IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: A KEY TO IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

by

Joyce Lau
BComm, University of Toronto 2003

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS COHORT IN INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

In the
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

© Joyce Lau 2007

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Fall 2007

All rights reserved. This work may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without permission of the author.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Name:</strong></th>
<th>Joyce Lau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree:</strong></td>
<td>Master of Arts in International Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title of Project:</strong></td>
<td>Impression Management in the Workplace: A key to Immigrant Integration in the Labour Market</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Supervisory Committee:**

---

Dr. Michael Howard  
Professor  
School for International Studies  
Senior Supervisor

---

Dr. Paul Warwick  
Professor  
Department of Political Science and School for International Studies  
Supervisor

Date Approved:  

Dec 1, 2007
Declaration of
Partial Copyright Licence

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection (currently available to the public at the “Institutional Repository” link of the SFU Library website <www.lib.sfu.ca> at: <http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/handle/1892/112>) and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

While licensing SFU to permit the above uses, the author retains copyright in the thesis, project or extended essays, including the right to change the work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the work in whole or in part, and licensing other parties, as the author may desire.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, BC, Canada

Revised: Fall 2007
ABSTRACT

Research suggests that immigrants’ inability to obtain mainstream jobs and lack of economic mobility in the labour market is attributed to the lack of human and social capital. In addition, they face institutional barriers such as the devaluation of foreign credentials and discrimination. In this paper, I address the implication of impression management techniques for immigrant integration in the labour market. This paper offers insight on how immigrants can minimize misguided perceptions and overcome invisible barriers through the use of two impression management techniques: dress and business etiquette.

Keywords: Impression management; Immigrants; Labour market; Economic mobility; Dress; Business etiquette

Subject Terms: Self presentation; Social psychology; Workplaces; Culture & ethnology; Clothing and dress –Social aspects
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my senior supervisor, Dr. Michael Howard for giving me direction and for spending time editing this paper. As well, I would like to thank Dr. Paul Warwick for his insights and Ellen Yap for managing the details of the submission process. And last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to Elic for providing his expertise, support and encouragement during the entire process.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval .................................................................................................................. ii
Abstract .................................................................................................................. iii
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................. iv
Table of Contents ..................................................................................................... v
Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1
Forms of capital: Success in the Labour Market .................................................... 3
Ethnic Relations in Canada ....................................................................................... 8
Impression Management and Cultural Boundaries ............................................... 14
Tools of Impression Management: Dress and Etiquette ....................................... 20
Impression Management for Immigrants ............................................................... 29
Discussion and Implications .................................................................................... 33
Reference List ........................................................................................................... 37
INTRODUCTION

Immigrants' lack of success in the labour market has been well documented. Traditional explanations focus on individual characteristics such as human capital and social capital. In this paper, I explore the possible effect of impression management; specifically dress and etiquette, on immigrants' performance in the labour market. Due to the social attitudes and prevailing ideology of race and ethnicity in immigration countries such as Canada and the United States, immigrants are often perceived as an outsider. In particular, visible minorities appear to be the most disadvantaged. I argue that discrimination and prejudice at the workplace is informal and mostly based on trivial markers. Although such patterns appear harmless, negative social and economic consequences do result from misguided perceptions. Here, I offer a possible solution that may minimize misguided perceptions by using impression management strategies. Although the effects of impression management are less salient than other factors such as Canadian work experience in the labour market, it can help highly educated immigrants to level the playing field compared to those who have similar backgrounds. In this paper, I first outline the current situation of immigrants in the workplace. Second, I describe the perceptions of mainstream society on immigrants. Third, I discuss the presentation of the self and the effects of impression management in the workplace. Lastly, I suggest reasons as to how impression management can
alleviate some of the barriers immigrants face in the labour market and other areas for future research.
FORMS OF CAPITAL: SUCCESS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Traditional studies of immigration mainly explain immigrants' failure in the labour market as a result of a lack of certain forms of human capital such as education, language skills, and work experience. This explanation worked well in the past mainly because many immigrants arrived to Canada as labourers and lacked substantial human capital. However, after the implementation of the point system in 1967, today's immigrants who arrive under the economic category are highly educated and skilled. On the surface, it appears that credentials and university degrees can make immigrants desirable in the labour market. A close inspection shows that this is not the case. Foreign experience is often not recognized in Canada and gatekeepers protect the entrance into many specialized fields—medicine and engineering are popular examples. Furthermore, not only are foreign credentials not recognized in Canada, many employers perceive foreign education as well below Canadian standards. For example, even though a Chinese immigrant has a PhD from Tianjin University, because the value of education is not weighted equally in Canadian terms, the degree is seen as nothing more than an equivalent Bachelor degree. Thus, foreign academic credentials have little competitive advantage for immigrants. Given that Canada needs economic immigrants to fill the demands of the labour markets, it might seem contradictory that the education of these immigrants so
often does not help them integrate into the labour market. Such institutionalized barriers impede the transfer of foreign experience, causing many immigrants to accept jobs requiring lower skills than their overseas credential might seem to warrant. For example, a person with credentials that would have allowed them to work as an accountant outside of Canada finds that they have to accept work as a bookkeeper in Canada.

