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Smoke and Mirrors: How an Allegedly Inclusionary Strategy Perpetuates an Exclusionary Discourse

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to critically explore the meaning making theoretical perspectives underlying the creation and development of a public mentoring program, allegedly designed as an inclusionary strategy for facilitating newcomers' labour market integration. Building upon findings outlined in the program's latest *Evaluation Report* (Bejan 2011) and drawing upon participant-observation as an inductive field-based research strategy, this paper questions the uncontested legitimization of the cited program as a positive inclusionary strategy and claims it perpetuates the very same discriminatory practices and systemic barriers that impede immigrants' ability to fully participate within the Canadian labour market. It further argues that, despite its affirmed inclusionary objective, the program's formation is rooted in theoretical perspectives that justify exclusion, reproducing and maintaining, by extension, an exclusionary status quo. As a result, it rejects the application of *social capital* and *social inclusion/exclusion* theories, those hypothetically deemed to be guiding the program's development, and those traditionally used as explanatory for newcomers' inability to successfully participate within the labour market. It then proposes a structural perspective as a theoretical base to direct the program's future design. Its conclusion emerged from the author's interpretative framework, that only a structural approach will draw attention to the power imbalances and discrepancies between Canadian-born individuals and newcomers, as they relate to the issues of labour market participation and subsequent economic gains.

Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est d'analyser sous un angle critique la signification des perspectives théoriques sous-jacentes à la création et au développement d'un programme de mentorat public censé viser une stratégie inclusive qui faciliterait l'intégration des nouveaux arrivants dans le marché du travail. À partir des conclusions exposées dans le dernier *Rapport D'Évaluation* (Bejan 2011) de ce programme, et selon une méthode de recherche inductive qui s'appuie sur les observations de participants, nous questionnons ici sa légitimation incontestée comme stratégie inclusive et positive, et nous affirmons qu'elle perpétue des pratiques discriminatoires et des obstacles systémiques qui limitent la capacité des immigrants à prendre pleinement part au marché du travail canadien. Nous soutenons en outre que, malgré les objectifs inclusifs visés, l'élaboration de ce programme prend ses racines dans des perspectives théoriques qui justifient la pratique de l'ostracisme, ce qui a pour effet de reproduire et de soutenir un statu quo exclusif. Par conséquent, nous rejetons dans cet article l'application des théories d'un *capital social* et de *l'inclusion / exclusion sociale*, aussi bien celles considérées comme propres à guider le développement de ce programme, que celles traditionnellement utilisées pour expliquer l'incapacité des nouveaux arrivants à trouver leur place dans le monde professionnel. Ensuite, nous proposons une perspective structurelle comme base théorique pour diriger les futurs développements du programme en question. En conclusion, ce qui ressort du cadre interprétatif de l'auteur, c'est que seule une approche structurelle attirera l'attention sur les déséquilibres de pouvoir et les écarts entre les personnes nées au Canada et les nouveaux venus, en ce qui a trait à la question de l'accès à l'emploi et des gains économiques.



INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to critically examine the meaning making theoretical perspectives underlying the creation and development of a public mentoring program for immigrants, the *Profession to Profession (PTP): Mentoring Immigrants* program. The PTP program was created and developed several years ago by Toronto's municipal level of the government, in partnership with an influential community organization, openly committed to advancing the access to employment of newly arrived immigrants within the Toronto Region. Due to the critical nature of this paper, the exact name of the partner organization will not be purposely identified. Based on occupational field, the program matches *City of Toronto* employees (i.e., mentors) with skilled internationally trained persons (i.e., mentees) in order to advance newly arrived immigrants' inclusion into the Canadian labour market. By critically analyzing how the referred program, originally designed as an inclusionary strategy, reproduces and maintains an exclusionary status quo, this essay proposes an alternative theoretical approach to guide its future developments, contrasting the scholarly perspectives previously framing newcomers' labour market integration on the binary concepts of exclusion and inclusion.

