

Cultural Capital during Migration—A Multi-level Approach to the Empirical Analysis of Labor Market Integration amongst Highly Skilled Migrants

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migration, cultural capital, status passage, highly qualified migrants, narrative interviews, documentary method, country comparison, labor market

Abstract: The integration of highly qualified migrants into the labor market can be an opportunity for knowledge societies because their prosperity depends on the incorporation and improvement of cultural capital. In this paper we present a qualitative research approach with which we analyze on several levels how migrants make use of their cultural capital during their entry into the labor market: in addition to the biographical experience of migrants we analyze how this experience is embedded in milieus, social networks and self-organizations (meso-level) and structured by the macro-level of judicial regulations of immigration and labor market policies.

Our empirical analysis is focused by the assumed importance of educational qualification and residence status during entry into the labor market. Four different groups of empirical cases, which differ with respect to the level of education, the place of its acquisition (at home or abroad) as well as to their residence status, are compared to each other. In order to study the contingencies of meso and macro-social contexts, labor-market integration will be examined in the context of Germany as well as in Canada, Great Britain and Turkey.

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1. Introduction

Modern knowledge societies are highly dependent on securing and utilizing cultural capital. Recently the public discourse on the demographic changes in Germany and the need to bring in highly qualified migrants, have highlighted the importance of the recognition and utilization of cultural capital. In the international arena, the importance of cultural capital can be seen in terms of the competition for highly skilled migrants. The success of states in attracting highly skilled migrants and utilizing their cultural capital is—at least from the perspective of immigrant societies—perceived as a central element in generating economic innovation and prosperity. [1]

Paradoxically, the integration of migrants within the labor market is often an explicit political aim of societies; however it is difficult to achieve in practice. Highly qualified migrants are often employed in jobs and employment fields for which they are unqualified or overqualified. Classical immigrant societies have historically (and still have) difficulties in guaranteeing easy access to the labor market. Even in traditional immigrant societies, highly qualified migrants are often employed in less qualified jobs, resulting in an increase in the income gap between migrants and the native-born population. These results can be seen not only in terms of economic problems but also in terms of political consequences: immigration will only have a positive impact on the receiving country's economy and social system and will gain broad acceptance among the existing population, if the integration of migrants into the labor market is successful and if their education and experience can be utilized effectively within the receiving society. [2]

The aims of the international research project "Cultural Capital during Migration. On the Importance of Educational Qualifications and Status Passages into the Labor Market"¹ can be described as follows: it focuses on the utilization of the cultural capital of migrants in the labor market taking into account micro, meso and macro social factors. The argument of this research builds on a critical analysis of dominant research questions (Part 2). Thus far the success and failure of the integration of highly qualified migrants into the labor market has been explained only to a certain extent. The third part discusses the central concepts relating to cultural capital and status passages. By using approaches found in the education, social inequality and migration literature and integrating them within an interdisciplinary perspective, we are trying to integrate thus far isolated research traditions. The central aspects of this research are discussed in part four, in which a research design connects micro, meso and macro social approaches. Based on narrative interviews, group discussions and country studies as well as multiple comparisons, this research group examines the complex relationship between macro structural (in particular the political) conditions of labor market integration on the one hand, and the individual and collective action strategies and orientations of migrants on the other. [3]

1 This international research project is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, since July 2005. For more information see <http://culturalcapital.uvic.ca> as well as NOHL, SCHITTENHELM, SCHMIDTKE and WEISS (2004).

2. Dominant Research Questions and Approaches in the Integration of Migrants into the Labor Market

A review of the existing empirical research on the integration of migrants into the labor market needs to be based upon international findings as German findings are limited in their application. The German data is often limited to specific nationalities (for example the social-economic *Panel*), or the "representative" census data fails in representing highly qualified migrants (BRIEDS & MINKS, 2004). By focusing on citizenship they fail to include later cohorts of migrants and re-settlers of German origin (*Spätaussiedler*). [4]

Comparatively, international data and analyses are clearly broader and more differentiated. In the case of the Canadian debate, the research interests focus on the institutional factors, which are seen as being responsible for the greater success of the integration of migrants into the Canadian society and labor market over recent decades, than is the case in the United States (ANTECOL, COBB-CLARK & TREJO, 2000; REITZ & SOMERVILLE, 2004). Attention is given in particular to the causal effects of immigration and labor market policies.² [5]

In the last couple of years, however, research has shown that in comparison to the native-born population, immigrants' income and their success in the labor market has lagged behind, although the migrants' levels of education and the work experience obtained in their country of origin, have increased (FRENETTE & MORISETTE, 2003; [Statistics Canada](#)). Furthermore, in the Canadian case different migrant groups, in particular those in urban areas, have witnessed high poverty rates (KAZEMIPUR & HALLI, 2000). These developments have led researchers to ask, whether Canada is following the American model, and whether Canada has allowed for the development of structurally anchored forms of "racial disadvantage" and "ethnic underclass" (BOYD, 2002). [6]

