

Running head: THE CANADIAN WORKPLACE

The Canadian workplace: An ethnographic study on how employers are facilitating the adaption
of their immigrant employees

by

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We accept the thesis as conforming to the required standard

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Diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with, and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a society to be without.

~ William Sloane Coffin, Jr.

Abstract

The researcher conducted an ethnographic study looking at how employers can build more inclusive workplaces and support the adaptation of immigrants into the Canadian workplace culture. The research consisted of ethnographic interviews with 15 immigrant employees living and working in British Columbia. The focus of the research study was to investigate how the various aspects of the employer-sponsored programs influence the cross-cultural adaptation from the perspective of the immigrant employee. Results from the study support that immigrant friendly practices and initiatives facilitate the adaptation process of immigrant employees. Practical implications and recommendations for employers are also discussed in the study.

Keywords: ethnography, immigrant, workplace, cross-cultural adaptation, diversity, training

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	6
Definitions.....	7
Literature Review.....	7
Theoretical Grounding.....	9
Method.....	13
Framework.....	13
Participants.....	14
Recruitment.....	15
Method of Data Collection.....	16
Data Analysis.....	17
Results.....	18
Employer Sponsored Initiatives.....	18
Leadership.....	25
Adaptation and Adaptation Responsibility.....	26
Discussion.....	27
Conclusion.....	38
Limitations and Future Research.....	40
References.....	42
Appendix A.....	47
Appendix B.....	48

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of their immigrant employees

Canadian employers are facing two major dilemmas: on the one hand, an increasing shortage of skilled employees resulting in a heavy reliance on incoming immigrants to alleviate the skills shortage; on the other hand, managing the challenges of having a culturally diverse workforce. In order to overcome these challenges, employers are implementing immigrant-friendly strategies and programs that will attract, integrate, and retain their international talent in order to maintain competitiveness in a new global market. However, new immigrants present challenges such as language proficiency, lack of recognition of foreign credentials, unfamiliarity with vocational cultural norms, and differences in team members' communication and interaction styles (Matveev & Milter, 2004; Chen, 2008). Unfortunately, these challenges can be very costly for both the organization and the individual employees because they can result in high turnover, low performance rates, and an early return home for some expatriates working on international assignments (Zakaria, 2000, p. 508). To overcome the challenges of having a culturally diverse workforce, employers need to further develop their strategies to effectively deal with issues of adaptability in order to meet the needs of those working in an increasingly multicultural organization.

However, there has been limited research on how these strategies support the adaptation process of immigrant employees in the workplace. Therefore, the objective of this research study was to examine the strategies that employers, located in British Columbia, Canada, are adopting in order for their immigrant workforce to adapt and how the immigrant employees perceive these strategies.

The practical implications of the research study was to gain new knowledge and increase awareness of the various strategies used to facilitate the adaption process of immigrant employees

by making my findings accessible to the general public through webinars, publications, and presentations at relevant conferences. Those employers who are interested can use this information to implement their own strategies to guide successful adaptation of their immigrant employees.

Definitions

Canada accepts immigrants who fall into a variety of categories such as economic, family reunification, and refugee; however, the increasing trend has been to attract those in the economic category. Based on the selection criteria for the economic group including level of education, language proficiency, and number of years of work experience, the recent immigrants coming to Canada tend to be professionals, highly educated, and skilled workers (Chen, 2008). For the purpose of this study, I focused on the group of economic immigrants and used the terms “newcomers,” “immigrant employees,” and “internationally trained professionals” interchangeably throughout the discussion. Furthermore, the terms “immigrant friendly initiatives,” “strategies,” and “practices” are also used interchangeably and refer to those programs sponsored by the employer to facilitate the adaptation process of their immigrant employees.

Literature Review

This research study draws from and contributes to a growing body of knowledge on managing workplace diversity (Cox, 2001; Patrick & Kumar, 2012; Matveev & Milter, 2004; Matveev & Nelson, 2004; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012, Chen, 2008). In addition, I examined research describing specific strategies and programs that employers are implementing at their workplace including diversity training (Zakaria, 2000; Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, & Mallett, 2005), English language programs (Kukushkin & Watt, 2009; Girard & Bauder, 2007), affinity groups (Douglas, 2008), buddy systems, and mentoring programs (Laroche &

Rutherford, 2007). To understand how the process of adaptation evolves after a newcomer moves to a new culture, I draw from the work of Young Yun Kim's (1988, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2012) cross-cultural adaptation theory (CCA) as it identifies those key factors that influence the adaptation process of the individual.

There are two common themes that emerge when looking at research on managing workplace diversity: one is the benefit of hiring immigrants to alleviate the skills shortage and the second is the challenges of having a cultural diverse workforce. It is the second theme that was the focus of my research. Regardless of whether the research was conducted in the United States or in Canada, the literature consistently mentions the same challenges including language barriers, lack of recognition of foreign credentials and international work experience, and lack of knowledge around vocational norms. The impact of these challenges on businesses is also universal including low retention rates, a decrease in productivity, and conflict amongst team members. Research examining the types of programs that attract, integrate, and retain international talent in order for businesses to be competitive in the global market was my main source of information. As my study involved participants working for employers located in British Columbia, research using Canadian businesses as case studies was particularly relevant (Girard & Bauder, 2007; Kukushkin & Watt, 2009; Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, & Mallett, 2005; Wilson, 2013).

Some of the research came in a format that could be used as a guidebook or toolkit for employers looking to build culturally inclusive workplaces. The chapters were commonly divided into different sections: attracting and recruiting immigrants, strategies on integrating immigrants, and how to develop and retain international talent. Although my focus was primarily on integrating and retaining immigrant employees, all sections were beneficial in understanding the challenges and to highlight the importance of implementing immigrant friendly practices beyond

just the recruitment phase. The literature was written primarily for Human Resources personnel responsible for recruitment and training as well as for leaders and top management looking to create a multicultural organization (Cox, 2001; Wilson, 2013). The examples of immigrant friendly practices, the self –assessment tools, and the step-by-step instructions provided a practical aspect and convinced readers that these strategies could easily be implemented in the workplace. However, many of the studies failed to discuss how the strategies being implemented actually help the immigrant employees adapt to the workplace. Therefore, this study was conducted to support the research examining the challenges and effective practices for integrating and retaining a culturally diverse workforce, but also to determine how the programs and strategies facilitate the adaptation process from the perspective of those immigrant employees who were interviewed.

Theoretical Grounding

In order to understand the adaptation process of immigrants including what happens when individuals enter a new culture and are exposed to aspects of the new host culture, I referred to Young Yun Kim’s (1988, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2012) theory of cross-cultural adaptation (CCA). CCA helps to understand how individuals who enter a new culture will experience some form of new cultural learning and acquisition of native cultural practice. Although the theory doesn’t address the workplace specifically, many of the key factors that facilitate as well as impede the adaptation process of immigrants can be applied to the workplace environment.

The theory evolved from Kim’s personal interest being an immigrant herself and moving from South Korea to the United States. Kim (2004) defines cross-cultural adaptation as “the entirety of the phenomenon of individuals who, on re-locating to an unfamiliar sociocultural environment, strive to establish and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional

relationship with the environment” (p. 339). CCA incorporates two models: the process model explains how the process of cross-cultural adaptation evolves and the structural model identifies the key factors that influence the adaptation process of the individual. The theory also states that each person is an “open system” meaning they are susceptible to exchanges of information through communication and evolve with their changing environment (Kim, 2008, p. 362).

