

# A Bourdieuan Analysis of Job Search Experiences of Immigrants in Canada

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**Abstract** Drawing on qualitative interviews, this paper examines the labour market integration experiences of immigrants from Turkey to Canada. Analysis is framed in the context of Bourdieu's theoretical framework in order to understand the ways in which members of certain immigrant groups follow varied integration trajectories. This paper contributes to the literature by first focusing on the experiences of immigrants who arrived with varied levels of education and under different immigration classes, settling in diverse segments of the labour market and, second, by exploring strategies developed to deal with job search challenges. The findings show that capital and habitus travelled with participants from Turkey and that the intersection of their immigration status with the set of written and unwritten rules of the Canadian labour market and its subfields (both professional and non-professional) shaped their integration experiences.

**Keywords** Job search · Immigrants · Habitus · Capital · Field

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the labour market integration experiences of immigrants from Turkey to Canada. I am particularly interested in the challenges these immigrants faced in the Canadian labour market and the strategies they developed to mitigate these challenges. Immigrants are defined as individuals who have settled permanently in Canada and who have been granted permanent resident status or citizenship (Statistics Canada 2009). The job search experiences of immigrants in Canada have been the subject of considerable research in recent decades. Studies have shown that there exist distinct barriers to employment for immigrants, including

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devaluation of their educational credentials (Basran and Zong 1998; Galarneau and Morissette 2004) and exposure to ethnic and racial discrimination, particularly for those from regions other than Western Europe and the USA (Hiebert 1999; Oreopoulos 2011; Oreopoulos and Dechief 2012; Pendakur and Pendakur 1998; Satzewich 2011). Several studies have further suggested that immigrants' class of admission (e.g. economic and family) affects how they will be treated in the labour market (Bauder 2005; Krahn et al. 2000; Hiebert 2009). While we already possess a clear idea of the *kinds* of barriers immigrants face when trying to enter the labour market, we know far less about *how* they overcome these barriers. This paper accordingly seeks to contribute to the literature by first examining immigrants' expectations of the labour market and, second, their experiences in *both* looking for and finding an employment in the Canadian labour market. In doing so, I rely on Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework (Bourdieu 1984, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1996, 2005b), focusing upon the ways in which interconnections among participants' *habitus*, various forms of *capital*, and *class of admission* shape their experiences within the *field* of the Canadian labour market.

This paper also contributes methodologically to the labour market integration literature. Most of the empirical research on this topic in Canada has been quantitative and conducted at the macro level (but see Bauder 2003; 2005; Girard and Bauder 2007). This work, in contrast, relies on qualitative interviews, allowing immigrants to express their individual feelings and opinions about their labour market integration experiences (Christinas 2011). I interviewed Turkish<sup>1</sup> immigrants employed at both the professional and non-professional levels, who came to Canada under different classes of admission and held varying levels of education. Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts, this paper shows the complexity of the labour market integration experiences of immigrants from Turkey to Canada.

## Literature Review: Immigrants in the Canadian Labour Market

Canada admits immigrants under three major classes: economic (e.g. skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and investors), family (e.g. spouses and children of Canadian residents living in Canada), and refugees<sup>2</sup> and/or asylum-seekers. While immigrants in the latter two classes are admitted for humanitarian reasons, immigrants in the former, the largest entry class, are selected by a points system. Introduced in 1967, this system allows admission of immigrants from all over the world based on socioeconomic characteristics predictive of employment success, such as education, work experience, and language skills (Green and Green 1999; Simmons 2010). Before the 1960s, admission was mostly limited to applicants from Western European countries and the USA (i.e. traditional source countries, or TSCs). Not surprisingly, the point system changed the traditional composition of the immigrant population, as the proportion of immigrants from non-traditional source countries (NTSCs) increased (Green and Green 1999; Simmons 2010). To illustrate, while the ratio of immigrants from TSCs to those from

<sup>1</sup> Turkish refers to all population groups in Turkey: Turks, Kurds, and others. When I use the adjective Turkish, it means immigrants from Turkey, not Turk.

<sup>2</sup> Refugee class comprises subcategories. For more information: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/index.asp>

NTSCs was about 9:1 until the 1960s, the ratio dropped to about 3:1 by the middle of the 1980s (Nevitte and Kanji 2008, 48). The increase in the number of immigrants from NTSCs has led scholars to focus on the labour market integration of these immigrants.