When it comes to education qualifications and employment rates paradoxically, the German and Canadian cases are comparable. With a few exceptions (SZYDLIK, 1996; KONIETZKA & KREYENFELD, 2001) the German research in this area focuses on the unqualified and professionally skilled migrants and the integration of the second generation migrants. In Germany, the formal professional degree has a direct impact on entrance into employment, thus the disparities between participation in education and the chances of employment are perpetuated (SOLGA & KONIETZKA, 2000; KRUEGER, 2001). Nevertheless, the clear improvement in the educational degrees of younger migrants did not lead to an increase in their share of professional training (GRANATO, 2003). This can only partly be explained in that access to educational opportunities has become more limited in general and that for the native-born population the transition into the labor market has become more risky as well. Thus, the research has focused on the question of why teenagers/young adults that have an immigrant

2 Relevant studies are devoted for example to immigration politics, multiculturalism and bilingualism, national welfare programs, equity laws and anti-discrimination legislation as well as education politics (CASTLES & MILLER, 2003; PORTES & RUMBAUT, 2001; MASSEY et al., 1998; REITZ, 1998, 2001; BORJAS, 1999; ABU-LABAN, 1999).

background and have a comparable education and legal status have greater difficulties in accessing vocational training (WILPERT, 1993; SCHITTENHELM, 2005a; GRANATO, 2003; SEIBERT, 2005). The few research results on the "second threshold," i.e. the transition from the vocational training into the job market (BENDER & SEIFERT, 1996; KONIETZKA & SEIBERT, 2003), have shown that young men with an immigrant background are more likely to be unemployed after a vocational training than the native-born population. They also tend to change companies or their job more often. Even though there are some biographical studies on highly qualified second generation migrants available (compare for example KARAKAŞOĞLU, 2000; GUTIERREZ RODRIGUEZ, 1999; POTT, 2002; NOHL, 2001a, pp.192ff), not a lot of research has been conducted on the transition into the labor market (with the exception of OFNER, 2003). [7]

The main approaches in this field include qualitative case studies and more often (statistical) quantitative research, which have shown complex cause and effect relationships between the integration of migrants and personal factors such as: educational background; origin; the recognition of educational qualifications; employment experience; language skills; age; gender; and, place of residence (GREEN, 1999; SCHAAFSMA & SWEETMAN, 2001). Rarely has a systematic combination of quantitative analysis with qualitative studies been tried in life-course research (KELLE & ERZBERGER, 1999). The predominance of quantitative research designs has consequences for the construction of the research subject. It is difficult to examine complex relationships between a number of variables (RAGIN, 1997) or to conduct multi-level analysis (ROKKAN, 1972), even with a large number of cases. The last point is important if one wants to get an insight into the influences of meso-structural factors, such as social networks or symbolic exclusion, and if one wants to go beyond the examination of the statistical relationship between individual attributes and governmental institutions. [8]

From the point of view of social theory, one has to question the idea behind the statistical analyses³, according to which the process of the individual's integration (with the characteristics described or expressed in terms of variables) is directly related to the macro-social structure (which is also expressed in terms of variables). Individualization, as well as system theories question whether the idea of a relatively uniform collective and a related concept of integration reflect the reality of modern societies (BECK, 1986; NASSEHI, 1997). In functionally differentiated societies, one cannot assume that the inclusion of a person in a subsystem would necessarily bring about the person's inclusion in another. Thus, the labor market is to be seen in terms of a social subsystem, which follows a specific logic of inclusion. This concept strongly diverges from the idea that integration entails the recognition of ethnically identified individuals in society as a whole. The analysis of status passages that is proposed here can help in the understanding of inclusion in different subsystems and how they are related in different life cycles. Thereby the research design can shed light on unorthodox and paradoxical developments in this process. [9]

3 For an essential critique see TILLY (1998, pp.30ff.).

However, the ideas of societal integration should not be dismissed entirely. On the one hand it can be assumed that labor market integration has far reaching consequences for the societal perception of migration (BAUBOECK, 1999; FREEMAN, 1995; HAMMAR, 1990, 2001; HATTON & WILLIAMSON, 1998; HOLLIFIELD, 2000). If this is related then to the social opportunities, one finds a drop in migrants' income and employment security. This also has an impact on a migrant's integration, social status and recognition in the host country. In political discourse on the other hand, migrants' access to the various sub-systems, including those of the labor market, is dealt with in reverse (EDER, RAUER & SCHMIDTKE, 2004). Preliminary empirical results show that discrimination and symbolic exclusion are important elements in the integration of migrants into the labor market. One of the highlights of this empirical study is the symbolic exclusion that needs to be examined in a differentiated way at the meso-structural level focusing on social group formation and self-organization. [10]