When individuals move to a new host culture, they are confronted with many challenges such as new language, new behaviours, new symbols, and signs that differ vastly from their home country. Moreover, the newcomer’s mental and behavioural habits might be brought into awareness and called into question by members of the new host culture (Kim, 2004, p. 340). Kim (2002) explains that individuals who enter a new cultural realm experience some form of new cultural learning and acquisition of native cultural practices (p. 261). The learning of these new cultural practices is facilitated by communication, which is at the core of CCA. The theory also emphasizes the importance of recognizing that the ultimate responsibility falls on the newcomer to undergo adaptive change (Kim, 2004). However, from the perspective of being an “open system,” individuals strive to achieve a balance between maintaining aspects of their original identity while at the same time learning the new cultural elements as they exist in their new host environment.

Process Model

Within the process model, Kim (1988, 2001, 2002) includes the terms *enculturation*, *acculturation*, *deculturation*, and *assimilation*. The term *enculturation* describes the process in which individuals, during their formative years, learn, and acquire knowledge through active socialization within their environment (Kim, 1988, p. 46). When individuals move into a new culture, they are faced with cultural norms and unfamiliar communication systems that are prevalent within their host culture. The process of acquiring and learning these new cultural

norms is described as *acculturation* (Kim, 2002, p. 260). While the learning occurs, individuals are shedding old cultural habits described as *deculturation* (Kim, 2002, pp. 260-261). Kim (2004) says, “some change in our original cultural habits is necessary to the extent that our success in life activities in the host society depends on our capacity to understand and practice in accordance with the local culture” (p. 350). Individuals vary in regard to the degree of acculturation; meaning they settle at different points on the cross-cultural adaptation continuum. The highest degree of acculturation is *assimilation* located at the end of the spectrum that includes a change in a person’s fundamental values to reflect those of the host culture (Kim, 2001, p. 52).

Structural Model

Some newcomers make a smooth transition by being receptive to new learning and new experiences while others struggle and are resistant to change, especially when change means giving up aspects of their original culture. So “why do some settlers adapt faster than others?” or “given the same length of time, why do some settlers attain a higher level of adaptation?” (Kim, 2004, p. 342). CCA addresses these questions by introducing the structural model, which is a multi-dimensional, integrative model identifying those factors that either facilitate or impede the adaptation process. The model illustrates that adaptation is an interactive process and communication the catalyst that drives the individual’s adaptation process over time (Kim, 2004, p. 342).

Within the model, Kim (1988) introduces two dimensions of communication: personal communication referring to those cognitive activities that prepare people to act and react in certain ways within a social setting and social communication occurring either through visual communication such as TV (macro level) or through interaction at the workplace (micro level) (pp. 60-61). She also distinguishes social communication into two further dimensions: interpersonal communication referring to social engagement with people in the newcomer’s

immediate micro-level environment and mass communication referring to indirect communication occurring within a larger, social context and without the direct involvement of specific people (Kim, 1988, pp. 60-61). Although some forms of mass communication are potentially less stressful for a newcomer because they don't involve face-to-face communication, Kim and McKay-Semmler (2012) note that interpersonal communication with members of the host culture is the main form of social engagement and the essential vehicle for adaptive change over time (p. 3).

Host Communication Competence

The act of communicating is an interactive process that individuals use as a way to give and receive information within their respective environment. For newcomers, interpersonal communication activities with members of the host culture provide an opportunity to gain insight into the messages that reflect the mind-sets and behaviours of the local people. Kim (2001) refers to this as *host communication competence* and explains that “once acquired, [it] facilitates cross-cultural adaptation in direct and significant ways [because] it enables strangers to develop their view of the way things are carried out in the host environment and the way they themselves need to think, feel, and interact with that environment” (p. 73). Host communication competence encompasses language competence, which is seen as particularly important in promoting social standing and credibility because “a person speaks not only to be understood, but also to be believed, respected, and distinguished” (Kim, 1988, p. 167). However, effective communication not only encompasses linguistic ability, but also knowledge of non-verbal behavioural codes that are often spontaneous and full of meaning. By actively participating in interpersonal communication activities, newcomers will obtain more knowledge regarding the communication practices that are effective and appropriate in their new host culture. Kim (1988) compares learning how to communicate with learning how to swim and says, “through active

communication participation, they learn to communicate better – just as one learns to swim better by actually being in the water and swimming” (p. 167). These social interactions also provide newcomers with the ability to check their host communication competence through the process of trial and error playing a vital role in their adaptation process.

Method

Framework

Given that I was interested in learning about immigrants’ lived experiences at the workplace, an ethnographic research study seemed appropriate. I took on the role of the emic researcher who describes events or behaviour by gaining the inside perspective from within the culture or group participating in the study. The emic researcher often assumes that a culture is best understood as an interconnected whole or system, which is different than the etic researcher who looks at the role of culture from an outside perspective and focuses more on describing differences across cultures (Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999, pp. 781-782). By using the emic approach and engaging in face-to-face dialogue, the participants were able to reveal versions of events in their own words and I had the opportunity to understand the meaning behind these words throughout the research process (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 14).

The purpose of ethnographic research is not to establish trends or make generalizations, but instead the researcher has the opportunity to explore a phenomenon of interest and engage in an intensive learning process. It was through my research and qualitative data analysis that I was able to gain new knowledge or as Krauss (2005) says, “generate new levels and forms of meaning, which can in turn transform perspectives and actions” (pp. 763-764). Ethnographic research allowed me to obtain inside knowledge of the participants’ experiences on the strategies that employers are taking to integrate their workforce and learn how they facilitate cross-cultural adaptation from the perspective of the immigrant employee.

So how does one choose a phenomenon of interest? Researchers often choose an area of interest that is significant or has meaning to them based on their personal or professional identity (Cherry, Ellis, & DeSoucey, 2010, p. 234). Working with immigrants and learning about the challenges they face at the workplace motivated me to conduct research on the role that employers are playing in facilitating the adaptation process of their immigrant employees. My professional background working with skilled immigrants influenced how the data was gathered, interpreted as well as how the findings are presented in this paper.

Participants

I used criterion sampling along with maximum variance to seek out potential participants who would be able to purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and to increase the likelihood that a wide range of experiences would be included in the findings (Creswell, 2013, pp. 155-157). The main criteria for selecting participants was that they were (a) permanent residents of Canada, (b) not working for the same employer as back in their home country, (c) currently employed full time by an employer located in British Columbia, and (d) their English level was intermediate to advanced since translators would not be used during the interview. Immigrants working full time would have a better understanding of the types of initiatives that employers are implementing whereas part time employees may not have the opportunity to participate in some of the programs taking place at the workplace.

A range of countries were represented including participants originally from China, the Philippines, Romania, Iran, India, Indonesia, Trinidad and Tobago and their length of time living in Canada ranged anywhere between 2 and 19 years. I interviewed both men and women working for companies that varied in size from 10 to over 2,000 employees. They also worked in a variety of different industries including Information Technology, Accounting, Engineering, Retail, Education, and Finance and were employed in a wide range of jobs including intermediate level

jobs, supervisory, and managerial positions. The majority of the participants were working for their current employer between 1 – 3 years while 4 of the participants indicated that they were employed for less than a year at their current workplace. All participants completed higher education overseas and obtained Bachelors, Masters, or Doctorate degrees. Because the participants were actively employed, I safely assumed that their English would be at a level in which they could express themselves with little difficulty. However, in order to avoid any miscommunication, I actively performed member validation as a way to verify the information by repeating back to the participants what I understood during the interview process (Walsh, 2012, p. 257). Although my target sample size was 18-24 research subjects, I only interviewed 15 participants because I reached redundancy in the information I was gathering and felt I had enough data to analyze, identify themes, and generate sufficient findings (see Appendix B for participant demographics).