Previous studies have demonstrated that immigrants from NTSCs are disadvantaged in the Canadian labour market in comparison with native-born Canadians and immigrants from TSCs (Baker and Benjamin 1994; Grant and Sweetman 2004; Hiebert 2009; Li 2008; Nakhaie and Kazemipur 2013; Pendakur and Pendakur 1998; Simmons 2010; Thompson 2000). Before presenting the labour market outcomes of these immigrants, it is important to note that with few exceptions (Shields et al. 2010; Sweetman and Warman 2012; Xue 2008), previous studies have been conducted using census or other micro-data in which respondents were not asked their class of admission to Canada. Their analysis therefore includes all individuals granted permanent residency in Canada (Hiebert 2009; Sweetman and Warman 2012). These studies showed that 34 % of Canadian residents with a university degree were immigrants (Bollman 2013). Furthermore, immigrants were twice as likely as Canadian-born residents to have a university degree (Galarneau and Morissette 2008). In contrast, the employment rate of university-educated immigrants (79 %) remains lower than that of Canadian-born residents who are university-educated (90 %) (Bollman 2013, 2014). Immigrants are also disadvantaged in terms of earnings. For instance, highly educated immigrants who arrived between 2006 and 2010 had earnings about \$30,000 lower than highly educated, native-born Canadians (Bollman 2014). Moreover, immigrants from NTSCs were overrepresented in jobs with low educational requirements (e.g. clerks and taxi drivers) in comparison with native-born Canadians and immigrants from TSCs, controlling for influential factors such as education (Galarneau and Morissette 2008; King 2009; Thompson 2000; Zeitsma 2010).

Certain factors can explain the disadvantaged position of immigrants in the labour market. Though immigrants are often highly educated, employers and regulatory bodies undervalue their educational qualifications and foreign work experience relative to those acquired in Canada or in TSCs (Aycan and Berry 1996; Basran and Zong 1998; Bauder 2003; Galarneau and Morissette 2004; Thompson 2000). This is considered justified because of their presumed lack of familiarity with the social and cultural norms of the Canadian workplace (Girard and Bauder 2007; Liu 2007). Another barrier to finding a professional job is the demand for Canadian work experience. Some employers place a high value on Canadian work experience and exclude immigrants who are otherwise qualified (Buzdugan and Halli 2009; McBride and Sweetman 2003; Reitz 2001). Ethnic and racial discrimination also exist in the labour market (Basran and Zong 1998; Hiebert 1999; Oreopoulos 2011; Oreopoulos and Dechief 2012; Pendakur and Pendakur 1998). Factors such as these systematically impede immigrants' entrance into the professional field, as do individual-level factors such as limited English and/or French proficiency (Alboim, Finnie, and Meng 2005; Reitz 2001; Sweetman 2004).

As mentioned above, few recent studies have examined the impact of immigration class on labour market outcomes. Sweetman and Warman (2012) found that economic-class immigrants garner greater earnings than immigrants entering through other classes. Similarly, Shields et al. (2010) reported that economic immigrants are more likely to be employed in their area of education than immigrants who enter under other immigration classes. Among all immigrant classes, refugees experience the greatest

difficulty in finding a job that matches their field of training or education, despite having the legal right to work (Sweetman and Warman 2012; Shields et al. 2010; Xue 2008). In addition to devaluation of educational credentials and work experience, negative stereotyping and prejudice encountered hiring explain their labour market outcomes (Krahn et al. 2000; Renaud, Piche, and Godin 2003). Refugees may also be less familiar with Canadian labour market rules than other immigrants and the Canadian-born residents (Bauder 2005; Krahn et al. 2000).

These studies rely mostly on quantitative data and offer generalizable findings that provide an important overview of the labour market situation encountered by immigrants. They cannot offer insights into the lived, everyday experiences of distinct immigrant groups, or convey experiences from immigrants' viewpoints. Previous studies presented limited analysis of the ways in which admission class affects labour market integration and how this intersects with other factors, such as education. In my analysis, I focus on the ways in which heterogeneity within a particular immigrant group shapes the experiences of participants. To this end, I have drawn on the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu to examine the labour market integration experiences of Turkish immigrants.

## Theoretical Framework

In Bourdieu's conception, capital presents itself in three forms: economic, social, and cultural. Cultural capital can appear in three sub-forms (Bourdieu 1986): embodied (e.g. accent, dialect, or bodily conduct), institutionalized (e.g. degrees or diplomas), and objectified (e.g. works of art or instruments). The use of one form of capital is understood in relation to other forms of capital. To find a job, for example, an immigrant may need to possess a form of cultural capital (e.g. knowledge of social and cultural conventions in the host country) that can be converted into economic capital in the host country's labour market. The value of capital is not fixed or permanent and can change spatially (Kelly and Lusia 2006; Ryan et al. 2008). The devaluation of immigrants' foreign education and credentials exemplifies a lack of recognition of their non-Canadian institutionalized cultural capital. In interviews with institutional administrators and employers in Greater Vancouver, Bauder (2003) showed that non-recognition of institutionalized cultural capital of immigrants impedes their access to upper segments of the labour market and reserves professional occupations for Canadian-born and Canadian-educated workers. Exclusion of immigrants from high-status occupations compels them to pursue accreditation of their educational certificates and/or accumulate Canadian institutionalized cultural capital (Bauder 2003; George et al. 2012; Girard and Bauder 2007).