In the Canadian case, one finds a number of studies that utilize labor market data, and examine/compare migrants and "visible minorities" in the labor market to the entire population (PENDAKUR & PENDAKUR, 2002). The results of these studies explain the various forms of disparities and disadvantages faced by migrants; however, they cannot explain the underlying mechanisms of this particular phenomenon. In the few German contributions on discrimination, inequalities are related to human capital; however, the statistical analysis cannot explain fully how the differences and inequalities are created in the first place (GRANATO & KALTER, 2001). The "skill underutilization" hypothesis (GRANT, 1999; REITZ, 2001), where migrants' real labor value, according to their education levels and productivity (AYDEMIR & SKUTERUD, 2005) is not recognized (for example because of non-recognition of credentials⁴), has only found little interest in Germany (SZYDLIK, 1996).⁵ Generally speaking, qualitative studies and case analyses on discrimination are an exception (see for example, LI, 1998, 2001), characterized by a gap between journalistic reports (that center on the debates around single cases) and academic analysis (that almost exclusively focuses on statistical analysis). The study between the relationship of status passages and their meso and macro social contexts, allows for the observation of the consequences of symbolic exclusion for migrants' integration into the labor market. However, migrants are not simply the object of meso and macro-structural contexts; they also shape them. In this respect, one has to take into account migrants' self organizational skills, such as the formation of social networks, and the related meanings and different forms of coping strategies adopted for facilitating the integration into the labor market. [11]

It should have become clear that individual and collective interpretations of reality are not enough to provide an adequate understanding of the status passages into the labor market. The social status of migrants and the utilization of their

4 Both authors point out that as a result the Canadian economy loses 2 billion dollars each year.

5 Experimental investigations on the topic of discrimination are rarely carried out. They can better account for discrimination; however, they also do not provide an explanation for the development, the mechanisms and the consequences of discrimination (GOLDBERG & MOURINHO, 1995).

educational degrees during their transition into the labor market are not only dependent on the migrants' actions. The options available to migrants also depend on opportunity structures in the labor market. Given the proposed research, it is important to find methodological approaches to the micro-, meso- and macro social aspects of status passages, and to re-construct the relationships between them. [12]

3. The Utilization of Cultural Capital during Migration

The following sections will introduce the central concepts of this study. We are examining the utilization of cultural capital (3.1) during the status passage into the labor market (3.2). Based on the definitions of the central concepts, the fourth part will focus on the methodological operationalization of these reflections. [13]

3.1 Cultural capital and migration

The cultural capital theory established by BOURDIEU provides an analytical approach for the reproduction of social inequality within highly individualistic societies, which enables us to capture the differences in migrants' positions within the social structure and their habitual disposition. Capital theory describes the position of social groups within a social space structured by economic, cultural and social structures of inequality (BOURDIEU, 1982). Within these structures, the *Habitus* and thus the everyday actions are structured or defined by the relative position of a group. [14]

For the recognition of cultural capital during migration, the form of cultural capital is significant. With institutionalized cultural capital (such as educational titles) the recognition can be formalized. The national organization for education normally stipulates, however, that foreign-gained educational titles are not equal to national titles, or not at all recognized. Incorporated cultural capital (mental schemes and action orientation, language, value, competences), is tied to a particular person, who acquires these through long socialization and educational processes (BOURDIEU, 1983). If the incorporated and institutionalized cultural capital do not match within the native born population, the discrepancies articulated can be even greater in migrant populations. Migrants' cultural capital is often incorporated; however, it is not institutionally recognized (ESSER, 1996; BOMMES, 1999). For example, national professional organizations that are responsible for foreign degrees, expect "national credentials" or nationally structured carriers, and specific linguistic skills, so that the inclusion of migrants into the labor market and the education system in particular are at risk. The relationship between the "environment" in which cultural capital is utilized or recognized determines the value of the capital (WEISS, 2002). [15]

Institutionalized cultural capital is usually applied in national contexts, and its value or relevance diminishes through migration. Nevertheless, in some fields of specialization transnational labor markets exist, in which cultural capital regardless of where it was obtained, can be utilized (COE & BUNNELL, 2003). The social space, in which the value of cultural capital is recognized, does not

entirely correspond to the national territorial segmentation of the world. The recognition of cultural capital of the highly skilled within the transnational labor market depends on their profession. Thus, this study concentrates on educational and professional degrees in the fields of health care, intelligent technology and the economy which could, potentially, be utilized in various countries. [16]

Even if cultural capital is recognized as being institutionalized, its incorporated components can be diminished and seen as being foreign, as a result of migration. The *Habitus* evolves through the long term socialization process in the family, and the environment in the country of origin with respect to the educational institutions, so that it cannot be easily changed. This can be observed as feelings of "physical strangeness" between migrants and the native born population (BROESKAMP, 1993) or as habitual similarities within migrant milieus (NOHL, 2001a; SCHITTENHELM, 2001) that separate migrants from the native born population with respect to their respective *Habitus*.⁶ [17]

