

A FOCUSED ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF ETHNICITY CATERING



Research Question

How do **work integration social enterprises** support the **social and labour-market integration** of immigrant, Black and racialized persons?

Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) =

organizations that help individuals overcome employment barriers while using a business model.

Methodology



EthniCity Catering

- A WISE operating under an immigrant-serving org
- Generates profit from food sales which are used to support newcomer training and employment

Focused ethnographic case study = method allowing for a short-term, in-depth analysis into an institution. Over **2 years**, we collected:

21

Interviews with clients and staff

8.25

Hours of observation

14

Field notes

Findings

Economic Domain

Clients gained practical work experience and workplace skills, even with limited financial compensation.

"You feel safe learning...without that, I would not have tried new things or applied for jobs I never thought I could do." - C9

Personal Domain

Supported by staff considerate of their personal lives, clients gained confidence in taking initiative at work.

"[The staff] don't want us to be late... but if something happened, they want us to let them know via group message or call." - C2

Economic

Personal

Domains of Impact
of EthniCity Catering

Sociocultural

"[When] learning English, [this one colleague] helped me [a lot]... A long time in the kitchen, we speak together." - C3

Clients established strong connections that ultimately furthered their understanding of culture and the English language.

Sociocultural Domain

Power Dynamics

"In my country, men and women are separate... but I think we can learn [many] things from men and we can learn [many] things from women." - C3

While not a dominant theme, data also suggest clients and staff negotiated roles and boundaries based on titles, gender, and race.

Power Dynamics

Conclusion

Due to their diverse and culturally-sensitive environment, **WISEs like EthniCity effectively support the socio-economic integration** of Black and racialized Canadians.

Recommendations for WISEs

- Strengthen career support (e.g., mentorship and job placement services)
- Formalize post-program support (e.g., alumni networks, ongoing resources)
- Enhance language support
- Increase inclusivity and accessibility (consider childcare, transport, and accommodations)