Immigrants might also leave behind their social networks and need to accumulate social capital in the host country to facilitate their job search (Nakhaie 2006; Nakhaie and Kazemipur 2013). They may also face significant challenges in restoring social networks within their host country (Cederberg 2012), or their social capital may concentrate them within particularly low-income economic sectors (Bauder 2005; Lusia and Bauder 2010; Hiebert and Walton-Roberts 1997), depending on the kinds of resources controlled within their social networks (Ooka and Wellman 2006). The value and structure of capital are tightly interconnected within the concept of field.

According to Bourdieu, every society is structured in fields, such as educational and labour market field. A field is a social space or setting (Huot et al. 2013, 9) and has its own rules of functioning and hierarchical structure (Bourdieu 1993). The position of an individual in the field is dependent on his/her amount and type of capital as well as his/her habitus (Bourdieu 1984, 1985, 1989; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Habitus can be defined as “an active residue of an individual’s past that functions within the present to shape his or her perceptions, thought, and bodily comportment” (Swartz 2002, 63). It consists of our thoughts, interests, and ways of being and acting (Bourdieu 1977, 2005a). Furthermore, such dispositions of habitus are developed through simultaneous intersection of class, gender, and ethnicity/race (Bridge 2004).

The concept of habitus enables migration scholars to examine how the habitus of immigrants formed in their home countries travels with them as a “culturally-embodied cognitive structure” (Glastra and Vedder 2010, 82). The act of migration causes immigrants to enter into fields whose rules of functioning may differ from those in their home country (Glastra and Vedder 2010; Huot et al. 2013). As a result, an immigrant might feel like a fish out of water as his/her habitus encounters social fields of which it is not the product (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 127). Bauder (2005) suggests that immigrants’ habitus can either constrain or create labour market opportunities for them, depending upon their level of familiarity with the rules of the market. Likewise, immigrants may be excluded from social fields in the host country because of their distinct cultural practices. Girard and Bauder’s (2007) study of foreign-trained engineers showed that immigrants’ admission into a profession is dependent upon whether or not employers think the applicant “fits” into the dominant habitus of the profession, according to conventions of workplace behaviour and business. However, habitus is not a destiny; it is open to innovation when faced with novel situations (Bourdieu 1984, 2005b). A complete understanding of habitus requires focus upon the social, cultural, and economic fields of the home country in addition to the changes it undergoes in the host country (Kelly and Lusic 2006; Loyal 2009). Analysis of an immigrant’s experience in the fields of their host country requires careful attention to the complex ways in which his/her habitus generate strategies for integration.

In the present study, the Canadian labour market constitutes a field with its own set of rules and power dynamics in which immigrants renegotiate the value of their capital, accumulate host-country capital, and reinforce, transform, and/or reinvent their habitus (see Bourdieu 1990). Here, I build on and extend the perspectives of preceding studies in two ways. First, though previous research applied Bourdieu’s concepts of capital and habitus to the labour market integration of immigrants, it paid less attention to the concept of field and its relation to habitus and capital. Hence, there exists a need to address and examine the interconnectedness of these concepts in order to better understand the struggles of immigrants in the host country (Kelly and Lusic 2006). Second, in my analysis, I focus on the ways in which habitus, immigration class, and level of education intersect and shape the labour market integration trajectories of study participants. A number of questions guide the focus of this paper: how can we define the rules of the Canadian labour market field from immigrants’ viewpoints? Do the rules of the market differ within its various segments? How do immigrants navigate and mitigate the rules of the market? How do forms of capital and habitus affect the experiences of immigrants, and the strategies they develop to enter the field?

## Methodology

This paper draws on the findings of a larger study examining social network development, labour market integration, and workplace experiences of immigrants from Turkey to Canada. It focuses specifically on the experiences of these immigrants in their search for employment in the Canadian labour market. The study was conducted in Toronto and London, Ontario between February 2013 and March 2014. I interviewed 78 participants, facilitating individual interviews and focus groups. The sampling method was purposive, and participants were selected according to certain criteria: being born and raised in Turkey, migration to Canada as an adult (i.e. 18+), permanent residency or citizenship in Canada, current employment or employment experience in Canada, and residency in Toronto or London for at least 1 year. Participants were employed in professional (e.g. engineering) or non-professional (e.g. construction) jobs. I interviewed immigrants with varying levels of education and from different segments of the labour market to assess the role of forms of capital and habitus in their employment trajectories. Study participants were diverse with regard to age, gender, entry status, and duration of residence; however, they were all permanent residents or citizens of Canada at the time of the interviews.

