

The Cultural Preparedness Model of Aspiration and Engagement:

Understanding the Interplay between the Career Development Aspirations of Immigrants and their Engagement with Services Provided by the State

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Abstract

This paper uses the cultural preparedness paradigm to analyse the interface between the aspirations of immigrants and their engagement with systems of the host country. It draws upon interviews with 84 immigrants from 35 developing countries living in 9 advanced countries. Based upon phenomenological methodologies, two studies are presented to understand the disturbance of cultural preparation status equilibrium experienced by immigrants as they try to find their way in host country. Aspiration-Engagement themes and responses to the challenges of integration are discussed. A cultural preparedness model of aspiration and engagement is proposed as a framework that guidance and counselling workers could use to help immigrants optimise their engagement with the systems of the host country.

Keywords: acculturation, aspiration and engagement, cultural preparedness, enculturation, immigration

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Biographical Note

Gideon Arulmani, Director, The Promise Foundation, India, is a clinical psychologist interested in culture and counselling. His Cultural Preparation Process Model has informed career intervention designing in many developing countries. He is President: Indian Association for Career and Livelihood Planning, Vice President: IAEVG, a visiting professor and international consultant.

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Introduction

The contemporary immigrant arrives in a location that is usually culturally occupied by others. While different push or pull factors influence migration, it is likely that nearly all immigrants aspire to a “better life” in the host country. From the side of the host, systems and supports are created and resources spent to help immigrants realise their aspirations. However, engagement with such service provision is not always optimal. Sweden, for example, has received a large number of refugees in recent times and here, 10.5% of foreign-born students drop out of upper-secondary education compared with 5.4% native-born students, and 24.1% change educational choices compared to 12.6% of native-born (OECD, 2014). In Canada recent immigrants are 2.5 times likelier than Canadian-born individuals to be working in low-skilled jobs and immigrants who have spent 15 years are still twice as likely as the Canadian-born to be working in low-skilled occupations (TIEDI, 2014). Similar trends are seen in other immigration destinations. Of concern is the fact that these disparities prevail despite substantial provisions made by “the system”, where system is defined as the rules, mores, requirements, common practices and expectations that compose the social, educational, economic and cultural structure and organisation of the host country. An important mechanism available to the migrant to re-attain stability is engagement with supports offered by the system. It is a moot point as to whether the system’s offerings are consonant with the immigrant’s cultural preparedness (described in greater detail below). Aspiration, engagement and their interface are therefore crucial elements linked to the immigrants’ integration into the host country. This paper aims to address the issues that surround this interface.

Aspiration and Engagement: A Matrix of Interactions

Aspiration

Aspirations have been described to be expressions of personal agency, involving intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2001). From a developmental perspective Super’s (1990) description ties aspirations to career maturity. Gottfredson (1981) argues that aspirations are formed and shaped by circumscription and compromise. Aspirations develop within a cultural context and are strongly influenced by factors such as gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status (SES), and disability (e.g., Metz & Fouad, 2009). An interesting distinction that has emerged in the literature is between aspiration and expectation. While individuals may have a certain aspiration, what they actually expect would happen may be different and closely tied to their circumstances. For example, while Fouad and Byars-Winston (2005) in a meta-analysis (16

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studies) found no significant difference between the career aspirations of ethnic minority or nonminority individuals, they did find that ethnic minorities expected fewer career opportunities and a larger number of career barriers than their nonminority peers. Therefore understanding congruence or discrepancy between an individual's career aspiration and expectation is important (Rojewski, 2005). The development of aspirations is not just an individual-specific matter. The prevailing opportunity structure (e.g., Schoon & Parsons, 2002), constraints of social circumstances (e.g., Arulmani, Van Laar & Easton, 2003), systemic and structural barriers (e.g., Furlong & Biggart, 1999) all affect the manner in which aspirations are formed and realised. Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994), in their social cognitive career theory (SCCT) argue that psychological, historical, cultural, economic, and socio-political forces all influence the formation of career aspirations. A Multidimensional approach to aspirations is required in order to understand individuals' engagement with actions linked to the realisation of their aspirations.

Engagement

Prominent amongst attempts to operationalise engagement as a construct are the person-environment models. Neufeld et al., (2006) define engagement as "...the quality of a person-environment relationship determined by the extent to which negotiation, participation, and evaluation processes occur during the interaction" (Neufeld, 2006, p. 251). These three components of engagement are said to be the active ingredients for the promotion of positive outcomes in any person-environment interaction. Brown's (1987) research shows that locally specific working-class culture engenders cultural predispositions toward education that are seen as three main forms of engagement: a positive normative acceptance of schooling, a negative alienated rejection and between them, an alienated but instrumental orientation to schooling. Macdonald and Marsh (2004), nearly 20 years later, extend Brown's categorisations showing that the nature of engagement need not be fixed and stable. Pupils move from one form of engagement to another. Schaufeli and colleagues hypothesize that engagement is the opposite of burnout. They define engagement as "...a positive fulfilling, and work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 465). Unlike those who experience burnout, those who show high levels of engagement are energetic, deeply connected with their work roles and see themselves as able to manage their job demands effectively.