Another institutional factor that affects immigrant’s success in the labour market is the labour characteristics of the host country (Reitz, 2003). Although highly educated immigrants earn more than labourers, recent research shows that economic importance of education for immigrants is diminishing. This effect is attributed in part to the rising level of education of native-born Canadians. Borjas's (1999) study shows that in 1960 the level of education of native born Canadians was similar to that of the immigrants. Only 10% of the immigrants had college education, while 66% of the men did not complete a high school education (Borjas, 1999). However, in 1998, the variance between the two groups had become significant. Only 10% of native born Canadians were high school dropouts, while 34% of immigrants who arrived to the country were high school dropouts (Borjas, 1999). The increase in the education level of native-born Canadians diminished the human capital advantage of immigrants. Although human capital plays a vital role in determining economic success, the institutional barriers and devaluation of foreign education impede immigrants’ integration in the labour market.
Education and skills alone do not explain economic success in the labour market. Sociologists have long recognized that getting good jobs is not just "what you know," but also "who you know" (Granovetter, 1974). The "who you know" is important to all groups of people, since it provides access to certain networks and can tap into resources like an unadvertised job. Referrals also help companies save time and cost since candidates are pre-screened by a reliable reference (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003). A study in Los Angeles found that it is through these personal contacts that many Asians were able to get mainstream jobs (Sanders, Nee & Sernau, 2002). A study in New York also showed that many workers in the garment industry got work through family and friends from the same ethnic group (Zhou, 1992). Networks and social ties are important to immigrants. Those who do not have ties to the wider society may not gain entrance into good companies, even if it is an entry level position. Furthermore, these ties equip them with the cultural know-how in their adaptation process. For example, many Chinese professionals from Mainland China do not know how to write resumes and cover letters because jobs were previously arranged through the government (Salaff, Greve & Ping, 2002). Therefore, having friends and family to help an immigrant re-socialize is crucial to the employment process.

Another dimension that shapes the ability of immigrants to access good jobs is cultural capital. Often overlooked because of its intangibility, cultural capital is the "glass ceiling" or invisible gateway to certain networks and influential groups. Bourdieu (1984) describes cultural capital as behaviours, attitudes, and preferences—frequently conceptualized as "tastes"—that
separates those of the higher class and lower class. Cultural capital allows higher status groups to create symbolic boundaries that separates and keeps outsiders from entering one’s social circle. Cultural capital is related to formal education in that formal education allows one to become aware of the functions and mechanisms of social interactions and micro-social order. However, some forms of cultural capital go beyond just being educated in a formal sense. Beyond having a graduate degree, landing a professional job requires the “strategic use of knowledge, skills, and competence (that) comes into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation” (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p. 569). For example, if friendliness and sociability is valued in the corporate culture, and promotion to management positions depends on your employer’s perception of these qualities, then your ability to project these characteristics becomes an important part of your cultural repertoire in order to gain economic mobility.

In the social world, people draw boundaries to separate themselves from others who do not share the same principles. Lamont’s ethnographic study of the French and American upper middle-class show that the boundaries that people draw can be based on morals, socio-economic, and cultural standards (Lamont, 1992). For example, those who draw moral boundaries believe in having qualities such as “honesty, work ethnic, personal integrity, and consideration of others,” (p. 4) and therefore do not respect those who do not have a moral character. On the other hand, groups that differentiate themselves based on socio-economic class use wealth as a signal of success, as well as
their profession and influential power (Lamont, 1992). Therefore, owning a luxury car and living in a prestigious neighbourhood becomes a means to signify a person’s worthiness in becoming part of their circle. Finally, those who emphasize cultural boundaries will judge others on their “education, intelligence, manners, tastes, and command of high culture” (p. 4). This group will feel superior to those who are not as sophisticated culturally and less intellectual (Lamont, 1992). What is interesting in Lamont’s study is the difference between the men of American and French upper middle class. Both groups place different emphasis on the boundaries they draw. She explains that people’s boundaries are shaped by their country of origin and by the history of the country.

Overall, cultural capital is the breaking point for many immigrants. Not only are they unfamiliar with the cultural ways of the mainstream society, they are also unaware of the boundaries of the dominant class. Their inability to adopt the same attitudes and preferences of the decision-makers in the workplace (those in power) greatly affects their life chances and access to good jobs. Studies have shown that managers prefer employees who are like themselves culturally and that success in the workplace is dependent on an employee being able to make the manager feel comfortable, follow cultural guidelines, and not stand out (Granovetter, 1974; Jackall, 1983; Kanter, 1977). Therefore, it can be reasoned that if immigrants do not meet these expectation of potential employers, they are more likely to be excluded from economic opportunities and mobility.
ETHNIC RELATIONS IN CANADA

People often perceive Canada as a country that openly accepts people of all nationalities and that work and life chances are equal to all. Immigrants can come to this country and maintain their ethnic identity and traditions without economic or social consequences. Canada often differentiates itself from its southern neighbour, the United States, in this regard. In contrast to the melting pot model, Canada's multicultural rubric promotes the idea that there is no race or culture that defines "Canadian" because it is made up of a diverse group of people from different ethnicities and backgrounds. However, research shows that Canada is no different than the United States when it comes to racism and prejudice (Reitz & Breton, 1994).