A conceptual framework drawing upon two threads of scholarship guides this critical exploration. First, the paper's critical discourse brings forward a structural theoretical perspective by placing individual struggles within broader oppressive (George and Marlowe 2005) and alienating social structures (Lundy 2004), while advancing the idea that certain groups' dominance in society has been reproduced, through "current social and political power arrangements" (Heron 2005, 343) yielding economic privileges to some (i.e., Canadian-born individuals) at the expense of others (i.e., newcomers). Second, it builds upon a poststructuralist standpoint (Foucault 1994; McHoul and Grace 1993) and draws upon conceptualizations of governmentality, (Sharland 2006) risk, (Webb 2005) and governance of social marginality, (Pollack 2007) in order to examine the dominant discourses related to newly arrived immigrants' labour market participation and their inability to access field-related employment. In fact, structuralist and post-structuralist elements intertwine in this paper, in order to build up the argument as to how the *PTP: Mentoring Immigrants* program further perpetuates a discriminatory discourse related to internationally trained professionals' labour market participation. A poststructuralist perspective brings into play discourses' relevance in constructing the current knowl-

edge about the immigrant populations and their ability to access field-related employment, while a structuralist approach entails that such discourses have secured their dominant positions, simply by being the ones held by those in privileged social positions (i.e., Canadian-born individuals).

I will introduce the topic by providing some background information to contextualize the issue of newcomers' inability to secure field-related employment and attain successful labour market integration. I will then explain how prior research endeavors have led to the development of this paper. I will succinctly describe the referred program and briefly touch upon my role in getting familiar with it. I will further proceed with the critical analysis of the subject matter by discussing and deconstructing the current prevailing theoretical frameworks that frame the creation and development of the *PTP* program. Within this context, the program's ability to disrupt the exclusionary discourse related to internationally trained professionals' labour market participation, will be thoroughly questioned. The discussion and critique will be organized around several conceptual tools, including the notions of "social capital" and/or "human capital attainment," along with the concepts of "inclusion" and, respectively, "exclusion." I will then argue that, disguised as an economic inclusionary strategy, the referred program further sustains a systemic exclusionary discriminatory discourse, as it particularly relates to newcomers' labour market integration. I will conclude by proposing the use of a structural theoretical framework to guide the program's future development.

BACKGROUND

Immigration has been specifically defined as an urban process (Grant and Sweetman 2004), given that almost three quarters of newcomers are making their home in one of Canada's largest cities, Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal (Omidvar and Richmond 2003). Out of these municipalities, Toronto remains the primary destination for new immigrants within Canada. Between 2000 and 2009, it received an average of 48,900 newcomers, representing 20 percent of all new immigrants (City of Toronto 2011).

After the Second World War, it became widely documented that newly arrived immigrants were successfully integrating into the Canadian labour market (Omidvar and Richmond 2003). Today, despite the fact that current national immigration policies mostly recruit university educated individuals (ibid.) with higher educational attainment and higher credentials (Grant and Sweetman 2004), newly arrived immigrants are found to fare worse than their predecessors on employment and earnings outcomes (Wayland and Goldberg 2009) and often find themselves unemployed or performing in underemployed positions (Grant and Sweetman 2004). Since newcomers' employment earnings have been one of the most studied

areas of their economic integration (Picot 2004), the growing gap in income over the last decades, between Canadian-born individuals and newly arrived immigrants, has been thoroughly documented: newcomers arriving in Canada between 1975 and 1979 had initial earnings representing 83 percent of those of their Canadian-born counterparts (Schellenberg and Hou 2005). However, within a period of ten to fifteen years, this gap often narrowed to 90 percent (*ibid.*). A decade later, in 1989, things actually looked worse: new immigrants' earnings represented only 66 percent of those of Canadian-born individuals, and this number only increased to 78 percent, after being in Canada for a period of eleven to fifteen years (*ibid.*). By 1990, most of the increase in low income rates statistics was found amongst newly arrived immigrants, an increase further correlated with a decrease in the low income rates for Canadian-born individuals (Picot 2004).

Many barriers have been identified as impeding newcomers' capacity to fully integrate into the Canadian labour market, including: the non-recognition of foreign credentials, their lack of Canadian work experience, their unfamiliarity with the practices and behaviors existent in the Canadian workplaces (Tufts et al. 2010) as well as their lack of transferrable skills, given the difficulties related to language, culture, education and discrimination (Schellenberg and Hou 2005). Several other economic and social factors have been considered to restrain immigrants' participation in the labour market. These aspects have been particularly related to changing labour trends: within the last years, Ontario's labour market moved towards an "hourglass shape" (Zizys 2010), with less middle-level jobs, polarized high-end knowledge jobs, and, respectively, entry-level skilled jobs at both ends of the labour market spectrum (*ibid.*). Most of the previous good jobs are now unavailable, and this in itself has led to a tendency towards precarious forms of employment (*ibid.*). Additionally, an increase in the education levels of Canadian-born individuals has also been documented (Schellenberg and Hou 2005). The number of women entering the labour market with a university degree quadrupled between 1980 and 2000, while the number of men with a university degree doubled (*ibid.*). Despite the fact that Canadian immigration policies are based on a point system emphasizing education, many highly educated newcomers are also compelled to compete against highly educated Canadian-born individuals.

