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The impact of intercultural communication competence on the career experiences of skilled immigrant managers in the greater Toronto area

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THE IMPACT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE ON THE CAREER EXPERIENCES OF SKILLED IMMIGRANT MANAGERS IN THE GREATER TORONTO AREA

by

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ABSTRACT

Guided by James Frideres' model of integration and Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical approach to

capital, this paper examines the factors that contributed to the upward mobility of some skilled

immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area. An examination of the literature on the phenomenon of

the "glass ceiling" reveals that skilled immigrants' integration into the workplace is

multidimensional, and cannot be achieved without the accumulation of different forms of capital

necessary for advancement. The empirical research of this study captured the participants'

professional experiences that led them to develop an intercultural communication competence,

which became a fundamental component to their career development. Based on this finding, I

offer a new conceptual model of integration into the workplace that can be achieved through the

accumulation of intercultural communication and identity forms of capital. The paper advances

recommendations for an in-depth investigation of the impact of formal and informal training, in

the host country, on skilled immigrants' upward mobility.

Key words: Intercultural communication, career advancement, skilled immigrants, forms of

capital, Greater Toronto Area

Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

Recently, there has been an increased interest in Canada to examine the barriers to upward mobility of skilled immigrants. While a growing body of literature has contributed to the understanding of the nature of these barriers, there seems to have been little discussion on how some skilled immigrants have broken through obstacles to upward mobility and have moved into management, and in some cases leadership positions. The absence of the voices of skilled immigrant managers themselves, within the literature, on this topic calls for an examination of their perspectives to understand the factors that contributed to their career progress. This understanding will be important to both skilled immigrants and employers alike.

In this paper, I use a framework adapted from Frideres (2008) to examine the barriers to skilled immigrants' integration into the workplace. In this examination, I deploy Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical approach to capital to illustrate the nature of these barriers. An empirical research study was conducted to gain an understanding of the work experiences and perspectives of immigrant managers in the Greater Toronto Area, and it was intended to seek answers to three main questions: (1) how does the accumulation of linguistic, cultural and social forms of capital influence the career experiences of skilled immigrants? (2) Could capital-rich, highly-educated immigrants overcome obstacles to career advancement that are deeply rooted in the host society's institutional practices and attitudes? (3) What lessons skilled immigrants can learn to improve their chances for advancement in the Canadian workplace?

This paper is structured as follows. First, I provide a theoretical review of the barriers to immigrants' advancement at two levels: the immigrant individual and the host society's institutions. In the second section, I outline the research methodology, in which participants' characteristics and research procedures are discussed. The third section presents the findings

into four main categories: (1) knowledge of English language and foreign accents; (2) culture as context for communication; (3) networking, social connections, and mentorship; and (4) career advancement: lessons learnt. Each of these categories is broken down into themes to describe the participants' work experiences and perceptions. In the fourth section, I offer an analytical discussion of the findings along with their theoretical implications, and suggest a new model (or framework) for skilled immigrants' integration into the workplace. Finally, I conclude that skilled immigrants have potential to accumulate intercultural communication and identity forms of capital through the development of intercultural communication competence. On the basis of this, I recommend an in-depth investigation of the impact of formal and informal training on skilled immigrants, in the host country, which I see as essential step to develop such a competence.

Literature Review

The emergence of a knowledge-based economy in Canada has increased the demand for a highly educated workforce necessary for sustainable long-term economic growth. This demand has led to the recruitment of skilled immigrants, who possess human capital to meet the needs of the country's growing knowledge economy (Green and Green, 1999). The term "capital" in the science of economics goes back to the thoughts of classical economists, who attached dominant importance to issues of capital accumulation and growth (Kim, 2009). The term "human capital" was first included in the definition of capital by Adam Smith (1776), but had never been used by economists until the 1960s (Laroche and Mérette, 1999). Human capital is particularly important in the context of Canadian immigration policy because it is based on selecting individuals with human capital attributes such as education, language skills and work experience that are considered ideal for Canada from an economic standpoint (Buzdugan and Halli, 2009). Over the past three decades, human capital was mainly generated from the increasing promotion of immigration from non-traditional source regions under the economic admissions class, providing Canada with access to those who have the desired human capital attributes.

According to the 2006 census numbers (Statistics Canada, 2007), skilled immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006 have originated from regions such as Asia and the Middle East, and make up the largest proportion (58.3 per cent), followed by those who were born in Europe (16.1 per cent), Central and South America (10.8 percent), and Africa (10.6 per cent). The 2006 census also shows that the majority of immigrants (68.9 per cent) settled in one of Canada's three largest census metropolitan areas (CMAs): Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver, of which 16.2 percent belong to a visible minority group[1]. The Toronto CMA has been, by far, the

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[1] In Canada, the visible minority population includes the following groups: Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Japanese, Korean and Pacific Islander (Statistic Canada, 2007).

country's primary urban centre for recent immigrants. Between 2001 and 2006, Toronto took in 40.4 percent of all newcomers to Canada, and 81.9 per cent of these newcomers belonged to a visible minority group (Statistics Canada, n.d.). According to new population projections, the visible minority population of the census metropolitan area of Toronto could more than double by 2031 (Statistics Canada, 2010).
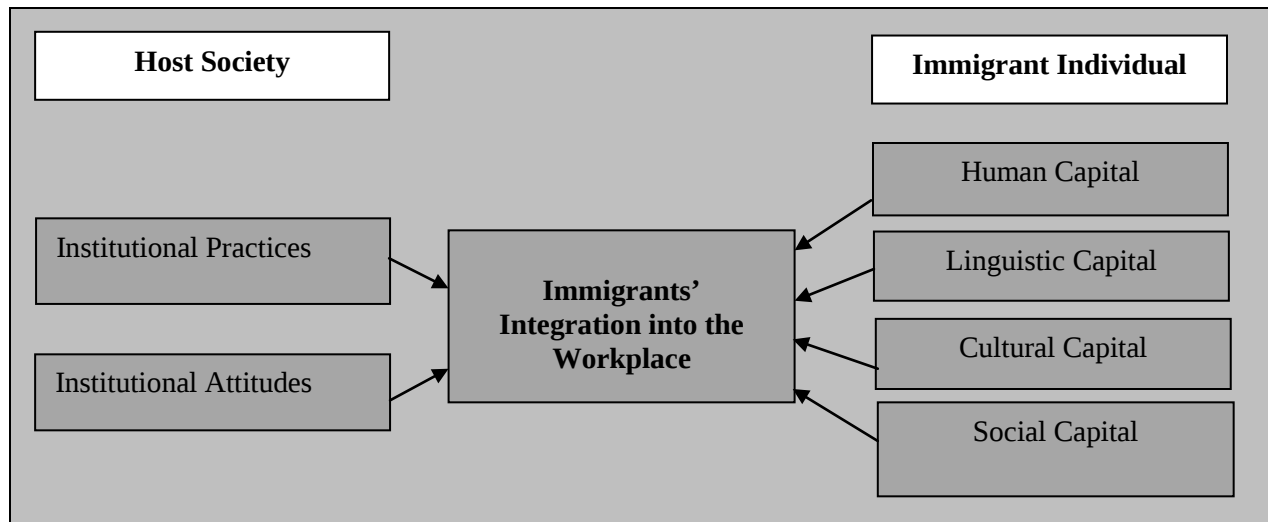
While skilled immigrants' human capital provides access to the labour market, it is questionable to what degree it impacts immigrants' career advancement, particularly for members of visible minorities (The Diversity Institute in Management and Technology, 2009). According to Reitz (2005), many recent immigrants, particularly members of visible minorities, are unlikely to hold managerial positions in the workplace. Cukier et al. (2011), find that only 14.5 per cent of leadership positions in the Greater Toronto Area are held by immigrants who are members of visible minorities. The greatest number of leadership positions held by visible minorities is in the education sector (20 per cent), while the smallest number is in the corporate sector (4 percent). All this suggests that barriers to advancement, also referred to as the "glass ceiling," are preventing skilled immigrants from fully participating in the workforce (Schreiber et al., 1993).

The "glass ceiling" is the term used to describe barriers to advancement into leadership positions (Staff Catalyst, 1993). It was first used in 1986 by two Wall Street Journal reporters to describe the invisible barriers that block women from advancing to senior leadership positions in organizations. It was later on used to also describe low representation of minorities in senior managerial jobs (Beck et al., 2002). Although most of the studies of the "glass ceiling" have originated from the Unites States, recently there has been an increased interest in Canada to

examine this phenomenon and its impact on immigrants' integration into the workplace (Silva et al., 2007; Giscombe, 2008; Shin, 2008; Cukier et al., 2009; Cukier et al., 2011).

As exhibited in Figure 1 below, integration into the workplace is multidimensional, and can be achieved through a positive interaction between the host society and the immigrant individual, which is a fundamental mechanism to develop individual forms of capital (Frideres, 2008). While human capital greatly influences labour market success, the degree to which it impacts immigrant career advancement cannot be understood in isolation from other forms of capital such as linguistic, cultural and social. According to Bourdieu (1991), linguistic expressions are produced in particular markets that endow linguistic products a certain value. The more the speaker is able to produce expressions that are highly valued on a particular market, the more he or she will possess different quantities of linguistic capital that embodies a certain level of power. Bourdieu (1989) argues that relations of power are symbolic and they tend to reproduce and reinforce themselves as an authoritative embodiment of cultural values based on recognition and prestige. In addition, Bourdieu (1986) suggests that cultural capital can exist in three states : first in the *embodied* state, which is "linked to the body and presupposes embodiment," (p. 48, emphasis in original) i.e. in the form of culture or the process of assimilation, which requires time and personal investment; second in the *objectified* state, i.e. in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, instruments, etc.), which is transmissible in its materiality in the form of ownership; and finally in the *institutionalized* state, i.e. in the form of academic qualifications or a "certificate of cultural competence," (p. 50) which provides a guaranteed value. Further, Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 51). Bourdieu (1986)

Figure 1: Model of Integration into the Workplace

Host Society		Immigrant Individual
		Human Capital
Institutional Practices	Immigrants' Integration into the Workplace	Linguistic Capital
		Cultural Capital
Institutional Attitudes		Social Capital

Source: Adapted from Frideres, 2008

proposed a process in which one form of capital can be transformed into another, and can result in a certain value, which cannot be accessed instantaneously, but can be established and maintained after a period of time. In the immigration context, this notion of the conversion of one form of capital into another provides skilled immigrants with a competitive advantage and value in the labour market, a concept that will be explored in more detail here below.