Participants were recruited through posters, advertisements on social media (e.g. LinkedIn), and passive snowball sampling. Interviews were held in public places or at participants' workplaces or homes and lasted between 55 min and 2.5 h, with an average length of approximately 90 min. A grounded theory approach was applied to the analysis of the data (Corbin and Strauss 1990), and the interviews were analyzed with NVIVO software to code emergent themes. Interview quotes were translated into English, and pseudonyms have been used throughout the paper.

## Findings

Study participants came from different educational backgrounds. Fifty-two came to Canada with a bachelor's degree or higher and began their job search in the professional field. With the exception of those who came as asylum-seekers ( $n=14$ ), within 2 years, all had managed to find jobs similar or identical to those they had in Turkey. Highly educated asylum-seekers, in contrast, held non-professional jobs and experienced downward social mobility. The remaining 26 came with a high school degree or less and, as asylum-seekers or through family reunification, began to work in non-professional jobs. The challenges participants encountered in the labour market, and the strategies developed to mitigate these challenges, varied according to the segment in which they conducted their job search as well as their forms of capital, habitus, and immigration class. In this section, I will first discuss the experiences of less-educated participants and, second, the experiences of highly educated participants. Analysis of the latter is divided in two subsections—skilled immigrants and highly educated asylum-seekers—to show the ways in which intersection of immigration class and capital affected participants' employment trajectories.

## Less-Educated Participants in the Labour Market

Participants with a high school degree or less did not have many difficulties in the labour market and found a non-professional job soon after arrival in Canada (from a couple of days to 3 months). This can be attributed to two main causes. First, they searched for jobs in bureaucratically less-structured places, such as construction sites. The majority of them did not face the problem of preparing a resume or preparing for a formal interview. If they needed a resume, they got help from their friends. Second, nearly all participants had pre-existing networks in Canada in the form of family, relatives, and friends, and they relied upon these networks in their job search.

Guliz: Do you think it's difficult for immigrants to find a job?

Mahmut: No, it isn't difficult. If you have a friend here, I mean an employed friend, then finding a job isn't difficult at all. He would definitely make you work in his workplace.

Ihsan: Language skills don't matter.

Mahmut: Yeah, when you work as a plasterer or painter, language isn't a problem. You learn the work and the language eventually.

Ihsan: If you don't know anyone here, you can't find a job! Your acquaintance tells the employer he knows you, and that you can do the job. This is how we found our jobs.

(Mahmut, M, 30; Ihsan, M, 25).

Less-educated participants had no knowledge of the English language when they arrived in Canada. Though some had attended English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) courses, they had not completed them—because of their long work hours and because they lacked motivation to learn a new language. When asked about their English proficiency, many participants stated that their degree of knowledge had become sufficient to maintain basic conversations with their employers and colleagues. Interview data, and my observations during data collection, showed that participants' personal networks, combined with their limited language skills and low level of education, channelled them into particular sectors—namely the construction sector in Toronto and taxi-driving in London.

Even though participants considered their entrance into the labour market smooth, they made it clear that finding a job was easier only in the non-professional field.

There are so many challenges in the labour market, but these challenges aren't for people like me. They are for engineers, for computer scientists. They came here with higher education, but they struggle in finding a job for a long time, because they don't have Canadian experience! I have seen those people. We worked in the same workplaces. This is all I can do with my education, but I'm so sorry for those highly educated immigrants (Eray, M, 50).



Eray's excerpt demonstrates that unique sets of rules governing segments of the labour market determine the experiences of immigrants. Prior to their migration to Canada, participants "knew" that they would work in non-professional jobs, because of their level of education and degree of English-language knowledge. The notion of "What else could I expect?" emerged frequently during the interviews. This suggests that participants had an internal sense of the labour market, specifically of the non-professional field. Non-Canadian cultural capital of less-educated immigrants did not prevent them from entering the labour market. Social capital, rather than cultural capital, was needed in order to enter the field. Only a few participants in this group had no pre-existing social networks in Canada. Nonetheless, they managed to accumulate social capital within the Turkish community soon after their arrival by going to associations, restaurants, coffee shops, and mosques, and utilized their connections to find non-professional jobs.