There is a popular notion that Americans are the ones who force immigrants to assimilate while Canadians encourage immigrants to embrace their own ethnicity. However, this difference is more symbolic than an actual reflection of reality. Embedded in Canadian culture is also the desire that immigrants should fit in with the dominant culture and many believe that the consequences of maintaining ethnic ties will result in social exclusion (Reitz & Sklar, 1997). One explanation for the push of immigrant integration is ethnocentrism, the belief that an ethnic group's values are better than those of others (Reitz & Sklar, 1997). In state terms, this takes the form of a belief that the cultural values of a dominant group within the state are superior to those of
other ethnic groups within the state. Another explanation is that a struggle to uphold social barriers helps to affirm and maintain one's identity (Epstein, 1989). In Canada, overt acts of discrimination are rare because government policies are in place to prevent direct barriers such as access to jobs on the basis of one's race or ethnicity. However, this does not eliminate indirect and informal prejudices that happen on a micro-level that leads to discrimination. In such a context, discrimination and prejudice often occur in invisible ways. This makes it even more challenging to eliminate such discrimination because the barriers that exist are harder to eradicate through government policies. Government policies, for example, cannot force a group of individuals of European ancestry to associate with a co-worker from Sri Lanka outside of working hours. However, informal networks are important and many social exchanges that influence work occur at this level. Consequently, this social exclusion can affect the life chances and economic mobility of the immigrant.

Discrimination can be influenced by an immigrant's type of ethnic attachment. At the individual level, Reitz and Sklar (1997) explain that there are two types: the "internal aspects" of ethnic attachment as well as the "external aspects" (p. 237). Discrimination in general is focused mainly on external aspects, such as towards those individuals who do not blend in physically and stand out as foreigners. This kind of discrimination is based on the perception resulting from visual markers that a person is different from us. According to Keller (1985), the categorization of "people, things and ideas" is done in a way that is based on how each of the elements is different from another (p. 128). For
example, a man and woman are different because of their different physical anatomies. In comparing native born and immigrants, a variety of visual and auditory signs such as language (i.e., speaking with an accent), skin colour, cultural customs, and dress may separate the two. These categories may be ranked and, according to Collins (1991), “the element which is objectified as the ‘other’ is viewed to be manipulated and controlled” (p. 128). He argues further that “social relationships of dominance and resistance are formed when ‘legitimate’ power is given to one element which attempts to control the other” (Collins, 1991, p. 128). Applying this to the history of Blacks in North America, O’Neal (1999) argues that this group has been “normalized as the “Other” (p. 129). In contrast to such external aspects of ethnic identity, internal aspects of ethnic attachment are not so visible in that they belong solely to the mind (Reitz & Sklar, 1997). This relative invisibility results in discrimination that is based on such internal aspects of ethnic attachment receiving fewer penalties in social or work situations (Reitz & Sklar, 1997).

The idea of “the other” is not just an individual-level prejudice, but is a pattern that exists in government policies. Li (1994) has found that in Canada, unfair distribution of funding towards arts and minority cultures have created two separate worlds of art. One is the dominant European and American art and culture and the other is “marginal, folkloric and low-status multicultural circle of immigrants and visible minorities” (p. 366). Financial support to the minority group is very different to that of the dominant culture; with the emphasis on “sensationalizing remote foreign cultures and to highlight the distinctiveness of
distant lands" (p. 381). The ethnic definition in Canada is so focused on “ancient cultures” and “cultural novelty” that the preservation of different cultures has only magnified differences between the dominant group and “the other” (Li, 1994, p. 381).

Discrimination and prejudice varies between groups. Research shows that racial or ethnic minorities are placed on a desirability scale based on their ethnic roots. Porter's (1965) _Vertical Mosaic_ asserts that a social hierarchy based on ethnicity exists in Canada. He argues that not all groups are perceived equally and that this is reflected in the manner in which power and economic success remains in the hands of a few. At the top of the pyramid are people of British origin who experience the most success. People whose origins are from other parts of Europe come next. At the bottom of Porter's _Vertical Mosaic_ are people from other parts of the world. A recent study by Li (2000) lends support to the view that people from visible minorities such as Blacks, East Asians, and South Asians are perceived and treated as socially less desirable than those of European decent. This preference occurs when the dominant culture is Eurocentric and any deviation from the Eurocentric mainstream will result in individual's experiencing disadvantages (Reitz and Sklar, 1997, p. 235). In other words, non-European immigrants who hold on to their ethnic identities and cultures tend to create increased social distance and become isolated from the mainstream. This explanation partially indicates why European immigrants assimilate faster than non-European immigrants.
Many studies on workplace boundaries have confirmed that certain barriers are deeply inherent in people's ideologies of "classes, communities, working groups, genders and other classifications" (Epstein, 1989, p. 571). These boundaries are accepted as a way of social order and help to define "the self" (Epstein, 1989, p. 572). Gatekeepers create boundaries sometimes unconsciously through their habits and other times consciously using words to exert power and control (Epstein, 1989). The dutiful feeling of keeping "others" out is believed to be justified and a normal part of culture (Epstein, 1989).

Looking at the effects of social hierarchy in the workplace, it predicts that immigrants of visible minority would experience hindrances to employment success. For example, if Pakistanis are ranked lower on the social hierarchy than Germans, then if both applicants were to apply to the same job and have equal qualifications, the German applicant would get the job. This shows that if employers and decision makers are discriminating based on physical appearance and the stereotypes attached to them, then an immigrants' success is greatly affected by their social desirability. This certainly proves that life chances are not equal as Canada claims to offer, but rather, a reality that shows that being "foreign" has its consequences.