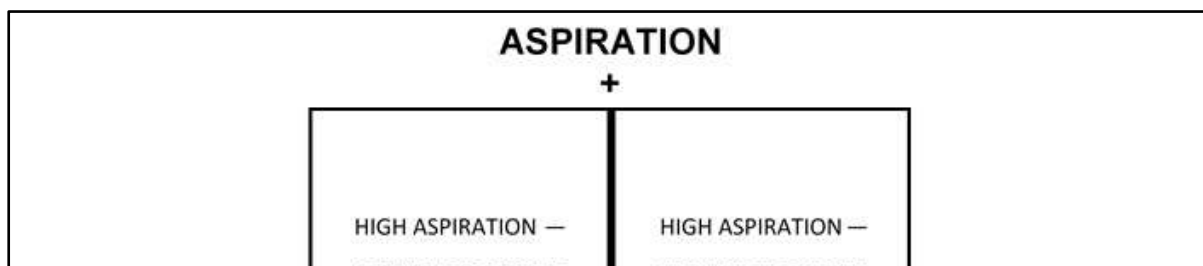
The important point arising from these discussions is that engagement and disengagement ought to be viewed along a continuum and not as dichotomous, polar opposites (Macdonald & Marsh, 2004).

The Cultural Preparation Process Approach

This paper uses Arulmani's cultural preparation process (2014, 2015, 2016) as the theoretical framework to further understand the aspiration-engagement interaction. The cultural preparedness paradigm proposes that *global trends* form the backdrop against which human engagement with work and career play out. These are macro, external factors (social philosophies, economic trends, political changes, technological advances, natural phenomena) that affect the individual/group but over which they have little or no control. The process of *enculturation*, facilitated by the human ability for *cultural learning*, leads the members of a group to absorb the ways of their culture. Enculturation is effected through three key factors: patterns of social organization varying along the individualism-collectivism continuum, patterns of value attribution, and processes of role allocation. Enculturation creates a unique state of balance and internal stability, reflected in the person's engagement with the world. This internal stability is described as the *cultural preparation status equilibrium*. This equilibrium is not permanent. The forces of *acculturation* can affect this state of equilibrium. Acculturative forces could be consonant or dissonant with the individual/group's cultural preparation status. Consonance would mean that the acculturation supports, enhances, or further stabilizes the existing equilibrium. Dissonance would mean that the forces of acculturation disturb the existing equilibrium. Accordingly, the immigrant is already in a state of cultural preparedness equilibrium when arriving in a new country. The acculturative demands of the new system almost inevitably disturb this pre-existing equilibrium. Immigrants' responses to this disturbance could range from establishing a new equilibrium by integrating with the host system to adopting a separatist position by rejecting the host and retaining the original cultural orientation. This paper proposes that insights emerging from understanding the aspiration-engagement interaction could contribute to helping immigrants find equilibrium once again.

The juxtaposing of the constructs of aspiration and engagement (A-E) provides four theoretically interesting interactions between aspirations and engagement. These interactions are captured in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Cultural Preparedness Model of Aspiration and Engagement
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Thus, interactions could show low aspiration-low engagement, high aspiration-low engagement, high aspiration-high engagement and low aspiration-high engagement. Each of these associations is a theoretical grouping and it is unlikely that any one individual would “fit” purely into any one category. Instead, the patterns presented are a theoretical starting point to explore the interplay between aspiration and engagement. Underlying this theoretical categorisation are propositions rooted within the processes of cultural preparedness: immigration by its very nature results in the disturbance of cultural preparation status equilibrium; variations seen in A-E responses could throw light on the disturbance of this equilibrium; understanding nuances in this disturbance could inform the formulation of interventions whereby immigrants learn to establish a new equilibrium.

Philosophic Moorings

This study is informed by philosophic constructs from Asian and Western thought with a strong emphasis on lived experience. Hence the method of enquiry articulated by Edmund Husserl, namely, phenomenology (Husserl, 1913/1931) is of interest here. This style of enquiry seeks to create an intellectual ethos for the objective study of topics typically considered to be subjective such as judgements, perceptions, and emotions. Phenomenological data comprises conscious human experience rather than data emerging from experimentation. The fact remains however that perspective is ever present and cannot (perhaps need not) be eradicated. The notion of karmic dispassion from Asian philosophies

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is relevant here. The seeker of truth is exhorted to engage with life and its duties with vigour, but at the same time practice dispassion (Hiriyanna, 1993). This principle of distancing oneself from a task, yet engaging with it wholeheartedly could be relevant when applying the phenomenological approach.

Husserl and his colleagues (Heidegger 1927/1996) draw upon the ancient principles of hermeneutics to describe a hermeneutic phenomenology that strives to reflect upon basic experience before it has been coloured by theory, translated or elucidated in any way. One of phenomenology's key tenets is phenomenological reduction (epoché) or bracketing. Hermeneutic phenomenology requires the identification of personal assumptions about the external world and the bracketing of these assumptions in order focus on the analysis of the original experience without bias. A repeated and consistent return to and a re-viewing of the original material is said to provide new insights which can inform the modification of earlier impressions creating a process of iterative reflexivity that continues throughout the examination of the data. Reflections of this approach are seen in the nonlinear foundations karmic principles. Cause and effect are not seen as polarities but as integral aspects of the same phenomenon and enquiry is portrayed as an ever expanding spiral (Arulmani, 2014). Development occurs upon previous development, whereby one constantly learns from the past and looks to the future accepting all experience as integral to knowing. Applied to hermeneutic phenomenology one could conceive karmic engagement with data as a spirular (spiral-like) evolution of ideas.

