As a result, the 2012 final report titled *A Framework for Success: Practical Recommendations to Further Shorten the Foreign Qualification Recognition Process* mainly focused on the best practices producing faster FQR results and ways to solve certain problems inhibiting the efficiency and rapidity of FQR in Canada (HUMA, 2012).
In 2013, MPs expressed more interest in modifying the immigration admission policy to better address FCR issues. Minister Kenney presented the Conservative government’s “expressed intention” to adopt the Australian approach of incorporating the assessment of credentials by relevant licensing bodies into the immigrant selection process (Debates, 2013a, p. 17043). MP Dean Allison (Conservative) also presented the government’s 2013 economic action plan suggesting to reopen the Federal Skilled Worker program with an “updated points system” to better match prospective immigrants’ skills to recognized labour market shortages in Canada (Debates, 2013b, p. 17551). The 2013 Economic Action plan will also further the Pan-Canadian Framework’s work on improving the FCR process for specific “target occupations” (Debates, 2013b, p. 17551). Thus, since the 2009 meetings, government actions on FCR have continued to center on modifying information and assessment services and access to FCR programs while increasingly focusing on linking immigration admission policies with labour market needs and shortages.

As of 2015, policymakers under the Conservative government have continued addressing FCR issues in Canada through the Pan-Canadian Framework establishing national standards for assessing the credential and qualifications required of particular occupations (Debates, 2015). Government efforts addressing FCR have also focused on facilitating immigrants’ access to FCR programs by introducing loans programs to “help cover the costs” of having their credentials assessed (Debates, 2015, p.11949). Providing financial support to programs intended to accelerate and simplify the FCR process and to recent immigrants in accessing these programs have thus been a major focus since 2009 (Debates, 2015). Since the Liberal government was elected replacing Conservatives in 2016, the issue of FCR in Canada has yet to be explicitly addressed by politicians in government committees. Whether or not this particular policy issue will resurface on the Liberal government agenda is yet to be seen.
Chapter 7. Discussion

Tracing the use of evidence in the policy process as well as comparing MPs’ discourses on FCR before and after the evidence meetings reveal two main findings, in particular: (1) the incoherence between the explanations used to identify key aspects of the problem of FCR and (2) the addition of non-academic, non-expert-based explanations for the problem of FCR by politicians. These findings reveal the selectivity practiced by politicians in picking and choosing the instrumental evidence that best matches their original policy decisions as well as the conceptual evidence that best suits their pre-existing policy stances and ideological orientations surrounding this particular policy issue. Thus, a political use of evidence was revealed in this research and will be further outlined in the second section of this chapter.

Analyzing and Interpreting the Use of Evidence in the Policy Process

In tracing the trajectory of the evidence available on FCR throughout the policy process, this research found an overall selective uptake of evidence from certain explanations over others. Beginning with the evidence meetings where experts were invited to present their findings on FCR, slippage occurred in the first, pre-evidence meetings stage of the policy process as policymakers made a political decision to invite certain experts over others to present their findings on FCR to parliament. As outlined in chapter five, there is much social science research and academic support for the explanation of discrimination arguing that FCR is caused by systemic issues such as racism and xenophobia in the labour market. However, of all the experts invited to present, only

OCASI’s Casipullai centred her entire presentation on this particular explanation. Thus, the Committee decision to invite certain experts from particular organizations and departments, most of them governmental, was a political decision by MPs of the CIMM resulting in only a partial discussion of the core causes of FCR and best ways to address it.

Tracing the evidence throughout the policy process reveals the slippage in the use of evidence between the expert presentation, MP discourse, and final report stages of the process. Particularly revealing is the lack of attention being paid by politicians to the evidence suggesting that discrimination plays a large role in perpetuating the problem of FCR in Canada. Such evidence was argued and supported by several experts in arriving at some of the main causes of FCR issues yet, the CIMM final report makes no mention of the racism and discrimination experienced by racialized immigrant groups in the FCR process and in the wider labour market. What is more is the overwhelming unpopularity for the discrimination explanation characterized by the outright disdain for this explanation expressed by certain MPs as well as the hesitation to even admit certain key facets of it on the part of some experts as well.

As highlighted in chapter six, MP Karygiannis was explicitly hostile towards Casipullai’s key argument and evidence presented on the racialization, discrimination and particular struggles immigrants today face vis-a-vis past cohorts due to their ethnic origin, skin colour or country of origin. MP Karygiannis insisted that he, along with all the members of the Committee, did not appreciate where she “was coming from” in arguing that immigrants today faced more racial discrimination because of their visible minority status (CIMM, 2009b, p.6). MP Karygiannis argued instead that the same “negative reactions” towards previous immigrant cohorts from Italy and Greece occurred thirty years ago and no differences existed between immigrants today versus previous cohorts (CIMM, 2009b, p.6). Thus, from the outset, MP Karygiannis struck down a crucial
facet of the discrimination explanation for FCR issues involving the particular racial discrimination recent immigrants coming from developing, nonwhite areas of the world experience in Canada (Hawthorne, 2007; Picot and Sweetman, 2012).

While certain MPs acknowledged the role discrimination against immigrants may play in perpetuating FCR issues, particularly when it comes to employer hiring practices, CIMM evidence meetings clearly revealed a hesitation on the part of certain experts and MPs to pay much attention to this issue. Expert Beaudin of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada demonstrated outright hesitation in even mentioning the term ‘racism’ in stating “if I can use the expression” immediately after recognizing the effectiveness of anonymous CVs to prevent racism in hiring practices (CIMM, 2009b, p. 17). Expert Prince St-Armand of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration merely admitted that certain “challenges remain” even with the full cooperation of all actors and stakeholders on this issue when immigrants continue to experience FCR issues as a result of discrimination in employer hiring practices (CIMM, 2009c, p.7).

As the sole expert to base her entire presentation and arguments on FCR on systemic issues surrounding racism, xenophobia and prejudice against immigrants as a racialized group, Casipullai received the least hospitable response from the CIMM. Most MPs questioned, argued against and, ultimately, ignored her evidence on the lingering labour market exclusions experienced by non-white immigrants and her call to better understand these exclusions by collecting data on the intersection between the race and gender of immigrants facing FCR issues, unemployment and underemployment (CIMM, 2009b). MP Tilson (Conservative) expressed disapproval for implementing measures to reduce discrimination in the hiring process, describing it as merely “creating categories of people” in the hiring process based on their “education or colour of skin or nationality” (CIMM, 2009b, p.8). As a result, the final report merely mentioned the need to ensure employment
equity and provide recourse for immigrants who suspect employer discriminatory practices but overall ignored discrimination in communicating the origins of FCR issues. In no way did the report use any concepts or arguments from the discrimination explanation to understand the root causes of the problem of FCR as the academic literature and some experts do.