## Highly Educated Participants in the Labour Market

### *Skilled Immigrants*

Based on prior knowledge of Canada and expectations of a Canadian society centred upon equality and meritocracy, highly educated participants assumed that their credentials and qualifications, along with their knowledge of the English language,<sup>3</sup> would enable them to find a professional job in their field upon arrival in Canada. Their assumptions, however, did not fit the objective structures of the Canadian labour market. Shortly after commencing their job search, they realized that their educational credentials and foreign work experience were of lesser (or no) value in the Canadian labour market. Moreover, they needed Canadian work experience to find a professional job. Migration made participants aware of their distinct cultural capital and habitus. As in other research (e.g. Basran and Zong 1998; Bauder 2003; George et al. 2012), this shift in the value of institutionalized cultural capital constituted one of the biggest challenges to their labour market integration. Devaluation of cultural capital made it more difficult, if not impossible, to compete in a job search on equal terms. More than half of participants began work in survival jobs, such as cashier or clerk, but within 2 years, all had managed to switch to careers similar or identical to those they had held in Turkey. I will focus on strategies developed by the participants shortly, but remain for the time being on differences experienced in the new field.

The importance of social networks in the job search created another mismatch between participants' expectations and the reality of the labour market. The majority of participants expressed their astonishment that many jobs were filled via connections or word of mouth, "even in Canada". Though they were already familiar with the importance of social networks in the labour market, they were now in a new field as outsiders, perhaps with low amounts of social capital. When asked, for instance, if there are any challenges in the labour market specific to immigrants, participants pointed to lack of access to the "hidden job market".

<sup>3</sup> Only a few participants attended language courses (ESL or others).



The thing that we immigrants sometimes don't want to admit is that lots of jobs are hidden in Canada. They are advertised, because job posting is a legal requirement. Companies advertise jobs, and you apply thinking that there is a chance. Most of the time, companies know who they will hire. Then the company sends you an e-mail saying, "Sorry, you are not a suitable candidate." The important thing is to be part of this network (Hulya, F, 40).

Similarly, they highlighted the role of companies in solidifying the importance of social capital within the labour market.

HR [human resources] sends an internal e-mail saying, "We have a job opening that you can forward to the people you know." There are also incentives. I mean, if your friend gets employed, the company gives you an incentive. [In our company] the incentive used to be \$100, and now it has increased to \$1000 (Ilker, M, 32).

Hiring practices that place high importance on networks put immigrants lacking such networks at a disadvantage (George and Chaze 2014). The hidden job market and incentives offered by companies show how the structure of the Canadian labour market perpetuates the importance of social capital. Participants felt that Canadians are always privileged, because they have access to broader social networks.

Participants also identified distinct interviewing structures in a labour market with which they were completely unfamiliar. During job interviews, participants became aware of the fact that their formerly taken-for-granted dispositions of habitus did not help them with job interviews in Canada. They expressed that they were unfamiliar with the Canadian norm of "self-promotion".

There is definitely a cultural difference. The ways in which you reply to interview questions aren't the same as in Turkey...well, here, people promote themselves. It's all about self-promoting, all about marketing. I mean, they market their skills. They say "I'm good at this and that..." Just marketing! In Turkey, no one would appreciate it. People would ask, "Are you crazy?" You can't show off in this way in interviews in Turkey. So it takes a long time to get used to the system here, to adapt to their system. It took me a good two years! But now I know how to behave in a job interview. (Gamze, F, 40).

While such differences constituted a challenge in fitting into the new field, participants' professional habitus enabled them to develop strategies to negotiate the rules of the field. Because the labour market rewards immigrants complying with the normative values and practices of Canada (Li 2003), participants tried to transform their embodied dispositions in order to attract employers' attention during the interviews, despite being uncomfortable with the Canadian norm of self-promotion. Similarly, they decided to acquire Canadian credentials and mobilize their social capital as a strategy to gain positions and accumulate and exchange different forms of capital valued within the new field (see Bourdieu 1993). Nearly half of participants accumulated institutionalized cultural capital (i.e. a certificate or degree) in Canada. Without social capital, this strategy remained relatively ineffective. Not surprisingly, many participants stated that

mobilization of personal networks was the most important strategy in facilitating their integration into the labour market. After receiving a 1-year human resources management graduate certificate from a college, Hulya (F, 40) thought, “Okay, I even went to a college, now I can find a professional job. But still the same problem; I didn’t have a network.” She further stated that:

I talked to my classmates later [after graduation]. They were all Canadian, so they have friends from elementary school, high school, university. Their partners and parents also have friends. So I was the only one who had difficulty in finding a job. They used their networks and found a job. It is so hard for immigrants; if you don’t have any networks, then you have to struggle.

