

Immigrant Perceptions of Integration in the Canadian Workplace

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Introduction

Canada is traditionally known as a country of immigration, with official multiculturalism and interculturalism policies asserting recognition and respect for diverse identities, languages, customs, and religions of its residents and citizens. The country has a diverse demographic profile with over 250 ethnic origins (Statistics Canada, 2017a). According to the 2016 long-form census, one in four people in Canada speaks a language other than English and French (Statistics Canada, 2017b); one in five Canadians are foreign-born; and two out of every five Canadian children have an immigration background (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Statistics Canada (2017a) defines immigrants as persons who are born outside of the country and granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities, excluding temporary foreign workers and those with student or working visas. Thus, the reported numbers reflect this definition which is also adopted by our study.

It is predicted that immigrants and their Canadian-born children will make up nearly half of Canada's population by 2036 (Statistics Canada, 2017c). In 2016, immigrants represented nearly one quarter of Canada's total labour force (Statistics Canada, 2017d). Thus, immigrants constitute a growing proportion of the workforce, and the Canadian workplace structure and composition is becoming increasingly diverse to include employees from a range of ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. The increasing trend in cultural diversity of the workforce has brought a greater complexity and challenges to the employers wishing to integrate talented immigrants successfully into the workplace and maximize their growth (Malik *et al.*, 2014). The majority of new immigrants enter the job market with sufficient work experience and human capital (Reitz, 2007), making them an important talent pool who can contribute to productivity and profits in the short term. However, recent evidence suggests that while attracting skilled immigrants, Canada struggles to successfully integrate immigrants into its workplaces (Nakhaie and Kazemipur, 2013; Yap *et al.*, 2014).

A wide body of research has documented existing barriers to integration of immigrants into the labour market in immigrant-receiving societies. The existing literature focuses predominantly on immigrants' *economic integration* with attention to reporting unemployment and underemployment rates, earnings disparities, and deskilling of immigrant workers. Research in Canada shows that many skilled immigrants are prevented from entering the labour market and/or upward mobility due to de-credentialization (Bauder, 2003; Dolin and Young, 2004; Ng *et al.*, 2006; Reitz, 2007; World Education Services, 2019), which is the tendency of employers and licensing bodies to discount professional credentials and foreign experience. Studies revealed that over half of the skilled immigrants were unable to find occupations in the fields of their education and experience (Statistics Canada, 2007) and had to overcome periods of unemployment and underemployment (Aghakhani, 2007; Avni, 2012; Khan and Watson, 2005; Oreopoulos, 2011). According to the studies that assess earnings disparities, recent immigrants had lower income levels compared to those born in Canada despite similar levels of education and work experience (Bloom *et al.*, 1994; Frenette and Morissette, 2005; Li, 2000; Maxim, 1992; McDonald and Worswick, 1998; Picot and Sweetman, 2004; Skuterud, 2010; Warman and Worswick, 2004); World Education Services, 2019). Furthermore, the presence of an income gap has increased in the last decades (Picot and Sweetman, 2004; Reitz, 2001). While some

researchers explain these trends with deskilling and de-credentialization (Schmidt *et al.*, 2010), others emphasize discrimination based on race and skin colour (Haan, 2008; Hersch, 2008) and judgements of cultural capital such as accent speech, ethnicity, and cultural background (Mattu, 2002; Murdie, 2002; Purkiss *et al.*, 2006). Research examining the role of cultural capital, without employing the concept, revealed existing discrimination in the hiring process due to ethnic sounding names or foreign credentials (Oreopoulos, 2011). Esses *et al.*, (2014) found that applicants' religious identity affects the selection process if the applicant was not Canadian born and trained. Studies show that within the province of Quebec, which has its own Ministry of Immigration and adopts an interculturalist approach that encourages reciprocity and respect between cultures while recognizing French descent and values as dominant (Gauthier, 2016), deskilling and lack of recognition of foreign credentials is less problematic than other provinces; however, unemployment rates of skilled immigrants are higher (Gauthier, 2016). Furthermore, having a foreign-sounding name is also reported to be a barrier to employment in Quebec (Eid *et al.*, 2012). Similarly, research in the United States reported that Muslims, pagans, or atheists were less likely to be hired for high-status jobs (Ghumman and Jackson, 2008; Wallace *et al.*, 2014) and resumes with English-sounding names received about fifty percent more interview requests (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004). Furthermore, research on discrimination in the United States labour market reported race as a significant variable and newcomer Hispanics were the group that is the most discriminated against (Bendick, 2007).

The barriers to labour market integration in other industrialized countries parallel those faced by immigrants in North America. For instance, in Australia, studies showed that despite high levels of human capital, migrants experienced difficulty in securing their first jobs (Syed and Murray, 2009; Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2006) and experienced underemployment (Ho and Alcorso, 2004) and racism regardless of their language proficiency (Rajendran *et al.*, 2017). According to a European Commission report, access to employment has been the largest barrier to immigrant integration in the European Union (Kesler, 2006). A series of studies conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in several industrialized European countries revealed that more than one in every three qualified migrant applicants were unfairly excluded in the hiring process and migrants experienced substantial discrimination on the basis of race, religion or country of origin (Syed, 2008). Strömgren *et al.*, (2014) reported that in Swedish workplaces, skin color is a significant factor in integrating into the Swedish labour market. In Sweden, Britain and Germany, new immigrants face higher unemployment rates than natives while long-settled immigrants seem to have closed the unemployment gap. Nonetheless, country of origin was a significant determinant (Kesler, 2006). In France, studies exposed exclusion of immigrants from the upper segments of the labour market with high underemployment and job insecurity rates for immigrant workers, and deflation of union efforts to represent migrant workers (Turner, 2014). Using national level data, Andersson *et al.* (2014) and Strömgren *et al.* (2014) suggest a correlation between residential segregation and workplace segregation in the United States and Sweden. Their findings show that immigrant groups that are spatially concentrated are likely to find jobs through referrals from other immigrants in their neighborhoods which leads to immigrant concentration and segregation in specific sectors and workplaces. Likewise, Kesler (2006) reported high levels of sectoral segregation in Germany, manufacturing jobs being held by immigrant men since the postwar period during which Germany signed bilateral agreements with underdeveloped countries to import labour. As a result of segregation, immigrants were less likely to work with and develop relationships with natives, and integrate into the social life. Remarkably, studies conducted in regions that assume

different ideological approaches to immigration, such as multiculturalism, interculturalism, melting-pot, and assimilation, suggest similar labour market outcomes for immigrants.