Immigrants who move between cultures must learn not only new skills and a new way of life, but also apply specific strategies to respond to stress caused by a new cultural setting (Bhatia and Ram, 2001), and accumulate linguistic capital. Linguistic capital, which is a mechanism of power (Bourdieu, 1977a) is a form of capital that is accumulated as a result of daily interactions between immigrants and native-born Canadians. These interactions are based on the ability of an immigrant to project his or her power position in order to make the message itself better understood (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). As suggested by Bourdieu (in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992):

6

[…] what goes in verbal communication, even the content of the message itself, remains unintelligible as long as one does not take into account the totality of the structure of the power positions that is present, yet invisible, in the exchange. (p. 146)

Acculturation in the linguistic sense is the process of conforming to the host society's linguistic practices and adopting a "standard language ideology," (Milroy and Milroy, 1985 cited in Lippi-Green, 1994, p. 166) which is defined as "a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogeneous spoken language" (Lippi-Green, 1994, p. 166). Variations of linguistic capital, such as accents, can also determine the speaker's position in the social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1991) since they are "the first diagnostic for identification of geographic or social outsiders," (Lippi-Green, 1994, p. 165) and can have positive or negative implications on how these relations can be formed. When people accept or reject an accent, they also accept or reject the identity of the person speaking (Lippi-Green, 1994). For example, British or Australian English accents do not produce the same reactions and attitudes produced by immigrant individuals coming from non-traditional source regions (Creese and Kambere, 2003). Bourdieu (1991) argues that accents act as cues for the linguistic capacity of the speaker, and determine the degree of access that an individual has to other forms of capital, as well as opportunities (or the lack thereof) in the labour market. "Strong" accented speech implies limited language skills even if it does not lead to reduced intelligibility (Munro, 2003). It can be described as a "border" that prevents crossing from the status of "immigrant" to "Canadian" regardless of formal citizenship status (Creese and Kambere, 2003).

Linguistic capital facilitates the reproduction of the dominant culture, norms and values resulting in a specific habitus, which is a "system of *dispositions*" that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking" (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 27, emphasis in original). Smith (1966 cited in Jandt, 2010) defines culture as "a code we learn and share, and learning and sharing

require communication" (p. 37). Habitus facilitates the reproduction of the cultural conditions within a society, and dispose individuals to behave and communicate in a certain way as a result of living in a particular social environment (Lamaison and Bourdieu, 1986). The social environment is a field in which individuals act in a certain manner, and are willing to "play by the rules of the game if they want to be included as members of the institution" (Bauder, 2006a, p. 674). Therefore, individuals who consciously choose to play by the rules of the game are better positioned to maximize their profits within the social field in which they operate (Bourdieu, 2002). Bourdieu (1977b) uses the concept of habitus in relation to communication to explain how cultural messages and codes influence individuals' thoughts and behaviour, which leads to the development of cultural competence. Cultural competence can be accumulated as capital which provides skilled immigrants with opportunities to advance in the labour market (Bauder, 2005). Cultural capital provides skilled immigrants with a base to "Canadianize" their communication style and behaviour in order for them to fit into their organizations and achieve better employment opportunities (Giscombe, 2008). This is particularly true for some minority women, who adopt particular behavioural manners that would, for example, make them seem either more assertive or less outspoken than they normally would be (Giscombe, 2008).

The role of linguistic and cultural forms of capital in the career advancement of skilled immigrants cannot be fully understood without examining how social capital contributes to the process of career advancement. Immigrants who are able to expand their networks beyond their own ethnic community, and "bridge" their social capital to include native-born Canadians are more likely to increase the economic returns on their human capital (Kunz, 2003). A lack of social networks could have serious consequences for advancement and economic prosperity (Putnam, 2000, cited in Silva and Edwards, 2004). As most of relationships are formed during

8

informal networking opportunities, some immigrants are excluded from many activities that may help them develop the necessary connections to advance in their careers (Silva et al., 2007). This exclusion may lead to difficulties establishing mentoring relationships with a champion in the workplace, which is considered one of the main factors impeding career advancement. Mentoring is "a type of developmental relationship in which a more experienced individual assists a less experienced individual in his or her career and personal development" (Kram, 1985, cited in Nguyen et al., 2007, p. 296). Mentors transmit cultural capital through the reproduction of the dominant cultural practices so mentees are better equipped to play by the "rules of the game" (Bauder, 2006a, p. 674) and learn about the culture of power (Byrd, 2007). While there is a clear link between mentoring and career advancement, Nguyen et al. (2007) suggest that one variable, such as personality, can predict immigrants' chances for mentorship since highly agreeable individuals are more likely to be mentored, and report higher career satisfaction.

All this leads to the realization that communication and the sociocultural dimension of integration are inseparable. This realization helps us better understand the reality and complexity of the immigrant experience. Whorf (1956, cited in Zhu, 2002) states that "It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language, and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection" (p. 164). The degree to which highly skilled immigrants are able to accumulate linguistic, cultural and social forms of capital determines the level of intercultural communication competence developed to support career progress.

The development of intercultural communication competence is a process that starts with interpersonal communication while incorporating cultural factors (Ellingsworth, 1983, cited in Gudykunst, 2002). Intercultural communication involves verbal and non-verbal elements of

communication such as words, gestures, body language, and emotions, and they are used to communicate specific messages (Jandt, 2010). The process of developing intercultural communication competence involves the formation of an individual's interpersonal characteristics (Herfst et al., 2008) where "the seamless synthesis of personal and work-based identity has to be artfully performed to produce a convincing synthetic personality which embodies certain 'competencies' and dispositions" (Fairclough, 1992, cited in Campbell and Roberts, 2007, pp. 244-245). A lack of interpersonal skills decreases the chances of advancement for skilled immigrants, who tend, while interacting with other people, to be unaware of certain workplace norms since they are different from those in some other cultures. These norms, such as asserting oneself, taking initiative by asking questions, and being critical are acceptable behaviours in a workplace, but may be uncommon in the immigrants' work-related culture in the country of origin (Zaldman and Drory, 2001; Roberts et al., 2008, cited in Holmes and Riddiford, 2010). Also, skilled immigrants are often overwhelmed by the way in which social talk is intertwined with work talk, and how native-born colleagues can easily switch between small talk and task-oriented talk (Holmes and Riddiford, 2010). Another important factor associated with workplace norms in relation to communication is the idea that our identities are expressed communicatively in core symbols or cultural values (Martin and Nakayama, 2007). Cupach and Imahori (1993, cited in Gudykunst, 2002) view identity as providing "an interpretive frame for experience," (p. 191) and motivates individual's behaviour. For example, core symbols of African American identity may be positivity, sharing and assertiveness, while individualism is often cited as a core symbol of European American identity (Hecht et al., 1993; Hecht, 1998, cited in Martin and Nakayama, 2007). Hecht and his colleagues (1993) further argue that some workplace norms or behaviours are also associated

10

with gender identities, for example, the way women behave, communicate and express their concerns about work-related issues (cited in Martin and Nakayama, 2007). Whereas the development of intercultural communication competence could be a stressful process, Schwartz et al. (2006) maintain that personal characteristics can buffer immigrants during cultural transition and protect them from the negative effects of the acculturation process such as an experience of identity threat and frustration. The more an individual cultivates a level of identity security, the more he or she is open to interacting with members of the host culture, and therefore making the process of cultural transition easier to manage (Gudykunst, 2002). The reinforcement of immigrants' sense of self leads to the accumulation of identity capital, which is a form of investment by individuals in "who they are" (Côté, 1996, p. 425). Côté and Levine (2002) conceptualize identity capital as a capital associated with identity formation, which represents "the varied resources deployable on an individual basis that represents how people most effectively define themselves and have others define them, in various contexts" (p. 142). The formation of identity capital requires personality traits to better position an individual to move through dimensions of place and space, and engage in self-monitoring (Snyder, 1974).

The host society's institutional practices and attitudes can increase barriers to career advancement and, therefore, impact the process of developing intercultural communication competence. These practices and attitudes are influenced by an organization's culture and values, which are dominated by gender and racial variations, creating major barriers to the advancement of skilled immigrants in general, and women in particular (Staff Catalyst, 1993). Gender- and racial-based stereotypes for women and members of visible minorities contribute to skilled immigrants' professional isolation and exclusion, and can leave them feeling unable to fit into their workplace (Giscombe, 2008). As a result, some of these skilled immigrants have to

adopt strategies to downplay certain cultural aspects of their background, which decrease their chances for advancement. Gender variation is quite evident for visible minority women who experience many of the same barriers to women's advancement in general, but the impact of such barriers is more profound for them because their numbers in management are so small (Staff Catalyst, 1993). The effects of race on occupational status and promotions have also led to occupational stereotyping. Asian immigrants, for example, are stereotyped as being "technically competent," (Tang, 1997, p. 399) a skill that provides them with access to employment in technical fields, but limits their opportunities for advancement.

Another aspect of racial variation is the concern that insufficient opportunities for the promotion of skilled immigrants may be based on linguistic profiling and accent stereotyping (Munro, 2003). The institutionalization of accent stereotyping has led to discriminatory bahaviour toward particular racial groups even when it did not necessarily lead to reduced intelligibility (Derwing and Munro, 1997; Munro, 2003). Accent discrimination separates "the powered and the disempowered," (Fairclough, 1989, p. 33) where the powered mainstream protects one's practices as universal to preserve the "standard language ideology," (Lippi-Green, 1994, p. 166) and the disempowered, or those who do not subscribe to the same ideology, are excluded from promotional opportunities. Although heavily accented speech can often be perfectly intelligible, it implies low levels of linguistic competence due to "harder to understand" language (Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada, 2006).

In addition, gender and racial variation in career patterns differ by industry sectors and size of organization. Schreiber et al. (1993) presented the findings of the Glass Ceiling Benchmark Survey undertaken in 1992 by the U.S. Human Resources Planning Society (HRPS) and the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). The survey looked at barriers to advancement in

manufacturing, service and not-for-profit sectors at different size organizations. The study found that barriers to the movement of women and members of visible minorities into management or executive positions exist in all three sectors, with a notable difference in the not-for-profit organizations reporting fewer barriers. Barriers to advancement by the size of an organization were also evident in medium- to large-size organizations, with fewer reported barriers in small-size organizations. The absence of the host society's institutional support to a diverse workplace, and vigilance to address negative stereotypes create major barriers to skilled immigrants' promotional opportunities (Cukier et al., 2009).