Recruitment

As I work for an immigrant-serving agency, I had access to data, which for another researcher may not have been possible. I recruited participants by tapping into my established network and contacted individuals who I knew fit the criteria. Unlike most ethnographic relationships, I did not need a lot of time to establish trust and develop a good rapport with my participants as I knew many of them already. I contacted the potential participants via email and explained that I am doing a Masters thesis and invited them to participate in my research study. I also used snowball sampling to recruit participants, which included asking friends, family, and colleagues for referrals of individuals who fit the criteria (Seale, 2012, p.145). When contacting the potential participants, I was aware of my dual role as both an employee of the immigrant-serving agency and as a researcher. Since the individuals were no longer clients of the employment program, I didn't have any influence over those who agreed to participate in the

study. I only had a dual role when I first contacted the potential participants. As soon as they signed the consent form, I was no longer affiliated with the participants through my work.

Method of Data Collection

I collected my data by conducting ethnographic interviews with immigrants working in British Columbia. Ethnographic interviewing allows for a genuine exchange of views and enough time and openness for the participants to explore purposefully with the researcher the meanings they place on events in their worlds (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland & Lofland, 2001, p. 369). All of the interviews were conducted in person between August and December 2013 and took place outside working hours either in the evening or on the weekend and at a location convenient for the participant. Individual interviews lasted 1 to 1.5 hours and were all digitally recorded with the key points later transcribed. I used the technique of qualitative interviewing and asked open-ended, semi-structured questions, which encouraged the participants to speak freely about their opinions, interpretations of events, and experiences (Byrne, 2012, pp. 208-209). I used an interview guide for consistency purposes and to ensure that certain topics or themes were covered; however, the style of questioning was still flexible rather than asking the questions in the fixed order outlined in the questionnaire. My goal as a researcher was to act as a co-producer in which data was produced through interactions taking place between the participants of the study and myself (Byrne, 2012, p. 208).

Before starting the interview, I explained the purpose of the study, asked whether the interview could be recorded, and obtained written consent. I also informed the participants that we could stop the recorder at any time if there was something they wanted to say 'off the record.' There was only one participant who asked that the interview not be recorded, so instead I took diligent notes. At the beginning of the interview, I informed all of the participants that they were free to withdraw from the study at anytime at which point all data related to the participant would

be destroyed and deleted. This was also clearly stated in the consent form that participants signed before starting the interview. I collected demographic details and asked some background questions (e.g. when did you move to Canada, did you move here with your family, etc.) before moving onto the core questions that addressed specific themes as they related to my research topic (see Appendix A for the entire list of questions).

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data according to Carol Rivas (2012) who suggests using qualitative thematic analysis as a way of looking at data collected through ethnographic research (p. 367). Qualitative thematic analysis involves looking across the data set rather than within just one case and allows the researcher to focus on “what a phenomenon, event or social interaction ‘looks like’ to the individuals of interest (their lived experience)” (p. 367). Before I started to identify themes with the help of a coding scheme, it was important for me to think about theoretical sensitivity (Rivas, 2012, p. 368). Based on my professional background and extensive reading on the topic, there was a danger that some themes may develop before I started my analysis and therefore, I needed to be sensitive to concepts, meanings, and relationships within the data (Rivas, 2012, p. 368). In other words, I needed to keep an open mind at the stage of data collection and not frame my findings around any theories or models until later in the research process when I started interpreting my data.

Once I completed all my interviews, I transcribed the key points and familiarized myself with the data by reading and re-reading the interviews several times. When I was ready to code, I aimed to write down a word or phrase that described the data as it made sense to me without involving any interpretation at this point (Rivas, 2012, pp. 370-371). With the help of coding, I started to recognize themes that emerged from the participants’ stories and pieced them together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience (Aronso, 1994). I believe an

important outcome of qualitative data analysis is to identify themes similar to Krauss (2005) who says, “developing themes and storylines featuring the words and experiences of participants themselves...adds richness to the findings and their meaning” (p. 767). Although I followed this step-by-step process, the data collected was ‘far from raw’ (Crang & Cook, 2007) because I had already made sense of it by continuously refocusing my research aims and questions, by choosing individuals to be involved in my study, and by noting down my reflections in my research journal.

Results

As a researcher conducting ethnographic research, I was not looking to establish trends or seek out generalizations of the public, but instead to induce themes based on the collective experience of those participants I interviewed. Each individual participant shared their unique stories and although there were several themes that emerged, the following were the most common based on the participants’ lived experiences.

Employer Sponsored Initiatives

New employee orientation and training. When asked whether their company provided any type of new employee orientation and training, 11 of the participants talked about their experience in more detail. Many of them said the orientation and training covered a variety of topics including an introduction to the organization, an explanation of the company’s code of conduct, core values, methods of assessment, overview of the various departments, and a description of the job itself. One participant described her experience:

...first of all it’s a whole day orientation introduc[ing] about the firm, about IT issues and other general questions that you may have...then...these first two weeks we don’t have a lot of work because we are new, so we are doing a lot of e-learning stuff... about your compensation. How will you be assessed at the end of the year. All kinds of e-learning stuff just to introduce about the company, introduce to you about the culture, and your job description, and how you can be successful in the firm

(Tax Analyst)

Another participant talked about his orientation and training:

...the company is very detailed, so I knew from the first day what they were expecting of me, what I should be expecting from them, their values, everything. It was a lot of reading, a lot of paper work, a lot of things that I have to sign and I was very happy with that and even after that one day orientation, I had seven weeks of training...only after the seven weeks, then only I could be in charge of things in the store. To me that was very impressive

(Operations Manager)

Only 2 of the participants mentioned that there was no formal orientation or training and when I asked what employers could do to help their immigrant workforce adapt, one of these participants responded,

I [had] very minimal training...I had to go into the role up and running even if I didn't know the system. Initiatives like maybe you have somebody... who could have helped you, helped me understand the process, understand my functions...understand better...

(Office Administrator)

Based on the experiences' of the participants, the new employee orientation and training lasted anywhere from one day to several weeks and consisted of classroom training, online webinars or a combination of both.