While this body of literature provides valuable knowledge on labour market participation (rates, sectors, segmentation) or economic well-being of immigrants utilizing big data sets (e.g., census data), it pays little attention to immigrants' everyday experiences and perceptions of workplace integration, which can help identify the subtle and complex ways discrimination and social and institutional norms get in the way of their integration. With this goal, the current study aims to contribute to the literature to create a more holistic understanding of immigrant experiences by capturing perceived barriers to maintaining employment, advancing, and developing social relationships. It focuses on the workplace in which workplace culture, cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), and cultural judgements (Bauder, 2006) are exchanged and negotiated on a daily basis. Few Canadian studies have focused on immigrants *within* the workplace; those that have looked at the challenges faced by new immigrants identify challenges such as lack of language proficiency, unfamiliar workplace culture and norms, discrimination, exploitation, and social exclusion (Akkaymak, 2016; Fang and Goldner, 2011). These studies revealed that new immigrants are expected to assimilate into the Canadian workplace culture, adapting their behavior, values, beliefs (cultural capital) while native-born employees do not feel any responsibility in the integration process (Akkaymak, 2016; Malik and Manroop, 2017). To this end, drawing on qualitative interviews with immigrants working in the province of Ontario, the current study explores the Canadian two-way integration ideal and how it is experienced in the workplace. This article examines workplace "relations of inclusion and exclusion" (Swartz, 2013, p. 51) and the mediating roles of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and cultural judgments (Bauder, 2006) in the integration process with the aim to develop strategies to overcome existing barriers to workplace integration.

The next section provides an overview of the study's theoretical background, which elucidates theories of integration, cultural capital and judgements, and Canadian integration policy. In the following section, we explain our research objectives, questions and methods. The fourth section provides our findings and analyses followed by our discussion. We finish the paper with concluding comments and recommendations.

Theoretical Framework: Integration, Cultural Capital, and Cultural Judgement

Immigrant integration is a two-way adaptation process by migrants and receiving societies that involves both sides' rights, obligations, and respect for distinct values and practices (Appave and Cholewinski, 2008). This integration process aims for equal access to resources that would allow immigrants to participate in social, cultural and economic spheres (Phillimore, 2012); yet, integration outcomes depend on the choices immigrants make *as well as* the degree of receptiveness of the receiving society and the policies of the receiving society (Esses *et al.*, 2006; Kunst *et al.*, 2015; Van Oudenhoven *et al.*, 1998). At the micro individual level, *integration* can be seen as the process through which immigrants synthesize both heritage and receiving society cultures (Berry, 2005; Schwartz *et al.*, 2006). Immigrants' experiences in receiving societies vary and do not always result in integration. One may *assimilate* into the receiving society culture and give up one's own cultural identity while taking on all of the characteristics of the dominant culture, or have no desire or opportunity to relate to the dominant society and *segregate* from it (Berry, 2005).

At the macro level, integration can be defined as the structural process “by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups” (Appave and Cholewinski 2008, p.494). In Canada, at the macro level, the official policies of interculturalism and multiculturalism (in Quebec and all other provinces respectively) encourage integration and attempt to avoid segregation and/or assimilation of immigrants. Consequently, integration is seen as “a two-way street requiring accommodation and adjustments, rights and responsibilities on the part of both newcomers and the receiving society” (Biles and Winnemore, 2006, p.24). In other words, integration involves mutual obligations, and the Canadian institutions have roles and responsibilities in making integration attainable (Burr, 2011; Li, 2003), such as adjusting existing programs, policies, and services to accommodate diversity. However, while at the policy level cultural diversity is respected and integration is recognized as a two-way process, in practice, immigrants are often expected to adapt their behavior, values, beliefs (in other words, their cultural capital) while native-born individuals do not feel any responsibility in the integration process (Malik and Manroop, 2017). As a result, immigrants experience a slow form of assimilation as opposed to integration (Akkaymak, 2016).

Li (2003) argues that the integration policy in Canada *implies* that immigrants should accept “prevailing practice and standard and become similar to the resident population” (p.315). Therefore, immigrants’ integration is equated with the degree of convergence to the standards of Canadian society. The immigrants who speak the official language, live in white neighbourhoods, adopt a way of life that is similar to the majority Canadians, and participate in social and political life are considered as *socially integrated* and immigrants who participate in the economy and generate as much income as the members of the receiving society are seen as *economically integrated*. By the same logic, immigrants who differ from the average income or standard norms, values, or social practices are deemed as *poorly integrated* (Huot *et al.*, 2013; Li, 2003). Li (2003) argues that integration can be more inclusive and “differences can be treated as assets in the building of a global and diverse society and not as liabilities that undermine the aesthetic past of traditional Canada” (p.316).

The inclusive integration policy Li is referring to requires accepting and valuing immigrants’ *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital includes the set of symbolic elements such as skills, knowledge, credentials, behaviors, mannerisms, and material belongings a person accumulates in life. According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital comes in three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. We acquire cultural capital through socialization and education over the course of life and it exists within us, in an embodied state. We display embodied cultural capital as we interact with others, in the forms of norms, mores, and skills (table manners, accent, dialect, behavior, among others). In its objectified state, cultural capital refers to the material objects we own in relation to our embodied cultural capital; examples include the electronics we use, our style of dress, or the food we eat. These objectified forms are symbols of our cultural capital and our social class. In its institutionalized form, cultural capital refers to the measurements, certifications, and rankings of cultural capital, such as degrees, job titles, religious titles, and political offices that symbolize competence and authority. One important aspect of cultural capital is that it has the power to define each persons’ social position and mobility in society, just as much as income or wealth (economic capital). People with similar forms of cultural capital share a social status and form a sense of collective group identity. Bourdieu (1986) asserts that cultural capital enforces social divisions, hierarchies, and, ultimately, inequality.