Aside from the overall dismissal of evidence from the explanation of discrimination throughout the policy process, slippage also occurred in the policy process in linking the origins and conceptualization of FCR to the appropriate solutions according to the admission policy explanation. Most experts identified strong links between immigrant intake levels, admission policy and labour market opportunities and, while the Committee’s final report acknowledged these links, the report’s recommendations made no specific mention of modifying or updating the immigrant selection process in an effort to better match immigrant credentials to labour market needs. Indeed, wider systemic explanations for FCR issues such as labour market barriers, integration obstacles, systemic racism, immigration levels, etc., all covered by the explanation of admission policy and discrimination, were presented to and considered by politicians but, ultimately, made little impact in the final report recommendations to best address the problem of FCR in Canada. Instead, most of the report’s recommendations mainly centred around financially supporting, improving, and expanding current FCR services and programs aimed at facilitating and streamlining the FCR process.

These service-oriented recommendations emanating from the institutional complexities explanation all aim to help immigrants on an individual level in accessing the appropriate services required of them upon arrival to effectively integrate into the Canadian economy and labour market. Highlighting the need to increase the information available to immigrants about the reality of the complex FCR process in Canada, report recommendations thus employed an overall reactive
and symptom-targeted, rather than preventative, origin-based approach, to the problem of FCR. Rather than creating policy solutions intended to reduce the root, *systemic* causes of FCR complexities such as matching immigration intake to labour market needs or systemic racism barriers, the report recommended offering more services, programs and information to individual immigrants for when they face the inevitable obstacles of the FCR process. This reactive approach to FCR is most evidenced in the report’s recognition of the discrimination and unfair hiring practices visible minorities face in their FCR experiences and their only solution to this issue being the creation of an “ombudsman’s office” where immigrants can bring their complaints of unfair hiring practices (CIMM, 2009a, p.12). Despite acknowledging the merits of anonymous CV practices in the hiring process, the report makes no further recommendations to address the core causes of FCR according to the academic- and expert-supported explanation of discrimination.

The CIMM final report’s reactive approach revealed not only support for but also justification of the explanation of institutional complexities. In particular, experts Beaudin and Gagnon argued that the obstacles and procedural difficulties immigrants must overcome in having their credential recognized are justified to prevent fraudulent practices. Both experts defended the complexities and barriers that immigrants face in the FCR process in arguing how immigrants can easily present fraudulent credentials and thereby attain the licenses or occupations in which they are not qualified for. Assuming that immigrants are susceptible to committing these fraudulent practices, Beaudin and Gagnon thus both defend these strict FCR practices as important to maintaining ‘Canadian standards’ in the labour market and workplace (CIMM, 2009b). This justification for the institutional complexities explanation was supported throughout the final report as the recommendations made no changes to the FCR process itself but to the programs and services
intended to help immigrants navigate this process and prove to authoritative bodies that their credentials are real and legitimate.

**Analyzing and Interpreting the Use of Evidence Before and After the Evidence Meetings**

During the pre-evidence meetings and debates held in early 2009, Minister Jason Kenney added a non-academic explanation for FCR that would later influence future conceptualizations of the problem of FCR and policy solutions for it. This alternative explanation, outlined in Figure 3 on p.36, asserts that it is the personal responsibility of immigrants to access the appropriate programs and services required to navigate the FCR process and integrate themselves into the Canadian labour market. Kenney attributed most of the FCR issues and barriers to the labour market that immigrants experience to their poor language skills and their lack of participation in language training programs and settlement services offered by the government. This explanation was entirely based on a 2009 study by COMPAS comparing employers’ perceptions of the barriers skilled immigrant workers face in Canada to that of internationally-trained professionals.

While the study did find that employers attributed the greatest barrier to the employment of immigrants to be “inadequate language skills,” another crucial part of the report that Kenney left out highlighted the discrepancy between employers and internationally-trained professionals who, on their part, reported few “communication difficulties” and adequate language skills (COMPAS, 2009, p.5-6). The report recommended further research on the specific issue of immigrant language skills before government takes any action on the matter given the great discrepancy in assessments between employers and internationally-trained workers (COMPAS, 2009).

Despite COMPAS report’s inconclusive results on the actual language skills of immigrant workers in Canada, Minister Kenney nevertheless maintained that immigrants were not fulfilling
their obligation to Canada in learning the official languages and thus argued for the personal responsibility explanation for FCR issues. Although this explanation of personal responsibility was not argued by experts in the CIMM evidence meetings, the assumptions upon which this explanation is premised nevertheless formed the basis of most of the final report recommendations by the CIMM. The personal responsibility explanation held the assumption that the responsibility for the FCR process and the wider integration into the Canadian labour market fell on immigrants themselves to partake in the appropriate programs and services required. This assumption formed the basis of the report’s individual, service-oriented approach to addressing FCR issues.

In the post-evidence meetings, despite having read the academic evidence on FCR from experts as well as the CIMM final report, Minister Kenney nevertheless reiterated his original explanation of personal responsibility in arguing how immigrants’ poor language skills are at the origin of most of the FCR and employment barriers they face. In the end, Minister Kenney went on to support the Conservative government’s original policy decision (made in January 2009) committing $50 million to help organizations responsible for the FCR process and developing a Pan-Canadian Framework with provincial premiers to standardize FCR practices (Debates, 2009d). Since the final policy decision of the federal government addressing FCR issues matched their original policy decisions from January 2009 (before any evidence on this issue was presented to MPs), it is clear that the evidence presented to parliament on this policy issue made no demonstrable influence and thus, in the case of FCR in Canada, we cannot speak of genuine EBPM.

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A Political Use of Evidence

Overall, the slippage of evidence from the admission policy (1) and discrimination (3) explanation occurred more and more further down the policy process while another explanation was added to the pre-Evidence meetings until the CIMM final report and subsequent policy decisions centred on only two explanations: institutional complexities (2) and personal responsibility (4). This selectivity, slippage and addition of evidence reveals a political usage. This is most clearly evidenced when analyzing the very few changes made to the initial policy decisions of the Conservative government to address the problem of FCR. The Conservative government went ahead with their original policy decision to devise and implement a national framework for FCR practices in Canada (the Pan-Canadian Framework) and investing $50 million in the 2009 budget to implement the framework (HUMA, 2012). Despite hearing evidence from various experts in CIMM evidence meetings and devising a report with recommendations to the problem of FCR, (Conservative) MPs made virtually no changes to their original policy decisions employing mainly an institutional complexities-based approach with key assumptions from the personal responsibility explanation to this policy issue.