Study 1

The objectives Study 1 were twofold: identifying themes reflecting engagement the systems of the host country and identifying responses to these themes. Study 1 draws upon interviews conducted by the author between the years 2000 and 2017 with 84 immigrants from 35 developing countries living at the time of the interview in 9 advanced countries (24 cities). Research indicates that the strongest impact of acculturation is felt by first generation immigrants (e.g., OECD, 2014). The cultural preparedness paradigm suggests that the greater the cultural and economic difference between the home and host country (e.g., collectivist-individualistic social organisation, post-industrial work environment), the greater are the challenges faced by the immigrant (Arulmani, 2014). Hence Study 1 focuses exclusively on first generation immigrants who had moved from developing to developed economies. These interviews were conducted in the course of the author's travels on assignments and hence are limited to immigrants one would encounter during international travel (e.g., in airports, hotels, restaurants). The case material analysed is not meant to be

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representative of entire immigrant populations as such. In a sense the collection of case material followed a serendipitous approach, "...making fortunate discoveries unexpectedly, by accident or coincidence" (Nutefall & Ryder, 2010. p. 3). The interviews were conducted in English with the duration ranging from 45 to 120 minutes ($M = 60$) depending on the availability of the interviewee. About 40% of those whom the author approached did not wish to participate. On the other hand, about 25% of those interviewed also offered to bring their friends/relatives to meet the author. All interviews were conducted with informed consent based on the assurance of confidentiality. No incentives were offered. Recordings were handwritten in the form of jottings which were transcribed to complete narratives. Participants could not be invited to verify the final version. The final transcripts were about 2000 to 3500 words in length.

Interview Protocol

The overarching guideline for this study was to gain insights pertaining to the interaction between aspiration and engagement based on immigrants' *lived experience*. Interviewees were encouraged to look back to their earlier lives, compare and contrast it with their present situation and articulate plans for the future. After collection of preliminary background information, all interviews began with the question, "Tell me how your life has played out over the last few years". Other questions included, "Tell me about failures/successes/barriers you have experienced here", "How did you deal with any barriers you faced", "How has this move affected your family life/values/identity". Mother tongue expressions were encouraged and the author used prompts, encouragement and reflective statements to obtain as full a narrative as possible. All interviews were conducted by the author. An overview of the sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Over view of Sample

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Host Country (city)	Number of Interviews	Males	Females	Age range
Austria (Feldkirk, Vienna, Innsbruck, Salzburg)	8	4	4	18-47
Australia (Perth, Sydney, Melbourne)	9	5	4	28-55
Canada (Montreal, Quebec City, Toronto)	5	2	3	28-34
Liechtenstein	3	0	3	24-32
New Zealand (Wellington, Auckland)	8	6	2	22-45
Sweden (Stockholm, Gothenburg)	14	8	6	21-48
Switzerland (Zurich, Berne, Freiburg)	14	9	5	30-46
France (Paris, Nice, Roissy)	13	7	6	24-54
Italy (Rome, Bergamo, Turin)	10	6	4	28-54
Total	84	47	37	
<i>Mean Age: 36 years (range = 20 to 55 years)</i>				
<i>Means years of residence in host country: 6 years (range = 1 to 12 years)</i>				
<i>Countries of origin: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Caribbean, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Eritrea, Ghana, India, Iraq (Kurdish), Kosovo, Lebanon, Morocco, Philippines, Poland, Serbia, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkey (Kurdish), Ukraine, Vietnam.</i>				
<i>Occupation in home country: accountant, auto mechanic, bank teller, bus driver, business carpenter, clerk, computer teacher, doctor, electrician, factory worker, farmer, fish canning industry, food technologist, graphic designer, head of school, history teacher, housewife, journalist, lab technician, lawyer, lecturer, miner, nongovernmental organisation worker, nun, nurse, nursery school teacher, physiotherapist, policeman, preschool teacher, psychologist, rug maker, scientist, senior teacher, shop attendant, shop keeper, shop owner, social worker, software programmer, soldier, student, teacher, tour guide, unoccupied, waitress</i>				
<i>Occupation at the time of interview: accountant, accounts clerk, auto mechanic, bar tender, box office clerk, bus driver, career counsellor, clerk, electrician, farmhand, front desk (hotel), housekeeping (hotel), housewife, janitor, junior accounts clerk, luggage handler, machine operator, maid, nun, nurse assistant, relief teacher, shop assistant, shop owner, software programmer, street vendor, student, supermarket clerk, taxi driver, tour guide, unoccupied, waiter/waitress</i>				
<i>Reason for Shift: better prospects, loss of livelihood and property, marriage, political unrest, war</i>				

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The Research Team

As described above, these interviews were conducted over many years, in multiple locations, within varying political, economic and cultural environments. Since the case material is multicultural in nature, it was important that the research team was itself varied and comprised individuals who were not only experienced and knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied, but who were from different cultures. The author turned to colleagues with whom he had worked before. The project as well as its philosophic orientation was explained, particularly emphasising the time commitment (nearly 250 hours over 3 months). All those the author approached accepted to join the panel. The research team comprised three men and three women in the age range of 28 to 55 years. Three were from India. The others were from Sweden, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. Two held doctoral degrees in clinical psychology and one in human development. One was in the final year of a 4 year doctoral programme in career psychology, one held a Master's degree in social work and one a bachelor's degree in sociology. All members of the team were professionally engaged in counselling and guidance and had practical experience ranging from 10 to 25 years. Five had direct experience with immigrants. They were all closely acquainted with the author's work on cultural preparedness.