The workplace is a site where “embodied cultural capital is both consumed and produced” (Crang 1994, p. 693 in Bauder, 2006). Building on Bourdieu’s theory, Bauder (2006) suggests that social processes such as *cultural judgements* are integral to the labour market. Decisions are influenced by cultural judgements of the body, which reflects embodied cultural capital. Immigrants need to be recognized as having the appropriate cultural capital to be selected for hiring or promotion, what Bauder (2006) calls *cultural judgment*. In order for an employer to select and make a judgment, as to the viability of an immigrant candidate for a job or task, the immigrant would need to demonstrate having the appropriate cultural capital: i.e., the “right” dress, walk, smell, and accent, and knowledge of the rules or norms. In this way, cultural capital is used as a signifier of cultural competence or incompetence when deciding the persons’ suitability for the job, rather than their skills and qualifications.

According to Bauder (2006), stereotypical perceptions of cultural capital are used by institutions (state, corporations) as an ideological tool to organize the labour market and match immigrants with certain occupations, which contributes to occupational segmentation in the labour market. The theories of dual labour market (Piore, 1979) and the segmentation of the labour market (Reich *et al.*, 1973) suggest that the labour market is divided into different segments and immigrants are placed in the occupations with low-wage and status, and poor working conditions. Bauder (2006) argues that immigrants are clustered in certain occupations in different sectors, not only in the secondary sector. To him, the segmentation reflects cultural judgements of employers. Different cultural markers and performances can be valued or devalued in different occupations. A person who is perceived as lacking the cultural capital that is required in one occupation is generally perceived to possess cultural capital to work in a different occupation, such as working as an accountant in the back office as opposed to a financial adviser working with clients. Depending on the industry and clientele profile, non-Western style markers or performances of cultural capital may be seen as valuable or harmful. For instance, in service occupations, accents are generally grounds for rejecting a job applicant; however, in other occupations, such as security guard, immigrant counsellor, taxi operator, one’s accent is not a barrier to employment. Therefore, work context matters. In another example, wearing a turban can be seen as a marker of cultural difference in the finance sector, but also as an asset in security as it symbolizes integrity and faithfulness.

Immigrants’ cultural capital reflects the culture of the workplace and labour market in their place of origin. However, the value of cultural capital varies in different social contexts. According to Bauder (2006), the capacity of immigrants to redefine interpretations and perceptions of embodied cultural capital, as well as the structured cultural codes of the workplace in the receiving society is very limited. This creates a power structure in the workplace that differentiates the holder of appropriate cultural capital from the non-holder and establishes workplace “relations of inclusion and exclusion” (Swartz 2013, p. 51). Canada’s Express Entry system allows employers to select candidates who will emigrate directly to Canada, and to their workplace without the buffer or settlement services of Canada’s settlement and integration sector. Thus, there is an increasing strain put on Canadian workplaces to become a space of integration, a space that is inclusive of different forms of cultural capital and free of cultural judgements, bias, and conflict.

In this vein, the current study aims to explore the power structure and the relationship between the holders and non-holders of the “appropriate” cultural capital within the Ontario workplace. It is important to discuss workplace integration from the perspective of immigrants

and identify cultural capital and cultural judgements that are perceived as barriers to workplace integration during the processes of recruitment, promotion, and everyday interactions. We can work toward the ideal of “two-way integration” only by gathering and understanding immigrant experiences. This research begins to address the gap between ideal and practice, underlines the importance of cultural capital and judgements in the integration process, and provides recommendations in regards to workplace intervention and accommodation.

Study Objectives and Research Questions

This study explores the ways in which *cultural capital* is employed and *judged* in the labour market and workplace; immigrants’ perceptions of *cultural judgements* of their employers and colleagues; and associated consequences for the integration of immigrants in the workplace. The overall objective is to assess how the official multiculturalism policy is reflected in Ontario workplaces and whether the cultural capital of immigrants is judged or deemed a valuable asset. The study examines immigrant experiences of integration in the workplace in three diverse cities in Ontario, Canada: London, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Toronto. Our research questions include:

1. What challenges do immigrants face in maintaining employment and advancing in the Canadian workplace?
2. Are cultural capital and/or cultural judgements perceived as barriers to inclusion and integration in the workplace?
3. What are immigrants’ perceptions and experiences of integration in the workplace? How, and to what extent, do they experience Canadian multiculturalism and the two-way integration ideal in their workplace?

Methodology

Participants

A total of 25 first-generation immigrants who were born and raised outside Canada, had acquired permanent residency or Canadian citizenship, and were employed at a medium to large sized companies in London, Kitchener-Waterloo, or Toronto were interviewed. The age range of the participants was 26 to 52 years old; gender distribution was 55% male and 45% female. All of the participants had obtained a university degree in their home country, and 55% had received a graduate degree in Canada. Their time of residence in Canada was between four and ten years. The level of English knowledge was advanced. The participants came to Canada from Bangladesh, China, France, Hungary, India, Iran, Japan, Romania, Somalia, and Turkey.

Procedure

This study was a part of a larger community-based research project on intercultural diversity and communication in the workplace, conducted in collaboration with the partner organizations London Cross Cultural Learner Centre and The Achievement Centre in London, Ontario. We used a snowball sampling recruitment technique that began with initial contacts being identified by our community partners.

Participants were asked a series of semi-structured, open-ended questions (Monroe, 2002), across five different categories: questions about finding a job in Ontario and their work (e.g. How did you find your current job? Did you go through periods of unemployment/underemployment? What is your current position?), questions about intercultural interactions and relationships with others in the workplace (e.g. Sometimes humor can cause conflict. Have you ever been in a situation when a joke was taken as an insult? Have you ever had a joke directed at

you that was insulting? Please explain.), questions about workforce and workplace diversity (e.g. How could your workplace be more diverse?), experiences of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and diversity training (e.g. Is diversity and inclusion training voluntary or mandatory at your workplace?), and finally, standard demographic information. Participants were asked fifteen questions in total and interviews took between one and three hours.