The review of this literature reveals that the barriers to upward mobility of skilled immigrants are multidimensional, tightly interwoven, and interdependent. These barriers are the underlying causes of the "glass ceiling," which is a complex phenomenon with subtle nuances that work together to create inhospitable workplaces and limit opportunities for career success. Using data obtained from interviews with skilled immigrant managers in the Greater Toronto Area, this study addresses three main questions: (1) how does the accumulation of linguistic, cultural and social forms of capital influence the career experiences of skilled immigrants? (2) Could capital-rich, highly-educated immigrants overcome obstacles to career advancement that are deeply rooted in the host society's institutional practices and attitudes? (3) What lessons skilled immigrants can learn to improve their chances for advancement in the Canadian workplace?

Research Method and Procedures

In order to understand people's perceptions and opinions of a situation, phenomenological research provides the basis for a reflective analysis to describe an experience from the perspective of the research participants using qualitative methods such as interviews (Neuman, 2006). A phenomenological interview is "one in which a participant is enabled to describe his or her experiences of some phenomenon with as little direction from the interviewer as possible" (Pollio et al., 1997, cited in Davis et al., 2004, p. 112). Semi-structured interview questions were developed with a pre-determined framework of categories to be explored. Semi-structured questions offer flexibility for respondents to convey their experiences and opinions, whilst ensuring a level of focus and structure throughout the interviewing process (Arksey and Knight, 1999, cited in Tatli, 2011). A purposive sample, which is an intentional, non random selection of participants (Trochim, 2006) was developed to capture the lived experiences of skilled immigrant managers. Despite its serious limitations i.e. a lack of wide generalizability, a purposive sample was selected to ensure that certain types of individuals displaying certain attributes are included in the study (Berg, 2009). An interpretive analysis of transcripts was used to examine how people interact with the world on a daily basis creating meaning (Merriam, 2002 cited in Bristol and Tisdell, 2010), and has resulted in the development of four main sections. Each of these sections was further broken down into themes characterizing the experiences and perceptions of the participants. Each theme was labeled by a phrase used by one or more participants to preserve the language used to describe an experience (Davis et al., 2004). These themes were not interpreted as separate, but rather as an interrelated aspect of an overall pattern.

Participants

A total of ten individuals (six male and four female) agreed to participate in the study to share their perspectives on the factors that contributed to their career advancement. All participants came from non-traditional immigrant source regions where English (or French) is not an official language, a criteria that was used for selecting the participants (See Appendix A).

The study sample included seven participants who were members of a visible minority group, and three others who did not belong to a visible minority group, but came from a country where English (or French) was not the official language. While visible minorities are perceived as unlikely to command managerial positions, recent immigrants in general, who come from a country where English (or French) is not the official language also face obstacles to career advancement (Reitz, 2005), hence the inclusion of non-visible minority individuals in the sample. Of the ten participants, nine individuals had obtained Master's or PhD degrees and one a Bachelor's degree. Of these nine individuals, five have obtained their degrees in North America (four in Canada and one in the USA), and one in Eastern Europe. The other three participants, as well as the one participant whose degree was at the Bachelor's level, have studied in countries where the language of instruction was English. For the purpose of this study, language of instruction in the institutions from which the participants obtained their degrees will be the primary control for the education criteria.

At the time of the study, participants held management jobs at three levels: entry, middle, and senior levels. While there are differences among these levels in terms of responsibilities, reporting and leadership, the aim of the selection was to capture the participants' experiences and perceptions rather than to learn about the nature of their roles and levels of responsibilities in their current positions. The three levels of management held by all participants varied by

industry sectors and organization's size. Of all ten participants, three work in a technical field.

Except for one individual, the average length of residency in Canada for most participants was

between eight and thirteen years, with five individuals reported to have been living in the country

for over fifteen years. See Appendix B for a summary table of the study sample.

Procedures

Participants were mainly recruited through professional networks using word-of-mouth

communication, and the snowball technique (Neuman, 2006) to locate subjects within attributes

necessary for the study. Some participants were also identified through publically available

sources such as "Top 25 Canadian Immigrants Award" program[2], which provides background

information on successful Canadian immigrants. Identified subjects were sent a letter of

invitation (See Appendix C) that included a brief description of the study, and subjects were

asked to contact me directly expressing their interest in participating in the study without any

coercion or concern for breach of privacy. Interviews were conducted between June 2010 and

March 2011. The first three interviews have been conducted as pilot interviews to test the

research process to increase reliability and validity. The data collected from the pilot interviews

did not require revisions to research methodology, and was therefore included in the main

findings.

All participants were provided with written informed consent agreement (see Appendix

D), and were assured of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of the interviews. To avoid any

discomfort, interviews were conducted at a place that was convenient and comfortable for all

participants. The majority of participants were interviewed in an office environment, with the

exception of two individuals who chose to be interviewed in a local coffee shop. Interviews

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[2] "Top 25 Canadian Immigrants Award" is a program that was launched in 2009 to recognize outstanding
immigrants who have made a positive difference living in Canada.

were conducted in person, and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The participants were interviewed using semi-structured questions (See Appendix E) with the aim to gather data focusing on three main conceptual categories: participants' perspectives on linguistic, cultural and social capital in relation to their professional experiences and career development. Questions concerning these three categories were derived from the literature review, specifically from the "integration into the workplace" model adapted from Frideres (2008). Questions were open-ended in order to allow participants to freely express their opinions and share their immigration experience. Interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Guided by the research questions, data was arranged into conceptual categories (and sub-categories). Open coding (Neuman, 2006) was initially used to condense data into categories using a computer note card (i.e. Microsoft Word Comment), and each category was highlighted in a different color. The second step involved axial coding (Neuman, 2006) when the focus was to organize data under each category to create themes. Finally, using selective coding (Neuman, 2006) data under each theme was scanned to make connections and develop concepts for analysis. An interpretive approach was used to analyze data and show "how specific circumstances, cultural meaning, and the perspectives of specific individuals are central for understanding social setting or process" (Neuman, 2006, p. 468).

I should mention here that my own background as both a skilled immigrant and a member of a visible minority group had some bearing on the dynamics of the interviews. Immigrating to Canada from Syria, where neither English nor French is an official language, and where different types of cultural values and behaviours are exhibited, probably made it easier for participants to share with me their personal and professional immigration experiences, and sensitized me to the challenges they faced throughout the adaptation process.

17

Limitations of the Study

As previously indicated in the literature review section, the phenomenon of the "glass ceiling" and the topic of career advancement of skilled immigrants in general, and members of visible minority groups in particular, had been increasingly attracting the attention of researchers in various fields. While this study will attempt to answer the research questions outlined in the literature review through interviews with skilled immigrant managers, it certainly has some limitations that should be taken into consideration. These limitations are mainly related to external validity, or the generalizability of the study, as was previously acknowledged in the research methodology section.

First of all, there were only 10 individuals who participated in the complete study. While all 10 participants share certain characteristics i.e. language of instruction in the institutions from which they obtained their degrees, other characteristics such as ethnicity, period of residency in Canada, and period of employment in a management position limit the study in a way that it restricts drawing conclusions from the sample data about a larger group. For example, the findings may have yielded different results if the primary control of the study was ethnicity since ethnic groups with similar cultural characteristics may or may not necessarily exhibit similar attitudes and perspectives. The same principle goes for period of residency in Canada or period of employment in a management position. One could ask here: is there a correlation between length of residency and the length of time it takes to accumulate different forms of capital necessary for career advancement? Also, the fact that five of the study participants have obtained their education from Canadian institutions may project a more optimistic picture of the possibilities available to skilled immigrants, who did not have the opportunity to obtain their degrees from a Canadian or North American institution.

The other limitation of this study is the interpretation of what "career advancement" means. While the intention was not to learn about the nature of the participants' roles and levels of responsibilities in their current positions, the fact that the participants have different levels of management presents serious limitation. For example, if an immigrant has been living in Canada for over 15 years, and he or she has been in a management position for 6-10 years, would this mean that this individual was able to "metaphorically" break the "glass ceiling" and advance in his or her career?

In addition, the study participants work in different types of occupations (technical and non-technical), industries, and company sizes. This present another challenge associated with this study's research topic. In my view, not all types of occupations and industries require the same level of capital (linguistic, cultural, and social) accumulation in order to have advancement opportunities. While this point was supported in previous research work included in the literature review section (Schreiber et al., 1993; Tang, 1997), it was inevitable to recruit individuals from various professional and organizational backgrounds given the limited number of skilled immigrants in leadership positions in the GTA (Cukier et al., 2011). Further, the research study might have yielded different findings if the focus of the project was to get the perspectives of immigrants, who were unable to break the "glass ceiling." This limitation is primarily related to obstacles within the organizational structure, where immigrant employees are expected to accept the general value of their social field as the norms and values of the wider society.

Finally, the findings of this study are limited to skilled immigrants who reside in a metropolitan area such as the GTA, where the discourses that are taking place around workplace diversity and inclusion are attracting, albeit slowly, the attention of some employers.

19

Despite of the limitations of this study, the decision to concentrate on skilled immigrants' attitudes and perspectives in relation to their workplace experiences was essential in order to tackle the complexity of the topic. This study should be seen as a kind of pilot that will bring some interesting possible avenues for further research.

Findings

The findings of this study have captured the participants' professional experiences and attitudes, as well as their perceptions of the factors that have influenced their career path. Four main sections have been developed to describe these experiences, and each section has been further broken down into different themes. The analysis presented here is based on the conceptual categories identified in the literature as a framework for this study.

1. Knowledge of English Language and Foreign Accents

In this section, participants were asked about the role that the English language has played in their career path, and whether having a foreign accent proved to be an advantage or disadvantage in the workplace.