Where there is no transnational recognition of cultural capital and where the incorporated cultural capital of migrants is not institutionally recognized in the host country, symbolic struggles over the assessment of capital between migrants and the native born population can occur. It can be assumed that when migrants are successful in gaining economic, social and political capital, their negotiating positions in symbolic struggles improve and thus the assessment of their cultural capital will be to their advantage. The proposed analysis of the meso-social context for the utilization of cultural capital examines the expected meaning of symbolic struggles. The building of migrants' networks and self organizations, as well as the exclusion and discrimination by the majority, can be seen as negotiations about the (potential) value of cultural resources. Ethnic discrimination can become a negatively connoted component of symbolic capital and thus can decisively shape the symbolic value of cultural capital (WEISS, 2001). Symbolic struggles cannot only be found in the devaluation of cultural capital but also in the recognition of knowledge and abilities that might not have been utilized in the migrants' country of origin and that have become valuable during the migration process. [18]

Empirical research on the integration of highly skilled migrants into the labor market should not only examine formal professional titles, but also the incorporated components of cultural capital. One needs to examine which components of cultural capital are valuable (i.e. are recognized as being valuable) and can be transferred from one country to another during the migration process. If one inverts the argument, this leads to the question: what binds cultural capital to specific places, so that it devalues during migration? Is it determined by the attribution of ethnic and cultural difference or the attribution of underclass status, which mainly affects migrants without academic titles in Germany? Does the transfer of formal foreign educational titles fail? What roles do key qualifications have? Do such components of cultural capital make it easier to access the labor market even if the access is blocked through residency title? After all, in light of

6 One has to keep in mind that the observed habitual differences of migrants go along with class differences (that is with differences in economic capital).

the fact that cultural capital is dependent on recognition and can be revalued in symbolic struggles, one should ask how migrants distinguish individually and collectively: do we find a dominance of self marginalization strategies or do we find signs for an improved re-evaluation of culture-specific capital as well as the intercultural competences of migrants? Can one also observe the development of new cultural capital under the conditions of migration? [19]

In sum, cultural capital during migration is highly tied to time and space. Whatever was recognized before migration might no longer be accepted after migration to a new country. The dynamics of time and space determine the utilization of cultural capital, which can be studied in terms of status passages of migrants. [20]

3.2 The utilization of cultural capital in the status passages between professional degrees and the labor market

In the course of status passages, it is determined whether migrants can use their educational titles and their entire cultural capital respectively, or if they witness social exclusion in the education and professional system or a diminished status in integration. To appreciate the re-distribution and new distribution of status positions during a life course as well as the *process* of migrants' transition into the labor market, we are examining "status passages." [21]

In the German and international scholarship on life-course and education research (HEINZ, 1991; HAGESTAD, 1991; LEVY, 1991), status passages have been repeatedly given attention for good reasons. A number of examinations of the Bremen Collaborative Research Centre (*Sonderforschungsbereich*) (HEINZ, 2000; BORN & KRÜGER, 2001) focused on the social risks associated with status passages. Migrants have been mostly overlooked in these studies. In hindsight, the contribution of this research has been that among other things, the transitions in the education and professional processes were not only studied in terms of *factual sequences*, but also analyzed in terms of the socialization and developmental *experiences* (HEINZ, 1995) of the involved persons. Through the (at the time) intense discussions on the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods (KELLE & ERZBERGER, 1999, 2000), delimitations between life-course and biographical research were questioned and approaches and interconnections were sought instead (KLUGE & KELLE, 2001). [22]

Given this qualitative research perspective, a status transition is seen as a social process, *including* the interpretations and orientations of those involved, which becomes the object of the analysis (HOERNING, 1978). Through this, attention is paid to the education titles and biographically gained knowledge and skills of migrants. It is one advantage of such an approach to interpret an ill-fated professional status position in the world of employment no longer as a result of a possible professional choice analysis. Instead, the way persons deal with opportunity structures or sanctions is better understood. KRUEGER (1993) has for example repeatedly pointed out that the concentration of women in specific professions cannot be seen simply as a result of them having a specific

professional orientation, rather it is the result of them dealing with chances and opportunities that they find during those transitions. In the investigations of younger female migrants it was determined that the professions chosen correlate to options that are perceived to be attainable (WILPERT, 1993) or that the entrance into a profession was experienced in contradiction to one's own unrealizable professional interests (SCHITTENHELM, 2005a, b). [23]

A comparative analysis of the process of the status passages between education and profession reveals the conditions for an ascending and descending dynamic of the professional utilization of migrants' cultural capital. With that, the result of such a status passage is absolutely open. It can end, among other things, in a regular employment contract, leading to precarious employment, or it can end in business start-ups. With our research approach, we allow for the fact that the transitions between the educational attainment and the labor market will not always directly lead to a qualified employment. Increasing shares of migrants are not employed in long-term employment with social security entitlements (SEIFERT, 2000, p.69). For some migrant groups their residency status precludes them from having that type of employment. Furthermore, one also has to take into account gender oriented transition profiles which does not only relate to the question of care and family work. Other forms of existence also play a role, given that women are helping family members in the "ethnic economy" catering to ethnic communities (HILLMANN, 2000). [24]