Scholarly work has also attributed the decline in newcomers' earnings and their low employment outcomes to the 1960s and the 1970s shift in Canadian immigration policies (Phythian et al. 2010). This time period coincides with the Federal Government's decision to extend the immigration process to include non-white, non-European immigrants (Valiani 2010). In turn, a culpability literature has emerged, advancing that a lower quality of education (Picot 2004) along with lower cultural and economic conditions present in these non-white/non-traditional immigrant sending

countries, are the factors to be blamed for newcomers' inability to succeed within the Canadian labour market (Phythian et al. 2010).

Now, in the midst of our current recession, complex immigration policies, along with institutionalized structures legitimizing exclusion (i.e., credentialism) are continuing to affect newcomers' employment situation. Internationally trained professionals face significantly higher unemployment rates (4.1%) than their Canadian-born counterparts (Toronto Community Foundation 2010). In Toronto, 19.7 percent of recent immigrants are unemployed, three times the jobless rate of Canadian-born residents (Mehler 2010).

EXPLANATION OF PRIOR RESEARCH INTERESTS AND PROGRAM'S DESCRIPTION

About half a year ago, as a requirement of my Master of Social Work (MSW) program, I had a five-month internship placement at the municipal level of government, within the *City of Toronto, City Manager's Office*, in the *Office of Equity, Diversity and Human Rights*. The *City Manager* is accountable to *City Council* for policies and programs delivered by the *Toronto Public Service*. His *Office* is responsible for governance, policy development and analysis, corporate performance, as well as equity, diversity and human rights issues.

My lead role and main learning activity was the evaluation of the *PTP: Mentoring Immigrants* program. *PTP* is part of a larger project which develops mentoring relationships with corporate and community partners, by matching recent skilled immigrants with employees from various private and public organizations. Within the *PTP* program, *City of Toronto* employees (i.e., mentors) are matched with skilled internationally trained persons (i.e., mentees) based on their occupational field. The program's stated objective is to advance newcomers' labour market integration. Informal requirements are setting the duration of the mentoring relationship between four to six months and guiding participants to spend together an average of four to six hours of work a month. The majority of this time is being used up in activities meant to support, assist and prepare the mentees for entering the Canadian labour market: providing information on various employment and educational opportunities, orienting them to the Canadian workplace and assisting them in establishing networks in their professional field.¹

The *PTP: Mentoring Immigrants* program has been portrayed by the *City of Toronto* as an inclusionary strategy in facilitating internationally trained professionals' labour market participation, and it has been described as a promising practice to support a diverse and positive workplace. By using the participant observation method, partaking in program-related weekly and monthly meetings, presentations and events, I have identified, during my five-month internship, a common discourse

circulating amongst staff and other individuals directly involved in the operation of the program. Central to this discourse was the *PTP* program's endorsement as an inclusionary strategy aimed at tackling the employment barriers faced by newly arrived immigrants. In fact, a quick browse of the *City of Toronto's* website, and, in particular, the *Office of Equity, Diversity and Human Right's* webpage, reveals a photo showing Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Dr. Eric Hoskins and City Manager Joe Pennachetti, holding a *PTP* completion certificate, a very symbolic representation of the positive features associated with the program. Although the *PTP: Mentoring Immigrants* program has been portrayed by the *City of Toronto* as a positive practice in facilitating the economic inclusion of internationally trained professionals, as it is being acclaimed yearly for its benefits, not much was actually known about the program's contributions to the labour market integration of foreign-trained professionals. Yearly evaluations have been conducted since the beginning of the program in 2004, but only through a mentors' self-administered questionnaire. In fact, up until the completion of the latest evaluation, mentees' assessments have never been included in the process. This critical essay builds upon the finding outlined in the program's latest *Evaluation Report* (Bejan 2011) that both mentees and mentors are using mentees' employment as an indicator for the program's success. Recommendations from this report proposed bridging and expanding the program to introduce an employment component. However, these recommendations have been received with a certain level of resistance, particularly by the *City's* partner community organization, stemming mainly from the premise that the *PTP* program's objective is not to endorse employment *per se*, but rather to assist newcomers' on their journey of securing field-related employment positions. The thought of critically exploring the theoretical perspectives underlying *PTP's* program development emerged from these resistance fences that I felt were being built against the introduction of a potential employment component within the program. I started to question why mentoring, in itself, has to be confined to such a precise category, strictly defined in terms of providing coaching and advice, and why the program's stakeholders are puzzled to move beyond such a categorization. I intuitively assumed that some of the notions and concepts behind the program's development must be thoroughly explored, in order to better understand the grounds these fences have been built upon.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE *PTP* PROGRAM