As outlined in chapter two on the different ways evidence is used in policymaking according to the literature on EBPM, evidence is used politically when they are merely sought to support “pre-existing political stances” and already made policy decisions addressing policy issues (Amara et al., 2004; Nutley et al., 2007). Given the slippage that occurred throughout the policy process as well as the few changes made to original policy decisions, the evidence on FCR was evidently used politically since politicians internalized and used all the evidence from the institutional complexities explanation throughout the policy process while outright dismissing or implicitly ignoring other evidence from the admission policy and discrimination explanations. Politicians address-
ing FCR issues thereby effectively utilized much of the evidence from the institutional complexities explanation while adding their own personal responsibility explanation to the policy process in devising service-oriented and individual-focused report recommendations. This selectivity of evidence and explanations thus resulted in a classic political use of evidence by politicians as they essentially ended up merely supporting their initial policy decision to address the problem of FCR by implementing the Pan-Canadian Framework and investing $50 million into this project.

While the 2009 final policy decision and action by the Conservative government to address FCR issues through a service-oriented, individual-based approach depicts a textbook political use of evidence according to the literature on EBPM, another, more conceptual political use of evidence was also practiced by policy makers (Daviter, 2015). The political use of policy knowledge may be practiced for more strategic and conceptual reasons when conceptual knowledge providing insight into the scope and nature of policy issues is used to control not only how a policy issue is to be addressed but also, how the issue is seen, understood and framed (Daviter, 2015). This conceptual knowledge provides crucial insight into the scope and nature of policy issues and is intended to enlighten politicians on the root causes of and wider social problems related to these issues (Daviter, 2015). Regarding the policy process addressing the problem of FCR, politicians essentially cherry-picked evidence from the institutional complexities explanation while largely ignoring the evidence supporting the admission policy and discrimination explanation to maintain control over how the policy issue of FCR is understood. There was thus very little enlightenment and policy learning occurring in the 2009 policymaking process addressing FCR issues in Canada (Daviter, 2015; Weiss, 1977).

A major reason why policy makers use evidence politically and conceptually is to maintain “policy authority” over certain issues and control the policy choices available in addressing policy
issues (Daviter, 2015, p.496). MPs, particularly those from the Conservative government, thereby internalized, received, and used certain evidence over others to maintain policy authority over an issue in which they had already made a policy decision on before the CIMM study on FCR was conducted. However, the literature on EBPM also points to another reason why policymakers would pick certain evidence over others to use politically in their decision-making. In his ethnographic study on the use of evidence in policy-making in the UK, Stevens (2011) found that policymakers were overall concerned with picking and choosing the evidence that best fit with the policy story being told by government on a particular policy problem. Policymakers were mostly concerned with using the right evidence that supports their “policy narratives” to control uncertainty over these policy issues rather than actually addressing the origins or root causes of these issues (Stevens, 2011, p.241-5).

Canadian MPs were evidently preoccupied with picking and using the evidence that best matched the policy stories they were telling on the problem of FCR in Canada. In analyzing the findings of this research, two main policy stories dominated policy makers’ receptions, internalization, and use of evidence on the issue of FCR. One policy story, presented first by Minister Kenney in pre-evidence meetings and maintained throughout the policy process, is the integration narrative of immigrants to Canada. This narrative asserts the notion that the problem of FCR stems from immigrants’ difficulties in integrating to the Canadian society and labour market and thus, more social services and programs must be provided to help immigrants help themselves in learning Canadian culture, official languages and workplace standards so they can take part in the economic realm. This story was supported by most MPs and experts in CIMM meetings and was a major underlying theme in the CIMM final report recommendations. The second major story underlying policy makers’ decision-making on FCR is the narrative of high ‘Canadian standards’ in
the labour market which must be protected by maintaining strict FCR procedures ensuring that immigrants do not occupy positions or jobs for which they are not qualified (CIMM, 2009b). Explicitly purported by experts Gagnon and Beaudin, this policy narrative effectively legitimizes the FCR process itself and the many strict procedures and obstacles within it. MPs of the CIMM essentially followed this policy story in their final report by primarily focusing on immigrants and the programs, services, and resources available to help them navigate this process rather than make any changes to the complex FCR procedures and obstacles itself.

‘Institutional complexities’ is evidently the approach that best matched existing policy narratives on FCR while the explanation of discrimination most challenged this narrative. While institutional complexities tells a story of unnecessary complexities and slow processes solved by a service-oriented approach addressing individual obstacles to FCR, discrimination tells a very different story, namely one of unjust exclusions and discriminatory practices based on historically racist and xenophobic systems, institutions and social perceptions that plague the labour market and wider Canadian society (Thobani, 2008; Sharma, 2006; Bannerji, 2000). Unlike institutional complexities, where the problem of FCR falls under the social service policy domain, the problem of FCR under discrimination corresponds to the more complex, wider policy domain of social inequality, justice, culture, and immigration. According to Head (2013) and Amara, Ouimet and Landry (2004), the policy domains of culture, justice, immigration, and all others involving historically marginalized and vulnerable populations are those where the use of evidence is more likely to be “inevitably ideological and selective” and more political rather than non-politically instrumental or conceptual (Head, 2013, p.399). The policy domain of social inequality was also found by Stevens (2011) to be an area that policymakers consistently avoided addressing head-on despite the amount of conceptual evidence available on the root causes of this policy issue. They
instead opted to focus on the symptoms of inequality through government programs and services to “keep a lid” on this issue instead of addressing its root causes (Stevens, 2011, p.249).

Regarding the policy problem of FCR, Canadian politicians chose, despite the range of evidence from academic literature available on this issue, to employ institutional complexities to identify the (small) scope and (superficial) nature of the problem of FCR. Aside from the fact that institutional complexities corresponded perfectly with Conservative MPs’ initial policy decisions, this particular conceptualization of the problem of FCR also allowed policymakers to avoid confronting more complex, difficult, and politicized issues that may be at the core of the problem of FCR in Canada such as immigration and labour market policy (explanation one) or social/racial inequality and justice (explanation three). Thus, the political, conceptual use of evidence allows policymakers to not only determine how a policy issue is to be addressed but also control how deep or complex these problems are in society. By ignoring explanation three, policymakers were able to avoid the troubling reality of racial inequality and the marginalization of visible minority groups at the heart of much of the FCR obstacles and labour market exclusions non-white immigrant groups continue to experience in Canada (Esses et al., 2007; Guo, 2009).
Chapter 8. Conclusion

The main goal of this research has been to uncover government approaches to the problem of FCR in Canada and analyze the use of evidence behind government initiatives addressing the issue. More specifically, I have aimed to explore what evidence is used, and how, by the federal government in identifying the main aspects of this policy issue, in particular: the main groups affected, its origins or root causes, the terms used to describe the issue and the range of policy choices available to address it. This final chapter summarizes the findings of this research and reveals the theoretical, methodological and wider social implications of the results.