Although education and professional careers have witnessed deregulation, they are not solely dependent on the migrants' individual planning and decision-making competences. The transition from university or a professional degree to the labor market represents an individual as well as a collective status passage (GLASER & STRAUSS, 1971; LEVY, 1991; SCHITTENHELM, 2005a, 2006), which is commonly experienced by the members of the same cohorts in the education process (HAGESTAD, 1991) or the same kind of migrants respectively. The structural identity between individual status passages is based on the collective integration of persons in a surrounding milieu (compare BOHNSACK, 2003, pp.111ff). As a "meso-social embedding form" (MATTHIESEN, 1998, p.22), the milieu links the micro social status passages with macro-social institutional framework conditions (HRADIL, 1992) found in employment and residency legislation. The course of these status passages is based not only on the individual educational career, but also on the utilization of cultural capital within the families (NAUCK, DIEFFENBACH & PETRI, 1998) and the entire environmental milieu (SCHITTENHELM, 2005a). The change in the societal contexts also has an effect on the status transitions during a life-course (ELDER, 1991), which is why the labor market access for the second and third generation migrants differs from the parent generation. [25]

When we examine status passages in terms of how adults with a migrant background are integrated in their milieus, it becomes clear that they have to overcome a number of status changes. In their case, therefore, we are talking about "multi-dimensional status passages" (SCHITTENHELM, 2005a). They

contain the following status changes, which must be related to our differentiated analytical levels: [26]

Similar to education and life-course research, which is based predominantly on a micro social level, the term "status passage" denotes the period of life during which the transition between the educational degree and the labor market takes place. For this transition, the level of the educational title is decisive. Depending on the respective biographical course, it may be necessary to deal with a status change relative to earlier generations. Also, the detachment from the social background and social mobility coincides with a transition in terms of a status change. [27]

With migration, status passages also encompass a transition between societies. In effect, a status change occurs due to one's own biography or through the family's transition between nation-states with their respective education systems and labor markets. A status change is experienced by migrants not only as a collective, but also results in the development of groups and milieus (compare NOHL, 2001a) or forms of political self-organization. [28]

Highly qualified migrants can be involved in a number of dimensions of individually and/or collectively undertaken status passage at the same time. With the help of a qualitative analysis, one can observe how the transition processes register in the day-to-day experiences, and thus appear in conversations and biographical narratives. With that, besides being able to reconstruct the factual sequence of transitional stations (jobs, internships or traineeships, phases of application, etc.), one can reconstruct coping processes of migrants as well as their consequences for the progression of the status passage. Thus our research design takes into account: (1) the micro social level of (individual) biographical experiences as well as the interactive negotiation of this transition in a collective framework; (2) forms of institutional and informal frameworks (for example milieu, social networks, common self-organization) of the transition on the meso-level; and, finally (3) nationally specific political and legal regulations for the access to (national) labor markets shaped by migration, integration and labor market politics at the macro-level. [29]

4. The Empirical Design of the Study: Comparative Analysis and the Development of a Typology

Given our broadly defined object of research, analysis on the micro, meso and macro level, country comparison and comparative study of different status groups, our research design generates a maximum of desired variance. This will allow us to engage in empirically grounded theory formulation (GLASER & STRAUSS, 1969) conceived in terms of qualitative experiment and discovery (KLEINING, 1991; KLEINING & WITT, 2001). In order to allow for inter- and transnational comparability the critical references to the subject of our research will be formulated to a large extent independent of national traditions and conceptual approaches. This refers to the concepts of cultural capital and status passage (see Section 3) and also to the selection of the sample that is not

focused on national-ethnic categories, as normally is the case in migration research, but on analytical considerations. [30]

4.1 Sampling and status groups

The design of our study focuses on the situation of migrants and in its analysis of status passages into the labor market takes into account different status groups: in particular we differentiate between persons with medium and high educational qualifications, between so-called *Bildungsinländer* (the group of indigenously trained persons whose last educational title was acquired after migrating) and *Bildungsausländer* (the group of foreign trained persons whose last educational title was acquired before migrating). Furthermore, we categorize groups with respect to their right of residence and legal access to the labor market. Formal legal equality means in this context that migrants have no legal problems with respect to their right of residence and work permit which would put them into a position of disadvantage compared to the native-born population. [31]