Canadian workplace culture and diversity training. 6 of the participants mentioned that the new employee orientation also included training on the Canadian workplace culture. One participant described his training:

One of the things that comes out very clear throughout the bank is that it's a Canadian workplace, it's based on Canadian values...it is meant to assist people from different cultural backgrounds and understanding what the bank stands for...it is always very clear that this is the way we do it in Canada

(Regulatory Affairs Manager)

Another participant said,

...they did make me attend seminars on workplace culture...and they also had another seminar on violence at the workplace. They make you attend those...it's put into your to do list, you have to attend these trainings to discuss the work culture

(Office Administrator)

While some participants mentioned that the training was just for the new immigrants, others said it was mandatory for all new employees in the form of diversity training. One participant explained,

Within the first two months of being hired, you then have to go through formal online training on everything including diversity and inclusion, anti-money laundering, global sanctions, some HR stuff. There are six or seven standard training that you must do in the first two months of being hired and then you do it annually after that

(Regulatory Affairs Manager)

Another participant described a similar experience:

...as a new [employee] they have a few new courses you need to take, some of them online, being workplace culture and everything. Irrespective of where you come from, if you join the company, you need to do these two courses. It's all about culture and safety and health and background of the company

(Senior Operations Accountant)

I continued to ask the same participant how beneficial he thought the courses were, specifically for someone with no Canadian work experience. His response was:

I think they were very informative...even though it might be something very standard as a person you might feel yeah I know this, but it's good that they do it because it refreshes your memory and then you are more inclined to keep those things in mind. So it was more general in terms of how you handle people at the workplace, equal standards, no discrimination. They did talk about culture and people...and all that stuff in that course, so that was quit interesting

(Senior Operations Accountant)

For some of the participants, the training also included a discussion around the benefits of having a diverse workforce. One participant explained, "I think diversity is one of the four key words for our company. They really want to focus on that, so during the e-learning section about diversity, they introduced how beneficial it is for both the employer and employee" (Tax Analyst). I asked whether she found the training helpful and she responded,

Yeah, very helpful...[they] teach you how to accept different cultures and different opinions. Open your mind, don't be isolated and what are the actions that are not acceptable at work...from my point of view, I think it's good because I feel accepted in this firm...

(Tax Analyst)

Another participant said that his diversity training included a presentation on the contributions that immigrants make:

Our company, we believe in diversity, that is one of our values. The people that they hire, a lot of different backgrounds and they open up about Canada what it is like. We thought Vancouver was diverse, but when they told us about the numbers in Toronto that was more of mind opening. I haven't been there, but the numbers that they gave us, especially how much the immigrants, the non Canadian born, how much they help with the GDP, that is very substantial

(Operations Manager)

Based on the comprehensive training provided to staff as well as the emphasis placed on the benefits of having a multicultural workforce, these participants were confident that diversity was one of their company's core values.

Buddy systems. In relation to new employee orientation and training, participants discussed how their companies have an official buddy system. One participant explained,

Every new person will be assigned to a buddy, you can talk to her or him about your personal life, about your career goal, about how you adapt to the work. My buddy is a girl and she can answer all the questions you have about the firm

(Tax Analyst)

She continued to explain how the buddy system was beneficial:

Because during the first week, you don't know anything, even how to operate the printer, so I can go to [my buddy] for very small issues like how to use the printer and she is very patient. I think it's a very good program for every firm to adopt

(Tax Analyst)

Another participant talked about the relationship with his buddy:

...it got very personal to the point of saying 'I think you should wear this coat'...for me, even though I travelled, and my family has travelled, we never had to live for an extended period in a cold environment so of course we don't have a wardrobe... If you don't have people around you to support you through that, then it becomes very difficult even though the work is very easy

(Regulatory Affairs Manager)

Although the buddies were there to answer work related questions, they acted primarily as cultural informants helping the immigrant employees learn about life in Canada. Some of the participants even mentioned that their buddies continue to be a valuable resource even after the initial training and that their relationships have grown into personal friendships.

Affinity groups. A few of the participants mentioned that their companies have affinity groups, which include members of the same cultural group who share their experiences, their

successes, and their challenges of living and working in a new culture. One participant said it was an initiative implemented by his company while other participants said it was more of an unofficial group not sponsored by the company, but formed by the employees:

In the company, there is an organization of our nationality...I was invited to join and...we were around 25 that got together for Christmas dinner, but it's not sponsored by the company, it's sponsored by the ones who have been in the company long enough
(Office Administrator)

I continued to ask how the group supported her and the participant said,

They told me 'oh did you know what the company offers in terms of benefits.' Since I was new I wasn't aware of it. So they said 'oh, you know that there are health programs that you could sign up for...'
(Office Administrator)

When asked specifically what employers could do to help their immigrant workforce adapt, one participant alluded to having an affinity group:

I think there should be a program specific designed for us immigrants because we have our own issues...I heard the [partner company] in the US they have very specific associations within the firm like Chinese group...but here in Canada I don't think there is such kind of stuff I can join. I really hope they might have this in the future
(Tax Analyst)

Mentorship programs. 5 of the participants mentioned that their companies have official

mentorship programs and explained how the mentors assisted them with training and answered questions related directly to work. One participant described his experience when he first started:

So throughout my seven weeks, I am not allowed to be alone, so I'll be with somebody and then they will tell me their tasks and what there're doing and why. After the seven weeks, I felt very comfortable and when I was out there alone, I know what I have to do. And to do it in seven weeks that makes me feel really easy. For the associates, we do the same thing as well. We will ask that person to be following another coworker, so that coworker becomes their mentor. So everywhere that person goes, they will be together...
(Operations Manager)

In some cases, the mentor also acted as a cultural informant, similar to the buddy system described above. For example, one participant explained that her conversations with her mentor are not always "about the work, it's about the way you say it and also the gestures you make, it's about everything. I get to know about the western culture better through the communication with

him” (Tax Analyst). Some of the participants, who weren’t matched with a formal mentor, said their colleagues acted as unofficial mentors, especially during their first months of training.

Social events. The participants talked about their companies hosting social events including holiday parties, potlucks, social hours, sporting events, and fundraisers for the community. These events are typically organized for all employees, but the participants found them to be particularly helpful when learning about Canadian workplace culture. One participant described social hour at his workplace:

...every Friday at 4:30 in the afternoon, we have it our lunchroom. You socialize with the rest of the company staff...I think these social hours that they are doing is a good exercise for immigrants to mingle with the new environment, new culture

(Computer Aided Design and Drafting Technologist)

Another participant talked about how his company sponsored a sports day and explained,

I personally learned lots of things on that sport day...about Canadian culture. The place I come from, it’s not that common for coworkers to come that close together. I hadn’t experienced the same thing since till that day that I saw everybody was just having fun. It doesn’t matter if you are a manager or a cleaning lady. Everybody was just talking and having fun together. [I learned] the way colleagues are treated at an unofficial place

(Application Release Analyst)

For some, the socializing also took place ‘by the water cooler’ or after hours giving the

immigrant employees more opportunities to socialize and engage in conversations with their colleagues.

Professional development. Many employers offer professional development courses for staff including leadership training, conflict resolution, team building, and technical skills training. These courses are particularly important for immigrants to improve their communication skills and to gain Canadian academic credentials. 7 of the participants informed me that their employer offers internal training for staff or covers the cost for taking external courses. A participant who has been working for his current employer for over 6 years explained,

...I have never attended so much trainings and pro-d...info sessions, seminars, online, in person, in class. Cross-cultural communication skills training, counseling methodology...customer service, monitoring and evaluation. When I was looking at the

list, I have attended first five years over two hundred pro-d activities. That's what...forty a year. I have never done that in my previous employment

(Settlement Worker in Schools)

Another participant with a similar experience said,

They have internal training, where they have leadership skills and workshops where you can register and that's all free. They have a full team that does these workshops....the internal training they have very good courses I have seen... And they have it for different levels for staff...as a manager you would do these courses...leadership, or conflict, or conflict assessment, or team management

(Senior Operations Accountant)

While most participants took advantage of the professional development courses, others hoped that their employer would offer training specifically for immigrants:

They have their own toastmaster club, but it's for everyone, not [only] for immigrants. I went there once and I got a little intimidated...we are at a lower level in terms of language skills...I think they can maybe have two separate groups for toastmasters club, so we have more chance to participate

(Tax Analyst)