Theoretical Perspectives Framing the *PTP* as an Inclusionary Strategy

"Social cohesion" and "social capital" concepts have been used many times as explanatory for vulnerable populations' precarious positionality within our societal structures (Forrest and Kearns 2001) and newcomer populations were no exception.

The deteriorating labour market outcomes for newly arrived immigrants' have been traditionally explained through the theory of social capital or human capital attainment, which proposes that individual economic performances are determined by individual skills and credentials that one brings to the labor market (Phythian et al. 2010). Within such a theoretical context, newly arrived immigrants' lack of Canadian work experience and transferrable skills, their inability to secure field-related employment and upward economical mobility, are completely decontextualized, and ultimately, justified. A perspective perfectly in line with the neoliberal discourse of meritocracy and the Darwinist idea of *survival of the fittest*, it involuntarily implies the existence of an even playing field for all and assumes an intrinsic individual culpability for newcomers' precarious labour market outcomes. Following this train of thought, it is not a far stretch to assume the *PTP* program might be guided by a social capital perspective: mentees' blame is, in one way or another, already implied, since they are perceived as being unable to secure field-related employment and achieve labour market integration, strictly as a result of their individual lack of skills. Therefore, they must be coached, mentored and advised, only to "better" themselves, hence to secure field-related employment positions.

Unfortunately, very few perspectives have challenged the social capital's functionalist version, as it has been particularly related to immigrant integration, and such efforts mainly originated from critical theoretical fields (Cheong et al. 2007). In turn, the social capital theory has slightly extended its explanatory position to the institutional processes that contribute to newcomers' economic exclusion, such as the Canadian regulation of what is acceptable in terms of educational and professional credentials, or, in other words, the so-called institutionalized cultural capital (Bauder 2003). The institutionalized cultural capital framework has been drawing attention to the Canadian differential assessment of credentials, where newly arrived immigrants' national origin of such institutionalized capital becomes significant. From this standpoint, despite having similar educational levels, skilled internationally trained professionals do not benefit from the same labour market access in comparison with their Canadian-born counterparts (Bauder 2003). Although this perspective led to the conceptual establishment of "systemic barriers" in relation to newcomers' labour market integration, less attention has been paid to how values, assumptions and ideologies shape these institutionalized structures which ultimately institutionalize exclusion. Perhaps such exclusionary processes are based on the value-encumbered premise that foreign qualifications are unsatisfactory for most Canadian professional practices and that Canadian-born individuals' skills and levels of education are somewhat superior. Perhaps, by having these closed requirements of professional standards, the superiority discourse of being a Canadian-born citizen is created and thoroughly maintained.

Such threads of thought led to the development of what is commonly seen as progressive inclusionary and exclusionary perspectives, in relation to the issue of newcomers' labour market integration (Omidvar and Richmond 2003). However, social inclusion theories have been built on the same notion of social capital (Caidi and Allard 2005) and therefore these novel inclusionary/exclusionary discourses have been framed around the same elements formerly central to social capital's theory: the non-recognition of foreign credentials, newcomers' lack of Canadian work experience, their unfamiliarity with the Canadian workplace practices, and their lack of transferrable skills. The main change within this new theoretical paradigm is that the very same attributes that have been originally (i.e., through social capital theory) labeled as individual deficiencies, hindering newcomers' ability to successfully integrate into the Canadian labour market, are now defined strictly as exclusionary rationalizations. However, this paper argues that social inclusionary/exclusionary theories are just social capital theories' other side of the coin. Their subsequent discourses are continuously built upon the same notion that newcomers' skills and credentials acquired in source countries are not up to Canadian standards. It then becomes irrelevant if newcomers' barriers to labor market participation are viewed as individual liabilities or general exclusionary processes. Either one of them are used in the same way, to justify an exclusionary discriminatory status quo.