In the group of highly qualified *Bildungsinländer* with equal legal entitlements we include those migrants that hold an academic degree from the host country and can rely on an (almost) equivalent legal status in terms of their access to the labor market. With respect to the *Bildungsinländer*, who often stem from former recruitment countries, we find some structural particularities compared to native-born students but also to *Bildungsinländer* from other countries of origin: they come more often from homes with a lower educational background (KARAKAŞOĞLU-AYDIN & NEUMANN, 2001, p.64) and normally their parents' generation has been employed in the unskilled sector of the host country. In 2002/2003 only one-third of those studying in Germany with a foreign passport had a German high school certificate, while 71,9% came to Germany to attend a university only after their high school education (MIGRATIONSBERICHT, 2003, p.68). In the meantime, migrants who come to Germany to study also receive a work permit which is, however, restricted to their professional field. Hence we define a *Bildungsinländer*—somewhat at odds with a colloquial understanding of the German term—as those migrants who received their last educational title in the country. Thus we define this category as also comprising those who receive a post-secondary degree in the host country and not only those who complete a high school degree. [32]

The second group consists of highly qualified migrants with a foreign educational title acquired before migration and equal legal access to the labor market in the host country. The active recruitment of highly qualified migrants found considerable public attention in Germany pertaining to the Green-Card Debate; however, the recruitment was never conducted to the degree originally envisioned (SCHREYER & GEBHARDT, 2003). Often highly qualified *Bildungsausländer* come to Germany due to family re-union or under the categories of *Aussiedler* (ethnically German re-settlers) and contingent refugees. In particular *Aussiedler* have legal access to the labor market that is the same as the native-born population and their language abilities are subject to targeted programs of support. Still, this had not led to a form of labor market integration without its

problems (SEIFERT, 2000). The group of the *Aussiedler* highlights a problem that is of critical importance to our study group: on the one hand the cultural capital of this group (in particular academic degrees) is institutionally accepted in a relatively trouble-free fashion. On the other hand however, this does not necessarily mean that potential employers recognize this cultural capital as well (KONIETZKA & KREYENFELD, 2001). [33]

The third group in our comparison includes highly qualified *Bildungsausländer* with a *subordinate* legal status regulating access to the labor market. Those migrants have received their academic degrees abroad and are entitled to find employment only under highly restricted or illegal conditions in the host country. With regard to this status group we can see how the utilization of educational titles is closely related to the respective legal status. In Germany the group of *Bildungsausländer* with inferior access to the labor market comprises among others asylum seekers who can apply for a work permit only after a one-year transition period. The application is based on criteria that pose "already considerable obstacles that for most asylum claimants and refugees lead to failure" (ISOPLAN, 2004, p.6, translation by the authors). As a result, this group often resorts to the informal economy seeking employment under conditions of access to the labor market that are comparable to tourists and persons without any legal residence status. What can be found relatively frequently is the combination of an insecure but legal residence status and a job in the informal economy (ALT & CYRUS, 2002). This status group hence is broadly defined: it can range from illegal migrants to those persons that have received an entry visa and a work permit only for a particular position for which they are specifically qualified. [34]

In the group of professionally (moderately) qualified *Bildungsinländer* with an equal right of residence we include those migrants that have completed vocational training in the host country and that have an (almost) equitable access to the labor market compared to the native-born population. In Germany the university system is open only to a very small group of immigrants. Although vocational training schemes also pose some obstacles to immigrants (GRANATO, 2003; SCHITTENHELM, 2005a; SEIBERT, 2005), until today, their opportunities in the labor market have been primarily shaped by these non-academic forms of professional training. [35]

The main focus of our empirical study is on highly qualified persons with a residence status, who in terms of access to the labor market, are formally put into the same position as the native-born population. Yet, the comparison of the four status groups described above allows us to comparatively study and contrast various contexts for status passages into the labor market. This will enable us to identify different options, strategies, coping patterns and restrictions that structure these status passages. [36]

4.2 Approaches to data collection and interpretation: narrative interviews, group discussions and the method of documentary interpretation

Since we are primarily interested in the utilization of cultural capital in the process of a biographical status passage, above all, we resort to the method of narrative interviews (see SCHÜTZE, 1983, 2003). Based on an initial question intended to generate a narration, we will ask migrants to tell their life-story in great detail. Our follow up questions then focus first of all on those themes that are relevant to our study. The narrative interviews will be complemented by group discussions (see BOHNSACK, 2003; BOHNSACK, PRZYBORSKI & SCHÄFFER, 2006). Status passages are collectively interpreted by those who experience a transition at the same time and under similar conditions. Furthermore, this group will interactively deliberate possible coping strategies responding to the challenges that are involved during this transition into the labor market (SCHITTENHELM, 2006). While narrative interviews are primarily directed to personal life-stories and clearly document their social embeddedness, group discussions are intended to depict the articulation of collective status passages. On the basis of these methods we will be able to take into account both individual and collective aspects of status passages. Furthermore we will collect data on the context in which these status passages evolve by conducting expert interviews, and by analyzing relevant documents and available statistical material. [37]