Procedure and Data Analysis

All team members were oriented to the concepts under study and the undergirding phenomenological principles. This was led by the author through discussions (group and individual) and written briefs. Given the nature of the case material, the team agreed that a theme would be selected if it characterised at least 75% of the cases and 100% concurrence between all members would be the criteria upon which selections would be made. The technique of memoing (Glaser, 1978) was used throughout the study.

Before the analysis, bracketing required all team members to describe their assumptions with particular reference to immigrants' aspirations and processes of engagement, cultural preparedness, as well as their expectations of the study. The objective was to achieve, as far as possible, a suspension of assumptions through the articulation of these assumptions, sharpening personal and mutual sensitivities to personal orientations and thereby mitigating the influence of bias. Over the next three months, each member of the group followed a two-step examination of each interview.

Step 1: Identifying key themes reflecting immigrants' aspirations and their engagement with the host country's systems and provisions, with primary reference to education and career. Thematic extractions were conducted to identify core phenomena (broad themes)

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running through the case material that were specifically linked to finding one's way in the host country (e.g., learning the host country's language). This analysis was conducted in 6 rounds, over a period of 8 weeks, with each member examining 14 cases per round. Open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used to identify distinct, independent concepts and categories in the case material. On completion of open coding, the study drew upon hermeneutic phenomenology to re-examine the first round of analysis. Each team member shared with the rest of the group, a written document listing identified themes with illustrative quotations from the case material. Each member was then required to perform two functions: firstly, indicate consensus with the themes in other members' lists and secondly, based on readings of others' lists, edit to include or delete themes they had originally listed. After one such round of editing, themes that found complete consensus were marked as selected. Members debated the inclusion/non-inclusion of remaining items on the theme list. This reflexive-hermeneutic iteration allowed the team to learn from each other, re-examine their own reflections and engage in an expanding spirular evolution of ideas. Three such rounds were held iteratively after which it was decided that the analysis was saturated and further analysis would not make substantial additions. Items that had not found consensus at this stage were dropped and the core phenomena referred to as Aspiration-Engagement themes (A-E themes) were listed.

Step 2: Identifying responses to the A-E themes. Axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used to list the various ways in which interviewees engaged with the A-E themes. The same method of case allocation used in Step 1 was followed. Each A-E theme was examined across the cases with the intention of identifying how the interviewee responded to the challenge, task or requirement presented by that theme (e.g., responding to failure to learning the language by *trying again*). The process of reflexive iteration was repeated. The objective this time was to find consensus about the best fit between the responses emerging from axial coding and the A-E theme to which each response best belonged (e.g., response of *failure* to learn the language best fits under the *failure experience* theme). Here again, items that did not find consensus about fit with a A-E theme were dropped after the third iteration and the final list of responses referred to as *Aspiration-Engagement responses (A-E responses)* took shape.

Results and Discussion

Open coding identified seven A-E themes and axial coding drew out four to ten A-E responses to each theme, together composing seven A-E sets. For example, Perception of the System is an A-E *theme* and corresponding responses of engagement such as acceptance,

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criticality or trust toward the system are the A-E *responses*. Together they compose the Perception of the System *set*. The following section presents illustrative vignette-pairs. Background information is given in parenthesis in the following order: gender, country of origin, age, present occupation, previous occupation, year of interview, location of interview, duration of stay in host country, reason for immigration. The superscripts AE and AER are used to mark phrases that open coding and axial coding identified as an A-E theme and A-E response respectively. While multiple A-E themes and responses maybe seen, a given vignette intends to illustrate one A-E set. All vignettes are verbatim extracts from the interviews.

Perception of the System. This A-E set reflecting attitudes toward and judgements of the host environment characterised every interview.

Vignette 1 (male, Sri Lanka, 45, front desk clerk in hotel, scientist, 2001, Zurich, 6 years, civil war). Yeah... life is alright. The Swiss system is good^{AE}. But just imagine what I was and what I am now. In Lanka I was a junior scientist in the ministry. But because of the war I could not proceed further. I thought I would be able to continue in the Swiss system. Initially I enrolled in a science programme. But for me this was not to be^{AE}. With job duties and shift timings, how cannot maintain a study schedule. So I guess I have given up^{AER}. The money is there. Comforts are there. Children are in good school system. So I guess I just go on^{AER}. My dreams are left behind^{AER}.