Inclusionary and exclusionary discourses are considered in this essay to be the ones that construct the process of justification for explaining immigrants' precarious labour market outcomes. Importing Titchkosky's (2008) interpretative sociological approach, used in analyzing the access discourse as it relates to the *disability* concept, this paper aims to draw attention to the stories of justification potentially framing newcomers' exclusionary discourse. Although such discourses initially appear to tackle immigrants' exclusion, since they are drawing attention to various barriers that hinder newcomers' ability to achieve upward economic mobility and field-related labour market participation, at a second look, they may also reinforce a justificatory dialogue for how exclusion has been generated in the first place. For example, talks about newly arrived immigrants' lack of transferrable professional skills or non-recognition of their foreign credentials, without any actions per se to change these exclusionary structural factors, produce a justification discourse that ends up rationalizing newly arrived immigrants' marginalization from the labour market. Critically examining the narration of disability discourses, Titchkosky (2008) advances that justification makes exclusion reasonable, and that finding a reason for exclusion normalizes it and maintains its exclusionary legitimacy, since it becomes "reasonable to give a reason for the lack of access" (Titchkosky 2008, 45). Juxtaposing such a critical analysis to our issue, perhaps the very same activities of seeking out reasons, even if some are transpiring as being more legitimate (institutional non-recognition of

foreign credentials) than others (newcomers' lack of transferrable skills), make the lack of access reasonable and ultimately justify why it is reasonable for immigrants to be excluded from the labour market. Once a justification rationale is set in place, public policies and programs mostly aim to advance inclusion and ultimately fail to tackle exclusion. We then talk, for instance, about the non-recognition of foreign credentials or the lack of newcomers' Canadian experience as exclusionary practices, but instead of changing such requirements, we proceed by creating a variety of inclusionary programs to assist newly arrived immigrants in defeating these systemic barriers.

The *PTP* program might be the perfect example of how an inclusionary practice may carry out an exclusionary justificatory discourse, given that its main objective is to advance the economic inclusion of internationally trained professionals without necessarily taking any steps to challenge what created their exclusion initially. The program's latest *Evaluation Report* (Bejan 2011) pointed out that employment outcomes, without being a program's objectives, were the mentees' baseline for assessing their satisfaction with the program. Although the *PTP's* program objective is not necessarily to create employment opportunities but rather to assist mentees in improving their employability potential, by not taking further steps in facilitating the creation of employment prospects, this program's defined objective becomes limited and ends up perpetuating a discriminatory and exclusionary status quo.

Whereas no prior scholarly efforts have been known to conceptually apply disability theories to the issue of newcomers' labour market integration, this paper makes a timid attempt towards it, given that such theories could be an eye opener as to how inclusionary practices may serve exclusionary discourses. Drawing from Oliver's (1992) idea that disabled individuals should not be the ones scrutinized, but rather the able-bodied society, and from Morris's (1992) perspective focused on the unequal relationship between disabled and non-disabled people, this paper argues that, ultimately, newcomers are somewhat constructed as "disabled." From a social capital perspective, newcomers, due to inapt individual abilities and skills, are unable to economically integrate and, therefore, they become pathologized as unfit or "disabled." From a social inclusionary/exclusionary framework, if the focus is on exclusionary systemic oppressions (i.e., credentialism) as being the factors that impede their ability to economically succeed, without any action per se to change such structures, newcomers are similarly pathologized and again constructed as "disabled," based on the implied assumption of needing to be somewhat changed in order to be included. As a result, policy efforts concentrate on introducing inclusionary strategies as ways to get newcomers to economically succeed. Surprisingly, whereas as a society, we do not usually focus our efforts on forcing disabled individuals to become able bodies, this paper rhetorically asks, why do we then compel immigrants

to integrate? If we construct newcomers as disabled, shouldn't we try to change the external environment in order to enable them? Let us take the example of a person with a physical disability, who needs to make use of a wheelchair in carrying out daily tasks. Would we try to concentrate our efforts on forcing a disabled person to walk, or, rather, would we try to change our built-in environment (i.e., providing a ramp alternative instead of stairs) to accommodate her or his needs? By extension, why are we, as a society, constantly and extensively preoccupied with making immigrants "walk"?