The interviews were audio-taped and professionally transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were analyzed using a grounded theory approach by comparing individual responses, noting and coding emerging themes using a thematic framework approach (Pope *et al.*, 2000). A five-stage framework (Ritchie *et al.*, 1994) was adopted during the process of thematic analysis: (1) the data were read by all researchers; (2) the data were re-read, themes regarding workplace experiences were identified, individually created themes were shared and a thematic framework was co-developed; (3) the thematic framework was then systematically applied to the data; (4) the data were re-organized according to the themes and saved on shared files; (5) the thematically organized data were reviewed by comparing and contrasting cases within themes and identifying patterns. While writing the research findings, intuitive decisions were made to identify and incorporate some excerpts over others (Gomm, 2008). Ethics approval for research involving humans was obtained from the University of Western Ontario's Research Ethics Board. To attend to issues of confidentiality, pseudonyms were used and all identifying information removed to conceal participant identity and ensure confidentiality.

Limitations of this study include those typical of snowball sampling techniques, such as inability to determine the sampling error and make inferences about populations; despite allowing the researchers to study more difficult to reach populations to discuss sensitive matters, these individuals may have 'more to lose' in their participation (Waters, 2015). Due to the sampling technique, sample size, and geographical limitations, the findings cannot be generalized. In the following section, we discuss the findings from these in-depth interviews.

Findings

Perceived Barriers to Workplace Entry

Nearly all of the immigrants participating in this study experienced difficulty at the recruitment stage. Contributing to previous study findings on ethnic and religious identity obstacles in hiring (e.g., Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004; Esses *et al.*, 2014; Ghumman and Jackson, 2008; Oreopoulos, 2011; Wallace *et al.*, 2014), the participants reported incidences of discrimination against candidates holding ethnic names. Carlos, who is employed at a financial corporation in Kitchener, spoke about his job search experiences utilizing different names:

I was sending resumes with my real name on it and not receiving any call-backs. When I sent a few resumes with a Canadian name 'Peter', I got job interviews. When I did not get a call back, I was at least getting a response such as 'you are in our records now and we will contact you in the future', which I never received when sending a resume with my ethnic name.

The 'ethnic name barrier' is widely acknowledged by the immigrants and their circles. Clark (London) believed that using ethnic names restricts immigrants from being recruited by Canadian employers, especially for managerial positions:

My [ESL] teacher told me if they see my resume with my name on it, it will go to the garbage right away. He suggested that I change my name if I want to be in a professional or lower management position. I heard that also from a few friends. Even my Canadian friends accept that this is the reality here.

The above quotes suggest that names, as indicators of applicants' cultural capital and signifiers of membership in an ethnic group encounter cultural judgements. Some participants in this study emphasized that names with cultural, especially Islamic, connotations should be avoided on resumes to avoid discrimination at the application phase; for instance, Bill, who had worked in three cities Ontario asserted:

I have been using a common Canadian name for many years. My real name screams that I am a Muslim and there is no way I would send a resume with that name on it. I am a senior engineer and have sat on hiring committees. I have seen how hesitant people are to hire Muslims, believing that all Muslims are practicing and would take frequent breaks during work hours or would not be coming to work on Muslim holidays.

Immigrants believed that, as Bauder (2006) suggests, cultural judgements operate in the hiring process and stereotypical perceptions of cultural capital affect decisions about a person's suitability for a job. Therefore, despite having adequate skills and qualifications, immigrants with ethnic, specifically Muslim, names may not be considered as having appropriate cultural capital to be hired, in terms of the way they dress, pray, speak, and/or act in Ontario-based workplaces. Such a finding is important considering the cultural diversity of the cities (London, Kitchener-Waterloo, and in particular, Toronto) in which these interviews were conducted.

Supporting Arthur and Merali, (2005), our study participants spoke about better employment opportunities for immigrants in metropolitan cities versus smaller cities. Some prefer living in small cities while complaining about a lack of job opportunities and discriminatory attitudes of white Canadian employers. Similar to the findings in United States and Sweden (Andersson *et al.*, 2014; Strömgren *et al.*, 2014), in the big cities of Canada, the existence of established ethnic communities and an ethnic labour market allow immigrants to utilize their social capital where networks and opportunity exist. However, finding job opportunities through ethnic networks may lead to a concentration of ethnic groups in specific sectors, as reported by research. According to the participants, the businesses owned and run by immigrants prefer to employ members of their own ethnic communities.

I worked at a Call Center in London for two years. It took me more than a year to find this job. They are conservative. They want to hire Canadians. They recruited me only because I was fluent in English and in French. But finding the [...] job in Toronto was momentary. The situation is very different there. Lots of immigrants, they have companies and hire some other immigrants. First, they will hire their own nationals, then they will hire other immigrants. (Clark, London)

Clark is suggesting a hidden hierarchy in hiring practices where immigrants face not only Canadian-born stigmatization, but also exclusion through hiring preferences for those who have the same nationality as the hiring staff member. These findings suggest the existence of a dual labour market (Piore, 1979; Reich *et al.*, 1973), similar to EU states (Syed, 2008; Turner, 2014), consisting of Canadian businesses and immigrant-run businesses with their own cultural and behavioral codes, with a preference for hiring in-group ethnic members. Thus, participants believe that they faced hiring bias as evidenced through employers' use of cultural judgements based on their cultural capital.