Vignette 2 (male, Serbia, 46, supermarket clerk, business, 2004, Zurich, 7, loss of livelihood and property). I lost everything. But here I think I can gain back^{AE}. Not what I lost, but something else. New start^{AER}. Here they allow you to work^{AE}. No thinking which people is which and no making differences^{AE}. In this system all are equal^{AE}. I had a bakery in Belgrade. But all gone. Bombed out! But here now I am studying also^{AER}. Maybe I don't get all back. But sure my children will. We are happy^{AER}. We are working for better future^{AER}.

The Perception of the System A-E set provides insights into how experiences of the system shape perception of the system. Vignette 1 shows a depletion in motivation for engagement characterised by indifference and a feeling of having tried and lost. Vignette 2 shows high aspiration and engagement, characterised by trust and hope leading to an alignment with the system.

Failure Experiences. Experiences related to failure were common.

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Vignette 3 (male, Somali, 35, unoccupied (engaged in gambling), farmer, 2015, Stockholm, 3, civil war). The first thing to do – learn Swedish. Without that, no chance. I joined the classes. But it was too hard^{AE}. The language is too hard^{AE}. I did not pass^{AE}. How can I pass? I am a farmer. I felt shame^{AER}. Shame is very bad in my country. I am angry^{AER}. How can I pass? Easy way is this... take money from foolish tourists with this number game^{AER}.

Vignette 4 (male, Turkey (Kurdish), 32, taxi driver, rug maker, 2015, Stockholm, 4, civil war). I tried to continue my rug business. I thought I can bring from my country. But no chance. To export from my country, too much corruptions. To bring into Sweden, too much rules. So my idea of doing my business in Sweden, it failed^{AE}. But in Sweden, at least I can drive taxi. So I am taking you to airport! So I am taxi driver. Fine! So is my destiny, so let it be^{AER}. But please know, all my children they go to school. My work is for them^{AER}. To make them success^{AER}.

This A-E set shows that failure is a common experience, and that failure experience may be system induced but recovery requires concerted personal mediation. Vignette 3 shows anger and frustration along with the tendency to break rules. Vignette 4 is characterised by acceptance of personal failure along with a shifting of emphasis from personal success to the success of the children.

Motivation to Engage with the System. Motivation is reflected by the enthusiasm and willingness to form and sustain a connection with a system.

Vignette 5 (female, Philippines, 34, maid, unoccupied, 2000, Rome, 6, better prospects). Because my father died when I was young, I could only study till high school. Jobs were difficult to get in my country and low paid. Then through my church, I got the chance to come to Rome. Now I am still only a maid. But I have good hope for the future^{AE}. I have learned Italian and I know English also^{AER}. I am enrolled for a part time course in nursing^{AER}. I am in my 2nd year. It is slow because of my work. Sometimes I get very stressed wondering how to keep studying successfully for 3 years more^{AER}. I cannot sleep then! But okay. To make it I must keep on working and following the syllabus^{AE}.

Vignette 6 (female, India, 32, relief teacher, accountant, 2007, Perth, 6, better prospects). I worked as a mid-level accountant for Ernst and Young in my country. I moved here after marriage. Look at me now. Just a relief teacher. I

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wait every day to be called. A daily wage worker! All my education, my experience, my status, all gone. I have no more desire left to make it here^{AE}. The careers office told me I have to re-qualify. But no energy for all that^{AE}. I would quit even what I have^{AER}. But I need the money. I'm on tablets for depression^{AER}. I can't take this^{AER}. Sometimes I feel I should just end it all^{AER}.

Both these vignettes show the reality of the relative inflexibility of the system. Responsibility rests upon the individual to remain motivated and persistent despite expectations not being met. Vignette 5 is imbued with a positive orientation and high energy to maintain the engagement. At the same time, this person also seems to be anxious and experiencing stress not merely because she has to succeed at a set of tasks but because she has to continue to remain successful. Vignette 6 is a contrast. This person shows low motivation and desire. Her energy to persist is depleted and she seems to be dangerously depressed.

Integration and Adjustment. This A-E set draws attention to the variations in the value placed on integration.

Vignette 7 (female, Vietnam, 32, janitor, accountant, 2014, Toronto, 4, better prospects). I was an accountant and I'm actually quite well qualified. But I've realised that won't work here^{AE}. But still, I like it here^{AE}. I think their system is good and everything is well organised and rational. I want to fit in^{AE}. See this job I'm doing now is a very low job in my country. But here, it's okay. So I don't feel bad or anything^{AER}. I think it would be easier if I just started again^{AER}. Anyway I always wanted to change my career and become a chef! So here's my chance.

Vignette 8 (female, India, 34, waitress, psychologist, 2014, Toronto, 2, better prospects). I was head of a counselling service for 15,000 youth, pan India. I have a master's degree in counselling. I attended 14 interviews here. All said my qualifications are not relevant. This system is wacky^{AE}. They want integration. Why should I?^{AER} They won't do a thing to integrate^{AE}. I got one job in a refugee centre. Didn't last a week. Then they asked me to leave citing no funds. Didn't they know that when they appointed me?^{AE} You know what my boss said when she asked me to leave, that I won't have problems finding another job because of the colour of my skin! Racism in a refugee centre! I'm going back home^{AER}.