After establishing that certain welfare policies and programs, although designed as inclusionary practices, may just perpetuate and maintain exclusionary discourses, attention should also be paid as to how the rationalization of inclusionary discourses is being constructed. The case for inclusion is most often being made based on the argument that newcomers have higher rates of poverty and higher rates of social assistance dependency (Omidvar and Richmond 2003). Deconstructing such prevailing discourses, the apparent aim is to limit newcomers' dependability on the state. Inclusion is not sold out on a social justice or moral argumentation, but rather on efficiency, on a cost-benefit notion. If newly arrived immigrants are deemed at risk of being unemployed and at risk of further relying upon the welfare state's highly prized resources, whose distribution seems to be chosen amongst those deserving, then policy measures and public programs are concentrated on changing them, modifying them as objects, reframing them (by giving them new skills and familiarizing them with Canadian workplace practices) in order to become self-sufficient and therefore not dependent on the state.

This push towards self-governance lays the premises for the establishment of governmentality (Foucault 1994) or the governance of their marginality (Pollack 2007), concepts totally in line with current neoliberal discourses. Perhaps the *PTP* program rests on similar underlying ideas. Mentoring does imply guidance and support, which ultimately translates into providing help to internationally trained professionals, to "change" themselves, or to regulate themselves, in order to become more marketable, to gain meaningful employment and, therefore, to not rely on state-provided assistance.

Mentoring, by its limited conceptual nature, becomes only a "band-aid" fix, subsequently failing to address any systemic barriers that perpetuate newcomers' exclusionary discourse, such as the non-recognition of their foreign credentials or the discrimination faced when interacting with potential employers. It is the perfect example of how governmentality employs various strategies to regulate individuals deemed at risk, by creating practices that focus on transforming the excluded, marginal or at-risk subject into certain ideal type populations (Webb 2005). Such a discourse is shaped by what Uzma Shakir (2003) called the logic of social

accommodation, where “exclusion is the problem and inclusion is the solution” (ibid., 204) and where the question of why the marginalized become excluded in the first place is never posed. Failure to consider what initially created the exclusion denies that, in relation to each marginalized group, there is a privileged one (Young 1990), that exclusion is created by unequal power structures, and that someone is always benefiting from another’s exclusion (Shakir 2003). The discourse of newly arrived immigrants’ inability to integrate into the Canadian labour market is a blaming discourse, a typical risk discourse which decontextualizes individuals (Pollack 2007) by pinpointing their personal deficits (Webb 2005) and by focusing on their personal insufficiencies as explanatory for their inability to secure field-related employment. Within this context, internationally trained professionals are seen as not having satisfactory transferable skills to successfully participate in the Canadian economy. Not once, within the public policy discourse, is the question raised as to how the Canadian labour market structure, as a colonial Anglo-Saxon space, is constructed in such a way that subsequently invalidates any other different skills from those traditionally labeled as Canadian. All of a sudden, a life planning strategy for newcomers lacking self-management capacities (Webb 2005) is set in place, through education and training, bridging and transition, mentoring or job-seeking skills programs, in order to get them to acquire the skills deemed necessary to fit in, and to become familiar with standard Canadian workplace practices. Again, no thoughts or efforts are advanced to change the Canadian workplace culture to embrace alternative, non-Canadian work practices, behaviors or conducts. The *PTP* program is a perfect example of how such exclusionary ways of regulating otherness have been imbedded in our entire institutional agenda.

An added consequence of the inclusionary/exclusionary discourse is that, ultimately, inclusion’s purpose is to transform newcomers to become more similar to their Canadian-born counterparts. Immigrants’ integration becomes dependent on their acculturation and assimilation. Preservation of foreignness (Phythian et al. 2010) can never lead to inclusion, since newcomers, in order to actively integrate within the labour market, must become less foreign and more Canadian (i.e., acquiring Canadian work experience, skills, and knowledge of workplace customs and practices). The social inclusionary framework is proposed by advancing an entire apparatus of policies and programs aimed to regulate and transform newcomers to become like their Canadian-born counterparts, or, in other words, to assimilate. Sakamoto (2010) advances that “Canadian experience” as a professional requirement, is just a pretext for employers to hire only those individuals who fit in with a certain dominant cultural image. Only those who acculturate, who become more Canadian, have a greater chance of achieving both social and economic inclusion in the Canadian society. By its mentoring nature, the *PTP* program definitely con-

tributes to, and sustains the dominant position of the ones in power: it tries to change newcomers to become more akin to their Canadian counterparts, in a way, to forget their origins and become acculturated, to better fit within the Canadian work culture. Social inclusion becomes a selective process (Shakir 2003) and only those willing to assimilate will be fully included.