Perceived Barriers to Workplace Advancement: Glass Ceiling and Occupational Segregation

Extending previous findings in Canada and other immigrant receiving societies (Aghakhani, 2007; Avni, 2012; Ho and Alcorso, 2004; Khan and Watson, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2007; Syed and Murray, 2009), the participants in the current study described securing employment in their own professions as the main difficulty. Experiencing barriers of credential and foreign

experience recognition, more than half of the participants obtained additional post-secondary education in Canada after a period of unemployment. From the perspectives of immigrants, while their workplaces were diverse in regards to the demographics and cultural orientations of the labour force, the upper levels of management tended to be racially and ethnically homogenous. None of our participants held managerial positions even though they believed that they had the human and cultural capital for such positions. They perceived that their institutionalized (degrees, credentials) and embodied forms of cultural capital served as barriers to promotion. For instance, when Carlos (Toronto), a customer service representative at a bank, was interviewed for a management position, he was told that he “had a strong accent.” His language skills, which is a form of embodied cultural capital, were judged as inappropriate for the position. Nearly all participants believed that despite the fact that they worked hard and were very effective at their jobs, there was a glass ceiling preventing them from promotion to management:

You can try and you can do your best to get a position in the management, but nobody will give you a chance. Nobody says during an interview you must be Canadian, but nobody hires immigrant people to be part of the management team. Even if you have been schooled here. It's kind of a policy, but not disclosed openly. (Albert, Toronto)

Some participants believed that the Canadian workplace would benefit more from the cultural capital of immigrant managers and only immigrants could relate to immigrant employees.

If they want to benefit from the diverse workforce, they have to have a manager who is not Canadian, because it does not matter how much they try to understand the people of different cultures, they can't. They need to share the same experiences as a newcomer, as a foreigner. This is the only way to understand, relate and trust. (Mary, Kitchener)

Mary is, in fact, referring to an intercultural competency skill, assuming it would only be developed by a newcomer. The existing glass ceiling was perceived as exclusion and segregation by immigrant workers. Immigrants working with non-Canadian managers expressed similar feelings of inclusion. For instance, Janet (Toronto), expressed her feelings of security and comfort when working with a supervisor who was also an immigrant:

I realize that having a supervisor who is *not* Canadian makes me feel good at the workplace. I know it *should not* be important, but this is how I feel. I feel comfortable working with a person who does not embrace the dominant culture and understands where I am coming from. This way, I feel that I am not forced into the Canadian ways of business, I am contributing in my own way and my supervisor is definitely way more open to my ideas compared to the previous supervisor who was a White Canadian. (emphasis added)

These experiences suggest that, in spite of the inclusive integration policies at the policy level, as Li (2003) suggests, cultural capital representing Canadian values and conduct is more valued within the Canadian workplace and immigrants are expected to converge to the standards of the dominant workplace culture instead of contributing with their own cultural capital. George from Waterloo talks about his realization of cultural convergence:

When you look at the workplace, you see different colours. Some Canadians, some first-generations, and some second-generation immigrants from different geographies. However, the dominant workplace culture is Canadian. Everyone plays the game with the Canadian rules, in Canadian ways. I do not know what they do or how they act in their private lives, but in order to secure their place within that system, they have to go with the Canadian rules and work ethics and this is what they are doing. (George, Waterloo)

In addition to the barriers to promotion, the participants of this study believe that there is no (easy) access to certain occupations. The participants identified ethnic segregation of certain occupations, that is certain positions were associated with a particular ethnic identity. Clark (London), for example, stated that: “The owner of the company was born in Russia. The management was mostly Russian, but at the accounting department almost everybody was Chinese...” Such concentration of ethnic groups in specific occupational positions create *segregation* in the workplace. Aaron (London), for instance, spoke about how stereotypical perceptions of cultural capital were used as a tool to match immigrants with certain occupations (Bauder, 2006), and create physical, social, and occupational separation of different ethnic groups at the workplace:

You know, if you go and tell them you are a structural engineer, they will tell you to work at the Geotechnics department, because they all have Iranians in that department and you are a Middle Eastern. They believe Middle Easterners are better in Geotechnics, even though you tell them you are better at Structural. Partly, it is about stereotypes but mostly, they all live in their own cubicles and they do not want to have a Middle Eastern in their Canadian cubicle. They try to channel people to different groups by looking at their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, not their qualifications. They do not want to mix it up.

The aforementioned comments about occupational segregation and the glass ceiling confirm the persistence of what Maume (1999) described 20 years ago- that despite an increase in the presence of immigrants in corporations, immigrants (and perhaps also, visible minorities) fail to attain certain positions. To feel *integrated*, immigrants need workplaces where they feel that their cultural capital is valued throughout the organizational hierarchy. However, facing promotional barriers and occupational segregation due to cultural judgements, immigrants feel like second-class workers who are segregated from the majority Canadian co-workers and at times, other (preferred) immigrant groups.

Perceived Barriers through Cultural Stereotyping

During interviews, a majority of the participants shared their experiences of overt discrimination and stereotyping, resulting from cultural judgements of the body and embodied cultural capital (Bauder, 2006). Some incidents made Araf (Waterloo) feel as a ‘criminal’; for example, Araf stated, “They believe we are all lazy and came to Canada illegally.” Being “lazy”, “illegal, and “uncivilized” are reported by our respondents as commonly used stereotypes for immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

Almost all the non-European immigrants complained about receiving questions about the level of civilization in their home countries; for example, some experienced Canadian-born coworkers doubting their computer and technological skills (embodied culture) and had been in situations where they had to prove their knowledge and experience with technology. Some participants felt offended when they received questions about their objectified cultural capital such as dresses and accessories they wear or means of transportation used in their home country:

They ask “do you ride camels as means of transportation?” They know nothing about the world and think we are all far from technology. (Sonia, Toronto)

Because you are coming from a Muslim country, people expect you to wear burka or hijab, which I have never worn. I talk to someone from another department or a client on the phone, they have this stereotype about me. When they see me, they ask: “Did you take off your hijab after you arrived in Canada?” If I am wearing a tank or a mini skirt they ask where or when I bought these clothes, wondering if I could buy them at home. (Yuhanna, London)

This cultural bias aligns with reports of increased levels of religious bias - particularly Islamophobia – that mimic current trends of reported prejudice within Canadian society (Fleras, 2017).