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While integration may be valued by the system, this A-E set points to the variations in the value immigrants place on integration. Vignette 7 shows a strong desire to integrate, despite original desires not being fulfilled. Although the present job is low in status, there is a clear plan for optimally using the provisions made by the system. Vignette 8 shows anger, frustration and discontentment. This person feels unrecognised and unaccepted. There is a strong feeling of alienation.

Opportunity Awareness and Planning. Almost all host systems make provisions and create opportunities for immigrants to make a new life. However, awareness of these opportunities and systematic planning are crucial if benefit is to be gained.

Vignette 9 (female, Cameroon, 32, tour guide, non-governmental organisation worker, 2000, Paris, 7, better prospects). When I came I was lost and confused for two years. But the counsellor in the employment office helped me know more about what is suitable for me^{AE}. Then I found my way. Now even though I am not doing what I used to do, I am still okay with this job^{AER}. It is all about my talent to talk to people and guide them. I did not have to study a lot for it. Now I am going to study and develop in this area^{AER}. It will take about 4 years and I have the plan^{AER}. I know what to do and how.

Vignette 10 (male, Ghana, 33, street vendor, factory worker, 2016, Turin, 6, better prospects). I don't know what to do or where to go^{AE}. Which office?^{AE} I read in the posters, some information^{AE}. But I don't understand^{AER}. Once I found out some courses^{AER}. But what is the use of that?^{AER} So I am selling these items on the road side. You can call me a small business man. But I don't want to do this for always. Sometimes I feel like lost^{AER}. I don't know how to move forward^{AER}.

Differences in capitalising on opportunities are seen. Vignette 9 shows a seeking attitude, and a concerted effort to plan and organise oneself. Vignette 10 shows a low level of awareness, poor quality planning and difficulties in linking opportunities with personal development.

Qualifications, Credentials and Recognition of Past Experience. Nonrecognition of credentials and prior work and educational experience by the host country emerged across almost all interviews.

Vignette 11 (female, India, 28, unoccupied, food technologist, 2009, Melbourne, 6, better prospects). I have a master's degree in food

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technology^{AE}. I worked in a large food processing firm in India^{AE}. But here, these people don't recognise my degree or value my experience^{AE}. They want me to do it all over again^{AE}. WTF! I gave them the finger^{AER}. I am making stuff^{AER}. Pickles, jams, juices. My products are totally natural, homemade. Best you can have! I am selling to a growing circle of buyers^{AER}. All off the record! No qualifications, no license. Let's see what they'll do^{AER}.

Vignette 12 (female, Poland, 40, shop assistant, nurse, 2000, Salzburg, 8, better prospects). I think what they say is true. The first generation of an immigrant family, must sacrifice for the children^{AE}. In the beginning I tried to study again and be a nurse here^{AER}. But I could not^{AER}. I am too old for that! So I could not qualify as a nurse^{AE}. I felt bad that I could not get a job like in my country^{AER}. But now I have accepted^{AER}. I do this just to bring some income home. But I am mainly trying to be a good mother and wife^{AER}. Forget a career for me^{AER}.

Every country has its own regulations pertaining to certification. In advanced economies the regulations are usually more stringent than in developing countries. Vignette 11 shows quite an aggressive and angry response to these pre-established standards. While it is true that this person is attempting to make her way forward, this effort may not be sustainable since it falls outside established regulatory frameworks. Vignette 12 shows a different response. There is a touch of sadness and disappointment about not qualifying to continue professionally. But at the same time there is acceptance and along with acceptance, a shift in perspectives from self to family.

View of the Future. Personal development is intrinsically connected with the person's orientation to the future.

Vignette 13 (male, Syria, 48, bar tender, business, 2015, Gothenburg, 9, civil war). When I lost everything (even some loved ones) because of the war, I lost hope. I had a black view of the future^{AE}. But somehow I managed to arrive here. I will never be a prosperous business man again^{AER}. But now my future is not so black^{AE}. I have a good job. It gives me what I need. I am also involved with the labour unions^{AER}. That gives some meaning for what can happen in the future^{AE}. I teach my children that nothing comes when we want it. We have to work for it, and plan for it and wait for the fruits to ripen^{AER}. But, no plans no fruits!

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Vignette 14 (male, Ukraine, 51, taxi driver, unoccupied, 2016, Bergamo, 8, political unrest). Before I came I lost my job and was unemployed in my country. Here I thought I will make it^{AE}. But after many years, I am still only a taxi driver. I don't think there is anything more in the future for me^{AE}. My children do not listen to me. They have grown up in this country and they think like these people. Our culture is lost but they will be alright. And me, I think I will just be a taxi driver. I can't go back. It is too late and I am too poor^{AER}. So, I just carry on with this, day to day^{AER}. I don't think so much now about the future^{AER}.

The person's view of the future can have an impact on the quality of his/her preparation for the future. Vignette 13 begins with a bleak view but with the passage of time in the host country, much more positivity is seen. The importance of having a positive, planful view is highlighted. Vignette 14 shows a resigned acceptance. There seems to be a sense of giving up and focusing on immediate survival needs.

The A-E sets listed above comprising A-E themes and A-E responses were crystallised at the end of this study. Feedback received from presentations at multiple fora (e.g. Arulmani, 2014) indicated that the information was useful in and of itself. However, such an A-E set still remained merely a list of responses tagged to a set of themes. The relevance of these themes and responses to the practice of guidance and counselling needed clarification. This was the objective of Study 2.