Focusing specifically on the actual economic outcomes in the workplace, Reitz and Sklar (1997) compared the earnings of Europeans immigrants and immigrants of ethnic minorities. They found that when comparing the two groups while holding all other factors the same, racial minorities experienced close to 13% disadvantage in net earnings. Minorities such as Blacks and Asians make
less than European immigrants (Li, 2000). When compared to native born Canadians, immigrants of racial minorities are found to consistently earn less income, while Europeans were found to be making equivalent income levels of the native born (Li, 2000). There are also differences in relation to genders. Foreign men of a racial minority makes $3100-$7100 less per year, and women make significantly less, approximately $6100-8200/year (Li, 2000). Overall, being non-white and having immigration status while controlling for education, showed disadvantages in the workplace, but being a female immigrant of a racial minority is the most handicapping (Li, 2000). These numbers prove that even though Canada is accepting of people from different cultures and backgrounds, racial prejudices and lack of opportunities still persists in the workplace. Skin colour and appearance is highly correlated to earning levels. Given that there are gatekeepers in the employment arena, there are significant economic consequences if one is not “Canadian-ized”.
IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT AND CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

Given the reality of Canadian society and the hardships in breaking cultural boundaries, the inability to successfully create positive impressions can be detrimental to the economic success of immigrants. Behaviours that are different from the host country, is seen as “deviant or deficient in terms of communication style” (Bilbow, 1997, p. 463), and racial differences make it even more challenging in social and work settings. This confirms the need to appear “less different” and “less foreign” so to match the opportunities that are the same as the native born Canadian of ethnic minorities. By visually appearing more like the in-group and less of an outsider, it can ease the transition of immigrants into the same playing field as others. I propose that through the use of impression management techniques, immigrants will be able to communicate an identity that would minimize social boundaries and increase opportunities and success in labour market integration. In the next section, I review the ideas behind impression management and explain its importance in the workplace.

Social psychologist Goffman (1959) broke grounds with his seminal work, “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.” Goffman (1959) discusses how in social interactions, individuals are constantly putting on a mask and playing roles in order to present themselves positively. He explains that it is through role playing that people get to know one another and learn about themselves. This
process is done either consciously or subconsciously. A person can act in such a way that meets the expectations of the audience. For instance, a teenager can act apologetically and remorsefully because he knows that is what his parents want to see; behaviours that shows he understands his actions and will not offend again. The teenager’s behaviour would therefore be a conscious mask used to manipulate the situation to get his desired outcome (i.e. his parents to leave him alone). On the other hand, the changing of masks can be unconscious in that a person’s behaviour may not have been well thought out and planned. However, everyone act in accordance to social norms because of possible social sanctions. Goffman (1959) puts in clearly, “When an individual appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation” (p. 15). It is through our masks and the belief in our role that it becomes a part of one’s personality (Goffman, 1959). “We come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons” (Pg. 20). In other words, how we see ourselves is very much dictated by how others see us. In our performances and role playing, we act in a certain way to gain social acceptance, and depending on how others treat us, it affirms and shapes our identity.

Since Goffman’s study on personal performances in social interactions, his theory has led many others to offer insight on the classifications of self-presentation or impression management. The two terms are used synonymously throughout the literature, but in this article, I will use the term impression management. Zaidman (2001) defines impression management as “any behaviour by the individual attempting to control or manipulate others attributions
Impression management occurs when a person wishes to create and maintain a specific identity. This goal is achieved by strategically exhibiting behaviours, both verbal and non-verbal, that will lead others to view the actor as more desirable” (p. 671). The idea that acting and behaving in a certain manner can effectively influence the reaction and treatment by others has spawned a variety of research into personality, and implications at the workplace. Studies have looked at how impression management techniques can affect interview outcomes (Tsai, Chen, & Chiu, 2005) to the ability of expatriates to integrate into a host country (Montaglioni & Giacalone, 1998) and among others. In this article, I examine how the management of impressions can influence economic mobility in terms of promotion and increase in wages.

Based on a variety of research, it has been found that individuals who have mastered the art of impression management are “able to project appropriate impressions in a wide range of situations, and have common traits that include self-monitoring skills, self-consciousness and conformity” (Bilbow, 1997, p 463). Because individuals who are projecting the signals cannot perfectly predict the response of another person, the only way for them to know if they have succeeded in sending the right signals (or failed) is by reading the social cues and reactions from the viewer (Bilbow, 1997). In some circumstances, it may be easy. For example, a person makes a joke in an attempt to appear funny and witty at a party. But if no one laughs, the immediate negative response from the ‘audience’ has confirmed that the communication style was not effective in delivering his intention (trying to appear funny and
witty). This act of reviewing and being aware of others' reactions and adjusting one's behaviour accordingly is called self-monitoring.