Theme 1: "It goes without saying that you have to not only speak the language, but also master it" (Respondent 07)

All participants reported the significant role of the English language in their career development. As one participant puts it "Language is the basic backbone of any immigrant that comes in whether it is a skilled immigrant or a family class" (Respondent 08). They described the role of English language proficiency in upward mobility as the ability to communicate accurately (Respondent 04), express points of view easily, negotiate barriers, and develop and advance an argument effectively. A "good command of English comes first" (Respondent 02). One participant describes how lack of communication skills could be a roadblock not only to employment, but also to career advancement. Learning the language is a continuous process if immigrants aim to advance in their jobs:

> Knowing English language, and being able to communicate, it makes a huge difference. I have to tell you that I have hiring authority. It is very hard for me to hire people if they cannot express themselves because of the nature of the job that I do. There is a fair bit of communication with senior executives; there is a lot of work involved with written and

verbal communication alike. So this is very important. I have to tell you that as I am growing into my role […]. I continue educating myself. (Respondent 10, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

Traditional language training that immigrants typically obtain either prior to or upon arrival in Canada was perceived by three participants as being insufficient to master a language. Interaction with the host society and the degree to which an individual uses "subliminal learning"[3] to acquire language skills are major factors in job advancement. One participant provides an example of how listening to or watching CBC programs, which is one of Canada's largest cultural institutions, can have tremendous effects on the process of subliminal learning for immigrants. He states: "The way to learn the language is to do it, to hang around with people that like to talk, listen to CBC. I am not a believer of the artificial context of language training" (Respondent 06).

In addition to proficiency in English, knowledge of the French language, as expressed by one participant, is highly valued in the Canadian workplace, and it increases immigrants' chances of job advancement since the speaker possesses additional linguistic competence that has a value in the Canadian labour market. According to Respondent 07, "in the Canadian context, you need French as well because if you are not bilingual, and bilingual in terms of the official language, that is something which is quite essential" (Respondent 07).

Another participant explains how language proficiency can also determine whether a person can advance from one type of occupation to another. For example, people with low levels of language proficiency do not only face obstacles to advancement, but they also tend to stay in technical positions that require a minimum level of communication:

If someone does not understand what you are saying, they will not know how good you are, how bad you [are], they will just assume that they cannot communicate with you, and

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[3] Subliminal learning is the use of techniques that allow people to learn without any conscious effort.

22

if you cannot communicate, that's it for you. You will remain in [a] highly technical position where you do not need to communicate, and that is not leadership positions (Respondent 05, Personal Communication, October 20, 2010).

The same participant has further elaborated on how the English language can have less effects on individuals whose careers are highly technical than those who, for example, are working as consultants "because it is a whole different style of communication" (Respondent 05).

The link between proficiency in the English language and the type of occupation in relation to career development has been also established by Respondent 03, who acknowledged that while it is true that "the language could be a barrier," it was never considered as an obstacle because of the technical nature of her job.

Theme 2: "Accent is part of identity, it cannot be changed" (Respondent 01)

This theme emerged as participants described their workplace experiences having a foreign accent. When asked about their views on whether a foreign accent is seen as an obstacle to career advancement, their answers revealed two perspectives: host society perspective and immigrants' perspective.

From the host society perspective, three participants acknowledged the negative attitudes that some native speakers have toward immigrants with accented speech. As one participant puts it "There will be always people who are intolerant to accents even when they fully understand what you're saying" (Respondent 05). There is a "negative connotation" (Respondent 10) associated with foreign accents and a tendency by native speakers to look upon individuals with accented speech as being different (Respondent 08).

From the immigrant perspective, accent was recognized by all 10 participants as being part of identity. It can be softened, but not changed or eliminated easily (Respondent 02).

23

Accent "has a negative effect" (Respondent 04) in the workplace, but having clarity of speech was reported as a strategy that has been used by most participants to overcome accent barriers to advancement. Speaking at a slower pace (Respondent 03) and observing how other Canadians pronounce words are some of the strategies adopted by participants to reduce their accent. Participants also felt that people become less sensitive to foreign accents when communication is delivered effectively, and messages are articulated clearly. One participant described his attitude to accents in relation to workplace experience as follows:

> Accents can have some initial barriers, but I think as a communicator I have to make sure that I articulate my message clearly, and if other people can follow you, then it works fine. So I had a habit of speaking too fast before, so I kind of slowed down my pace, so that helped me, but I am not seeing my accent becoming a barrier. I think the biggest thing is, if you think it is a barrier in your head then it becomes a barrier. I feel comfortable the way I speak, I have no problem with that, I am able to engage an audience, and I actually speak at a quite few conferences, and I do facilitate senior level meetings. So if you don't think it is a barrier; it is not a barrier (Respondent 09, Personal Communication, December 1, 2010).

This relatively "positive" attitude towards accents was also shared by another participant who believes that immigrants are more likely judged by the degree of their accent and the clarity of their speech, rather than the accent itself. A lot of people in Canada have accents whether they are from Great Britain, French Canada, or from a non-English or non-French speaking country:

> You see the advantage in being Canadian and being part of Canada is that every person has an accent, every person. Now it is a question of the degree. If you come from New Brunswick, [or] if you are an Acadian you have your own accent. If you are a Quebecois speaking in English you have your accent. If you work in a public service environment 60-70% of your staff or your colleagues are French Canadians (Respondent 07, Personal Communication, November 1, 2010).

Only one participant believes that immigrants should make an effort to reduce their accents through professional training so they are able to increase their chances of advancement.

Although immigrants cannot remove their accents completely, they can be trained on pronunciation problems that affect clarity of speech, and improve their chances for promotion:

> I have a very good colleague that is part of our group, well educated, [has a] graduate degree, very technical, but this particular person […] has a difficulty communicating what that is she found out, and what she produced. She will not be able to move upward in this company or other company unless she invests in her communication skills. She speaks with a very heavy accent which is difficult to understand (Respondent 10, Personal Communication, March 29, 2011).

Another participant, who comes from India where English is widely spoken, discerns that switching to the local English accent is necessary sometimes when dealing with colleagues or friends from the home country. This process was perceived as being in many ways a "tragic" experience for immigrants and "superficial" (Respondent 06) because of the confusion it creates when interacting with one or more different cultures:

> When I am talking with […] colleagues or friends, you will hear my accent switch. I think it is very instructive for me when I hear myself doing that because it brings home to me how superficial all of this is that in fact the immigrant experience in many ways wonderful, it is also in many ways tragic because you are from everywhere (Respondent 06, Personal Communication, October 28, 2010).

2. *Culture as Context for Communication*

In this section, participants were asked to describe how knowledge of Canadian culture affects promotion into leadership positions.

Theme 1: It is "a rainbow culture" (Respondent 03)

For a start, participants had difficulty defining Canadian culture. As one participant expressed "what is Canadian culture? How do you define it?" (Respondent 01). Six participants pointed directly to the fact that Canada does not have a distinctive culture, and that "multiculturalism" is what characterizes the country's cultural make-up (Respondents 07, 08 and 09). One participant makes a distinction between the culture in Canada and the United States, and believes that Canadian culture is a rich and unique mixture of immigrant experiences. The

view of Canadian culture by this participant might have not been similarly shared by immigrants

who do not live in a metropolitan area such as the GTA:

> Canadians are quite different from Americans […] Americans are talking about […] melting pot, and in here it is that we call "a rainbow culture." So for me [it] is [….] not really a culture, it is a mix of immigrant experience (Respondent 03, Personal Communication, August 5, 2010).
> Another participant felt that there is so much cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in

Canada that we do not, in fact, have a distinctive culture:

> What is unique about the Canadian culture [is that] there is so much diversity. I mean, don't forget, when we talk about the Canadian context, there are three main drivers or pillars [in] the Canadian context: aboriginal communities, the French/English factor, and then the multicultural communities. And these three pillars project themselves at the workplace as well (Respondent 07, Personal Communication, November 1, 2010).

> *Theme 2: "First we do not know the context; we do not know the written and unwritten*

> *rules of engagement" (Respondent 06)*

This theme emerged as participants described their experiences reflecting on their own

cultural adjustment. Most immigrants face challenges when they get their first job because they

do not know much about Canadian culture, and they are not certain about how to behave around

colleagues. Immigrants are more concerned about coping with a new environment, and adapting

to life in a new country. They can only see the "big picture," and cannot understand the

importance of small talk:

> First, we do not know the context, we do not know. The written and unwritten rules of engagement continue to challenge you, and those unwritten rules of engagement, you know, what to say at the water cooler, how to take, you know, how to make a small talk. Small talk is an incredible challenge for immigrants because they don't know what small is. We don't know what small is. We are interested in a big practical issues, you know, where should I live, what does the house cost, what does the car costs, what [is] the salary, and these are sort of the unwritten rules of engagement that you do not talk about these things in Canada, you do not talk about, you know, you learn that (Respondent 06, Personal Communication, October 28, 2010).

Later, the same participant explained how differences between two cultures can be misinterpreted between an immigrant and a native born-Canadian. While immigrants try to make every effort to become familiar with the Canadian system by asking curious questions, curiosity by most Canadian-born individuals is considered impolite, and can be even regarded as bad:

> These immigrants are curious by nature and when you come from a culture like mine, curiosity about human beings is perfectly normal. Curiosity about human being in Canada is considered impolite, rude, and you are intruding on someone's personal space, whatever that might be. Those are concepts you learn with time, but in the beginning, you know you are curious about them because you want to know if you should follow that path (Respondent 06, Personal Communication, October 28, 2010).

One participant noted that a thorough understanding of one's own culture can reveal important elements in the host country's culture, that if overlooked, it can be a disadvantage when going through the adjustment process. It is important to recognize these elements in order to adjust to the host society's cultural norms:

> Being too open about what we think might be a disadvantage, so I tempered this particular cultural element that I brought with me. Yes, I would think twice before I express what I really think or how I say it, and that is typical for Eastern Europeans (Respondent 10, Personal Communication, March 29, 2011).

In addition, this participant (Respondent 04) thinks that understanding the Canadian business "system" and how it operates is another dimension to culture that should be taken very seriously, and "if you don't understand [the system], you will become isolated."

Theme 3: "You have to be culturally relevant" (Respondent 09), and when you understand the culture, "the colour of the skin then disappears from the equation" (Respondent 08)

Reflecting on one's own culture while developing an understanding of another culture can lead to an appreciation and acceptance of the host culture values. This has proven to be an

important step for some participants while going through the integration process. Reflecting on

their own immigration experience, some participants provide an advice to newcomers to make

efforts to have a good understanding of the "Canadian mentality and Canadian traditions"

(Respondent 02), and become "culturally relevant" (Respondent 09) to Canadian workplace

culture and practices. Newcomers who do not make such efforts may not be presented with

opportunities for advancement because workplace culture is tightly linked to connecting with

people and building networks:

> I think culture is very important. So same way, if you have moved to a new country, you
> have to adapt so I think you have to be culturally relevant. I don't think it is an unnatural
> process for me, it is a natural process of appreciating of what I have: the four seasons, the
> sports and the people from different parts of the world who are here. So I think it is a
> natural process of evolving, of building a network, [and] connecting with other people
> (Respondent 09, Personal Communication, December 1, 2010).