As Bourdieu (1996, 134) reminds us, the rate of return on educational capital is a function of the social capital that can be devoted to exploiting it. Although Hulya’s involvement with college education allowed her to acquire Canadian institutionalized cultural capital, she could not convert it into social capital, as her classmates did not become part of her network. She then decided to volunteer to increase her chances of finding employment. This strategy worked, and after 6 months of volunteering in her field, she found her first professional job. Volunteering in different places is an important strategy utilized by several participants in negotiating the challenges of the labour market and creating social networks, which could then be converted into social capital on job applications.

Analysis showed that almost two thirds of participants relied on their social capital to enter the Canadian labour market. Several mentioned news reports in the national media discussing the findings of Oreopoulos’ (2011) study on the impact of ethnic-sounding names on employment trajectories. In his study, Oreopoulos sent thousands of randomly manipulated resumes to online job postings across multiple occupations in Toronto in order to examine why immigrants struggle in the labour market. He found “substantial discrimination across a variety of occupations toward applicants with foreign experience or those with Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, and Greek names compared with English names” (Oreopoulos 2011, 148). Some participants in my study changed their names to British-sounding names; however, they stated that information about their educational background and previous work experience on their resumes still disclosed their country of origin. Foreign education and work experience, in this context, act in a manner similar to ethnicity and race, and can represent a basis for discrimination (Khan 2007). Participants had not experienced overt discrimination in the labour market due to their ethnic/racial, national, or religious backgrounds; however, they had concerns about being victims of covert discrimination. Referring to their job search experiences and the findings of Oreopoulos’ study, they expressed that networks were crucial to overcome employer prejudice and discrimination against immigrants. The following excerpt illustrates participants’ perceived importance of social networks in mitigating ethnic/racial discrimination in Canada.

Networks are so important! Especially here in Canada. Networks are important in Turkey, as well, but they are extremely important here because there are people from all around the world, from various backgrounds. Since the society is very diverse, employers might not know anything about your background, or they

might be very biased towards your background. You know, diversity may result in stereotyping, discrimination, and so on (Meté, M, 31).

The experiences of two participants demonstrated the role of social capital in overcoming major barriers in the labour market particularly well. Adil (M, 32) and Esra (F, 41) found jobs in their fields within 3 and 4 months, respectively, after their arrival in Canada. Adil utilized his network, which had been developed prior to his migration. Through his professor in Turkey, he connected with Melda (the professor's close friend). Melda had been in Toronto for more than 10 years and worked as an engineer. She facilitated Adil's job search by introducing him to another engineer from Turkey working in his field. Adil explained his job search process:

I met my current manager through Melda. He was then the lead engineer in the company. He liked my resume, and gave it to his company's human resources department. Then, you know, the company called me for an interview. The interview went well, and I got the job.

He further stated, "You can apply individually to human resources, but you need someone in the company to make sure your application will be taken into consideration." Similarly, Esra described how she perceived her advantage as her Canadian friend facilitated her employment. Esra had met her friend, Laura, at an international conference in 2010, 2 years before her immigration to Canada, and had been in contact with her since then. Following her immigration to Canada, Esra began to search for a job and came across an advertisement in her field (management). She called Laura to ask if she knew someone in the company. Laura knew the manager of the department, and she talked to him/her regarding Esra's application. Esra told me during the interview that her manager had asked Laura if it was worth inviting her for an interview, and Laura had confirmed that Esra was a good candidate to consider for the position. Esra expressed that her friend was the major reason she got the interview. She had previously applied to several other job openings without receiving any responses.

Esra and Adil found their first jobs matching their level of education without Canadian degrees or work experience. This suggests that newly arrived immigrants lacking recognized institutionalized cultural capital could enhance their chances of finding a professional job when they gain social capital. This finding challenges the perception that a lack of Canadian experience or degree represents a legitimate reason not to hire immigrants. More importantly, it illustrates that these two criteria of hiring act as a discriminatory tool unless immigrants have social capital. When asked whether there was any reference, for instance, to their lack of Canadian work experience in their job interviews, both participants said "no". Previous studies (e.g. Bauder 2003; Hiebert 2006; Khan 2007; Oreopoulos 2011) have suggested that employers give preference to Canadian-born and educated applicants, and thus prevent immigrants' access to professional jobs. The excerpts above, however, suggest that social capital can serve as a functional equivalent to a Canadian degree and work experience. It enabled study participants to evade major challenges in the labour market by eliminating potential discrimination and validating their cultural capital. It also allowed them to convert their social and cultural capital into economic capital. I am not presenting social capital as a panacea for all challenges in the labour market; it mitigates labour market barriers only

if immigrants possess the required qualifications and comply with the rules of the field. In other words, social capital is not a substitute for institutionalized cultural capital in the process of immigrants' integration into the Canadian labour market. Nevertheless, as the quotes above indicate, social capital represents an important factor in creating trust in the hiring process. Employers value the institutionalized and embodied cultural capital of immigrant applicants, and recognize them as employable when recommended by other members in their network (for a discussion on trust, see Cohen and Prusak 2001; Fernandez, Castilla, and Moore 2000). This finding provides support for the argument that a combination of various capitals, particularly social and cultural capitals, enables us to understand and explain the multifaceted labour market integration of immigrants (Hiebert 2006). The next subsection takes these analyses a step further by focusing on the experiences of highly educated asylum-seekers.