Individuals who are recognized as having high self-monitoring skills are able to change their identity (the way they are perceived by others) through their use of verbal, non-verbal communication and their way of dress (Kilduff & Day, 1994). These high self monitors are very conscious of how others perceive them and have an almost innate desire for others to accept them (Kilduff & Day, 1994). As a result, they become like “chameleons”, able to change their self-presentation to maximize their social acceptance, to gain rapport and the like (Kilduff & Day, 1994, p. 1047). Through successful readings of social cues or messages from others, they are able to adapt themselves to a variety of instances. Kilduff (1994) found that those who are able to adapt more readily in a believable way, are found to change jobs more frequently which in all cases, resulted in higher wages. Also, the high self monitors that stayed within the same company experienced more internal promotions (Kilduff & Day, 1994).

Low self monitors on the other hand, describe themselves as “staying true to themselves” and “I am who I am, they either like it or not” (Kilduff & Day, 1994). This lack of skill and desire to be flexible in identity creation is what makes one ineffective in their impression management. Comparing these two groups, the low self monitors did not experience the same economic benefits that the high self monitors did (Kilduff & Day, 1994).

In addition to the ability to put on different hats and play different roles, there are other aspects of impression management that increase the likelihood of
promotion and higher wages. Many people believe that in order to move up in
the corporate ladder, one only needs to be competent in their work and have a
track record of experience. But to many, it comes as a surprise when an external
new hire takes on a managerial opening in a company even though there may be
many internal candidates that have more knowledge or experience in the
company. Research has shown that when it comes to management and
leadership positions, hiring criteria is based less on traditional qualifications
(Waldinger & Lichter, 2003) and education was found to carry very little weight.
They found that aspects of responsibility, leadership, and “perspective” became
key indicators (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003). Other research confirm these
findings and conclude that promotion in corporations go beyond successful
performance on the job to “social presentability, visibility, organizational
demeanor and political skill,” (Heisler & Gemmill, 1978, p. 1048). This is not to
undermine hard work or level of education, but promotion is highly dependant on
the perception of managerial ability (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003). This is where
impression management comes in. The ability to communicate that one is
credible as an authority figure would therefore lead to increase opportunities in
leadership roles (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003). So being a leader translates to a
need to “look and act the part”, because others have expectations of what a
leader should look and act like. Furthermore, it is because we function in a
“role-governed society and people try to make their social images conform as
closely as possible to prototypic characteristics of the role theory they are playing
(leader, minister, police officer, teacher, etc.)" (Zaidman & Drory A., 2001, p. 674).
TOOLS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT: DRESS AND ETIQUETTE

In the previous sections, I reviewed various studies that demonstrate that appropriate and successful impression management in the workplace results in promotions, attainment of leadership roles and job changes that earn higher wages. Building on the foundation of identity formation and the use of impression management, I now focus on two aspects of impression management: dress and business etiquette. The reason these two areas are chosen is mainly because of its universal applicability (one needs to be dressed/clothed in social interaction and business etiquette is the social interaction between people at work). As well, these are two areas of impression management that are first to be judged (what you wear and how you act) and therefore weighs heavily on first impressions. They can also be seen as props for achieving the desired role and is an integral part of “an act”. At the same time, dress and business etiquette is a learned skill and can therefore be adopted quickly.

Many studies have proven that appearance management is a tool that can be used to manage others’ impressions. Findings have shown that those who spend time in managing their appearance have found that clothing made a difference in their ability to gain respect, achieve higher credibility and better able to play their role in the workplace (Peluchette, Karl, & Rust, 2006). Research
also supports that clothing greatly affects how “one is perceived by others and clothing wearers can use their attire decisions to influence the impressions formed in the workplace” (Peluchette, Karl, & Rust, 2006, p. 46). Fashion and dress have been known to symbolize socially acceptable behaviour, and can signal good taste and social class. Etiquette is another other form of impression management which proves to support good breeding, sociability and can represent awareness and understanding of a system of behaviours that are acceptable.

Studies on dress and the body are not new. Traditionally, it has been argued that dress puts cultural meaning to the body and by abiding to social codes, the body will not be “ridiculed or scorned” (Entwistle, 2000, p. 324). In North America, children are socialized and even at a young age they desire to be accepted, to make friends and not to be an outcast. During the teenage years, boys and girls become very aware of their appearance as they learn that looking a certain way categorizes them either into the “cool” or “uncool” group. Brand recognition as well as certain styles begins to represent their identity. And many parents can agree to the struggles of letting their teenager find themselves through their clothing choices (i.e. Gothic look, Rocker etc.) Taken these behaviours and fears into adulthood, many find themselves judging and ridiculing others for their poor clothing choices. Clothing and dress visually signals whether one has abided by certain social and moral rules. For example, dressing inappropriately (i.e. too casual) at a formal business event can make one feel very self conscious, lower confidence levels and make one feel
insecure. Women in particular have a deeper understanding of the use of clothing and the consequences that result if she disobeys social rules (Entwistle, 2000). Wearing a short skirt or revealing clothing is acceptable at a bar, but in the boardroom, such clothing choices would elicit comments and glances from men and women alike, and jeopardize her credibility (skills, intelligence, job experience etc.). This is a clear example that at a bar, it is a socially acceptable code of dress but would be offensive in a business setting. This very same principal is used by many women who will not go to see a client without first putting on a suit jacket because of the authority it represents (Entwistle, 2000). In many ways, we are socialized to an unconscious level to care about our dress and ensure that we have abided by certain unspoken guidelines. When one fails to meet the expectations, there is a sense of failure and even shame. One may feel that the body has failed in delivering or communicating “the self” (p. 339) and the clothing, which is an extension of the body has failed to represent who we are. Entwistle (2000) explains that the feeling that our clothing has failed us is like “finding our fly down in public, discovering stains on our clothes or having dreams where you find yourself naked in public” (p. 338). The result is embarrassment and awkwardness in a social setting. It is important to note that no one is excluded from these social pressures. Even those who claim they do not care (i.e. style, brands or fashion), are aware of dress related “rules”. For instance, even those who do not care will consciously choose to wear clean clothes to work or risk others thinking that he is dirty or unkept. Likewise, those who are part of the “sub-culture” have their own sense of dress that dictates what
Dress as discussed by Entwistle (2000) is a form of impression management. Since our dress is a part of a micro-level social interaction, it is connected to one’s sense of self (Goffman, 1959). Dress becomes an expression of personal identity. Because certain social situations demand norms on us, we therefore learn how to present our identity through acceptable ways of dress (Entwistle, 2000). The questioning of norms in different social situations is one example. These include, “Is there a dress code? What activities will we be participating in? Do we want to stand out or blend in?” (Entwistle, 2000) Clothing and dress visually show our intentions and shape how others read us; it is a means in which we understand identities and to make sense of things uncertain (Entwistle, 2000).