The research reaches four main conclusions. First, politicians are selective in employing the various explanations for FCR and ultimately demonstrated an incoherent use of these explanations in identifying the origins and solutions for FCR issues in Canada. During the evidence meetings with experts, MPs were willing to admit that the origins of FCR lied in wider labour market and immigration policies as well as systemic issues with racial discrimination. However, when it came to the use of evidence in the final report stage of the policy process, politicians ultimately settled for a reactive, service-oriented approach to FCR employing solutions from the explanation of institutional complexities over that of admission policy and discrimination.

Second, the evidence presented to politicians made no demonstrable difference to government policy decisions addressing the problem of FCR. Indeed, MPs from three main political parties simply stated the exact same position after having been exposed to the evidence meetings as they did before. This leads to the third main research finding revealing politicians’ addition and usage of their own, non-academic and non-expert-supported explanation for FCR issues. Support for Minister Kenney’s (Conservative) explanation for FCR issues as stemming from the personal
responsibility of immigrants to better integrate themselves into Canadian society and labour market was used in the final report recommendations as well as final policy decisions addressing the problem of FCR in Canada.

The fourth and final finding of this research is that politicians overall opted to use only the evidence from the explanation of institutional complexities and of personal responsibility in the final policy decisions for FCR. Indeed, the decision to employ only these two explanations reveals a political use of evidence in policymaking as politicians ultimately selected only the evidence supporting their original policy decisions as well as their pre-existing ideological orientations. Moreover, the evidence for the personal responsibility of immigrants had little basis in the COM-PAS report through which it was argued for by politicians and absolutely no basis in the academic evidence on the problem of FCR. Despite the pervasive support for the explanation of discrimination, as revealed in the academic literature on FCR, politicians largely ignored and, at times, explicitly dismissed this explanation in the policy process.

Although MPs evidently employed a political use of evidence to support their original policy decisions, a deeper, more conceptual reason for this political usage was revealed. Mainly, MPs were concerned with selecting the evidence from explanations matching the dominant policy story associated with FCR in Canada (Stevens, 2011). This policy story centred on the dual role institutional procedures and immigrant responsibility to integration play in overcoming FCR problems in Canada and was supported by politicians to control the policy issue (Stevens, 2011). Thus, in maintaining control and authority over how the policy issue of FCR is understood and conceptualized by government, politicians mainly used the evidence from the explanations of institutional complexities and personal responsibility to control the scope, nature, and, above all, the politics surrounding this policy problem.
Ultimately, the evidence on FCR was used politically by politicians to maintain control and authority over how deep and politicized the policy issue became in the policy process. Indeed, by controlling the evidence use, politicians were successful in denying any wider, systemic issues that may be at the origins of this policy issue from even being brought to the decision-making table and in the process, effectively exercised a hidden, “second face” of power (Bacharach and Baratz, 1962). Through the political use of evidence, politicians were successful in limiting the scope of the problem of FCR in Canada to include only the policy story they wanted to tell on FCR. This story identified FCR as an issue stemming from institutional complexities as well as the personal responsibility of immigrants to better integrate into Canadian society. Alternative stories placing FCR issues within wider, systemic, and more politicized and controversial issues surrounding racial inequality and discrimination were carefully ignored and, at times, aggressively dismissed in the policy process.

The findings of this project are important for a number of reasons and reveal key theoretical, methodological and social implications. First, they elucidate how EBPM is still troubled even when the two conditions identified in EBPM literature to lead to a genuine (non-political) use of evidence are met. The first, being the degree of politicization of the policy issue at hand, was further complicated when studying the evidence used to conceptualize the issue throughout the policy process. While the academic literature on EBPM identified the politics surrounding policy issues as an important determinant for the use of evidence, this project’s unique investigation tracing the evidence throughout the policy process reveals how politicians’ use of evidence can actually impact the degree of politicization surrounding the policy issue. Specific to the policy problem of FCR, the evidence selected and used by politicians to address this issue ultimately influenced how politicized this issue became as well as its appropriate policy domain. Thus, according to the
policy story politicians followed conceptualizing FCR as an individual and depoliticized issue in Canada, they were in fact able to control how politicized the problem of FCR became throughout the policy process.

These research findings also complicate the second condition from EBPM literature identifying the policy capacity of government as an important determinant for the use of evidence. Broadly defined as the “ability of the state to acquire and process research evidence for use in policy-making,” a high policy capacity is theorized by EBPM scholars as an important determinant for the effective and genuine use of evidence for superior policy outcomes (Newman et al., 2016, p.5; Howlett, 2009; 2015). However, as this research shows, despite the relatively high policy capacity of federal politicians to access and use evidence through Committee studies, MPs were still found to make less genuine use of the evidence. Indeed, despite the high capacity of the CIMM whose evidence meetings included hearing a range of evidence from all three explanations for the problem of FCR, federal politicians were nevertheless found to be less willing to effectively use this evidence.

Given the challenges these research findings present to current EBPM theory, some methodological implications and suggestions for future research can be made. First, more in-depth, empirical research needs to be conducted tracing the use of evidence throughout the entire policy process of a concrete policy issue (Howlett, 2009). Indeed, current EBPM literature’s overall general focus on the use of evidence in general fail to fully capture how genuine the use of evidence is throughout the policy process. As this research has revealed, although politicians may seek evidence from various sources in the policy process, their selectivity in its usage to maintain control over how the issue is conceptualized and framed reveals a political use of evidence. Moreover, these research findings have revealed how a closer analysis into the evidence used at various stages
of the policy process can actually challenge current EBPM theory identifying certain conditions for the uptake of evidence.

Another methodological suggestion for future research involves exploring the use of evidence in comparative case studies across countries, government levels or policy domains. This research involved tracing the evidence throughout the policy process addressing a concrete policy issue within the Canadian federal context. Studying the use of evidence addressing a particular, concrete policy issue across government levels or countries where the policy process differs may reveal important insight into exactly what factors influence EBPM and ultimately determine the political or non-political use of evidence. Alternatively, comparative research can be conducted into a single government or country level but on different policy issues. Although MPs for the most part were found to use the evidence on FCR politically to control its conceptualization, politicization, and the range of policy choices available, perhaps other policy issues are less malleable in their conceptualization and require a more non-political, conceptual or instrumental use of evidence. Thus, important insights into the use of evidence according to the policy issue or domain may be revealed through these kinds of comparative studies.