Professional designation/licensure. Most regulated professions require a professional designation or licensure, which includes filling out a lengthy application form, taking courses, and passing several exams. Some of the participants explained how their employers provided information and guidance on the credentialing process, acted as references, and helped cover the cost of the courses and exams. When asked how the company helped him to obtain his certification as a technologist, one participant said,

In getting a technologist certificate, you have to have four references, professional references. So three of them I was able to get from my company now and one was from the Middle East. When I tried to call [the references], they were so supportive. Even my Supervisor, was the one who helped me on what requirements are best to submit

(Computer Aided Design and Drafting Technologist)

Another participant said that her employer is covering the cost of the courses that she is currently taking in order to become a Chartered General Accountant (CGA):

...they reimburse if I pass....everything...I know that 10 years ago my company didn't support that because for a very long time they don't have any new employees. Some [new] employee came here and asked whether they can reimburse or not and they are aware of the importance of that, so they decide to do that. CGA is very expensive, \$2000 per course, so it is really important to support me

(Intermediate Accountant)

One of the participants gave an example of a friend who didn't have this type of support from his employer and talked about the potential consequences:

He was not supported to go through the [credentialing] process, so I could see the consequences that the employee got very depressed and was always thinking of jumping the boat...[if] it was true that he left, then it would definitely be the loss to the company
(Thermal Engineer)

Leadership

While organizations may implement immigrant friendly practices, participants explained that it is critical that management including directors, managers, and supervisors support these initiatives. Only when there is support from someone in a leadership role, did many of the participants feel that this would set the tone for other managers and staff. One participant, who worked for a number of different employers since arriving in Canada 19 years ago, said,

If the board and top management [are] not enlightened, [are] not encouraging, nothing below that will happen. They should accept immigrants, they should accept diversity...it's the value of having people from different cultures to contribute, to add colour and vibrancy to the environment. It starts at the very top. No other way...if the top doesn't make any move, nothing will happen
(Settlement Worker in Schools)

Another participant gave an example of how top management in his company support diversity:

The diversity [training] was conducted by our District Manager and she has her team. I know she flew to Alberta and does her diversity training there as well. So she is the diversity champion for the western region...and yeah, I believe it trickles down
(Operations Manager)

Other participants mentioned how they were able to take courses in professional development and improve their skills because of the direct support from leadership. One participant said,

It was a one-week seminar about Project Management and my Project Director personally endorsed me to participate in [this] training and [I am] so happy that I learned a lot about Project Management
(Computer Aided Design and Drafting Technologist)

The same participant continued to reflect on his current workplace and explained,

Employers must support the new immigrants in order for them to succeed, especially in their first years here and based on my experience, a lot of support from your Supervisor

especially. They must not hinder them in participating in any social or technical exercises that they are doing. Must be open and welcome you as you are, as an immigrant. And that's what I have experienced in my company. They were so supportive...

(Computer Aided Design and Drafting Technologist)

In contrast, one participant told me that he doesn't feel very supported by either his colleagues or manager. Although he has the skills and expertise to do his job well, he often lacks motivation to make any valuable contribution. He said, "sometimes if you are not [happy], [it] doesn't motivate you...why would I share and they would get the credit and not me" (Bank Teller). The majority of the participants agreed that in order for organizations to leverage the talent of their international workforce, it would require engagement and support from management.

Adaptation and Adaptation Responsibility

I asked the participants what adaptation meant to them and many of them said maintaining the best of both worlds or in other words retaining aspects of your cultural identity, but also learning the cultural practices of your new host culture. One participant explained,

I know someone told me if you come to Canada don't be an Indian in Canada, be a Canadian in Canada. You need to be part of the society because you need to gel with the society over here otherwise you will not have probably the best of what the society has to offer...I am not saying discard whatever your core values are or whatever your parents have taught you and brought you up with. But you should also learn to adapt to the society that is around you

(Senior Operations Accountant)

Another participant echoed similar sentiments and said,

...I say retain the best of our culture and then learn Canadian culture and values etc. Choose what can fit into your own culture, your values etc. that will help you reach your goals and objectives. Choose those that will work for you...and use them in the best way you can.

(Settlement Worker in Schools)

Most of the participants also felt that part of the learning process meant shedding some of their learned behaviour and cultural values based on the fact that they may no longer 'fit' with the behaviour and values of their new host culture. One participant said,

...when I first came here, people as usual always talked about Canadian work experience and then very quickly I started to say to people 'it's not really about Canadian work experience, it's a fit.' Let's start with your wardrobe, let's start with your eating habits,

your lunch habits, your volume and your tone...if you don't fit into the way things flow in the workplace, then you are going to stand out in a negative way. So it's not so much about being able to say I worked 3 years with a Canadian company, it's being able to say I am familiar with the way Canadians work and I can fit into that

(Regulatory Affairs Manager)

One participant gave an example of how she adapted her behaviour since moving to Canada:

I am not sure whether you are aware of that, but we Chinese like to speak loudly. When I talk to people here, they talk in a low volume, I cannot hear, so it is a communication handicap. When I was aware of that I said maybe I should not talk that loudly. That is one way that I try to change to adapt to the local culture

(Intermediate Accountant)

I continued to ask the participants whose responsibility it was to facilitate the adaption process,

the immigrants, the employers, or both? The majority of the participants said it was the

immigrants' responsibility:

At the end of the day, things will never be done in Canada the way they are done in Romanian because they are completely different cultures. So it is up to me to understand that I have made the decision to move to Canada and I need to live in Canada like I am living in Canada and not like I am living in Romania. So for that I need to step up and make Canadian friends. I need to step up and accept the Canadian culture as the country that has opened the doors...so I am going to put more responsibility on the [immigrant] employee than on the employer

(ESL Teacher)

Another participant explained that it all comes to attitude and wanting to make a change:

First you have to be self- motivated because you are brand new here, you need to learn, listening more to adapt to the new environment. You need to learn from others, to see what others are doing. You need to ask questions...because they hire you, you need to take initiative to adapt to the company culture...every company has a very different culture and you need to adapt yourself into the culture. So the attitude is really important. If you think that is what you should do and you don't think that is discrimination, then it would be better for you

(Intermediate Accountant)

Discussion

When I initially reached out to my research subjects, I was pleasantly surprised by their willingness to participate in my study and share their experiences at the workplace. In the end, 14 out of the 15 participants gave at least one example of an initiative they believe helped them adapt to the Canadian workplace culture. Many of them gave 2 or 3 examples. Below is a detailed

discussion of these examples supported by both theory and research on managing workplace diversity.

Employer Sponsored Initiatives

Many of the participants explained how they completed new employee orientation and training. According to Laroche and Rutherford (2007), providing new employee orientation can help the new immigrant feel settled and provide a source of valuable support and direction in the early stages of their employment, especially when the new immigrant is coming from a culture where they are used to more interaction with coworkers; being left alone without any introduction to staff and not knowing who to ask can leave the new immigrant feeling demoralized and wondering whether something is wrong with them or the company (pp. 86-87). The participants who went through the new employee orientation and training found it to be very helpful when learning the company's core values, organizational structure, health and safety procedures, job expectations, and knowing who to go to with certain questions.

In addition to the more common topics covered at orientation, the results of my study highlight the importance of also including training on the Canadian workplace culture. New employees are always keen to learn and be productive immediately, but new immigrants have more than just the duties and responsibilities of the job to learn; they often need to learn about the professional workplace practices and behaviours, especially if they are new to Canada and were trained in a different business culture. Certain behaviours are rooted in culture and according to Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, and Mallett (2005) some of the most commonly misunderstood cultural behaviours include personal space, verbal and non-verbal communication, perception of time, workplace values and norms, and what constitutes as teamwork. While employers shouldn't be 'hand holding,' they need to recognize that because of cultural differences, new immigrants

have different training and integration needs than their Canadian born colleagues (Kukushkin & Watt, 2009).