Looking deeper into the specifics tools of dress, the most powerful form of business dress for men has been the business suit. The theory behind the suit is that it covers the sexual parts of a man, to only reveal his face and hands (Entwistle, 2000). In essence, the clothing has concealed the body, making the man transcend beyond a sexual being to an effective means of production (Entwistle, 2000). Similarly, as women moved toward the workforce, leaving traditional home roles to administrative support positions and now into management roles, their form of dress has also evolved (Entwistle, 2000). When women began entering traditional male dominated spheres, their form of dress adapted such that their clothing resembled that of a man’s (Entwistle, 2000). The
suit became a tool, which helped to minimize the women’s body and its sexual association, therefore making the body more productive and professional (Entwistle, 2000). The suit, especially the jacket serves to conceal a woman’s breasts and thereby covering her body and “reduce sexual meanings” (Entwistle, 2000, p. 343).

A unique research on men’s use of clothing and body image assert the use of dress as a mechanism for managing one’s appearance (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). They argue that women have been primarily the focus since they are a group that has been assumed to have more pressures to conform to society’s ideal in beauty and body shape. However, even men have not been free from social pressures. Gender stereotypes discourage men to express outward interest in appearance and dress. Stigmas and labels such as “feminine” or “gay” (for heterosexual men) made it socially undesirable for men to care about their appearance (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). However, in the past 15 years, the “pressures to conform” have led men to use clothing to “change and manage their appearance so to fit cultural ideals” (Frith & Gleeson, 2004, p. 44). Hence, the manipulation of dress should not to be isolated as something that differs between cultures, but rather an area that exists even within the same culture and gender groups.

Studies in culture and consumption have found that with industrialization, an identity crisis has emerged and attention to “fashion and shopping has become an expression of modern social life especially in cities” (Zukin & Maguire, 2004, p. 174). Individuals who are oblivious to fashion are seen as
backwards, or less modern in contemporary society. This phenomenon has caused anxiety among men and women who now have the freedom to find and express themselves. Moreover, the increase in publications of self-help magazines, advise columns and others have led to “concepts of taste and lifestyle” that created new categories of people and things that are acceptable and unacceptable (Zukin & Maguire, 2004, p. 181). Looking specifically at the North American culture, dress is not dictated by religion, like woman wearing head scarves in Turkey. Rather fashion and the system itself is defined by current acceptable way of dress through tastes and trends (Entwistle, 2000, p. 338). These subtle differences exist as a means to differentiate the self and create boundaries between classes within the same society. Taste in dressing is one of these boundaries. Not only does clothing and dress signal one’s identity to others, it is a means in which one experiences the world (Entwistle, 2000). Those of the upper-middle class distinguish their belonging to a group by selecting and maintaining certain tastes in such things like clothing and dress (Bourdieu, 1984, Entwistle, 2000). For example, the middle-class desires designer names and one-of-a-kind pieces and they draw boundaries from others who choose to purchase knock-offs and mass produced designer look-alikes (Entwistle, 2000). Something as subtle as these can create boundaries between various classes and groups based on their clothing choices. Given this knowledge, any ignorance to appearance management techniques and dress can lead to negative impressions. As individuals are driven to “become what one
Another aspect of impression management is the proper "performance" in a business setting. In this section, I address the use of business etiquette as a means to communicate awareness of norms and conformity in behaviour. Furthermore, we argue that in addition to the use of dress, business etiquette is another tool that can be used to minimize cultural differences, and to signal high class behaviour. Thus, immigrants will be able to bridge gaps with those in the dominant culture who draw on cultural boundaries.