Study 2

This study considered how the A-E sets identified in Study 1 through discussion and consensus building within a small, multicultural group would relate to the aspiration-engagement *matrix* (A-E matrix) described in Figure 1. The objective was to use the A-E set to find descriptors for the four categories emerging from the A-E matrix. Since the objective now focused on application and practice, inputs from practitioners became imperative.

Composition of the Practitioner Group

The Practitioner Group comprised 120 Swedish counsellors in the age range of 24 to 61 years. All had gone through a three year, bachelor of arts programme in guidance and counselling. Their experience ranged between 2 and 21 years. They were all directly involved in interventions for immigrants and their clients were from 19 countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Ghana, India, Iran, Iraq, Iraq (Kurdish), Kosovo, Lebanon, Morocco, Poland, Serbia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, Turkey (Kurdish)).

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About 15% of this group were immigrants themselves. The author had no control over the selection of this group since this exercise was a part of a municipality-wide cultural sensitivity training programme that all staff were required to attend.

Procedure and Data Analysis

All members of the Practitioner Group went through a four day workshop on cultural preparedness aimed at improving sensitivity to the issues that surround immigrants' wellbeing. The practitioners were met over a period of two years (2015 to 2017) in six batches ranging in size from 15 to 20 persons. The training included a detailed orientation to cultural preparedness and the aspiration-engagement interface in the form of lectures and group exercises. At least 80% of every batch recognised clients they had met who fit into one of the four A-E categories. The data for this study is drawn from the culminating exercise of this training course. This was a day-long exercise that required participants to draw upon their experience as counsellors and map the A-E sets onto the A-E matrix. Each batch was divided into smaller groups comprising 3 to 4 individuals and given one of the A-E sets. Written instructions were given to create an A-E map and each small group engaged in a 90 minute focus group discussion to complete the exercise. The author circulated amongst the groups providing explanations along with examples. Each group then presented their mapping exercise in a plenary session. The rest of the batch then added their comments and views. The A-E map created by each group was collected and retained as data.

Results

The frequency with which each response under each A-E theme was attributed by the Practitioner Group to one of the four types of A-E interactions was computed. Responses with the highest frequency for each type of A-E interaction were allocated to that type. Thereby the four A-E categories were populated with a set of descriptors drawn from the A-E sets of Study 1. Table 2 presents the final outcome of the mapping exercise. Drawing upon these findings the salient characteristics of the A-E groups could be described as follows.

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Table 2. Mapping the Aspiration-Engagement Set to the Aspiration-Engagement Matrix

A-E Theme	LALE	HALE	HAHE	LAHE
<i>Perception of the System:</i> attitudes toward and judgements of the host environment based personal experiences of the host system.	accepts the system but has grown indifferent and sceptical; feels let down by the system; feels requirements are overwhelming	critical of the system; does not align with the requirements of the system; does not trust the system	trusts the system; has learned how to align with and benefit from the system	trusts the system; is willing to contribute as a member
<i>Failure experiences:</i> the lack of success in obtaining what one desires despite effort.	attributes failure to personal failings; given up	anger; frustration; unable to understand reasons for failure; attributes failure to flaws in the system; takes shortcuts to beat the system and circumvent failure (rule breaking)	learns from failure; tries again; anxious not to fail again; experiences stress and strain related to maintaining what has been achieved	acceptance; shifted priorities from self to others
<i>Motivation to engage with the system:</i> the quality of desire and energy to engage with activities and tasks set by the system and the interest and energy directed toward attaining goals using the provisions made by the system.	low and indifferent; disappointed after trying hard; low motivation because of poor health/trauma	high but unrealistic expectations; easily bored; dissatisfied with present level of success	high but realistic expectations; moving toward further development; but also experiencing stress because of the need to achieve	positively involved with family, community and social events
<i>Integration and adjustment:</i> experiencing a state of satisfaction and is at ease with one's situation having effectively combined aspects of the host culture with aspects of the own culture.	low contentment; feels: I don't think I will ever make it	feels unrecognized and blocked; high sense of alienation from the system	feels content because of successes; satisfaction with the freedom to follow one's culture; accepts the host system	high contentment as a result of personal contribution to others' achievements
<i>Opportunity Awareness and Planning:</i> knowledge of chances available for advancement and preparing oneself in accordance with the	is aware but shows low energy to engage with opportunities; not systematic when planning; poor preparation; has a long	struggles to link opportunities to personal development; interested in opportunities for which personal suitability is low; plans but gives up easily;	high awareness and able to plan appropriately; can identify sources of opportunities; plans effectively; makes long term	high awareness of sources of opportunities and able to plan appropriately on behalf of others