The narrative interviews and group discussions will be interpreted with the documentary method (see BOHNSACK, 2003; BOHNSACK, NENTWIG-GESEMANN & NOHL, 2001). The documentary interpretation of narrative interviews (see NOHL, 2006a) and in particular focus group discussions do not only aim at reconstructing explicit aspects of the life-story as pointed out by the interviewees themselves. In addition, they allow understanding the implicit set of knowledge that shapes and is embedded in daily practices. By referring to narrative interviews and group discussions as our primary set of data we hope to get a better understanding of those socialization and learning processes as well as sets of knowledge and competence that are not yet, or no longer, present in the form of institutionally accepted cultural capital. [38]

Second, the documentary interpretation of narrative interviews and group discussions does not aim at the single case but, based on the comparison of different cases, intends to understand general orientations and experiences. Such findings can then be captured in types and a typology (see BOHNSACK, 2001). By generating these typologies that generalize the findings from single cases the documentary interpretation of narrative interviews avoids reducing these interviews as simple expressions of individual biographies. Rather, this method allows for a better understanding of how individual life stories are embedded in collective, milieu-specific dimensions of experiences (see NOHL, 2006a, 2006b).⁷ [39]

7 While focus group discussions articulate collective patterns and belongings to specific milieus, the bibliographical approach has been subject to the suspicion that it falls victim to "biographical illusions" replicating the arguments of BOURDIEU's influential essay. Here BOURDIEU (1986) criticized the dubious assumption of bibliographical research that individuals have the capacity to shape biographical opportunities and individual room for maneuver. However, already Fritz

Our sampling strategies for the comparative analysis (see NOHL, 2001b) will emanate from the above-described four status groups. Since we intend to analyze how status passages into the labor market unfold under the experience of migration the place at which the last educational title was obtained and the legal status are of crucial importance. With these sampling strategies oriented towards the institutional setting for the utilization of cultural capital (and not based on individual differences between migrants), we want to make sure that, next to the status passages, we will also shed light on the meso and macro structural context. [40]

4.3 Country comparison

The country comparison is an important instrument for the reconstruction of the meso- and macro-structural context of labor market integration. Our country comparison focuses on key aspects of how certain groups go through the status passage; its main goal is to better understand the significance of country-specific socio-cultural practices of exclusion and also institutional conditions (such as migration and labor market policies as well as regulations concerning educational titles and residence permits) for the status passages into the labor market. For instance, in Canada our comparative perspective will focus on highly qualified migrants who received their education both in their country of origin and Canada as their new host country. This group is targeted for recruitment through Canada's immigration policies and has equitable legal access to the labor market. In Great Britain our interest in the comparative study is directed towards moderately qualified professional migrants who in general are British citizens and who benefit from the anti-discrimination legislation of this country. In Turkey we draw our attention to the highly qualified *Bildungsausländer* with a subordinate or no residence permit in terms of their access to the labor market. In spite of missing immigration visas and work permits this group has often succeeded in establishing itself in the labor market in Turkey. [41]

In contrasting our national cases with reference to the status groups we are able to cover a wide range of meso and macro structural settings: They comprise the case of a highly sophisticated point system of selecting immigrants based on the country's economic and labor market needs in Canada (WHITAKER, 1987; SCHMIDTKE, 2003). The opposite extreme case is the absence of any legal framework for attracting individual migrants in an orderly fashion. Until recently the latter scenario has applied to Germany (DICKEL, 2002) and is still characteristic of Turkey (KÖKSAL, 2003). [42]

SCHÜTZE (1983, 1989) tried to understand the social structures that are behind personal life stories with his biographical approach. With the documentary method as it has been developed by Ralf BOHNSACK (2003) based on Karl MANNHEIM (1964) our research gradually moves away from a "biographical illusion."

4.4 Comparative analysis and the establishment of a typology

The different aspects of utilizing cultural capital, described here only very quickly, will be developed further empirically during our research. The comparative analysis and the establishment of a typology will be advanced in three closely linked and at times recursive steps: [43]

In a first step we will develop an initial typology within every status group in each country. This typology will refer for instance to phases in the multi-dimensional status passage, the utilization of social networks, the interrelatedness of family, educational and migration biographies and in particular the varying forms of utilizing cultural capital. [44]

In a second step, the establishment of a typology aims at the basic institutional and social conditions for the utilization of cultural capital in migration. Comparing the four status groups in Germany we will identify the typical elements in the status passage with respect to the form of educational title, the place where it was obtained and whether access to the labor market is equitable or subordinate compared to the native-born population. [45]

The third step is closely related to the second one. Comparing the four countries guided by the focus on the status groups we will then also seek to identify and typify the country-specific aspects of utilizing cultural capital. Here the main focus will be on the immigration and labor market policies that are regulated by national authorities. [46]