Business etiquette is defined as rules of behaviour that are founded on "organizational hierarchy, power and status" (Lazorchak, 2000, p. 100). According to Lazorchak (2000), examples of etiquette include "knowledge of proper business dining and entertaining; business communications including introductions, correspondence, conversation, telephone and electronic etiquette; appropriate professional dress; business gift-giving; networking; meeting and conference etiquette; and nonverbal communication such as posture, handshaking, and eye contact" (p. 100). The need for these skills has been extremely important for individuals in business settings because one is able to communicate greater credibility, increase productivity and better first impressions (Wederspahn, 1997). More importantly, it is based on these "cultural rules" that we make judgments on others and decide how we feel about someone (Wederspahn, 1997). For example, in North America, a firm handshake communicates confidence and capability. Thus, in a first meeting, if a man...
shakes another man’s hand and it is weak and limp; the message that is communicated is a feeling of insecurity and lack of confidence. That perception can leave a lasting impression and can be lethal in a professional circle.

Similarly, if someone eats with their mouth open in Canada, the person would be seen as rude and uneducated.

Meals are likely one social setting that is universal because it is an activity in which relationships are built and formed. Many meetings and business deals are conducted over meals and poor table manners can leave a bad aftertaste. Recruiters often take candidates out for a meal where they are informally evaluated on their ability to present themselves in a social setting, their adaptability; and thus how they will represent the company (Lazorchak, 2000). It is important to note that culture plays a significant role in defining the social do’s and don’ts (Lazorchak, 2000). Something that is acceptable to one group can be seen as negative to another. As mentioned previously, eating with one’s mouth open is perceived as poor manners, but to some, eating while making loud slurping noises is a sign that the food is very enjoyable. Hence, business etiquette is especially useful for immigrants who arrive to the country with a different set of values. It is in part a re-socialization process, but more importantly, it empowers immigrants to overcome the social hierarchy in which they are placed and the stereotypes that come with it. For example, if Sri Lankis are low on the social hierarchy scale, and are considered “low class” by the dominant group, having good business etiquette eases work relationships and eliminates racial prejudices for that individual. He will be able to overcome and
stand above the rest by demonstrating cultural awareness, adaptability and good breeding. Consequently, the dominant group will not actively exclude him because he is socially adept.
Impression management is especially important to immigrants because they are crippled by invisible barriers in the workplace. It is a known fact that immigrants struggle to translate their foreign work and education experience when seeking employment in Canada. However, what makes it worse is that they encounter social exclusion due to racial and cultural prejudices (Reitz & Sklar, 1997). Even though institutions have created policies to prevent outright discrimination to immigrants and those belonging to racial minorities, prejudices on a personal level still exists. This barrier inevitably leads to the inability of immigrants to attain social and cultural capital, which is by far more important than human capital (Reitz & Sklar, 1997).

Looking at how the mainstream society views immigrants in the workplace, a study on the segmented labour market in the United States reveal an interesting finding. In many cases, immigrants are not seen as valued citizens in society. However, as a group, they are preferred by employers when trying to fill low paying positions (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003). Oftentimes, it is the dominant group’s feeling of entitlement that somehow makes low paying jobs not good enough for them, but good enough for immigrants (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003). In the eyes of the employer, they choose to hire immigrants on the basis that they are more hard working than their native born counterparts (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003). It is a common belief that immigrants have more to lose if they do
not work (i.e. unemployment) and regardless of what they are doing in the host country, it is better than back home. To make matters worse, racial minority immigrants are unlikely to be seen as people of influence in the workplace (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003). This is a very important factor because promotion is often based on perceived leadership qualities. Because it is not highly dependent on hard skills or educational qualifications, misguided perceptions of an immigrant’s abilities are detrimental. These ideas and attitudes are therefore hindering immigrant success in the labour market.

As discussed in previous sections, the lack of credibility and influence in the workplace has significant consequences on the economic mobility of all employees. However, given the additional struggles that immigrants encounter, the question then is: how can immigrants especially those of racial minority, influence the way the dominant culture perceives them? How do they minimize barriers so to attain economic gains in the workplace? Part of the answer lies in the application of impression management. Through the use of dress and etiquette, immigrants can gain control of an otherwise unequal relationship through influence and strategic communication. They can create an identity that allows them to access gated circles within the mainstream society. And by doing so, it increases their opportunities of developing greater social ties and cultural capital.

Looking deeper into the strategic use of dress, if clothing is "a means by which individuals orientate themselves to the social world" and dress is how the self is presented; the implications of selecting the appropriate dress is vital
(Entwistle, 2000, p. 344). This is especially true for immigrants and those of ethnic minorities who need to ensure that their identity is one that they wish to portray and one that matches the expectations and desires of the workplace. Clothing visually communicates one's intentions and categorizes identities to help us understand the world (Entwistle, 2000). Oftentimes, immigrants arrive to a new country with a suitcase of clothing that is different in fashion and style. This can be a first signal that communicates a lack of awareness to a country's culture and way of life (i.e. taste and lifestyle) and thus categorizes one as "foreign". These visual differences promote categorization of people, boundary setting and even stereotyping.

Clothing in the workplace works in a similar manner. Guidelines such as business casual and professional dress partly manage individual behaviour, establish roles and create a consistent corporate message (Peluchette et al., 2006). Furthermore, Montagliani & Giacalone (1998) assert that it is through the embodiment of these roles that one acts accordingly to meet social cues and expectations. Clothing becomes a tool that can assist in role expectation and formation at work (Peluchette et al., 2006), and a tool for immigrants to communicate their integration into corporate and social culture.