Another participant described how developing an understanding of Canadian culture

allows for establishing closer relationships and strong friendships with native-born Canadians.

This helps immigrants blend with the host society in a seemly manner. While cultural

differences continue to present major obstacles to immigrants' career advancement, this

particular participant (Respondent 08) believes that the ability of immigrants to build strong

friendships with native-born colleagues and develop more of "human" relationships with them,

makes the "colour of their skin" disappear:

> So your hockey games, your baseball games, you know, attending those things, having
> occasional meetings, Friday pub meetings, you know, going out with friends for cottage
> country, playing sports in the summer, playing the winter sports, so doing the things that
> […] other Canadian people do […]. What happens is that the colour of the skin then
> disappears from the equation (Respondent 08, Personal Communication, November 29,
> 2010).

The value of diversity in the workplace has been also pointed out by one participant

(Respondent 07) as an important element of the adaptation process. He stated that immigrants

aiming to advance into leadership positions should be inclusive and value every employee

regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. If immigrants were able to adapt to Canadian

workplace values and traditions, they will be able to maximize their chances for promotional

opportunities.

Theme 4: You have to learn how "to speak Canadian, not just English" (Respondent 05)

Some participants were very aware how face-to-face interactions with native-born

Canadians can exhibit certain communication style and behaviour particular to the speaker's

cultural background. As this participant states:

> I think in the first few years, I was perceived as a very rude person because of the way I communicate. Like I could not understand if someone speaking and I start to speak at the same time, that's what you do in Israel. You speak one over the other, but you keep listening while you are speaking. It's a skill that we develop. But here, when I start talking, the other would stop talking, and I could not figure out for the life of me why he had stopped talking because I knew he did not finish his idea. It took me time to understand that the way I behave is perceived in a way that I would never believe, because I see myself as a very pleasant person. So I had to learn how to tone down and how to speak in a rounded way, of the Canadian way, right? To speak Canadian, not just English (Respondent 05, Personal Communication, October 20, 2010).

A similar idea was also shared by another participant who notes:

> The style in which you interact, if it is a style that is alien to your other colleagues, you will not get integrated with the team. You need to understand that setting in which [you are] able to communicate with your people and feel part of that team (Respondent 08, Personal Communication, November 29, 2010).

One participant expressed his awareness of innate cultural behaviours such as gestures,

body language and emotions, and comfort when dealing with French- (as a result of the French

colonial influence) as opposed to English-Canadians:

> So through my background being Syrian… yes the gestures, the body language, even the emotions that one would express in meetings and communicating with others. French Canadians do the same thing. So sometimes I feel more at home when dealing with French Canadians than dealing with…Anglos (Respondent 07, Personal Communication, November 1, 2010).

In addition, one participant explained how in the Chinese culture, it is always appropriate to address your supervisor with his/her last name, something that this participant stopped doing only when requested by her supervisor:

> I think in [China] you speak to people in a way more polite and more conserve[ative] right?, Except in here they appear to be more open … So in the Chinese culture, you always call the person by the last name first (Respondent 03, Personal Communication, August 5, 2010).

3. Networking, Social Connections, and Mentorship

In this section, participants were asked to give their perspectives on how their communication style and behaviour from their native country may have influenced the way they established relationships with colleagues and staff.

Theme 1: When you first come to Canada, "you are an outsider" (Respondent 06), you are "not connected to the existing [social] system" (Respondent 03)

The need to establish professional networks was mentioned by three participants who acknowledged the fact that skilled immigrants have specific challenges building these networks when they first arrive in Canada. As these three participants describe "when you come to Canada… you are an outsider, you are an immigrant;" (Respondent 06) you "had a working life earlier, you've built up a network around you, so that is what you miss here" (Respondent 08). It all goes back to the fact that you are "not connected to the existing [social] system" (Respondent 03). One participant gave the summer camp as an example of how the connection was established:

> People who have grown up in Canada have very strong ties to the school they went to and to the summer camps they went to. We do not share those ties. So you know, [it is] access to those natural networks […]. [Immigrants] have created new networks, but since they are new, they don't run that deep, and they don't have the depth, and people in the network don't have that attachment to you. You put two [people], you know, on Bay street together they have been to the same summer camp, there is a bond there (Respondent 06, Personal Communication, October 28, 2010).

Another example is related specifically to immigrant women who are unable to connect with other women's groups for support that may lead to increased chances for advancement:

> The other bond we do not share in is this movement that women have […] wisely created in Toronto […] women helping other women, but it is primarily women helping other white women. So as a result, you see that trajectory and women in leadership has risen much higher. I mean you look at who is in Queen's Park, Deputy Ministers, Assistant Deputy Ministers, it is a sea of women, which is terrific; you have to learn from that (Respondent 06, Personal Communication, October 28, 2010).

Theme 2: If you "make no efforts to blend in a society" (Respondent 10), and "If you isolate yourself, you do not do the networking" (Respondent 04)

Some participants stressed the importance of "blending in" (Respondent 10) and networking in the workplace to overcome the challenges of being an "immigrant", an "outsider" with little or no social or professional connections (Respondent 04). The people who stay in big silos remain there, so networking is crucial in order to understand the perspectives of other people (Respondent 08), and gain their support (Respondent 05). Skilled immigrants who make no efforts to blend into the new society and network will find it difficult to advance in the workplace. As suggested by Respondent 10 "A lot of immigrant [groups] unfortunately do not make an effort to blend in a society […] they interact in their native languages, and interact with their own associations and neighbourhoods." One more participant also adds:

> Everybody is proud to have somebody who is not born in Canada, who is on the board […]. So everybody considers this positive, but they [employers] do not want somebody [who] isolates himself, and accidents cannot happen. If you isolate yourself, you do not do the networking…you do not blend (Respondent 04, Personal Communication, October 4, 2010).

Another participant draws attention to the importance of having a diverse network which could be the key to success in building powerful business relationships, to avoid staying in close circles that limit your opportunities for advancement:

What I find is [that …] every person is different, so for me I think it is about connecting with different types of individuals, okay? I feel very fortunate, you know, I enjoy great relationships, and I have a huge network, and my network is very diverse (Respondent 09, Personal Communication, December 1, 2010).

Networking is also about "who" you know, and not "how many" individuals you know in the workplace:

A lot of people got in because they know people, they get promoted […], and they go all the way. Except [it is…] whom do you know, not because you know more people, you see, whom do you know and who is willing to promote you (Respondent 03, Personal Communication, August 5, 2010).

The type of activity a skilled immigrant can share with management groups has also been reported by one participant as an important element to building successful professional relationships:

There are different interactions that are done. So let's say junior level [management], there are some sort of activity that those people do. It could be, you know, pub going […] and stuff like that. As you get to middle and senior level, there are different sorts of things, you know, volunteering on boards of an organizations, being part of some common cause as charity, and things like that, so different levels [of management] have different things to do. But there are Canadian things to do, and it is very important to get to that (Respondent 08, Personal Communication, November 29, 2010).

Building networks sometimes emerges from casual conversations that take place between skilled immigrants and management groups outside office space:

A lot of this is got to do with non-formal communication. You are not sitting in a meeting, talking in a meeting, talking in a technical stuff. This is when you are sitting with somebody having lunch, you know, going up the elevator with the boss (Respondent 08, Personal Communication, November 29, 2010).

In the end, networking is a "soft skill" and there is "a lot of value" in it (Respondent 07):

We tend to focus on academic qualifications or expertise, say, you know I was this overseas; I have done that in my home country or my country of origin; and Canadians don't accept me; and I like to be treated as an equal. Well, but there are other things you need to develop, and that includes the soft skills, including network[ing], including the ability to get people to know about you (Respondent 07, Personal Communication, November 1, 2010).

Theme 3: "If somebody is not networking, to me personally, did not recognize that he or

she is equal." (Respondent 04)

While all skilled immigrants wish "to be treated as equal" (Respondent 07), three

participants highlight the fact that the notion of equality should first exist within the skilled

immigrant themselves, and should be developed to build networks:

> So if somebody is not networking, to me personally did not recognize that he or she is
> equal. Because inside ourselves, we fear that we are from [a] part of the world which we
> are lower, that's wrong. Then it leads to many issues. But if you assume you are the
> same, and you play the game like anybody else, you could participate in networking, you
> could know who the managers [are]; manager[s] will invite you, you can invite them to
> dinner and go out, no differences (Respondent 04, Personal Communication, October 4,
> 2010).

Another participant states that skilled immigrants should develop a level of confidence

that will allow them to talk "level to level" with their peers and superiors. He asserts that "A

level of confidence, you know, not feeling as if I am the underdog… it is talking level to level

and being able to bring something to the table, right, and that gets reinforced further and further"

(Respondent 08).

Theme 4: "I had someone who did not realize she has been a mentor, but she was

instrumental in moving me forward" (Respondent 06)

For some participants, advancement in the workplace could not have been possible

without the support of mentors. These mentors were either the participants' bosses or

established colleagues who share the same job responsibilities. One participant credits her boss

as being instrumental in helping her develop skills necessary for advancement:

> On reflection, there are lessons I have learned. The first lesson is: find a mentor. I had
> someone who did not realize she has been a mentor, but she was instrumental in moving
> me forward, she sort of became my champion […] she was actually my boss in that place
> I worked, and she said you know, you do this, and don't do that [...]. I always give her
> credit for opening the first door; it was wonderful (Respondent 06, Personal
> Communication, Personal Communication, October 28, 2010).

33

Another participant shares a similar experience regarding the role that his boss played in shaping his career "So you know like [my boss] who was just an inspiration. So you cannot do it in a vaccum, you have to have support of people who encourage you and allow you to do that" (Respondent 05).

Mentorship from a colleague, either an immigrant or a native-born Canadian, was equally valued by some participants who found it indispensable to professional development. While some mentors, who are immigrants themselves, are able to teach other immigrants some skills they have learned from their own experience, mentors from members of the dominant culture are often better at helping immigrants understand workplace nuances necessary for advancement. As stated by Respondent 03 "The mentorship I had from …an immigrant, he is very competent and very smart, so the mentorship he gave me is very good in technical point, but he never know how to climb the corporate ladder himself." Another participant acknowledges the value of the mentorship he received from his co-worker:

> […] he was my colleague, and for 6 months, he was spending from his own time based on the friendship relations, he almost kind of educating me, you know, Canadian nuances, so this guy will be always in my history book (Respondent 02, Personal Communication, June 12, 2010).