Overall, the findings reveal an unwillingness on the part of federal politicians to address wider social, systemic issues, referred to as “wicked social problems” in academic literature, at the root of most policy issues like the problem of FCR (Rittel and Webber, 1973; Ferlie and McGivern, 2011). This leads me to the important social implications of this research. While EBPM scholars have cited the complexities, difficulties and competing stakeholder interests behind ‘wicked social problems’ as reasons why politicians are unwilling to address them head on in policymaking (Rittel and Webber, 1973; Ferlie and McGivern, 2011; Stevens, 2011), more critical scholars in sociology, political science, and criminal justice studying social problems related to racial discrimination in
Canada have identified other reasons. Critical scholars attribute Canadian politicians’ unwillingness to address systemic issues surrounding racism to the wider denial of racism rampant in Canadian society and institutions (Bannerji, 2000; Thobani, 2007; Tanovich, 2008; Turritin et al., 2002).

Despite evidence exposing substantial racial exclusions in Canadian institutions (Thobani, 2007; Haque, 2012; Bannerji, 2000; Henry and Tator, 2009), particularly those pertaining to employment and the labour market (Guo and Shan, 2013; Khan, 2007; Abu-Laban and Gabriel, 2002), denying racist practices and discrimination have been exposed by scholars focusing on race and racism in Canadian contexts. Specific to the case of migrant professional nurses, Turritin, Hagey, Guruge, Collins, and Mitchell (2002) expose how racism is constantly denied and thus rendered invisible by “those with a vested interest in denying its existence” (p.655). The authors explain how this denial of racism in Canadian institutions is attributed to the ideology of ‘democratic racism’ where, in a society espousing equality, fairness, and tolerance, “the existence of racial prejudice, discrimination, and disadvantage is difficult to acknowledge and therefore to remedy” (Turritin et al., 2002, p.656). Examples of this denial of racism include acts such as openly attacking those who “fight against racism” and remaining silent when confronted with instances of racial discrimination (Turritin et al., 2002, p.657-8).

Denials of racism and racial inequality in Canada such as those explored by critical scholars mirror closely MPs’ reception of and, at times, overt hostility towards any evidence pointing to discrimination as an explanation for the problem of FCR in Canada. Perhaps most telling is the CIMG’s denial to even further study the issue through government data disaggregated by race and gender, as argued by Casipullai during the evidence meetings. Indeed, the silencing and disavowal of racism is a frequent practice in many Canadian institutions pertaining to the criminal justice
system and policing (Chan and Chunn, 2014; Wortley and Owusu-Bempah, 2009), the labour market (Guo and Shan, 2013; Sharma, 2006; Choudry et al., 2009; Abu-Laban and Gabriel, 2002), the law and courts (Tanovich, 2008; Razack, 1998), and, as evidenced in this project, policymaking on FCR.

In sum, we cannot deny that the problem of FCR in Canada can be attributed to institutional complexities and admission policy. However, as evidenced throughout this project, the greatest discrepancy between empirically-grounded, academic evidence and government approaches lies in the explanation of discrimination for FCR issues. Although the denial of racism and discrimination is nothing new to the Canadian landscape, in light of extensive academic evidence on racial discrimination, Canadian governments must make more of an effort to address social justice issues at the root of policy issues such as the problem of FCR in Canada.
Bibliography


Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC), Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), and Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC). Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Evaluation. Toronto: Council of Ministers of Education Canada.


