

**OVER EDUCATED  
AND UNDER  
QUALIFIED:  
SUPER-SKILLED  
IMMIGRANT  
WOMEN'S WORK  
INTEGRATION IN  
CANADA**

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P2P 2022 Virtual Workshop Series:  
Newcomer Labour Market Integration in  
Pandemic Times: New Perspectives on  
Gender and Language

Tuesday 22 February, 1-2.30pm

# Point of Departure

## CONTEXT

- The pandemic pushed skilled immigrant women towards unemployment, lower-skilled or less stable employment.
- [Career trajectory delayed, interrupted or reversed](#) due to layoffs, decreased job opportunities and increased domestic burden
- [Pandemic's gendered nature heightened immigrant women's challenges](#) due to limited social support and increased family responsibilities with unforeseen long-term consequences.

## METHODS

- [Metaphors](#) as a coping tool to make sense of the pandemic.
- [Imaginative Metaphor Elicitation \(IME\)](#) to guide participants in their experience tangible and accessible, identify problematic assumptions, behaviors, as well as resources available to them.
- [Reflective interviewing](#) to embed social impact in the research process itself.

# The Study

- It is well documented that highly skilled immigrants face a persistent labor market disadvantage.
- A key feature of this robust evidence-based literature is a tendency to construct highly skilled immigrants as a homogenous category.
- We focused on an understudied subset of highly skilled immigrants – immigrant scholars.
- Sample: five women immigrant scholars.

# Coping with a paradox

- All participants felt that an academic career in Canada was out of reach.
- Participants reconstructed their professional identities and explored different career options using three primary strategies:
  1. *Explain the disruption*
  2. *Seek connections in skills and experiences*
  3. *Explore future possibilities*
- Strategies were not mutually exclusive, and their coping was not a linear process.
- Cope with the paradox of being simultaneously perceived as under-qualified for an academic career yet over-educated for entry-level non-academic positions in related fields.
- Limitation: Small sample

# Research & Policy Implications

- Expand the scholarly discussion of immigrants' life transition, adjustment, and coping to include a relatively understudied group.
- Reveal the intersection of internationalization of education strategies with immigration systems.
- Immigrant scholars can fall through the cracks of social supports.
- Educational institutions can play a key role in recognizing, incorporating, and formalizing mentorship of international academics as a professional service.
- Urgent need for cross-sectoral collaboration.



# THANK YOU

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