Another common issue voiced by the immigrants is perceived discrimination and unequal treatment at the workplace. Some respondents felt that their Canadian-born managers favoured Canadian-born workers and ignored immigrant workers. A few respondents expressed that despite their hard work and measurable productivity, their opinions were not heard or considered, which signals devaluation of immigrant performances as suggested by Bauder (2006). These instances can be sources of conflict within the workplace when the person speaks up. For instance;

They were all Canadians. They were talking about a problem and I said something to them. I was trying to tell them over and over again and they were not listening. And I said “Helloooo! Hello I’m here I’m talking, listen and say something”. They all laughed at first, it was unexpected for them. They didn’t listen to me still and I said “Yeah you don’t listen because I’m [ethnicity], right? I’m an immigrant, right? That’s why”. There was a big fight-like discussion after that. (Aaron, London)

The instances of disregarding immigrants’ ideas and keeping them outside decision-making and problem-solving mechanisms demonstrate that Canadian workplaces do not adopt a two-way, inclusive integration model, but instead, take a culturally judgmental approach. The immigrant employees want to feel included and integrated in the workplace. During the interviews, the emphasis was on equal contribution, respect, and treatment. It was common to receive statements such as “it is North America, this is how things are done here” or “this is the Canadian way.” This discourse forces immigrant employees to assimilate into the mainstream workplace culture as opposed to integrating. It may also lead to segregation as described in further detail below.

Our respondents identified the differences in cultural capital and cultural judgements as barriers for developing relations with co-workers. Immigrants, mainly with Middle Eastern and Asian origins, have values and lifestyles that are distinct from the mainstream Canadian culture. Participants listed the following Canadian cultural attributes for a Canadian workplace: an emphasis on individualism, talking about your individual success stories instead of being humble, and making efforts to be politically correct. Some social activities are listed by the participants as binding Canadian co-workers together while excluding immigrants, such as watching or playing hockey together, partying (drinking) on the weekends, and gambling at casinos. Conversations around particular popular culture references and hobbies, which are forms of cultural capital and rooted in the socialization of actors, also work to create barriers for building social relationships with people of dissimilar backgrounds. Participants mentioned, for example, feeling an invisible barrier to developing intimate relationships with Canadian coworkers: “...It’s not visible, but you feel it. Even when they are talking to you, they are a little bit pulling themselves back because of different background. You feel different” (Jill, Toronto). Importantly, these barriers are identified as cultural, not personal:

I had a mentor who was training me. He never invited me to go for a coffee or asked how I was doing. First, I thought he did not like me. After a while, I realized something. You always look from your own cultural perspective. In my culture, if somebody is new, you try to welcome and include them; you try hard so they do not feel excluded and lonely. It is not the same here. Then, I started to perceive it as a cultural shock. Our cultures are different. They don’t have to make good friends from work or be very friendly to the new personnel. It is their job to train them; that is it! (George, Waterloo)

Most of the participants talked about their experiences attending events to connect with co-workers and adapt to Canadian ways, signifying an integration strategy at the individual level. However, many expressed feelings of exclusion at these events. Some felt ‘othered’ when coworkers talked about their shared experiences over the weekend or the night before. Mona’s (London) words illustrate that feeling:

You think ‘what is going on here? A party? ‘We are 13-15 people in my department and 5, all immigrants, were not invited. The rest [Canadians] hang out together most of the weekends. After a while, you feel like “okay, if you do not want my friendship, I do not want yours.”

On the other hand, the interviews disclosed that the existence of other immigrants at the workplace can alleviate feelings of loneliness:

I was comfortable wherever I worked or studied, because there were other immigrants. If there wasn’t, I would be all alone by myself, that’s for sure. (Annette, London)

I have been closer with the immigrants, because we go through the same processes and we have more common experiences to share. (Jeff, London)

These interviews indicate that sharing similar forms of cultural capital and status (the “other”, the immigrant) creates a sense of collective group identity among immigrant groups, as Bourdieu (1986) suggests. Immigrants expressed feeling more comfortable and valuable when working in culturally diverse environments. As Marissa (Kitchener) states, “not being the only foreigner and seeing other people who are also unfamiliar to the Canadian workplace culture give [immigrants] a level of comfort and a sense of belonging.” The participants working in more homogenous Canadian teams or groups emphasized the feeling of ‘eccentricity’, referring to their exclusive cultural capital. On the other hand, immigrants working in ethnically diverse offices stressed feeling as equal members and contributors to the workplace. Therefore, working in a culturally diverse office environment gave immigrants a sense of integration, as they felt that they fit in and contribute as an immigrant, utilizing their cultural capital.

The non-Canadian cultural capital also extended to everyday communication patterns such as language choices and perceptions around the use of personal space. Despite their English-language fluency, our respondents identified the use of everyday language (slang and jokes) as an area where they lacked cultural capital. Furthermore, respondents identified differing perceptions of personal space, which is an embodied form of cultural capital, as an issue. Immigrants in this study realized that they do not have the same concept of personal space as Canadians and tended to physically get too close to the people they were communicating with. Despite the use of personal space being rooted in cultural capital, many respondents felt as though misuse of personal space was understood as a personal offense or a personality trait rather than cultural reference. The following statement is representative:

I am a touchy person. I touch people’s arms and shoulders when I am talking to them. I do not like to keep a big distance between myself and others. I love hugging. I am having (a) hard time about it though. Some people at work, I realize, they move a few steps backwards when I am talking. I feel the wall they are building. They do not say it openly, but made me realize they wanted to keep a wall between us. (Ella, London)

This ‘wall’ makes Ella feel separated from her colleagues. On the other hand, some interviewees who had participated in workshops on intercultural communication in Canada and learned about cultural ranges of personal space acknowledged that their Canadian coworkers’ response to physical closeness was due to their individualistic orientation. They did not interpret the sensitivity about personal space as ‘building a wall of separation’ as Ella and some others.