Mentorship was not only seen as beneficial to some participants, but was considered also as a valuable contribution to other immigrants. Respondent 04 said "I mentor immigrants," and Respondent 06 advised: "Find a mentor and become a mentor."

4. Career Advancement: Lessons Learnt

In this section, participants were asked to reflect on their accomplishments that set them apart from other immigrants who find it difficult to advance into management or leadership positions.

Theme 1: "I think I was ready to reinvent myself" (Respondent 06)

Almost all participants reported the importance of having a strategy in creating a new career path in Canada whether through building on existing skills or developing new ones. One participant describes his attitude towards the importance of being able to "mold" oneself professionally, and learn how businesses operate in Canada:

> I think the biggest thing here is the fact that when you come here you don't know the way the system works here. So we come from a different country, there are different system, a different way, maybe the corporate world, but it operates on its own manner, and when you come here you find things are a bit different. So you need to (a) learn as fast as you can as to what the differences are and (b) try sort of mold yourself to fit within that (Respondent 08, Personal Communication, November 29, 2010).

Two other participants explain the importance of reinventing oneself in order to be able to make career shifts that would facilitate career development:

> I think I was ready to reinvent myself. I was not stuck on the fact I was a teacher, and I want to be a teacher. I realized that was not what I wanted to do, in fact, but I did not know what I wanted to do […]. I look back on some of the decisions I made, and I am appalled of the risks I took doing this, going there, but when you are young, you know immigrants. What I want immigrants to remember is [that] they are taking a huge [risk], it is an exciting thing that they do. They give up everything and they come here […] you have to reinvent yourself; we must reinvent ourselves (Respondent 06, Personal Communication, October 28, 2010).

> My core thing was: I am in a new country, I have to reinvent myself, it does not matter what my position was back home. It was about […] the skills and experience that I gained that I could transfer to this new market. But it is all about how can I reinvent myself, and what would be the right level to start (Respondent 09, Personal Communication, December 1, 2010).

Theme 2: Immigrants should recognize that "being different is positive" (Respondent 04); "never have an attitude," (Respondent 08) and do not "turn everything into racism or discrimination" (Respondent 07)

Building on the previous theme, four participants described the importance of one's self-perception within the workplace. As stated by two participants: "I think number one is: never have an attitude" (Respondent 08) or an exaggerated view of one's own skills and capabilities (Respondent 07). Also, skilled immigrants must be actively engaged with their peers and management so their ideas and efforts are "recognized" (Respondent 02). Being "an immigrant" or "different" is perceived as positive and does not necessarily imply shedding past cultural heritage:

> I am not suggesting that you have to change, you have to be strong, and be proud, and realize that being different is positive. The only difference is you are positive; you have something positive to offer to the organization. I guess it is very very important that everybody thinks positive and try to learn how to upgrade their skills, and don't expect things to happen for nothing, and to work hard in order to get it. So when I find a job, the fact that I was not born in Canada, I did not personally consider that as a negative, and […] when […] people did not recognized it, I try to bring [it] to their attention […] this is very important (Respondent 04, Personal Communication, October 4, 2010).

Having a belief that racial discrimination is the only reason that is blocking the way to advancement is perceived by one participant as a mistake (Respondent 07). If immigrants want a great career, they should work hard at it:

> […] and also not to turn everything into racism or discrimination. That is the reality that if I had to be better than the other, so then I will work on it. Take language for example or the linguistic competency, English or French as an example. You cannot advance in the public service if you do not speak both languages, English and French. So it is not the question of race, it is the question of reality, Canadian reality […], and most of the times people may express their views about someone's ethnicity or background, and it is not because they are rejecting the individual, it is more because […] they echo what they heard. So [immigrants] will take it as a personal attack (Respondent 07, Personal Communication, November 1, 2010).

The same participant further concludes:

> […] and the other point is to know your rights, know your responsibilities and work on
> both. In some situations, some immigrant communities or individuals, they think more of
> in terms of rights, and they forget the responsibility, and these two go together
> (Respondent 07, Personal Communication, November 1, 2010).

With that being said, it is also important to note one participant's opinion on diversity in

the workplace as being "a very valuable asset," and how some organizations in Canada have

started to pay attention to the contribution that highly skilled immigrants can make to their

operations:

> I could say that my career path [was] impacted positively because I am not born in
> Canada, [and] because many corporations and organizations now realize the value of
> diversity. So being different is very positive. Many people look at things as negative,
> but in many organizations, they are looking for people of different thought process,
> different background, different culture, and many many companies, organizations, and
> institutions are now recognizing that diversity is a very valuable asset (Respondent 04,
> Personal Communication, October 4, 2010).

Theme 3: Personality Traits

Personality traits also manifest themselves in the context of communication, and can be

important to immigrants' career advancement. Personality can influence the way immigrants

develop professional and social networks as one participant illustrates:

> Other than having the combination of persistence [and] perseverance, [it is about]
> building the foundation in terms of education, [and] developing a network. But even
> when we say developing a network, you do not sit down and develop the design of a
> network of contacts, it happens, it's your personality, it's your ability as an individual,
> and not losing sense of who you are.(Respondent 07, Personal Communication,
> November 1, 2010).

Certain personality traits make it possible for some individual immigrants to build closer

relationships that can create, along with the individual immigrant's professional capabilities, a

positive workplace environment, and open the communication channels between individual

immigrants and native-born Canadians:

I think the relationships in the workplace starts from personality, if you are a good, [hard-working] person without even speaking, you will be recognized obviously, right? [...] I was working with kind of people that they liked to communicate with me which I believe that was my personality, and they were, almost they were trying to put into some kind of communication chain so they can understand me more (Respondent 02, Personal Communication, June 12, 2010).

As indicated in the previous section, the same participant (Respondent 02) reports

receiving personal mentorship from a Canadian-born colleague, which could be linked to his

agreeable type of personality exhibited in the workplace.

Personality traits can also be exhibited in the way individual immigrants initiate

communication, ask questions, and assert themselves with self-confidence. One participant

points out the importance of not being shy or hesitant in communicating new ideas to decision

makers:

I am not shy; I am not hesitant to move forward […], [to] contact people, propose ideas. It is easy for me for example […] that I phone Vice President[s] and explain to them my vision in [a] different company. I find their names, and send notes to them. I say "I have a proposal" I would like to explain to you […], and this [is] what I found most important here (Respondent 01, Personal Communication, June 3, 2010).

Discussion

The purpose of this empirical study was to answer three key questions: (1) how does the accumulation of linguistic, cultural and social forms of capital influence the career experiences of skilled immigrants? (2) Could capital-rich, highly-educated immigrants overcome obstacles to career advancement that are deeply rooted in the host society's institutional practices and attitudes? (3) What lessons skilled immigrants can learn to improve their chances for advancement in the Canadian workplace? The following sections will analyze the findings of this empirical research study in an attempt to answer the research questions.

Workplace Experience: Individual Forms of Capital

In order to break through the so called "glass ceiling," there was a level of awareness exhibited by all participating managers that refers to unstated conduct and rules for working in a Canadian work environment. All participants have expressed similar understanding of what it takes to rise into positions of leadership. To become a contender for a management position, all participants had to accumulate various forms of capital in order for them to develop an intercultural communication competence necessary for career advancement. Intercultural communication competence is important when skilled immigrants need to gain access to the dominant sociocultural system. It is a form of capital that is used to facilitate positive interaction between immigrant individuals and native-born Canadians.

All participants acknowledged the importance of having a strong command of the English language as key to unlock the door for career advancement. However, they felt that strong language skills do not necessarily guarantee promotion to managerial positions. Language was not considered by these managers merely as a method of communication, but also as a medium to produce expressions and advance arguments, while incorporating cultural cues into

conversations (Bourdieu, 1991). For example, when some immigrant individuals listen to CBC

to learn English, they also develop linguistic competence by adopting a "standard language" that

can provide a power base for effective communication and negotiation (Lippi-Green, 1994).

Five participants received their education in North America where they had an opportunity to

attend school within the dominant culture, which has helped them accumulate cultural capital

(Bourdieu, 1986). In addition, all participants acknowledged that having an accent is part of

identity; it cannot be changed, but can be reduced to increase intelligibility (Munro, 2003). They

felt comfortable with their accents as long as they were able to deliver clear messages and

engage an audience. However, some participants acknowledged the negative attitudes that some

native speakers have towards immigrants with accented speech even when the message has been

fully understood (Creese and Kambere, 2003). Another unstated, and often unacknowledged,

reality related to accented speech is identity struggle since our identities are expressed

communicatively (Martin and Nakayama, 2007). For example, alternation between dialects of

the English language to communicate with peer groups was described by one participant as being

"tragic" (Respondent 06, p. 24), since it requires immigrants to use an "identity framework" to

interpret their experiences and the world around them (Cupach and Imahori, 1993, cited in

Gudykunst, 2002).

While defining "Canadian culture" was challenging for many participants, they exhibited

a high level of cultural competence, and an ability to adapt to a new workplace environment.

The socioultural dimension of the adaptation process was seen by most participants as an

extension to communication and a process to adjusting to a reality that exists in any Canadian

workplace (Whorf, 1956, cited in Zhu, 2002). To increase their chances for advancement and

the economic returns on their human capital (Kunz, 2003), most participants felt that they had to

pay attention to the way they deliver their verbal messages, and adjust their non-verbal communication and behaviour such as gestures, body language and emotions blending into the mainstream Canadian work culture (Jandt, 2010). Immigrants need to conform to a homogeneous, standard language (Lippi-Green, 1994), as suggested by some participants, "speak Canadian, not just English" (Respondent 05, p. 29) and "be culturally relevant" (Respondent 09, p. 27). Conformity to a Canadian work environment was seen as an inevitable step to achieve better professional opportunities (Giscombe, 2008), and advance in the labour market (Bauder, 2005). By reflecting on one's own cultural values and developing an appreciation of the Canadian cultural norms, participants were able to learn how to bridge differences between the two cultures to reduce misunderstanding (Kunz, 2003). In a work environment that values diversity, it is important to have an understanding of the value of inclusiveness (Respondent 07) to support key workplace principles such as gender equality and individuals' sexual orientation (Cukier et al., 2009).