### *Asylum-Seekers*

Highly educated asylum-seekers also came to Canada expecting that their institutionalized cultural capital would help them find a professional job. Like skilled immigrants, they faced barriers such as lack of Canadian work experience and devaluation of their foreign credentials. However, some barriers were specific to (or more severe for) these participants. First, nearly all arrived with a low level of English-language skills. Second, they could not consider obtaining post-secondary education to accumulate Canadian institutionalized cultural capital, because they were not permitted to apply for student loans while holding asylum-seeker status—and had to pay international student fees. Lastly, they were obligated to deal with the long legal process of obtaining asylum, which rendered their residency status uncertain. Despite access to temporary work permits, participants felt that employers' discrimination against residents with temporary status made it almost impossible to enter the professional field (see also Jackson and Bauder 2013; Krahn et al. 2000). Their opinions about discrimination against asylum-seekers on the labour market were further solidified by their interactions with de-skilled immigrants and refugees, and they became even more discouraged. The following excerpt by Enes (M, 35), who came to Canada as an asylum-seeker in 2003 with a university degree in business administration and high level of English proficiency, is symbolic of the challenges of other highly educated asylum-seekers:

Everything was uncertain when I first arrived. It wasn't certain whether I could stay in Canada. Also, there were certain rules for us; I mean, you had to be either a permanent resident or citizen not to pay high amounts of money for education. This was the first obstacle. Also, it was very difficult to look for a job in my field, as I didn't have recognized status and an ID. You know, it is almost impossible to be part of the professional world until you get your permanent residency.

At the time of the interview, Enes had worked in different non-professional jobs since his arrival: he had been working in the construction sector for almost 9 years. He, like the other participants and the majority of highly educated asylum-seekers, utilized social networks he developed in places like coffee houses, where non-professional Turkish immigrants socialize in order to enter the labour market.

Though participants in this group had obtained either permanent residency status or citizenship by the time of the interview *and* improved their language skills, they were all still employed in the non-professional field. This raises an important question: what caused the majority of participants in this group to stay in the non-professional field? The major explanation is that many participants' approach toward the field had changed during the long legal process, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

Guliz: Did you consider looking for a professional job once you became a permanent resident?

Arif: You know what? To work as an engineer after all these years, I should get some sort of higher education degree. If I wanna get Canadian credentials, I would spend at least two years...I would spend money, as well. Also, I should quit my job. I can still survive with part-time jobs, but it isn't logical. Now I'm making money same as an engineer, although I know that if I become an engineer, I would have an office job, a business card, etc. My working conditions would be better. But I'm satisfied with my job, and don't wanna start from scratch once more.

(Arif, M, 30).

Satisfying income, declining motivation to pursue a degree, and unwillingness to "start from scratch once more" kept many participants in the non-professional field, even after they had obtained permanent status. This finding points to the relationship between strategies of individuals in social fields and the importance of "the *evolution over time* of the volume and structure" of his/her capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99, emphasis in original). Highly educated asylum-seekers could not accumulate Canadian institutionalized cultural capital over time, as their access was limited during their refugee determination process. They were also restricted to non-professional jobs for years due to certain barriers, which caused modification of their embodied expectations. Instead of starting the job search process all over again, they preferred to stay in non-professional jobs. Indeed, they formed a refugee habitus, to use Morrice's (2013) term. Their subjective experiences, combined with negative stereotyping, prejudice against asylum-seekers (and refugees), and limitation to non-professional jobs, had become incorporated into their habitus.

The overall experience of highly educated asylum-seekers suggests that they likely have the cultural competence to be successful in their search for a professional job, yet the barriers resulting from their immigration category constitute the major obstacle to their job search. Accordingly, their experience illustrates how the classification of immigrants affects their labour market experiences. We can say that possession of a "permanent" immigration status is one of the primary rules of the Canadian labour market in order to secure a job in the professional field. Immigrants who cannot achieve this status, or require a long time to achieve it, are compelled to accept the position assigned to them in the labour market.