Appendices

Appendix A - Tables

Table 1. Summary of main indicators of interest in discourse analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of interest</th>
<th>Specific indicators</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who?</td>
<td>1. Who is identified as the main group affected by FCR? (Economic migrants, all immigrant groups, employers, visible minority immigrants, …)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What?</td>
<td>2. How is the issue defined? Is it about educational credentials? Previous work experience? Workers’ competence in general? Is it about credentials or qualifications? How are these terms defined?</td>
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<tr>
<td>From Where?</td>
<td>3. What causes the problem of FCR in Canada? Does it originate in the labor market? Or is it an issue with immigration admission policies? Is it both? What about Canada’s history of exclusionist race-based immigration admission policies and immigrant labour exploitation practices? Does this legacy continue and is it a cause of FCR? What is the issue mainly about? Long waiting times? Impossible or insurmountable barriers/obstacles in place? Complex process to maneuver? Racist, xenophobic or prejudicial authoritative institutional actors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions?</td>
<td>4. How should the issue be addressed? As an individual issue? As a wider social issue? Should policies and initiatives target individual immigrants in accessing the right information and services to shorten the FCR process? Or should they target wider institutional practices and norms?</td>
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Table 2 - Academic Literature on FCR Empirical Findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Academic Literature</th>
<th>The who: Which Immigrants - who are the main actors/stakeholders</th>
<th>Origins of Policy Issue</th>
<th>Concepts used to describe/understand the issue</th>
<th>Solutions - How to address the policy issue</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Economic/skilled immigrants only. FSWs. Focus must be on pre-arrival immigrants (more than post-arrival). Include employers too to help determine LM needs??</td>
<td>About matching immigration admission policy to labor market needs. Unemployed immigrants = skills not needed by Canadian Labor market. Rise of the Knowledge economy at source, different, higher skills needed, harder to determine LM needs. Policy domain: Immigration policy and LM policy</td>
<td>Immigrant economic integration to the labor market issues, broader concept of FCR as economic integration. About immigrant success in labor market, actual employment in jobs matching their skills. Policy issue.</td>
<td>Modifications to the selection process, eligibility criteria, more pre-arrival screening of credentials (like Australia). Human capital focused v occupational shortages points system. Examples: PNP, CEC, Express Entry, IRPA changes points system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>All immigrant classes (economic, family and refugees). As well as 4 main stakeholders: educational institutions, professional bodies, federal/provincial bodies and employers.</td>
<td>Complex procedures, time-consuming stages, non-collaborative actors with veto points. Lack of information on the process. Institutional complexities. Subjective standards used. Policy domain: social services, funding support</td>
<td>More narrow concept of FCR as skills underutilization barriers, obstacles in the process, time-consuming. Institutional discord, unfamiliarity of employers with foreign credentials. About foreign credentials and previous work experience. Individual issues.</td>
<td>Establish a national, authoritative body responsible and standards for FCR. Create more services help access to information, integration services, settlement services. Objective standards Examples: FCRO, FCRP, Pan-Canadian Framework, info and coordinate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Literature</td>
<td>The who: Which Immigrants - who are the main actors/stakeholders</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Racialized immigrants, visible minorities, immigrants of a particular ethnic origin/religious background, gender (intersectional). Mostly employers are to blame, included in addressing issue. (social ideas, views of employers on race)</td>
<td>Those in charge of FCR not unfamiliar but intentionally exclude non-white people/immigrants. Legacy of past of Canada’s racist immigration laws pre-1960s. Racist/prejudicial institutional players. Lingering racist or xenophobic ideas about non-white people skills, competency, intellect, and proper role in Canadian society. Policy domain: HR policies, Justice issue, discrimination policies, employment equity.</td>
<td>Skills devaluation (intentionally not recognized by those in power out of ideas of race, inferior, etc.). Difference between non-white immigrants today v white immigrants 30 years ago - lower wages, underemployed, poverty = measurement of FCR. Broad definition FCR: Canadian experience, hiring practices, Credentials, etc. Systemic issue.</td>
<td>Create policies protecting non-white peoples from discrimination, do more with equity and HR policies in LM, workplace, institutions, etc. Examples: Employment Equity Act 1995, Canadian HR Act 1985, Hiring Practices regulate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>The who: Which Immigrants - who are the main actors/stakeholders</td>
<td>Origins of Policy Issue</td>
<td>Concepts used to describe/understand the issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casipullai (OCASI)</td>
<td>-Lower-income immigrants -racialized communities -intersectional identities of immigrants (race, class and gender)</td>
<td>-Inaccessibility of FCR-related government programs -Recent migration patterns from developing, non-white states -labor market barriers immigrants face -systemic barriers of racism and xenophobia</td>
<td>-Measured by the labor market integration of immigrants -Broaden FCR as issue of immigrant employment</td>
<td>-Provide financial support for practicum opportunities -Provide financial incentives for employers to hire immigrants -Comply with federal employment equity laws -Collect data on FCR according to race and gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIsaac (TRIEC)</td>
<td>-Highly skilled immigrants in non-regulated occupations -Main role of the employer in FCR -Leading role of federal government in creating a national strategy for employers to hire immigrants -there needs to be a national vision to FCR -Employers must be included in selecting economic immigrants</td>
<td>-Employers’ unfamiliarity with foreign credentials -Employers’ perception of risk in hiring immigrants -Discrimination is an issue in hiring practices -Immigration policy implications</td>
<td>-Employers ask for ‘Canadian experience’ -measured by employment levels of immigrants -FCR is about “building a nation...economic building” -FCR is a labor market and immigration issue together</td>
<td>-Build employers’ capacity to recognize credentials -More internships and practicums -Financial support to employers and loans for immigrants -Mentorship programs and bridging programs -Immigration lens for HR professionals -Pre-arrival information important</td>
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<td>Experts</td>
<td>The who: Which Immigrants - who are the main actors/stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Owen (WES)</td>
<td>- Immigrants of all classes  &lt;br&gt; - Singles out TFWs and Int’l students  &lt;br&gt; - Main institutional actors are educational institutions and licensing bodies  &lt;br&gt; - Federal government has a leading role to play in coordinating provincial govt’s FCR processes and making them portable across the country</td>
<td>- Issue with consistency and collaboration between actors  &lt;br&gt; - Lack information on the process  &lt;br&gt; - Lack of portability of credentials across provinces</td>
<td>- Specific to educational credentials  &lt;br&gt; - Measured by underemployment levels  &lt;br&gt; - “Complexity, maze” of FCR process  &lt;br&gt; - Taxpayer costs for skilled immigrants to go back to school  &lt;br&gt; - Not about building capacity or means but coordinating the actors involved in the FCR process</td>
<td>- More pre-arrival assessment of educational credentials  &lt;br&gt; - More pre-departure FCR services as offered by the FCRO  &lt;br&gt; - More accessible information offered by FCRP  &lt;br&gt; - Pan-Canadian framework (federal role)  &lt;br&gt; - Better harmonize the processes and resources available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swedlove (Sector councils)</td>
<td>- Many sector workers employed in non-regulated, low-skilled jobs  &lt;br&gt; - Sector councils help employers fill labor supply gaps through immigration</td>
<td>- Matching immigration to labor market shortages  &lt;br&gt; - Bringing in immigrants with credentials recognized and needed in Canada</td>
<td>- FCR as a labour market integration issue  &lt;br&gt; - FCR is broadly about competency recognition, not just education/work experience  &lt;br&gt; - Incorrect use of ‘Canadian experience’ by employers  &lt;br&gt; - Workplace integration issue</td>
<td>- Creation of online programs to acquire Canadian credentials abroad for the “potential immigrant”  &lt;br&gt; - Resources for employers to help newcomers integrate to the Canadian workplace and the nature of diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>The who: Which Immigrants - who are the main actors/stakeholders</td>
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<td>Beaudin (council of education ministers)</td>
<td>- All immigrants</td>
<td>- Very easy for immigrants to falsify foreign diplomas/transcripts - Immigration officers abroad do not assess credentials</td>
<td>- Real concern with immigrants with false credentials doing work that they are not qualified up to Canadian standards</td>
<td>- Need all FCR organizations to agree on Pan-Canadian quality standards to systematically assess foreign credentials - Changes to selection process - Lisbon convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs</td>
<td>The who: Which Immigrants - who are the main actors/stakeholders</td>
<td>Origins of Policy Issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karygiannis (Liberal)</td>
<td>-Issue with Casipullai's identification of 'which immigrants' -reject particularity of visible minorities</td>
<td>-Same issue with FCR today as it was 30 years ago - no difference between white and non-white immigrants</td>
<td>-Frustration all immigrants yesterday and today feel with the FCR process and barriers</td>
<td>-Online information portal on FCR process is useless -Is any money going to ethnic press to advertise FCR programs and information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St-Cyr (Bloc)</td>
<td>-It is primarily a provincial issue -Federal govt should not play a domineering role over provinces -Issue also affects people who have lived here a long time or even born here -Issue with federal frameworks on multiculturalism/integration and FCR imposed on Quebec -Provinces already have to work with licensing bodies, federal govt will just add another layer to complex FCR process</td>
<td>-Discrimination remains a big problem in the hiring process -Mentions Journal study on discrimination in assessing CVs -Hard for people to integrate because of their name, etc. -Discrimination impedes the hiring of immigrants, women, youth, etc. -The very nature of federalism is recognizing that different provinces have different ways of doing things, different ways to recognize credentials</td>
<td>-Main issue is also immigrants who get credentials recognized and still cannot enter labour market -Hard for people to integrate because of their name, etc. -Better investing money in wait times or directly to provinces</td>
<td>-Provinces should develop their own programs for FCR -Recommends anonymous CV practices -Asks experts if anonymous CVs are effective in integration process -Anonymous CVs for positive discrimination as well -Federal investments should go directly to provinces “that have the jurisdictions to approve credentials”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaudin (Bloc)</td>
<td>-Importance of cooperation of employers</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-Asks about anonymous CVs in hiring practices (McIsaac)</td>
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<td>MPs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tilson (Cons)</td>
<td>-Issue with McIsaac's discussion on the need for lens in HR practice</td>