To overcome the challenges associated with a new work environment, one participant (Respondent 06) stressed the need for new immigrants to make small talk with Canadian colleagues in order to build relationships (Holmes and Riddiford, 2010). Small talk can have great effect on how to cope with the stress caused by a new work environment setting (Bhatia and Ram, 2001). Knowing how to engage people in small talk is a skill that is derived from a unique individual's personal traits that can be applied to shield immigrants from the negative effects of the acculturation process (Schwartz et al., 2006). Most participants exhibited certain personality traits that made it easier for them to develop their careers. For example, they all had a positive frame of mind that seemed to have helped them apply certain strategies to "mold or reinvent themselves" (Respondent 08, Respondent 06, and Respondent 09, p. 36); make career

41

shifts, and have realistic and manageable self-expectations. Participants also made efforts to

adjust to new work practices such as initiating communication, asking questions, asserting

themselves, and feeling equal with others (Zaldman and Drory, 2001; Roberts et al., 2008, cited

in Holmes and Riddiford, 2010). Certain personality traits have also influenced the way these

managers were able to build professional networks and friendships. For example, the more

agreeable a personality is, the more it will attract mentors (Respondent 02), who can play an

integral role in an individual's professional development. As suggested by Kram (1985, cited in

Nguyen et al., 2007), there is a link between mentoring and career satisfaction that can lead to

greater career advancement opportunities. Mentorship was an integral element in some

participants' career development since mentors transmit cultural capital to less experienced

individuals. Therefore, mentorship provides skilled immigrants with opportunities to develop

cultural competence and learn the "rules of the game," (Bauder, 2006a, p. 674) and the culture of

power (Byrd, 2007).

The establishment of mentoring relationships with a champion within an organization can

also lead to the establishment of informal networking opportunities enabling immigrants to

accumulate social capital (Kunz, 2003). Networking and social connection strategies were used

by some participants for career building. This was essential for these managers to get connected

and blend into the work environment, since immigrants in general are perceived as "outsiders"

(Lippi-Green, 1994). Since barriers to the advancement of women to leadership positions, in

general, are more profound (Staff Catalyst, 1993), one female participant stated that it is

imperative for immigrant women to bond with native-born women and learn from them so they

are able to increase their chances for promotion (Respondent 06). While a lack of social

networks could have serious consequences for advancement (Putnam, 2000, cited in Silva and

Edwards, 2004), only a targeted social network or who you know (Respondent 03) could make a job promotion possible.

The empirical findings of workplace experiences in relation to the notion of capital accumulation reveal that immigrants' linguistic competence is exhibited through daily interactions within the workplace. These interactions do not only include linguistic expressions in the form of technical ability to produce words and terminology for particular markets (Bourdieu, 1991), but are also loaded with cultural components embodied in particular Canadian cultural features, and are institutionalized through academic qualification (Bourdieu, 1986). Note that all participants in this study have obtained their degrees from institutions where English was the language of instruction, predisposing them to think and act in particular ways similar to those of native-born Canadians.

The possession of linguistic and cultural forms of capital helped this study's participants to reproduce cultural expressions, allowing them to project certain level of power that made the meaning of their messages intelligible (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Linguistic and cultural forms of capital also had an impact on the participants' workplace habitus, (Bourdieu, 1977b), in which native-born Canadians operate. Understanding the Canadian workplace system, and people's perceptions and actions within this system, have influenced immigrants' ability to make sense of workplace practices and attitudes of colleagues and supervisors. This understanding helped immigrants strategize and consciously assess their workplace actions to maximize their professional gains (Bourdieu, 2002). With this in mind, and based on Bourdieu's approach to cultural and linguistic forms of capital, I propose a new form of capital, intercultural communication, as a primary capital to upward mobility of skilled immigrants. Intercultural communication requires selection of expressions and behaviours that are recognized by members

43

of the host country. It is a way of modulating one's conversation in order to communicate

effectively across cultures.

Another important point found in this study is the way that some participants deployed

their identity capital when interacting with members of the host society. It was important for

these participants to not lose sight of who they are, reinforce a sense of self (Côté, 1996), and

engage in a self-monitoring process (Snyder, 1974). The formation of identity capital within the

workplace enabled some participants to position themselves in a way that they were able to move

through different dimensions of place and space. Lack of identity capital leaves immigrants

insecure, threatened and stressed out. These feelings can put strains on immigrants, jeopardize

cooperative behaviour required to build relationships with native-born co-workers and

supervisors, and consequently undermine the process of accumulating social capital.

Workplace Experience: Institutional Practices and Attitudes

The strategies adopted by most of the participants to accumulate intercultural

communication capital cannot be examined in isolation from the organizational context, which

could have influenced their interpretation of the physical environment they operate in. As

Bauder (2006b) argues, organizations have "embodied cultural capital" (p. 79) that immigrants

encounter through various forms of gender and racial variations, which are "based on measures

of cultural distinction rather than ability or competence" (Bauder, 2006b, p. 79). Organizational

embodied cultural capital also varies among industry sectors, size of organizations, and

occupational fields. The findings of this study show how the embodied cultural capital within

organizations has a significant impact on skilled immigrants' professional progress.
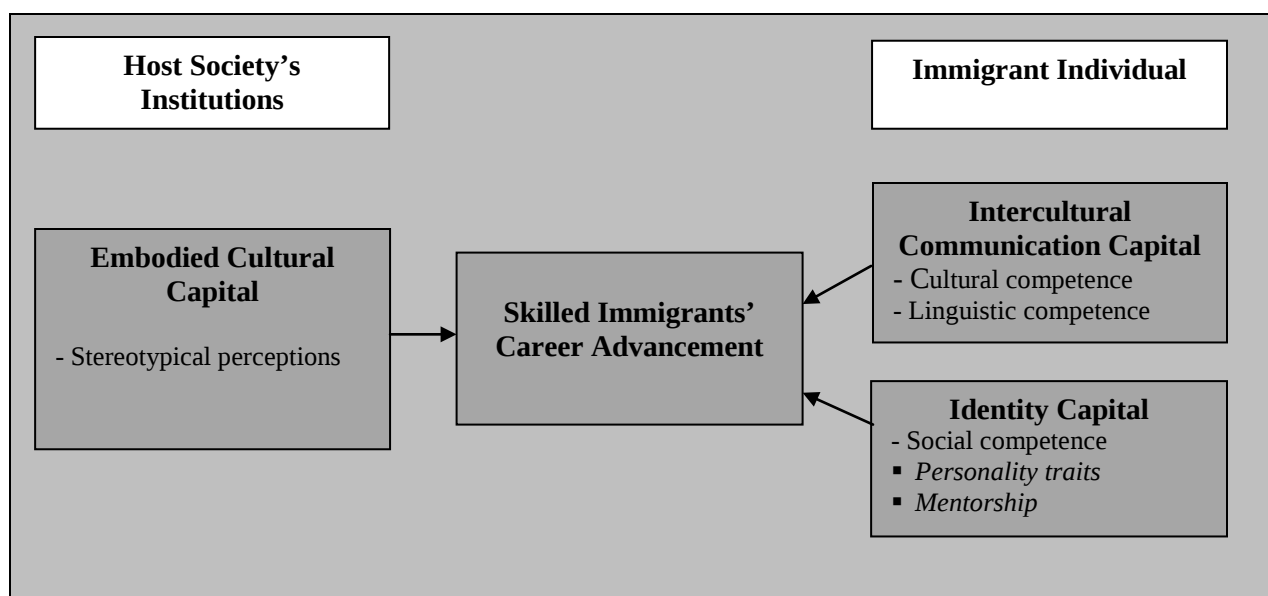
First of all, of the ten participants in this study, four female managers were able to

advance their careers into management positions. Of these four women, two individuals

44

(Respondents 03 & 06) belong to a visible minority group, and their positions are in the public and the not-for-profit sectors. One of these two individuals (Respondent 03) has a technical occupation, and it took her a longer period than the other participants to be promoted from the time she became a permanent resident. This shows that opportunities for promotion for female immigrants in a technical position are still limited (Tang, 1997), and this brings me to Bauder's (2006b) argument that "the value attributed to a particular cultural capital differs in different occupations," (p. 83) and this can lead to the segmentation of the workplace. Of the other two female participants (Respondents 05 & 10) who do not belong to a visible minority group, one works for the public sector, and the other in the corporate sector. They have both been living in the country for 6-10 years, and have been holding a management position for a period between 1 to 5 years. As for the male participants, four out of five individuals who belong to a visible minority group work in the corporate sector, and one in the not-for-profit sector. The only male participant (Respondent 02), who does not belong to a visible minority group, has a management position in a technical field. Similar to his female participant counterparts (Respondents 05 & 10), he has been living in the country for 6-10 years, and has been holding a management position for a period between 1 to 5 years. While both male and female visible minority participants were successful in getting into a medium to senior management level, non-visible minority participants seem to have enjoyed an accelerated rate of promotion in their chosen professions.

Second, organizational embodied cultural capital can lead to stereotypical perceptions of immigrants, therefore institutional practices and attitudes toward immigrants cannot be overlooked or oversimplified. While, for example, most participants were able to negotiate the cultural capital embodied in their organizations, have shared "positive" attitudes towards their

accented speech, and one participant in particular has advocated for not turning "everything into racism or discrimination" (Respondent 07, p. 37), it is questionable as to what degree capital-rich, highly educated immigrants are able to overcome the stereotypical perceptions of immigrants deeply rooted in institutional practices and attitudes. Although the accumulation of intercultural communication capital can provide a power base to advance into management positions, accents can act as permanent markers to identify the "disempowered" immigrant (Fairclough, 1989, p. 33) making the knowledge of the rules of the culture of power (Byrd, 2007) less effective. To this end, I offer a new way of conceptualizing Frideres (2008) framework to skilled immigrants' integration into the workplace by adopting Bourdieu's approach to forms of capital. I, therefore, suggest that integration into the workplace and opportunities for skilled immigrants' career advancement can be achieved by accumulating intercultural communication and identity forms of capital to facilitate a learning process of the host society institutional embodied cultural forms of capital. These forms of capital are symbolic since they tend to reproduce themselves as an authoritative embodiment of cultural value (See Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Conceptualizing Skilled Immigrants' Career Advancement – A New Model

Conclusion and Recommendations

Having listened to the voices of skilled immigrant managers, I gained an understanding of their professional experiences and perspectives as they advanced in their careers. The study's participants shared strategies that had led them to their upward mobility. In order for them to maximize their professional profits and advance in their careers, almost all of the participants made conscious decisions to adapt to the rules existing within their organizations. There was a common thread running through their stories of playing by their organization's rules, which enabled them to move beyond the perceived obstacles to advancement and have the right attitudes to observe, learn, adjust, reflect, and reinvent themselves to fit in and adapt to a new cultural and professional setting. These attitudes were fundamental in their learning process, and for developing a set of competencies necessary for accumulating intercultural communication and identity forms of capital.