## Conclusion

Drawing on qualitative interviews, this paper explored the labour market integration experiences of Turkish immigrants. I framed my analysis by relying on Bourdieu's theoretical framework, in order to elucidate a more holistic understanding of the experiences of immigrants and to understand the ways in which members of immigrant groups follow varied integration trajectories. This paper extended and contributed to existing studies, first, by focusing on the experiences of immigrants who came with different levels of education and under different immigration classes, settling within different segments of the labour market, and second by exploring strategies developed to deal with job-search challenges. My findings show that capital and habitus travelled with participants from Turkey and the intersection of their immigration status and the rules of the Canadian labour market and its subfields (i.e. professional and non-professional) shaped the integration experiences of Turkish immigrants.

It was apparent in the interviews that participants' expectations of the Canadian labour market prior to their migration was dependent upon their habitus and institutionalized cultural capital. Highly educated participants, regardless of their immigration class, anticipated an "easy" entry to the labour market. They expected the Canadian labour market to be more meritocratic, and thought educational qualifications and previous work experience would be valued. However, they did not realize that the value assigned to capital is subjective. From the perspective of employers and regulatory bodies, foreign educational credentials and work experiences are associated with foreign cultural practices that do not fit into the Canadian workplace (Girard and Bauder 2007). In addition, the demand for Canadian work experience further challenged the job search process. The importance of social capital in finding a job, and differences in interviewing techniques between two countries, represented two other mismatches between participants' expectations and the structure of the Canadian labour market. Findings also illustrated that the immigration class created more barriers for participants who came as asylum-seekers. Their temporary status, restricted access to education, and stigmatization in the labour market confined them to non-professional jobs. Less-educated participants, on the other hand, did not experience a mismatch between their pre-arrival expectations and labour market trajectories in Canada. Despite their lower level of education and language skills, they did not describe difficulty in finding a job. This finding contradicts the argument that knowledge of the official language stands as a prerequisite for labour market integration (Yu, Ouellet, and Warmington 2007). Mobilization of social capital, both in the job search and in non-professional employment, represented an important factor in avoiding the demand for high-level language skills.

Highly educated participants developed various strategies for finding a position within the field, the nature of which was subject to their class of admission. Immigrants who came under the economic class accumulated Canadian institutionalized cultural and social capital to mitigate the challenges of the labour market. Though they experienced devaluation of their home-country cultural capital, their professional habitus enabled them to understand the



importance of reinventing themselves in the new field—by adapting new forms of capital and mobilizing their job search. Conversion of cultural capital to employment remained highly dependent on the mobilization of social capital. Moreover, social capital helped participants overcome major challenges of the labour market, and assisted them in finding professional positions similar to the ones they had in Turkey. Based on this finding, I contend that lack of social capital in the host county constitutes a crucial exclusionary factor in the labour market, as its importance is solidified by the hidden job market and incentives offered to employees by companies to give referrals. Lack of social capital is not just an individual-level factor affecting immigrants' labour market outcomes. In reality, the importance given to social capital turns its absence into a structural barrier. Findings further showed that social capital could be particularly important in a multicultural society, which, according to participants, increases the skepticism of employers about applicants from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The story was very different for highly educated participants who arrived as asylum-seekers. The temporary status they held during their first couple of years, due to their immigration class and limited proficiency in English, constituted the biggest challenges in mobilizing their cultural capital. Constrained by a combination of barriers, these participants were confined to non-professional fields, at least until they became permanent residents. Findings showed that many gave up their pre-arrival plans upon finding professional jobs and/or pursuing degrees in Canada and stayed in the non-professional field even after receiving their permanent residency. This suggests that these participants' habitus, in terms of credentials and occupational prestige, had been transformed by their downward mobility.

Ultimately, this paper first demonstrated that the job-finding experiences of immigrants are varied and complex. The rules of the Canadian labour market vary within different segments and determine the experience of immigrants within various classes of admission and forms of capital and habitus. It is imperative to consider the challenges specific to certain segments of the market and to focus on the effects of immigration class upon the job search. In doing so, we can avoid generalizing the structure and rules of the field and point to diverse experiences while exploring those of immigrants seeking and finding jobs. This paper contributes to the literature on social capital and immigrant labour market integration (Li 2008; Nakhaie and Kazemipur 2013) by highlighting the importance of social capital in participants' job search process in Canada. In contrast with previous arguments that reliance on social capital in the job search could vary depending upon immigration status (Bauder 2005; Marger 2001), the experiences of Turkish immigrants showed social capital to be crucial to labour market integration, regardless of immigration status and educational background. It also showed that Bourdieu's theoretical framework enables migration scholars to offer a more comprehensive analysis of the labour market integration experiences of immigrants and to identify intra-immigrant group differences by focusing on interconnections among the concepts of field, habitus, and capital. Future research could explore ways in which other immigrant groups identify and respond to the rules of the labour market.



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