Discussion

Many developed immigrant-receiving countries are struggling to successfully integrate immigrants into their societies in general and workplaces in particular (Stebleton and Eggerth, 2012; Zikic *et al.*, 2010). Canada is not an exception despite its multicultural and inclusive reputation. Studies on the economic integration of immigrants in Canada tend to focus on un/underemployment rates or earnings as the best indicators of labour market participation. Research that has discussed employment discrimination against those with foreign-born names or non-Christian religious affiliations has scratched the surface of the first-hand experiences of exclusion in Canadian workplaces (Esses *et al.*, 2013, 2014; Haan, 2008; Hersch, 2008). As Li (2003) states, in order to reach a comprehensive assessment of immigrant integration, we need to examine to what extent economic institutions are open or closed to immigrants and treat them as equal partners/co-workers. To address this need, this study examined the openness of the labour market and workplace through the perspectives of immigrants, and identified factors that support or hinder workplace integration in light of cultural capital and cultural judgement theories.

Addressing the first research question of the study through qualitative data, it became apparent that immigrants in Ontario, Canada faced barriers to employment, promotion, and social integration. Even highly skilled immigrants perceived occupational segregation and a glass ceiling. Building on studies that revealed discrimination in the hiring of immigrants in Canada (Esses *et al.*, 2014; Oreopoulos, 2011), the participants in the current study believe that forms of cultural capital, such as ethnic name and religion, prevent them from being recruited for professional or managerial positions. The participants' perception is that their cultural capital is judged and undervalued in the workplace, causing their opinions to be ignored and promotions to be out of reach. Furthermore, cultural judgements that are experienced as stereotypes affect their social relationships with co-workers. In addition to perceived suspicions about the quality of their education and knowledge of technology, immigrants sometimes receive negative and degrading comments about their cultural capital with a focus on religious and cultural practices. Building on previous studies in the field (Haan, 2008; Hersch, 2008; Mattu, 2002; Murdie, 2002; Purkiss *et al.*, 2006), our results demonstrate the complexity of discrimination due to forms of cultural capital, mainly accented speech, religion, ethnicity, and cultural background, which can lead to segregation practices. The cliques at the workplace are formed on the basis of similar forms of cultural capital (religious practices, immigrant status, etc.). While the existence of immigrant co-workers eases the process, immigrants working in less diverse places feel isolated, avoided, and ignored. The findings indicate that the social distance between immigrants and Canadians is owing to differences in cultural capital.

Most economic immigrants migrate voluntarily in search of better lives and are motivated to adjust to their new social environment. Therefore, they are more likely to favor integration strategies and make efforts to be accepted and included. However, if they experience barriers to integration and feel like the 'other' due to their cultural capital, they may adopt a segregation strategy and form alternative cliques with other immigrants. This may lead to further segregation and social distance between groups within the workplace. Studies show that social support and office friendships bring job satisfaction (Morgeson and Humphrey, 2008). Furthermore, developing relationships with colleagues and supervisors not only enhance social integration of

immigrant employees, but also affect their performance through creating a safe environment for asking questions and sharing information about work, organizational norms, and values as well as developing a sense of belonging to the organization (Malik and Manroop, 2017). In the view of these studies, Canadian workplaces need to adopt changes in the social environment by encouraging Canadian-immigrant employee interactions and teamwork.

In regards to our second and third research questions, confirming Bauder's theory of cultural judgements (2006), immigrants in this study believe that cultural capital and its assessment are important factors in regulating and organizing the Ontarian labour market. The analysis reveal that employers and fellow Canadian-born colleagues use perceptions of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and cultural judgements (Bauder, 2006) to select individuals for tasks and jobs. The findings suggest that (i) cultural judgements enforce social divisions; (ii) segregation and structural forces of assimilation are evident; and that the official multiculturalism policy in Canada is often not reflected in the Canadian workplace.

Immigrants coming to Ontario believe that they will participate in a two-way integration process that aligns with the multicultural ideal. These ideals are elaborated upon in political rhetoric and in politicians' calls for increasing immigration to Canada. However, immigrants continue to feel segregated and excluded in Canadian workplaces. Although Canadian workplaces are not devoid of cultural values, the norms that organize these spaces work to exclude employees with non-Canadian cultural capital. Immigrants in this study do not perceive their workplaces as multicultural environments where differences are recognized, respected, or incorporated. On the contrary, they feel that they are expected to, in some cases directly told to, adopt the Canadian workplace culture without contributing with their uniqueness. These findings support Li's conceptualization of Canadian integration and studies reporting that immigrant employees are forced to assimilate as opposed to integrate into Canadian workplaces (Akkaymak, 2016; Malik and Manroop, 2017). In this vein, integration is seen as the equivalent of assimilating immigrants by assisting them adopt the workplace values, norms, beliefs, and politics (Malik and Manroop, 2017). To reach the ideal of two-way integration, Canadian workplaces must provide an environment that encourages immigrants to contribute to the existing systems and institutions with their unique cultural capital, skills, and experiences, and feel included and respected. Otherwise, the diverse workplace ideal could be achieved, but not the inclusive ideal. Workplaces can benefit from the diversity of talent by taking an integrative approach and supporting immigrants to maintain their own cultural capital and synthesizing different views and ways of doing business (Malik *et al.*, 2014).

This study makes four important contributions to the literature. First, it examines the mediating role of cultural capital and cultural judgments in labour market and workplace integration of immigrants. Seeing labour market, specifically the workplace, as a space where cultural capital is re-produced and negotiated, the study provides empirical data for the role of cultural judgements in labour market segmentation and immigrant inclusion or exclusion in the workplace. Second, it extends literature with a holistic approach to immigrant perspectives and perceptions of work experiences. Third, it provides empirical data that the Canadian multiculturalist ideal is distinct from reality in the context of work and workplace. Finally, this analysis may motivate employers to comprehend challenges perceived by immigrants and develop company level strategies to overcome barriers, such as incorporating intercultural competency trainings to diminish the effect of cultural judgments and promote social integration.