For example, most Canadians prefer an equal power distribution within a company and encourage employees to show initiative and voice their opinions (Hofstede, 2009; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). However, some new immigrants who are used to a more hierarchical structure with a defined power relationship between boss and employee might expect to be told what to do and often behave submissively towards their manager because they are either afraid or unwilling to disagree. They might also prefer a more autocratic or paternalistic manager who will make decisions on their behalf (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994, p. 236). These cultural differences affect workplace behaviour and colleagues and managers might construe their behaviour as lack of competence, skills, or inability to do the job (Chen, 2008, p. 425).

The lack of knowledge around these vocational cultural norms places the internationally trained professionals at a disadvantage in comparison to their Canadian born colleagues and could possibly jeopardize their employment (Girard & Bauder, 2007). Kukushkin and Watt (2009) explain that for many employers, the Canadian work experience requirement is less about the formal qualifications and more about having sufficient knowledge of Canadian workplace practices. To help the immigrant employees learn corporate norms of behaviour, research suggests that employers provide training focusing on cultural values and behaviours (Laroche & Rutherford, 2007). The training should be a key component of the new employee orientation and outline what the immigrant employees can do to fit into the organization's culture and what they can expect from the organization (Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, & Mallett, 2005). Many of the participants said the training on Canadian workplace culture was included during their new employee orientation and was either instructor led or delivered through online webinars.

Those participants who went through the training had the opportunity to learn vocational norms demonstrating what Kim (2002) refers to as acculturation or the process by which all individuals entering a new culture experience some form of new cultural learning and acquisition of native cultural practices (p. 261). For the participants, the learning process didn't only entail adding new cultural elements, but instead "deculturation (or unlearning) of some of the old cultural habits...at least in the sense that new responses are adopted in situations that previously would have evoked old ones" (Kim, 2002, p. 261). For example, one participant said that she used to be afraid to communicate with the partners who are high-level management because in China you have to first communicate with your supervisor and then go to the next level; but she quickly learned that in Canada she can go directly to the partners with concerns and questions (Tax Analyst). Other participants gave similar examples of how they had to adjust some of their learned cultural behaviour in order to adapt to the behavioural norms typical of the workplace culture.

While immigrant employees are willing to learn the vocational norms and adapt to their new host culture, employers looking to benefit from a diverse workforce should be prepared to change as well (Laroche & Rutherford, 2007; Kukushkin and Watt, 2009). Research suggests that employers should implement diversity training not only for the new immigrant employees, but also for the entire staff including managers and team leads (Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, & Mallett, 2005; Bennett J.M. & Bennett M. J., 2001; Cox, 2001; Zakaria, 2000). Diversity training draws on comparisons between different cultural groups, which helps to increase participants' self-awareness and gives employees the tools to better understand other cultures, avoid stereotyping, and ensure respect for the multilayered cultural identities represented within the organization (Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, & Mallett, 2005). The training might include a discussion on intercultural theory as well as interactive exercises such as small group discussions,

role playing, case analyses, and watching video clips or short films on diversity (Cox, 2001), which can help employees gain a better understanding of the nature of culture and how it influences behaviour and communication styles (Patrick & Kumar, 2012). It is important, especially for managers to be mindful of an employee's cultural orientation and suspend any type of judgment or ethnocentric biases (van Ginkel, 2004, p. 482). The goal should not be to impose the *Canadian standard*, but instead increase the cultural literacy of its employees so that they can begin to understand and appreciate their own culture, and that of their co-workers (Kukushkin & Watt, 2009, p. 34). Those participants who had diversity training said they thought it was beneficial because it taught them to accept people from different cultures. While most participants said it was included in their new employee orientation and mandatory for all employees, one participant even said his organization provides the training annually.

Diversity training can also be beneficial for promoting a positive attitude towards diversity in the workplace. There are many advantages of having a culturally diverse team over a culturally homogeneous team including different perspectives and approaches to solving problems, enhancing creativity and innovation, and expanding global business opportunities (Laroche, 2003; Matveev and Nelson, 2004; Cox 2001). By educating employees on how a diverse workforce can contribute to the organization's overall success will help create a more inclusive work environment that respects and encourages cultural and other forms of diversity (Kukushkin & Watt, 2009; Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, & Mallett, 2005). It can also help reduce any resistance that some employees might have in participating in immigrant friendly initiatives (Cox, 2001). Unfortunately, any resistance from employees including not wanting to participate in diversity training (Laroche & Rutherford, 2007) can lead to many initiatives failing and not providing the intended benefits to the company. Some of the participants gave examples of how the benefits of having a diverse workforce were introduced during their diversity training.

They said learning about the contributions that immigrants make helped them feel accepted and confident that diversity was one of their company's core values.

In addition to new employee orientation and training, some of the participants were matched with a workplace buddy or mentor who volunteered their time to provide job-related training as well as information on workplace culture. These participants had the opportunity to engage in interpersonal communication activities, which according to Kim (1988, 2001) plays a significant role in the cross-cultural adaptation process. Interpersonal communication activities involve interaction and engagement with members of the host culture allowing the newcomer to secure information and gain insight into the mindsets and behaviours of the local people (Kim, 2001). Moreover, these direct interpersonal engagements are the most effective way for newcomers to receive instant feedback on their communication behaviour, which is essential for adaptive change over time (Kim 2004, Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2012). The participants mentioned that although they became familiar with a broad range of vocational and cultural norms through their training seminars, having a mentor or buddy offered them a better opportunity to check and validate their own behaviour at the workplace. In other words, "they learn not only what to do, but also how they are doing" (Kim, 2001, p. 123). Many of the participants informed me that they continue to have fruitful relationships with their buddies or mentors even after their initial orientation and training.

Similar to the experiences of the participants, Kukushkin and Watt (2009) explain that mentoring can either be formal with a training plan and scheduled activities or it can be an informal relationship between the new hire and a more senior staff member. Furthermore, the buddy or mentor usually takes over where the new employee orientation left off and ideally, not necessarily, the person is from the same culture as the new immigrant in order to share similar challenges he or she experienced when first starting with the company (Laroche & Rutherford,

2007, p. 95). Other research highlights the benefits of matching the new immigrant with a mentor who is from the cultural majority group (Cox, 2001) because the mentors have a chance to learn about the experiences, challenges, and barriers faced by the immigrant employees. A case study on the Diversity Mentoring Partnership Program launched by The Ontario Public Service concluded that the program offered mentors a chance to learn about the experiences of staff who may be different from them as well as share their insights and strategies to help their mentees better navigate the Canadian workplace and how to succeed in the organization (Wilson, 2013, p. 77). An increasing number of companies are implementing mentorship programs or buddy systems based on the multilayered benefits, but also because they are more cost effective since the mentors and buddies are volunteers from within the company versus diversity training, which is often facilitated by external trainers.