This study shows that cultural competence influences the development of linguistic competence. Many skilled immigrants arrive in Canada with adequate English language skills, but they lack the cultural competence necessary to facilitate effective interaction with members of the host culture. Obtaining an education in the host country can expedite the process of developing cultural competence since immigrants will have an opportunity to attend school with local people and interact with members form the dominant culture. The development of cultural and linguistic competencies can lead to the accumulation of intercultural communication capital, which enables immigrants to reproduce the dominant culture and values through communication. Intercultural communication capital can be used to acquire the skills for successful social interactions with members of the host country while maintaining a sense of identity. Social skills provide immigrants with a platform for a positive interaction with members of the host society,

47

and can lead to mentorship opportunities. Personality traits can also influence the way immigrants establish relationships and networks, and increases their chances for being mentored by their colleagues and superiors. The various resources deployed by immigrants to define themselves in various contexts result in the formation of identity capital, which is an essential investment in skilled immigrants' upward mobility.

While this study shows that some skilled immigrants, including members of visible minority groups, are able to advance in their careers, many skilled immigrants are unable to hold managerial role in the workplace. Would it be possible that these highly skilled individual immigrants lack the ability to develop an intercultural communication competence necessary to accumulate different forms of capital, thus presenting them with obstacles to advancement? And if skilled immigrants are able to develop such a competence, would they be able to access managerial positions given the deeply rooted organizational embodied cultural capital that makes these opportunities inaccessible?

Having looked at the experiences of some skilled immigrant managers in the Greater Toronto Area, I think that it is necessary to have an in-depth investigation of the impact of formal and informal training, in the host country, on skilled immigrants' upward mobility. As this study reveals, the participants who obtained their education from a Canadian (or American) institution, and had opportunities to be mentored by members of the dominant culture were able to accumulate cultural capital necessary for career advancement. Informal education such as mentoring programs could have a significant impact on gaining cultural competence essential to succeed in the workplace. Mentoring can also help skilled immigrants uncover the unspoken workplace norms in order to operate effectively in a Canadian work environment. Mentors have the ability to transfer cultural competence to skilled immigrants, who can therefore reproduce the

48

local culture's expressions and behaviour. This could set the stage for skilled immigrants to

learn about the culture of power so they are better equipped to navigate organizational systems.

While it is questionable to what degree this power can be effective, it will certainly have an

impact on the process of skilled immigrants' career development, helping them better integrate

into the Canadian workforce.

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Appendix A
Participant Characteristics Form
Participant Code:

Company Name:

Business Sector   Goods ☐   Services ☐   Non-Profit ☐   Government ☐

Company Size
(Goods)   (5-99 employees) ☐   (100-499 employees) ☐   500+ employees ☐

(Service)   (5-49 employees) ☐   (50-499 employees) ☐   500+ employees ☐

PARTICIPANT

Gender   Male ☐   Female ☐

Occupation   Technical ☐   Non-technical ☐

Age   18-35 ☐   36-55 ☐   Over 55 ☐

Length of   1-5 years ☐   6-10 years ☐   11-15 years ☐   Over 15 years ☐
residency in
Canada

Ethnicity   Africa and the ☐   Asia and Pacific ☐
                      Middle East

                      South and ☐   Eastern Europe ☐
                      Central America

Education   Bachelor's ☐   Master's ☐   PhD ☐
                      Degree   Degree

Current   Entry-level ☐   Middle-level ☐   Senior ☐
management
level

Length of   1-5 years ☐   6-10 years ☐   11-15 years ☐   Over 15 years ☐
employment in
a management
position

Appendix B
Summary Table of the Characteristics of the Study Sample

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
Leadership level	Senior	Entry	Middle	Senior	Middle	Senior	Senior	Senior	Senior	Entry
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female
Ethnicity	Africa & ME	Eastern Europe	Asia & Pacific	Africa & ME	Eastern Europe	Asia & Pacific	Africa & ME	Asia & Pacific	Asia & Pacific	Eastern Europe
Education level	PhD	Master's	PhD	PhD	PhD	Bachelor's	PhD	Master's	Master's	Master's
Education Specifications	Canada	E. Europe (in English)	USA	Canada	Eastern Europe (in English)	Asia & Pacific (in English)	Canada	Asia & Pacific (in English)	Asia & Pacific (in English)	USA & Canada
length of residency	Over 15 years	6-10 years	Over 15 years	Over 15 years	6-10 years	Over 15 years	Over 15 years	1-5 years	11-15 years	6-10 years
Period of Employment in MGMT	Over 15 years	1-5 years	6-10 years	Over 15 years	1-5 years	Over 15 years	Over 15 years	1-5 years	6-10 years	1-5 years
Company size	Large	Small	Large	Medium	Large	Small	Small	Small	Large	Large
Company sector	Corporate	Corporate	Public	Corporate	Public	Non-Profit	Non-Profit	Corporate	Corporate	Corporate
Occupation	Technical	Technical	Technical	Non-Technical	Non-Technical	Non – Technical	Non-Technical	Non-Technical	Non-Technical	Non-Technical

Dear Sir/Madam:

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that will focus on the workplace integration of skilled immigrants, who currently hold management positions in their organizations. Study participants should be from top immigrant source regions[4], whose native language is neither English nor French. By conducting this study, I aim to gain insight into the factors that contributed to your career success, and find common ground on which to build a positive interaction between immigrants and native-born Canadians in the workplace. If you are not eligible to participate in the study, please feel free to pass this invitation on to a friend or colleague who may be interested and eligible to participate.

I am a graduate student at Ryerson University in Toronto, and this research study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's of Art program in Immigration and Settlement Studies.

By participating in this study, I assure you that any information you provide will be kept confidential, and no information will tie your responses back to your organization in my final report. Your responses will also be destroyed upon completion of the research project. The project has passed an ethics review process to ensure participant protection and data collection methodology has been approved by Ryerson University Research Ethics Board.

If you agree to participate in this study, please contact me by e-mail at sdeeb@ryerson.ca indicating your interest in participating in the study, and provide me with your full name, and a telephone number I can reach you at so we can arrange for an interview day/ time that is convenient for you. Alternatively, you call me at 416-979-5000, extension 6679 to confirm your participation. The interview will be for about 30- 60 minutes, at a location of your choice.

Thank you so much for your consideration to this request. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Suhair Deeb
MA Candidate
Immigration and Settlement Studies
Ryerson University

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[4] According to Statistics Canada 2006 Census, most recent immigrants come from regions such as Africa and the Middle East, Asia and Pacific, South and Central America, and Eastern Europe.

Research Project: Workplace Integration of Skilled Immigrants "Climbing the Ladder to Success: The Role of Linguistic Capital in the Careers of Immigrant Managers in Toronto"

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to take part in this study, it is important that you read the following information carefully, ask questions as necessary, and be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators: This research project is being conducted by Ms. Suhair Deeb in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Ryerson University's MA program in Immigration and Settlement Studies. The name of the faculty supervisor for this research project is Dr. Harald Bauder.

Purpose of the Study: The project aims to gain insight into the career experiences of successful immigrant managers, and the factors contributed to their success.

Description of the Study: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed for about 30 – 60 minutes at a location of your choice, and be asked open-ended questions about your career experiences in Canada that have landed you your current job (or previous leadership jobs). The interview will mainly focus on your personal traits and the strategies you have adopted to break the barrier to career advancement that exist for most immigrants of visible minorities. Approximately, 12 -16 male and female immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) will be selected for the study.

What is Experimental in this Study: None of the interview procedures are experimental in nature. The only experimental aspect of this study is the gathering of information for the purpose of analysis.

Risks or Discomforts: if any personal discomfort arises due the nature of the questions, you are reminded that your participation is completely voluntary and you may choose to end your participation at any time.

Benefits of the Study: By participating in this study, I cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits. However, the information you provide will lead to benefits to newcomers to Canada through your contribution of knowledge and experience. The study also aims to find common ground on which to build a positive interaction between immigrants and native-born Canadians.

Alternative Methods of Treatment: When applicable, inform subjects of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment that might be available or advantageous to them.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent allowed by law. No personal information about you or information about your organization will be included in the final research paper. Your responses will be coded by the researcher only. Responses will be

destroyed immediately after final submission of the research paper. If necessary, you will be able to review and edit the tape prior to any publication.

Incentives to Participate: You will not be paid to participate in this study.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty. At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact.

> Suhair Deeb
> sdeeb@ryerson.ca
> 416-979-5000, ext. 6679

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

> Research Ethics Board
> c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
> Ryerson University
> 350 Victoria Street
> Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
> 416-979-5042

Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You are informed that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

_____

Name of Participant (please print)

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix E
Interview Questions

1. If you could go back in your memory since you immigrated to Canada, and tell me briefly how your career path was impacted, if at all, by the fact that you are an immigrant as opposed to native born Canadian?

2. What role has knowledge of English language played in your career path in Canada?

3. What type of language training you received in your country of origin, and did you have any additional language training after you moved to Canada?

4. Would you say that your native language has been an advantage or a disadvantage in your career path?

5. This is a question that I am asking all my interviewees. In your opinion, do you think that having a foreign accent could be an advantage or disadvantage in upward mobility or promotion of skilled immigrants? Can you give me an example from your own experience?

6. Have you ever found it necessary to change your accent in any way to be able to blend into your work environment?

7. Do you feel that knowledge of Canadian culture affects promotion into leadership positions? Can you give me any examples from your own experience?

8. How has your communication style and behaviours from your native country influenced the way you establish relationships with colleagues and staff? For example the way you behave, you talk to people, you express yourself, keeping in mind all the cultural clues we all bring from our country of origin to the workplace? Can you give me an example?

9. I am interested in knowing how you have advanced your career in Canada. Would you describe some of your career experiences that have led to your current position?

10. In your opinion, what sets you apart from other immigrants who find it difficult to overcome workplace barriers to upward mobility or career advancement?