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system to benefit from these opportunities.	term view but low interest affects persistence	has a short term view; poor preparation	plans; seeks information; shows persistence	
<i>Qualifications, Credentials and Recognition of Past Experience:</i> evaluation and recognition of immigrants' qualifications, credentials and prior experience by regulatory bodies in the host country.	feeling that solutions are too complicated/expensive/take too long to actualise; unable to go through the process of re-certification; unable to allocate time for re-qualifying given the need to earn	feels earlier accomplishments not valued; unwilling for recertification; frustrated by educational requirements	willing to start afresh; has engaged in re-qualifying; able to make adaptations	may not possess the necessary credentials but has adjusted
<i>View of the Future:</i> thoughts and ideas about what is likely to happen in the future.	bleak view of future; feels it's too late; working just for livelihood/survival needs of the present	unrealistic view of future; has a short-term view and wants quick results	has clarity about the future; is invested in long-term plans	has a positive long-term view of the future in relation to others

Note: LALE: low aspiration-low engagement; HALE: high aspiration-low engagement; HAHE: high aspiration-high engagement; LAHE: low aspiration-high engagement

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The Low-Aspiration-Low-Engagement Group (LALE)

The LALE situation is tinged with disappointment. There is an acceptance of the host system but as Neufeld et al. (2006) point out, these individuals could experience a sense of being neglected, overlooked or disregarded by their environment. This could be the result of being overwhelmed by circumstances. Original dreams and wishes are likely to have been discarded. Low contentment and an almost wistful sense of accepting one's lot could characterise their engagement.

The High-Aspiration-Low-Engagement Group (HALE)

The HALE situation depicts an overriding sense of anger and frustration. Criticality and a tendency to blame the system is common. Aspirations are high but could be unrealistic. It must be noted however that this group has not given up personal advancement. However, while the vigour described by Schaufeli, et al., (2002) is present, the dedication required to overcome barriers described by these authors may not be persistent enough.

The High-Aspiration-High-Engagement Group (HAHE)

This appears to be the ideal group. Their aspirations are realistic and their engagement is sound. Rather than being a reason to complain, failure is a spur to try again. Information seeking and linking opportunities for personal advancement is common. This said, it is also important to note that the bidirectional process of evaluation occurring between the person and the environment (Neufeld et al., 2006), is tilted such that anxiety is experienced by the need to maintain what has been achieved and to continue to move ahead.

The Low-Aspiration-High-Engagement Group (LAHE)

This is an interesting group in that engagement and contentment do seem to be high, while aspiration for personal success is low. Motivation seems to stem from working for the welfare of others. Interestingly, the frequency of responses of acceptance of the host culture is low with this group. This could point to an instrumental form of engagement (Brown, 1987). Thus, although engagement is present, there could be an underlying sense of disaffection where engagement is exercised only in so far as it is required for progress.

With this, Study 2 drew to a close and the central objective of creating the cultural preparedness model of aspiration and engagement was completed. It must be reiterated that the purpose of this exercise is not to box people into categories! It is unlikely that any individual would fall purely into any one A-E category. In fact, not all responses could be exclusively allocated to a single A-E type. Trust, for example, is a response that occurred in almost equal frequency both with the HAHE and LAHE groups. Anxiety in different shades

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characterised all the groups. It is important therefore that a given response is holistically interpreted along with the client's other responses.

Discussion

This work has developed through a phenomenological analysis of a wide variety of case material a cultural preparedness model of aspiration and engagement. An important limitation of this work could be its lack of reference to how individual differences emanating from personality features, gender and socioeconomic status influence the manner in which the A-E process plays out. This is worthy of further exploration. Further, with the objective of grounding this work on lived experience, hermeneutic interpretation has been used as the primary tool of analysis. The word hermeneutic comes from Hermes, the inventor of language and speech, an interpreter of the gods. Hermes also is the archetype of the trickster and is often portrayed as a liar and a thief (Graves, 1955)! While this is stated here in lighter vein, it also flags for our attention the limitations one must be aware of when working with text and verbal material. These limitations are clearly articulated in Eastern epistemologies. Mimamsa (Sanskrit for reflection and critical investigation) rests upon a hermeneutics that describes the reliability of various modalities of knowing (Hiriyanna, 1993). The work reported in this paper rests on the mimamsa modality of *upamana*: vicarious learning about a phenomenon through someone else's description of their experience of the phenomenon. *Upamana* is categorised by mimamsa as the least reliable modality since it requires a high capacity for attention on the listener's side and true memories on the side of the speaker. Also, interpretation of words and text could be strongly mediated by cultural filters. It is essential that the limitations of drawing conclusions from a re-processing of the original experience, are kept in mind.

Having acknowledged these limitations attention is drawn to the strong possibility that the equilibrium in cultural preparation status created through enculturation is disturbed by acculturative demands resulting from immigration. The paper proposes the A-E model as a starting point from which to understand this disturbance. The A-E interaction is a dynamic one. Circumstances, experiences, opportunity structures and personal characteristics could cause a person to move from one A-E position to another. Vignette 1 (Study 1) for example shows that this person was initially at the HAHE position but succumbed to the stress and strain that characterises this group and slipped to the LALE position. By contrast, Vignette 9 (Study 1) shows a movement from the LALE status to the HAHE position because of the support received from the system. Central to this argument therefore is the notion of movement towards an equilibrium. The enculturated equilibrium with which the immigrant

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arrived perhaps can never be regained. The cultural preparedness model of aspiration and engagement could perhaps provide clues that guidance and counselling workers could use to help immigrants re-establish their lives by discovering a new equilibrium.

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