Another popular way in which organizations are supporting their immigrant employees is through the creation of affinity groups (Kukushkin & Watt, 2009). The organization can either support the group by providing funding and allowing the employees to participate on company time or the groups are entirely employee driven meaning the organization doesn't invest any money, resources, or spend any time creating the group (Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, & Mallett, 2005). The majority of the participants, who were members of an affinity group, said it was employee driven and explained that the group was primarily there to offer them support with settlement issues. However, research suggests that these groups can also increase cultural awareness within the organization by hosting events (e.g. cultural celebrations, international potlucks, lunch and learns) that are open to all employees (Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, & Mallett, 2005). According to Douglas (2008), some affinity groups even create professional development programs together with Human Resources to address specific issues that their particular group encounters. Furthermore, affinity groups sometimes include senior level

employees who share their experiences with junior level employees encouraging them to think about their career development within the company (Laroche & Rutherford, 2007; Kukushkin & Watt, 2009).

In addition to supporting affinity groups, many of the participants said their companies sponsored social events including holiday parties, potlucks, social hours, sporting events, and fundraisers for the community. Although the events are designed to give the entire company a chance to socialize, the participants found them to be particularly helpful because it gave them a chance to learn about Canadian culture. These experiences support Kim's (2001) notion of host communication competence and the idea that social interactions contribute to a newcomer's understanding of communication codes both verbal and non-verbal allowing them to gain a better understanding of peoples' behaviours, events, and issues occurring in their new host culture. Some of the socializing also took place 'by the water cooler' or after hours giving the immigrant employees further opportunities to engage with members of the host culture, which results in a stronger adaptive function than communication experiences with little or no relational engagement (Kim, 2004, Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2012). While these social interactions give newcomers the opportunity to learn the culturally accepted concepts and attitudes, the employers must do their best to respect and preserve the newcomers' personal and cultural identities; therefore, the goal should be to add new knowledge to the social skills already acquired in their home countries. It is a fine balance that needs to be struck and by facilitating the line of communication one can help newcomers overcome feelings of defeat and frustration, which often arise when living in a new culture.

Other than sponsoring social events, some of the participants gave examples of how their employers also supported their professional development by either providing internal courses or offering to pay for external courses. The courses included technical skills training, but also 'soft

skills' training such as conflict resolution, management, team building, presentation, and leadership skills. Canadian employers require that their employees have well-developed 'soft skills' (Girard & Bauder, 2007), which often means that the immigrant employees need to re-develop their soft skills because they are based on the standards from back in their home country. For example, an immigrant employee may have a different understanding for providing constructive feedback and their way is considered too direct compared to North American standards (Laroche & Rutherford, 2007, p. 263). While some participants had the opportunity to take advantage of professional development courses, others explained that it was on their wish list for employers to provide targeted training including running an internal toastmasters club specifically for immigrants to improve communication and public speaking skills.

The suggestion for communication classes indicates that language skills continue to be a barrier for immigrants when applying for better, higher level positions within their company. One participant, who used to be a manager back in his home country, said that he doesn't have enough confidence speaking English and therefore, wouldn't apply for a managerial position because he would have to work with clients (Developer). This supports Kim's (2001) belief that host language competence is integral, especially for long time settlers such as immigrants, because it serves "as the primary instrument in promoting...social power and credibility [and] allows access to many of the benefits that native speakers enjoy" (p. 230). Immigrant professionals can have ample education and experience in their area of expertise, but limited language proficiency can negatively impact their productivity and their ability to showcase their skills in the workplace (Chen, 2008, p. 424). In an effort to help their immigrant employees improve their language skills (e.g. occupation or sector specific language), employers are starting to provide these services in house or partnering with external training providers. Research suggests that hiring

instructors and offering customized English language training increases employee morale and improves manager-employee relations (Kukushkin & Watt, 2009, p. 31).

Leadership

In order to implement the immigrant friendly strategies and programs mentioned above, organizations need leaders who are committed to promoting diversity in the workplace as highlighted by various research studies. Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, & Mallett (2005) found that those in a leadership position (e.g. executives, managers, supervisors, team leads) can build organizational support and commitment to workplace diversity by promoting and participating in diversity-related initiatives. One participant explained that his District Manager is the ‘diversity champion’ who facilitated the diversity training as well as communicated to the staff the benefits of having a diverse workforce. Other participants said that top management are in a unique position to lead by example ensuring that immigrant friendly practices become part of the corporate strategy. Wilson (2013), who visited several organizations over the past 20 years, said, “if the leadership isn’t practicing behavior that leads to an equitable and inclusive environment, then you can bet no one else will” (p. 74). He goes on to suggest that one way of focusing on diversity efforts at the leadership level would be to assess the diversity knowledge and behaviour of top management. Depending on the type of assessment, the results would indicate the individual’s level of cultural competency and perhaps challenge that person’s perception of his or her own cultural awareness (Wilson, 2013, p. 169).

Further to the importance of needing engagement and support from top management, some of the participants discussed how their managers encouraged them to obtain their professional designation or licensure, which continues to be the biggest barrier, especially for those working in regulated professions (e.g. engineers, nurses, architects, etc.). By developing their skills through training and gaining Canadian academic credentials, immigrant employees

can increase their chances of moving up the organizational hierarchy. Research indicates that professional development and retention (Patrick and Kumar, 2012) are closely linked meaning that employees tend to leave if they do not see any opportunities for professional growth (Kukushkin & Watt, 2009). This becomes particularly relevant for new immigrants who feel like they are at a disadvantage compared to their Canadian colleagues when it comes to promotion (Laroche & Rutherford, 2007). Therefore, leaders play a critical role because they ultimately decide who receives training and who gets promoted. Organizations who want to stay competitive in a global economy need their top management to recognize that by supporting their immigrant employees in achieving their goals and objectives, it can positively impact their organization's bottom line including increasing productivity and employee retention (Baklid, Cowan, MacBride-King, & Mallett, 2005). Those participants who talked about receiving support and encouragement from their managers also said they see career development and advancement opportunities at their current workplace.

Adaptation and Adaptation Responsibility

The majority of the participants explained that since they are now living in Canada, it was their responsibility to adapt to the workplace culture. They also recognized the necessity of being open to new experiences and new learning that might change them. This underlines Kim's (2004) notion that newcomers, not the local people, are the ones expected to "make most of the necessary adaptive self-corrections" (p. 350). When newcomers understand that change is part of living and working in a new environment, it not only equips them with a sense of personal responsibility, but also a determination for new learning (Kim, 2004). In contrast, resistance to change, not engaging in new learning opportunities, and glorifying 'the old ways' can negatively impact the newcomer's successful functioning in their new host culture (Kim, 2001, p. 226). Many of the participants said as a newcomer you have to be receptive to new learning, be self-

motivated to engage in communication activities, and ask plenty of questions in order to learn the culture specific norms and adapt to the Canadian workplace.

Although adaptation might mean that the newcomer is going through a process of personal transformation (Kim, 2004), the willingness to change does not mean they are giving up their cultural identity. When the participants were asked to define adaptation, the majority said making cultural adjustments to adapt to the Canadian workplace, but also retaining those cultural values that helped shaped their identity. In other words, taking ‘the best of both worlds.’ This reinforces Kim’s (2004) belief that the “simultaneous interplay of new learning (acculturation) and loss of some old habits (deculturation)” does not require the newcomer to necessarily choose between maintaining their cultural identity and adapting to a new one (p. 350). Although Kim (2004) doesn’t apply this principle specifically to the workplace, the examples given by some of the participants on how they adapted their communication styles and behaviours to the Canadian workplace demonstrates that the process of adaptation can certainly be applied to all facets of a newcomer’s life.