We will avoid reifying differences between countries by already initiating the comparative analysis and the establishment of a typology within one status group and subsequently between status groups within one country. For the comparative analysis, this means that we will categorize contextual settings that apply to several cases and groups of cases *beyond the single case* but are located *below* the level of the nation state. For example, migrants can complete the transition into the labor market with the help of social networks whose composition is closely related to specific contextual settings (such as a particular urban context). This could be a phenomenon independent from the national context or indeed it could possibly be transnational in nature. Hence in the country comparison we will not compare entire populations (such as the second generation of labor migrants in various European Countries); rather, we will focus on specific groups that will be compared with respect to similarities and differences that they might show with respect to particular dimensions. As a result we compare smaller units of research that, in a reconstructive manner, we will identify as relevant in the process of analyzing our empirical data. Next to the formation of social networks, these units can also be, for example, forms of cultural capital or the linking of one's family, educational and migration biography in different local and national contexts. [47]

This will distinguish our approach from other multi-national comparative projects that also study phenomena on the meso level such as ethnographies on socialization

in schools (SCHIFFAUER, BAUMANN, KASTORYANO & VERTOVEC, 2002) or internationally comparative analyses of social movements or political institutions (KOOPMANS, STATHAM, GIUGNI & PASSY, 2005). In these studies, from the beginning, the units of analysis are defined in country-specific terms. For our study group it is undetermined whether the national context is of decisive weight and whether we can find trans-national similarities or variations within national societies that are more relevant. In our study it is crucial that, although the status groups organize our sampling strategies, we do not determine the units of analysis *a priori*. Rather, they will be determined only as a result of our empirical findings and in the process of analyzing the data aimed at developing theories and typologies. It is an empirical question if the national context is decisive or if the phenomena under research have transnational parallels or vary within one country. By systematically varying and comparing the contextual settings for the status passage of migrants into the labor market we will be able to account for their effects on the utilization of cultural capital in the framework of a qualitative multi-level analysis. [48]

5. Conclusion

The goal of the analytical model described here is to develop a better understanding of those complex processes that shape the success or failure in particular of highly qualified migrants in their attempt to enter the labor market. The model seeks to relate systematically (micro-structural) biographical data of migrants to meso and macro structural contexts (networks, symbolic exclusion, institutional regulations, etc.) and thus seeks to connect formerly isolated research approaches in a fruitful manner. [49]

First, this multi-level model does justice to the legal-institutional context for labor market integration which is politically formed. With the help of comparing various countries the study will be able to come to terms with the specifics of immigration, integration and labor market policies in a comparative-contrasting approach. [50]

Second, at the meso level we will focus on the social contexts for the utilization of cultural capital that will become manifest in our comparison of Germany, Canada, Turkey and Great Britain. This dimension of our research comprises phenomena such as the particularities of regional labor markets, forms of symbolic inclusion and exclusion and the wider political-cultural setting for issues related to immigration. In particular our interest is directed towards the importance of (non)participation in informal networks and political self organizations as well as forms of symbolic inclusion and exclusion also beyond legal regulations of labor market integration. [51]

Both dimensions of the research are critical to the interpretation of status passages that constitute the third core of our study. We conceive of status passages as the individual and collective transition into the labor market *and* as a process of migration. With this conceptualization we will be in a position to identify a whole range of these status passages such as the transition into self employment, informal labor markets and deregulated/atypical employment conditions and to study

them in a manner which is more differentiated than a country-comparative perspective. In this respect our study will show how migrants react to the fact that the recognition of their educational titles is not certain but contested and problematic and that they as a group are subject to forms of institutionally enshrined discrimination or symbolic exclusion. [52]

In order to ensure the coherence of such a complex research design, the definition of the subject of research has to be clear (a) at the micro, meso and macro level and (b) to be feasible in an international environment (with very heterogeneous contexts). With this in mind we employ the capital theory as developed by BOURDIEU and conceptualize the labor market integration of highly qualified migrants in terms of a process of (de)recognition, as a multi-dimensional process of the utilization of cultural capital. [53]

In order to grasp the issue of (de)recognizing cultural capital in a comprehensive way and to develop innovative strategies for the labor market integration of migrants, the model developed here relates individual and collective status passages to their meso and macro social contexts. With the help of narrative interviews and focus group discussions, we will distinguish individual and collective action and coping strategies that migrants adopt when seeking access to the labor market. These empirical data sets will be interpreted with the documentary method and analyzed in a way that in the narrative accounts, collectively shared and milieu-specific dimensions of migrants' experience will become manifest. Patterns of the (de)recognition of cultural capital as well as the coping strategies with which migrants react to them will allow us then to highlight in an empirically grounded fashion the implications of macro-structural factors and the effectiveness of governmental programs to facilitate the labor market integration of migrants. On this basis, we expect to generate innovative research results in two respects: first, we will contribute to the theoretical debate on mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that regulate migrants' access to the labor market and produce structures of social inequality. Second, our multi-level model will allow us to formulate practical recommendations for the successful labor market integration of migrants. [54]

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