A Step Forward: Towards a Structural Theoretical Perspective

After examining the theoretical principles guiding the discourses related to newcomers' inability to access field-related employment, this paper unfolds by proposing the use of a structural theoretical framework to direct the *PTP* program's future development. Structural theory is an emancipatory social work theory, focused on the structural, societal dimension of individual and social problems (Fook 2002). Its twofold conceptualization implies not only an inherent critique of the status quo (Fook 2002) and subsequent social arrangements (Davis 2007) maintaining the unequal and unjust (*ibid.*) domination of a ruling group (Fook 2003), but concomitantly seeks to change these oppressive and dominant structures (Fook 2002; Davis 2007) embedded within the body of our policies (Wachholz and Mullaly 1993).

Via a structural approach, the *PTP: Mentoring Immigrants* could be used as a progressive tool to purposely address or change some of the systemic barriers in order to further advance the economic participation of internationally trained professionals. The question raised should be in what measure does the *PTP* program help immigrants participate in the Canadian job market? Is it just a tool to assist Toronto's newly arrived immigrants to become job ready, or does it go beyond that? From a critical stance, just helping immigrants become job ready does not do much in terms of addressing the present inequities maintaining the imbalanced power structure. It rather works within the system, by assisting individuals to adjust and adapt to a discriminatory status quo (George and Marlowe 2005).

Shifting from the former discourse analysis, this paper takes up a structural stance by defining power in zero sum terms and associating it with a commodity held by those born in Canada. It starts from the premise that newly arrived immigrants' inability to fully integrate in the Toronto labour market is related not to an individual incapability but, rather, it has its roots within an inequitable society, in the systemic inequities that further promote and maintain the power over the economic gains of those who are Canadian, at the expense of newcomers. Therefore, it not only rejects notions related to "helping immigrants fit in" that have been commonly permeating public discourses (Habib 2011), but also the ones claiming the leeway of a win-win situation for everyone involved. At the recent *5th Ethnic Pluralism Studies Graduate Research Conference* held in Toronto on 26-27 January 2012, professor Richard Alba (2012) from the *City University of New York* used the

“non-zero sum mobility” concept to state that, given the downwards demographic changes within the majority population, minorities will be able to rise to an economically equal status without taking away any of the privileges extensively enjoyed by the majority. It wasn’t the presenter’s nonchalance of never contesting the idea of privilege that troubled me the most, but predominantly, it was the way he choose to frame the power-charged privilege-dominance relationships between the majority and the minority. It seemed reasonably unsound to bring on the idea of privilege while concomitantly advocating for the establishment of a “non-zero sum” concept. Privilege on its own cannot exist. And by its very nature, it has to contain a zero-sum dichotomy, as privilege in itself can only be defined in relation to the lack of privilege. Minorities’ ability to achieve upward economic mobility without laying hands on the majority’s privileges is an idea predestined to conceptually fail. It further warrants the adoption of a “zero-sum” structural framework in critically analyzing not only the issue of newcomers’ labour market integration, but also any subsequent inclusionary strategies aimed to achieve their allegedly economic integration.