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</table>
| Chow (NDP)   | -Federal govt plays a major role in funding programs helping medical professionals in FCR process  
               -Low-income immigrants who lack financial support to take part in FCR programs (i.e. internships, training, etc.)  
               -Employers' incentives to hire immigrants and provide programs to help them integrate to their jobs | -Doctors with degrees from Pakistan who practiced in UK or USA still need to take training in Canada - specifically a Canadian problem | -Asks about variety of programs on FCR: internships, bridging, etc. - which is best?  
               -More financial incentives and support for employers to hire immigrants  
               -More financial support for immigrants to access FCR programs  
               -Financial support for immigrants gain Canadian experience, esp. in health sector |
| Dykstra (Cons) | -Experts mention crucial role of federal govt  
               -Asks McIsaac on nat'l versus individual provincial approach to FCR | -Implications of immigration policy and selection process |                                           | -$50 million over 2 years and creation of Pan-Canadian framework  
               -Pre-landing knowledge of credentials from overseas |
<p>| Wong         | -Ask Swedlove on industries facing issues with matching skills of foreign-trained workers in non-regulated occupations |                         |                                               |                                            |</p>
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<td>Young (Cons)</td>
<td>- More success in health care sector where many ITI doctors found work in their field</td>
<td>- Iraqi cab driver who is a mechanical engineer story</td>
<td>- Asks about the 'Working in Canada' Portal offering information on jobs in Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dewar (liberal)</td>
<td>- Specific to professionals (license of certificate) - HRSDC and CIC main coordinating and funding role in FCR process - Bill was written with the input from members of the immigrant community</td>
<td>- FCR needs to become transparent, objective and impartial, too subjective atm - Lack of oversight and regulation of FCR practices by provinces - Issue of accountability: who is held accountable for FCR issues?</td>
<td>- About fairness and respect for ITIs - Assisting ITIs in labour market integration - New Canadians and professionals fail to “reach their full potential” in Canada - “what is going on in provinces” - Help ITIs get “that elusive Canadian experience”</td>
<td>- Created bill C-4125: An Act Respecting the Recognition of Foreign Credentials - HRSDC and CIC and the provinces collaborate to standardize and regulate FCR practices - Establish a nat’l framework - Minister must report to parliament on FCR progress</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grewal (Cons)</td>
<td>- Newcomers overall have issues with finding jobs matching their skills</td>
<td>- Education and qualifications required for a job = credentials</td>
<td>- Conservative govt is working with provinces to address the issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenney (Cons)</td>
<td>-Issue affects all new Canadians -Federal role to work with provinces in addressing the issue -The professions and training of immigrants to Canada -FCR process must begin with prospective immigrants -10 to 13 different regimes in a single profession in Canada -across provinces -Licensing bodies esp responsible for FCR issues, question their practices impeding the fast and transparent recognition of foreign credentials -Licensing bodies as creatures of the provinces -“Some things happen at the federal level” exclusively ex: pre-arrival FCR information to newcomers -Provinces are responsible for managing their labour market and FCR actors -largest stream: FSWs</td>
<td>-Non-collaborative actors involved in FCR process, makes it so long -The complex nature of the labour market that immigrants need to understand before coming to Canada -Immigrants must be responsible to Canada and Canada be responsible to them -Immigrants require more training, esp. language -“labour market regulation is not a federal issue” -FCR issues is about “labour market mobility within Canada” -Practices of licensing bodies esp. their closed-door approach -“Principle issue is language skills” -why employers don’t hire foreign-trained professionals, mention COMPASS study -“the challenges of integration”</td>
<td>-FCR is important to “our entire economy” -Lengthy and complex process -Need to accelerate the FCR process -Help immigrants “contribute to Canada, realize their dreams, contributing to our prosperity” -About the “successful and rapid integration of newcomers to Canadian society” -Multiculturalism implications -Many obstacles -Need a “simpler, more transparent pathway to recognition” -Invites committee to study the issue -HRSDC and CIC joint study of the issue -Lack of opportunities for foreign-trained professionals -Declining economic outcomes for newcomers to Canada -Labour market integration</td>
<td>-Creation of FCRO -Canadian immigration integration project overseas: “head start for newcomers in FCR process” -First federal government to take meaningful action on FCR -National action plan for FCR -$50 million to accelerate credential recognition -“pre-integration of newcomers” so they “hit the ground running the moment they arrive” -Settlement programs are key, language skills don’t develop’t -Federal leadership -Federal only assists provinces, does not impose on them, offer “training about racism” and help immigrants in FCR process -FCR must cut across provincial jurisdictions -EU example, France- Qc accord -FCRP coordinating role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs</td>
<td>The who: Which Immigrants - who are the main actors/stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenney Cont’d</td>
<td>-Agrees with Bevilacqua: “data that suggest that new Canadians are doing less well economically than in the past”</td>
<td>-It's important we “more closely align our immigration intake with economic opportunities here”</td>
<td>-Help improve the economic performance of newcomers -unemployment of immigrants -economic outcomes and labor market access of immigrants in Canada</td>
<td>-“increased by threefold our investment in settlement programs” -Not cultural assimilation but positive integration -The door to all opportunities is language -Settlement programs</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>-“Highly educated people who are working in survival jobs”</td>
<td>-Bring in people to professions that are in greater demand</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-the only stream requiring language skills is economic immigrants/FSWs</td>
<td>-higher unemployment amongst immigrants today due to limited language skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-No language requirement for family class or refugees</td>
<td>-Importance of language skills</td>
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<td>Dechert (Cons)</td>
<td>-Internationally trained workers are integral to the country and economy</td>
<td>-Canada as a country of choice for people from all over the world</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-ITIs unable to work in their fields of expertise due to FCR issues</td>
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<td>-Government investments in FCR -Important progress made on FCR issues by previous Conservative govt - how to continue it</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shory (Cons)</td>
<td>-New Canadians -foreign-trained professionals particularly (like himself)</td>
<td>-Even once education is evaluated and retired courses completed, there are still difficulties in entering certain professions</td>
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<td>MPs</td>
<td>The who: Which Immigrants - who are the main actors/stakeholders</td>
<td>Origins of Policy Issue</td>
<td>Concepts used to describe/understand the issue</td>
<td>Solutions - How to address the policy issue</td>
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| Bevilacqua (Liberal)| -Asks Kenney how many immigrants actually received accreditation as a result of government efforts  
- Government must take the lives of immigrants seriously | -False advertisement of Canada as the “land of opportunity” | -Immigration as a pillar and foundation of nation-building as are all issues related to it  
- “the Canadian dream is dying” for many immigrants  
- Underemployed immigrants  
- Longer to reach average incomes, falling behind  
- Biggest issue facing immigrants today | - Need better funding and better management of programs to make sure the Canadian team is fulfilled |
Table 5 - CIMM Final Report Empirical Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The who: Which immigrants - who are the main actors/stakeholders</th>
<th>Origins of Policy Issue</th>
<th>Concepts used to describe/understand the issue</th>
<th>Solutions - How to address the policy issue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Underemployed immigrants in jobs far below their expectations</td>
<td>- Complex process</td>
<td>- Include education and job experience in defining credentials</td>
<td>- Current initiatives: FCRO, FCRP, IEHPI</td>
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<td>- Provinces and territories responsible for licensing trades and professions</td>
<td>- Involves multitude of players</td>
<td>- Canadian professional standards</td>
<td>- Budget 2009 gave extra $50 million over 2 years to Pan-Canadian framework</td>
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<td>- Recognize Quebec sovereignty on the issue</td>
<td>- Dissemination of information pre-arrival</td>
<td>- Core element to immigrants’ labour market integration</td>
<td>- Pan-Canadian information centre on promising FCR practices across Canada (information)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 440 regulatory bodies, 200 post-secondary institutions, 5 assessment agencies</td>
<td>- Many actors/veto points involved in FCR process</td>
<td>- Costs to taxpayers (tuition)</td>
<td>- Overseas services are important to continue and expand</td>
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<td>- Federal government has a leadership role to play</td>
<td>- FCR affects different groups of immigrants differently</td>
<td>- Affects Canada’s attractiveness as a destination to skilled workers</td>
<td>- Pre-departure FCR services from overseas</td>
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<td>- Employers are key stakeholders in FCR, especially in non-regulated professions</td>
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<td>- Low-income immigrants</td>
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<td>- Risk-averse employers</td>
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<td>- Discrimination issues and connecting FCR issues to immigrants’ race, ethnicity, country of origin, etc.</td>
<td>- Credential recognition needs to match points system for selecting immigrants</td>
<td>- Immigration and labour market issue</td>
<td>- Opportunities to gain work experience in Canada, more to be provided by employers</td>
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<td>- Recent immigrants are overrepresented in poverty, unemployment and underemployment</td>
<td>- Possibility of FCR as Human Rights issue</td>
<td>- Issue of national interest</td>
<td>- offer incentives to employers</td>
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<td>- FCR as skills underutilization</td>
<td>- Issue with ‘Canadian experience’ employers demand</td>
<td>- Include with ‘Canadian experience’ employers demand</td>
<td>- Improve accessibility to FCR programs through loans, financial support</td>
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<td>- Recent immigrants are overrepresented in poverty, unemployment and underemployment</td>
<td>- Recent immigrants are overrepresented in poverty, unemployment and underemployment</td>
<td>- Information to employers on immigrant skills - EMPloyers’ Road map</td>
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<td>- FCR as skills underutilization</td>
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<td>- Anonymous CVs</td>
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<td>- Federal govt should hire visible minorities and more employment equity in federal public service</td>
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<td>- Recourse available for immigrants who suspect discrimination</td>
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### Table 6 – Overview of Empirical Findings