Business etiquette is another form of impression management that is also extremely important for newcomers to Canada. Being able to behave appropriately based on acceptable guidelines allows immigrants to transcend cultural barriers and to speak the same language. It helps to clarify role playing at work, decode social interactions and most importantly, eliminate
misunderstandings. By adopting behaviours that are viewed positively by the dominant culture, immigrants create positive impressions, likeability and minimize the idea of “otherness”.
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The aim of this paper is to understand the reality of the situation in which immigrants encounter when relocating to Canada. Instead of arriving to a country that is all accepting and job opportunities are endless, immigrants come head-to-head against “glass doors”. They are unable to access good jobs and obtain leadership positions in the corporate arena because of several factors. Initially, it was believed that immigrants lacked English skills and education but this explanation is inadequate. Since the adoption of the point system in 1967, the criteria for entrance into Canada have generated a group of highly educated and skilled group of immigrants. Yet, the lack of job opportunities and promotion persists. Immigrants who have high levels of post-secondary education are being depreciated, often demoted compared to what they were doing back home.

Another explanation for the mismatch of education and job opportunity is the lack of social capital. Immigrants come into a new country without any contacts and therefore unable to access mainstream jobs and tap into an unadvertised labour market. They mainly rely on kinship ties and others like themselves who have been excluded from mainstream society. They do not know “someone on the inside”. As a result, immigrants working in an ethnic economy are very prevalent. The results are often lower wages and an increase separation from the dominant culture.
Finally, an immigrants' lack of cultural capital is used to explain poor employment opportunities and low economic mobility. It is said that because immigrants arrive to a new country without the resources and know-how of the dominant group, they are excluded socially. Their difference in values, attitudes, lifestyle and habits reinforces these boundaries and thus, immigrants are unable to build social networks with the dominant group.

To make matters worse, immigrants face racism and prejudice against their cultural background. Studies have shown that Canada is not all accepting and multiculturalism is nothing but a façade. One-third of the public expresses an unwillingness to accept non-whites as an “integral component of Canada” (Li, 1994). Canadians have also expressed their desire for immigrants to assimilate into the dominant culture, and believe that if immigrants should maintain their cultural background, economic consequences are justified (Reitz & Sklar, 1997). A racial hierarchy also exist in Canada. Immigrants of British and European background are preferred; while ethnic minorities are at the bottom of the barrel and they experience lower wages and social segregation (Porter, 1965). Given this reality, I propose that impression management is the means in which immigrants can minimize their differences as foreigners and gain access to the dominant group. Research has shown that dress and business etiquette are two forms of impression management strategies that can be used to influence other’s perceptions and attitudes. The use of dress effectively enables one to better perform in their role at work and increase confidence. Likewise, appropriate business etiquette is the “social lubricant” (Lazorchak, 2000, p. 102) in building
relationships. By understanding the cultural meaning behind the do's and don'ts of behaviours in the workplace, immigrants can begin to share values and attitudes of the dominant group. The goal is not to change one's identity, but to use dress and etiquette as a means to communicate the idea of "sameness" with the dominant group.

The question that remains is how immigrants can develop an ideal identity. Research has shown that image consultancy is an industry built on the concept of identity management. They are a group of professionals who specializes in the "construction of socially accepted or preferred forms of identity" (Wellington & Bryson, 2001, p. 933) and they offer "advice on the production and transmission of personal signified and signifiers" (p. 936). One group that seeks the services of image consultants is professionals experiencing job changes or promotions. Their need is to perfect their personal packaging; to communicate more credibility, authority and capability at the workplace. Other groups include public figures, business owners and women in management. Given the current use of image consultants, further research can determine the effectiveness in which ethnic minorities can benefit from having specialized help in developing an identity that is adaptable to the Canadian workplace. It can be said that the ability for one to manage their identity through "looks, they way (one) sounds and present themselves" is the key to projecting a positive identity (Wellington & Bryson, 2001, p. 936).

Another aspect that needs more in depth research is the effects of one's knowledge and cultural background in intercultural perception. Research has
shown that due to the cultural differences in impression management, what is aggressive or assertive behaviour in one context may be seen as manipulative in another (Bilbow, 1997). One’s impression management style is dependent upon the individual’s “socio-cultural environment, i.e. status, gender, ethnicity, language proficiency, personality, age, level of education etc.” and is influenced by their “first culture” (Bilbow, 1997, p. 465) Therefore, cultural differences influence the perceiver of impression management techniques as well as influencing the behaviour of the communicator (Bilbow, 1997). By understanding how perceptions are interpreted, intercultural communication can facilitate easier transitions for immigrants to a new country and help to increase effective communication in today's highly diverse workplaces.
REFERENCE LIST


Entwistle, J. Fashion and the fleshy body: Dress as embodied practice. 2000, 4(3)


University Press.

monitoring on managerial careers. *Academy of Management Journal, 37*(4)

Press.


the global business environment. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences,
92*(1), 100.

Canadians. *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 37*(3)

Montaglioni, A., & Giacalone, R. A. (1998). Impression management and cross-

O'Neal, G. S. (1999). The power of style: On rejection of the accepted. In
Johnson, Kim K. P., & S. Lennon (Eds.), *Appearance and power* (pp. 127-
139)Johnson & Lennon(Eds).