Conclusion

The objective of this ethnographic research study was to examine the strategies that employers located in British Columbia are adopting in order for their immigrant workforce to adapt. After conducting interviews with 15 immigrant employees, the study provided new knowledge on the types of immigrant friendly practices that employers are implementing and helped gain a better understanding of how the immigrant employees perceive these strategies in relation to adapting to the Canadian workplace culture. The most common initiatives or programs included new employee orientation and training, diversity training, mentorship programs, buddy systems, affinity groups, assistance with obtaining professional designation or licensure, and social events. Participants also mentioned the importance of having someone in a leadership or

top management position supporting the initiatives and programs. Since much of the research predicts that there will be an influx of immigrants coming to Canada with the hope that newcomers will fill the gap in Canada's predicted skill shortage, the goal of this study was to highlight the necessity of change on the employers' end to build more inclusive workplaces that will largely be comprised of immigrants.

In addition to obtaining new knowledge on the different initiatives or programs, the findings also demonstrated that the size of the company should not be a determining factor whether an organization implements immigrant friendly practices. Cost and resources are a concern for many organization, especially small to medium sized firms; however, as concluded in this study, some immigrant friendly practices such as the buddy system, mentorship program, or affinity groups do not cost the organization much money because they are using internal staff to help run the programs. Other initiatives such as diversity or language training are more common in larger organizations because they often hire dedicated diversity professionals or external trainers to run the programs (Kukushkin & Watt, 2009). Although there can be minimal investment and long-term benefits, the study raises questions why some Canadian companies are not doing enough to implement immigrant friendly practices that will assist their immigrant employees adapt.

Research indicates that many organizations continue to view the existence of diversity simply in terms of legal compliance and human rights protection (Cox, 2001, p.4), but it actually involves an organizational change that includes the implementation of immigrant friendly practices. As this study highlighted, the onus is not just on the immigrant to adapt, but also on the employer. Creating a positive environment in which individual differences can be explored and moving beyond simple tolerance to celebrating diversity can result in newcomers reaching their potential and making valuable contributions to the organizations strategic goals and objectives

(Patrick & Kumar, 2012). In Kim's (1988) cross-cultural adaptation theory, she questions whether the host culture experiences a change as significant as the newcomer. She says, "the dominant culture of the host society controls the life activities of individual immigrants and sojourners, which necessitates the adaptation of the individuals, not vice versa" (Kim, 1988, p. 37). However, when looking at the increase in culturally diverse employees, I believe employers need to take on a more active role in meeting the needs of all the various groups working in an increasingly multicultural organization. Cox (2001), who specializes in organizational change and working with culturally diverse workplaces, says, "the challenge of diversity is not simply to have it, but to create conditions in which its potential to be a performance barrier is minimized and its potential to enhance performance is maximized" (pp. 15-16). Therefore, the goal of this study was to emphasize the important role that Canadian employers play as their workforce becomes increasingly diverse and act as a guide for those looking to facilitate the adaptation process of their immigrant employees.

Limitations and Future Research

As I reflect on the entire research process, I realize there are several limitations to my study; however, some of the limitations could be indicative of future research opportunities. Firstly, looking back at my criteria for selecting research subjects, I should have interviewed only those participants who had a minimum of 1-year experience working with their current employer. Although the majority of the participants worked anywhere between 1 – 3 years, approximately 30% worked for their company for less than one year. It is possible that those participants were not aware of the immigrant friendly strategies that exist in their organizations impacting the results of my study. Secondly, I only interviewed participants who worked for employers in the Lower Mainland. In most remote areas, there are fewer immigrant supports such as immigrant serving agencies and language programs; therefore, an area of future research could be to look at

the types of immigrant friendly strategies that employers in rural British Columbia are implementing.

Another limitation is not taking into the account the industry and seeing whether there are any commonalities across industries in regards to the immigrant friendly practices being implemented. Future research could address this issue by looking at a specific industry like Information Technology, Finance, or the Mining industry, which are currently hiring a large number of immigrants. One final limitation that should be noted is that because of the small sample size, the results of the study are not generalizable to all immigrant populations currently working for Canadian employers, but instead these were the experiences of the participants in the study.

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Appendix A

Participant Demographics

Sex	Place of Origin	Profession	Number of years living in Canada	Number of years working for current employer
Male	Philippines	Account Executive	3 years	2 years and 5 months
Male	Taiwan	Thermal Engineer	4 years	8 months
Female	Philippines	QA Analyst	3 years and 6 months	2 years
Male	India	Senior Operations Accountant	1 year and 2 months	10 months
Male	Philippines	Computer Aided Design and Drafting Technologist	3 years and 2 months	2 years and 5 months
Male	Romania	ESL Instructor	3 years and 2 months	2 years and 4 months
Male	Philippines	Bank Teller	4 years and 3 months	2 years
Male	Philippines	Settlement Worker in Schools	19 years	6 years
Female	Philippines	Office Administrator	5 years and 6 months	1 year and 8 months
Male	Indonesia	Operations Manager	1 year and 4 months	1 year
Male	China	Developer	4 years	3 years
Male	Iran	Applications Release Analyst	1 year and 7 months	7 months
Female	China	Tax Analyst	3 years	9 months
Male	Trinidad and Tobago	Regulatory Affairs Manager	5 years	2 years
Female	China	Intermediate Accountant	1 year and 3 months	1 year

Appendix B

Interview Questionnaire

Research Subject Number: _____ **Date:** _____

Study Name: Employer-sponsored programs facilitating cross-cultural adaptation from the immigrants' perspective.

Researcher: Stefanie Neth, Royal Roads University

Background Information:

1. Where are you from originally?
2. How long have you been living in Canada?
3. Did you move here with your family?
4. Why did you (and your family) decide to move to Canada?

Workplace:

1. What is your current job title?
2. How long have you been working for your current employer?
3. Is this the first employer you have worked for since arriving in Canada? If no, how many other employers have you been employed with since being in Canada?
4. Can you tell me a little about your interview experience? Were there behavioural questions or just technical questions asked during the interview?
5. How many employees does your current workplace have? How many of those are immigrants?
6. Have you ever experienced a situation in which a misunderstanding occurred because of certain cultural differences between you and your colleagues?
7. Have you experienced discrimination in the workplace because you are an immigrant?
8. Have you ever felt pressured to give up aspects of your own culture in order to fit in at the workplace?
9. What does adaptation mean to you? What does assimilation mean to you? Do you believe there is difference between adaptation and assimilation?
10. What are the benefits of hiring immigrants and having a diverse workforce?
11. Do you feel that your language skills and/or experience working overseas as helped you with your current job?
12. Are you aware of any initiatives at your current workplace that specifically help immigrants adapt to the workplace?
13. Do you know whether your workplace has a committee dedicated to promoting cultural diversity in the workplace?
14. Does your company offer employer-sponsored programs that help immigrant employees adapt to the Canadian workplace (give examples if necessary)?
15. If yes, then have you participated in any of them? Who else participated? Non-immigrant employees? Upper management? HR?
16. Do you know how long these programs have been running?
17. Did you find that the employer-sponsored programs helped you adapt to the Canadian workplace culture? If yes, then could you please give some examples?
18. If no, what do you think employers could do to help immigrants adapt to their workplace?
19. Whose responsibility is it to facilitate the adaptation process? The immigrants? The employers? Or both?
20. How important is it to support the adaptation of immigrant employees in the workplace?
21. What would be some of the consequences of not implementing initiatives that help immigrants adapt?
22. Do you feel there are opportunities for advancement at your current company? If no, why not?
23. Do you know anyone else who might be interested in speaking to me about this topic? If yes, then can you put me in contact with them?