By endorsing a zero-sum conceptualization of minority-majority relations, this paper questions the *PTP* program’s ability to actually change the power structures within the society as they particularly relate to the labour market integration of internationally trained professionals. From such a perspective, Canadian-born individuals, as a group, have privileged access to economic resources based on their subject location, as already settled individuals on Canadian land. Perhaps such privilege is mediated through the “othering” process, which implies the superiority of the dominant group (in our case, Canadian-born individuals) over the less worthy inferior group (newcomers), leading to a power-over legitimation process of Canadians as the dominant group (Tew 2006). This is somehow ironic, since those claiming their superiority based on their subject location or positionality were, at some point, new immigrants themselves. In view of that, the ones arriving here first decide they are better, since they were first to come, and they are not shy at all to manifest their perceived superiority by getting to decide not only who they will “let in,” but also the nature of newly arrived immigrants’ economic entitlements. Within such a zero-sum context, inclusionary practices, akin to the *PTP* program, should challenge some of these power imbalances, since the very same structures that create exclusion and oppression are also the ones to maintain privileged positions (Choules 2007), in our instance, the privilege of Canadian-born citizens over economic gains. By failing to go beyond the mentoring characteristic per se, (which in itself serves as an exclusionary process deemed to regulate newcomers) in order to create real employment opportunities for newly arrived immigrants, the *PTP* program not only falls short of shaking these power dynamics but concomitantly reinforces the economic privileges of Canadian-born individuals.

Since the *PTP* program has been particularly designed as an inclusionary strategy, this paper's critical perspective sheds light on inclusionary/exclusionary theories' limited applicability in achieving real social change (Shakir 2003). For this reason, it then proposes the adoption of a structural framework. Structurally, in order to change societal power imbalances, the program should promote, as much as possible, mentees' employment, and, in fact, should use the mentees' evaluation and feedback as a measure for the program's success. The mentees' driven outcomes have the potential to change some of the power structures and to transform the ongoing discourse related to newcomers' ability to access labour market employment.

CONCLUSION

Within the explored theoretical contexts, the much appreciated *PTP: Mentoring Immigrants* program seems to merely perpetuate the inferior position held by newcomers in our society and to maintain an incapability discourse as it particularly relates to newcomers' labour market integration. Although the *PTP* program's objective clearly states its purpose is not to secure market-related employment positions for the participating mentees but rather to assist them in becoming job ready—by helping them develop job-seeking skills, reviewing their resumes, providing them with guidance and advice regarding the interview process, sharing information about ongoing job-related workshops and circulating job postings—with the risk of repeating, this paper argues, that, without going beyond such rudimentary efforts, the program involuntarily perpetuates discriminatory practices and systemic barriers that impede immigrants' ability to fully participate within Toronto's labour market.

This paper's scope was to make use of the *PTP* program as an informal case study, in order to deconstruct current theoretical frameworks shaping its development. It rejects the application of social capital and social inclusion/exclusion theories, which traditionally have been used as explanatory for newcomers' ability to successfully participate within the labour market, and advocates for a critical examination of the *PTP* program as an inclusionary strategy. It further proposes a structural perspective as a theoretical base to guide the program's future developments. Only a structural approach will draw attention to the power imbalances between Canadian-born individuals and newcomers, as they relate to discrepancies in economic gains. Within this context, one way for the *PTP* to change some of these power imbalances is to promote mentees' employment, including referrals for volunteer and co-op opportunities, and to use mentees' yearly evaluation and feedback as a measure for the program's success. There is a clear need to go beyond the strict categorization of mentoring as it particularly relates to the *PTP* program, in order to really disrupt the exclusionary discourse that ultimately frames newcomers' ability to secure

field-related employment and achieve successful labour market participation. Failure to do so will place the *City of Toronto* in what Barbara Heron (2005) called a double comfort position: the comfort of admitting a privilege (i.e., Canadian-born individuals' access to the labour market) by showing awareness of the issue, and the comfort of not needing to take action to undo such a privilege. The very fact of having the *PTP* program legitimized as a positive inclusionary strategy, with its perceived positive legacy uncontested, involuntarily fails to further address the exclusionary situations that have been marginalizing Toronto's immigrant population.

This paper hopes to build knowledge within the ethnic studies field by shedding light upon alternative conceptualizations and understandings of the structural barriers impeding newcomers' labour market participation. Critically analyzing the theoretical underpinnings of a public mentoring program, it purposely draws attention to the unintended exclusionary consequences of an inclusionary strategy for internationally trained professionals. It hopes that this exploratory conceptual exercise will be a useful tool for other public and settlement agencies looking to implement similar inclusionary programs.

NOTES

1. The scope of the mentoring activities ranges from providing information on various employment and educational opportunities, orienting the mentees to the Canadian workplace and assisting them in establishing networks in their professional field. When the program first began, in 2004, twenty-nine mentors, representing three occupational fields, participated in the program. By 2010, this number increased by four times: 119 City employees from sixteen occupational fields were matched with 125 mentees (Bejan 2011).

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