Recommendations

Successful workplace integration cannot be achieved unless migrants are able to utilize their human and cultural capital, access employment that matches their skills and qualifications, advance at the same rate as native workers, and feel socially included. However, cultural judgments seem to be a barrier at each step. This study sheds light on the ways in which Canadian cultural values and norms continue to be used as a normative backdrop in everyday experiences that penalizes non-Canadian workers, despite anti-bias and anti-discrimination processes and practices at place. In order to address this issue and achieve successful integration for the immigrants, we need to consider initiatives at different levels: individual, organizational, and governmental.

Our findings support the previous research that indicates that both native-born and foreign-born employees lack intercultural competency, and new immigrant employees lack knowledge of the workplace culture (Malik and Manroop, 2017). Immigrants interviewed for this study reported communication problems that relate to the embodied forms of cultural capital. Whereas language is a barrier that can be overcome over time, personal space is rooted in cultural orientations and can be sources of misunderstanding at the workplace. These barriers can be overcome by educating the workforce about different cultural orientations. Employers and employees at all levels, from all cultural backgrounds (including Canadians) should work on building their self-reflection and their own intercultural skills to understand their cultural judgements, biases, and stereotypes toward different groups.

Malik *et al.*, (2014) suggest that individuals with high cultural intelligence (CQ) can effectively adapt to and shape the culture of their environment and manage cross-cultural relationships. Therefore, assessing current level of CQ of both native-born and immigrant employees during the hiring process and providing them with intercultural competency (knowledge, skills, behavior) trainings that incorporate CQ modules would be beneficial for the employers for minimizing cultural judgements and enhancing organizational integration. These initiatives can bring awareness and sensitivity about cultural differences and lead to modified behaviors that are acceptable to everyone in the organization. Since integration is and should be a two-way process, the role of the employers, HR personnel, and native-born colleagues should not be overlooked. Such interventions can address bias found in hiring practices- for example, difficulties facing applicants with non-Canadian or the “wrong” nationality names- and lead to assessments of diversity across the organization.

Organizational-level initiatives involve collaboration with their municipalities. The Canadian Commission for UNESCO supports the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities (CIM) that advocated for city-led training as one promising practice for immigrant integration. Such training aims to educate attendees about federal and provincial legislation (around immigration), human rights laws, local municipal harassment policies, and interpersonal communication and conflict resolution (or intercultural competency training) (Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities, 2019, p.28). CIM (2019) further advocates that training is tailored to various groups including employees, employers, as well as workplace teams. By hosting training and mentorship programs through municipal pathways, organizations avoid financial and resource (time, knowledge or network connections) limitations that notably affect small and medium-sized businesses. CIM (2019) also recommends the development of networking and mentorship programs, again hosted by the municipality, in an effort to build immigrants’ local connections and networks and to bring employers face-to-face with recent immigrant job seekers. This training could possibly address the cultural stereotypes and everyday racism, prejudice and exclusion facing recent immigrant employees and job seekers. Further, building networks with

local employers seeking employees would mitigate some of our participants' concerns finding employment.

Finally, at the governmental level, strategies to attract and retain immigrant talent differ depending on the size and location of the community (small or medium sized communities, rural communities, or metropolitan cities). The larger the community, the more resources to support immigrant settlement. Over the past 50 years, over 90% of the incoming immigrant population have settled in metropolitan areas due to the number of available jobs, integration services (and other social service provision), ethno-cultural resources, access to affordable transportation (and other physical infrastructure), among other factors (Patel *et al.*, 2019). Small Canadian cities typically use one of two approaches to attract immigrants: (1) attracting and settling newcomers using an economic strategy; or, (2) attracting and retaining newcomers by building a welcoming community (Vanhooren and Esses, 2019). The authors advocate that communities integrate both approaches to attract and retain immigrants. Acknowledging the important role immigrants play in the Canadian economy would work to support their acceptance by the receiving (majority) community influencing their placement and experiences within Canadian workplaces.

The authors also advocate for future research in the area of cultural capital and judgements from the perspective of immigrant employees to understand immigrant integration from a holistic perspective.

Conclusions

Although immigrants participate in the workforce in increasing rates, which is commonly interpreted by researchers as economic integration or labour market integration, they face discrimination in the work environment. This study pointed to the limited perspective taken in past research which equated finding work and equal pay as integration. From the perspective of recent immigrants, integration also includes their feeling a sense of belonging when working among the receiving (majority) community. Through in-depth interviews, this study demonstrated the importance of cultural capital and cultural judgements in Canadian workplaces as a factor of exclusion facing recent immigrants. The interviews demonstrated the nuanced and subtle ways that immigrant employees experience discrimination in the workplace. Although exclusion around ethnic-sounding names is well-documented, our work identified the role of cultural judgements in hiring, promotion, and social inclusion processes and uncovered preferences to similar cultural capital in the workplace.

Next, these interviews recognized the role of Canadian cultural values in workplace practices through everyday coworker communication and interaction that emphasized the importance of hidden 'Canadian values' as appropriate managerial skills, attitudes, and behaviours. Overall, the authors found evidence of cultural stereotyping of both Canadian and historically-marginalized recent immigrant workers, thus highlighting the continued presence of discrimination in Canadian workplaces - despite Canada's reputation as an inclusive and welcoming space for immigrants.

In response, the authors advocate for increased training for employees, employers and even teams as a means to identify personal and structural bias and educate Canadian-born employees and employers on Canada's immigration system, in a bid to engender empathy and understanding of immigrants' migration and workplace experiences.

Papers in this special issue spoke to the importance of understanding the complexity and subtlety of bias and exclusion immigrants face at work. This paper advocates for training - as

supported through government bodies to mitigate issues of limited financial (among other) resources - and building opportunities for face-to-face interactions between employers and immigrant job seekers. The study points to the need for change at the individual, organizational and governmental levels for immigrant integration in the workplace. Addressing the cultural biases present in Canadian workplaces – including the hidden Canadian cultural judgements at work – will facilitate the recruitment and retention of immigrant employees, contributing to Canada’s ability to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

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