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<tr>
<th>Explanation 1</th>
<th>Explanation 2</th>
<th>Explanation 3</th>
<th>Other Explanations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is affected</strong></td>
<td>Economic/Skill-selected immigrants, FSWs Prince St-Armand</td>
<td>All immigrant classes McIsaac, Owen, Swedlove, Beaudin, Sadiq, LaRue, McDade, Karygiannis, Wong, Dewar, Grewal, Kenney, Conservative Government Report</td>
<td>Radicalized groups, visible minorities, ethnic-religious minorities Casipullai</td>
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<td>Low-income immigrants -Casipullai, Chow, Report</td>
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<td>Skill-selected immigrants as only ones with adequate language skills -Kenney</td>
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<td><strong>What is it</strong></td>
<td>Immigrant Economic integration, immigrant success into the labour market, systemic issue Casipullai, McIsaac, Swedlove, Prince St-Armand, LaRue, Report</td>
<td>Skills underutilization, limited to foreign credentials and previous work experience, Individual issue, slow process Owen, Sadiq, Gagnon, McDade, Chow, Dewar, Grewal, Kenney, Conservative Government Report</td>
<td>Skills devaluation of non-white immigrants, immigrant employment levels Casipullai, St-Cyr,</td>
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<td>Legitimate concerns with immigrants falsifying credentials Beaudin</td>
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<td>Level of competence required of workers - Gagnon</td>
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<td>Falling income levels of immigrants today v past - Bevilacqua, Kenney</td>
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<td>Recent immigrants overrepresented poverty, underemployment -Report</td>
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<td><strong>Origins of the issue</strong></td>
<td>Discord between immigration and labour market policies: immigrant admission policy does not match labour market needs McIsaac, Swedlove, Beaudin, Prince St-Armand, Dykstra, Report</td>
<td>Institutional barriers and obstacles, complex procedures involved, non-collaborative actors with veto points, lack of information on the process and foreign credentials McIsaac, Owen, Sadiq, LaRue, McDade, Dewar, Kenney, Conservative Government Report</td>
<td>Racial discrimination and prejudice regarding immigrant competencies and skills, xenophobia, employer exclusionary hiring practices, labour market discrimination Casipullai, McIsaac, St-Cyr, Report</td>
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<td>Employers misinterpret ‘Canadian Experience’ - Swedlove, McIsaac, Report</td>
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<td>Easy for immigrants to falsify credentials from foreign institutions - Beaudin</td>
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<td>Need to maintain high Canadian Standards Beaudin, Gagnon</td>
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<td>Employers need incentives to hire immigrants -Chow</td>
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<td>Language issues of immigrants -Kenney, Kenney</td>
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<td>Licensing Bodies Practices -Kenney</td>
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<td>“Risk-Averse Employers” -McIsaac, Report</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Solutions - where do we focus to address it properly?</strong></td>
<td>Modify and update immigrant selection process and points system, more pre-arrival screening of prospective immigrants’ credentials. Beaudin</td>
<td>Establishing a national body standardizing FCR procedures and practices to better coordinate all the stages and actors with veto points involved, provide more funding, services and information on FCR available to immigrants, pre and post arrival McIsaac, Owen, Swedlove, Beaudin, Sadiq, Gagnon, Prince St-Armand, LaRue, McDade, Beaudin, Chow, Dykstra, Dewar, Grewal, Conservative Government, Kenney, Report</td>
<td>Employment equity policies and practices, anti-discrimination policies, HR practices, enforcing the Human Rights Act, oversee employer hiring practices Casipullai, McIsaac, Beaudin, St-Cyr, Beaudin, Report</td>
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<td>Lisbon Convention - Beaudin</td>
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<td>Immigrants need to make an effort to increase their language skills and integrate -Kenney</td>
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**Legend:**
- MPs Pre-Evidence
- Experts
- MPs Post-Evidence
- Final Report
Appendix B – List of Government Documents Analyzed


