

Master's Programme in People Management and Organization Development

From foreign to familiar

Inclusion of foreign employees in Finnish workplaces

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Abstract

This thesis studied the inclusion of highly skilled foreign employees in Finland through a case study method. The aim of the study is to explore, what makes foreign employees feel included or excluded, how organizations can foster inclusion and which individual skills and resources ease inclusion.

Using Bourdieu’s theory of practice, the study explored social capital, cultural capital, habitus and field to understand the dynamics of inclusion. Qualitative data was gathered from semi-structured interviews with foreign employees and HR representatives from two engineering and consulting companies.

Key findings showed that social capital in the form of positive interactions with colleagues and managers are crucial for inclusion, while limited and negative interactions lead to exclusion. Additionally, recognition from colleagues and managers, along with meaningful assignments that build cultural capital, contribute to feeling valued. Organizations can foster inclusion through non-discriminative practices, inclusive language policies and inclusive leadership. Barriers included limited availability of information in English and career advancement favoring native Finns. Language skills, work-related skills and social networks can ease foreign employees’ inclusion. Similar experiences were reported across both case companies.

Keywords Inclusion, Diversity, Highly skilled foreign employees, Bourdieu

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Tiivistelmä

Tässä maisterityössä tutkittiin ulkomaalaisten asiantuntijoiden inklusiota suomalaisilla työpaikoilla kvalitatiivisen tapaustutkimuksen avulla. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää, mikä saa ulkomaalaisen työntekijän tuntemaan itsensä osalliseksi tai ulkopuoliseksi työyhteisössä, miten organisaatiot voivat vaikuttaa osallisuuteen ja mitkä yksilölliset taidot ja resurssit edistävät inklusiota.

Teoreettisena viitekehyksenä tutkimuksessa käytettiin Bourdieun käytäntöteoriaa hyödyntäen Bourdieun käsitteitä sosiaalinen pääoma, kulttuurinen pääoma, habitus ja kenttä inklusion dynamiikan ymmärtämiseksi ja kuvaamiseksi. Laadullinen aineisto kerättiin puolistrukturoiduilla haastatteluilla, jotka toteutettiin kahden suunnittelu- ja konsultointiyrityksen ulkomaalaisten työntekijöiden sekä HR-edustajien kanssa.

Työn keskeiset havainnot osoittivat, että positiivinen vuorovaikutus kollegoiden ja esihenkilöiden kanssa on inklusion kannalta ratkaisevan tärkeää sosiaalisen pääoman näkökulmasta, kun taas rajoittunut tai negatiivinen vuorovaikutus edesauttaa eksklusiota. Lisäksi kollegoiden ja esihenkilöiden antama tunnustus sekä merkitykselliset työtehtävät, jotka kehittävät kulttuurista pääomaa, edistävät arvostuksen tunnetta. Organisaatiot voivat edistää inklusiota syrjimättömillä käytännöillä, inklusiivisella kielipolitiikalla ja inklusiivisella johtamisella. Esteitä inklusiolle työpaikalla ovat muun muassa englanninkielisen tiedon vähäinen saanti ja syntyperäisiä suomalaisia suosivat urakehityksen käytännöt. Kielitaito, työhön liittyvät taidot ja sosiaaliset verkostot voivat helpottaa ulkomaalaisten työntekijöiden inklusiota työpaikoille. Tulokset olivat yhtäläisiä molemmissa tapausyrityksissä.

Avainsanat Inklusio, Diversiteetti, ulkomaalaiset asiantuntijat, Bourdieu.

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1 Introduction

“But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not—and to know not is to care not for.” – Bram Stoker, Dracula

As reflected in the quotation above, foreigners as “strangers in a strange land” often experience themselves as outsiders compared to the local population. Although this quotation is over 100 years old, its themes of exclusion, isolation, and the reluctance of locals to engage with foreigners remain deeply relevant today. The feelings of loneliness and insignificance expressed in the quotation still relevantly capture the challenges that immigrants face in our modern-day society and highlights how persistent they are across time and place.

1.1 Background

With globalization, the demographic composition of the workforce has diversified globally and also in Finland. Especially over the past two decades, Finland has attracted an increasing number of highly skilled migrants with the rise of IT technologies, as well as a growing number of international students interested in the expanding variety of English-language study programs in Finnish Universities and institutions (Kilinc, 2021). The education level of Finnish immigrants is thus relatively high with nearly 50% holding higher education level degrees. Additionally, over half of immigrants in Finland speak fluently at least three languages, but only less than one third can speak Finnish fluently (THL, 2020).

The mobility and migration of highly skilled immigrants has increasingly gained the interest of policy makers and organizations globally and additionally in Finland (Habti & Koikkalainen, 2014). In Finland labor immigration is seen as crucial in solving the labor and talent shortage faced by organizations (Alho, 2023) and many organizations are therefore aiming to increase diversity within their workforce. Within the technology industries sector in Finland, it is recognized, that 130 000 new employees are needed within ten years to cover the expected growth of the sector and retirement of current employees. This number cannot be reached alone with Finnish graduates (Teknologiateollisuus, 2023) and therefore there is a growing interest in hiring international employees. According to the recent study by Teknologiateollisuus (Teknologiateollisuus, 2023), 42% of technology companies in Finland are considering hiring international employees within the next four years and 45% of the companies are possibly considering this option.

Increasing diversity in the organization by simply hiring international employees is one thing but making them feel valued and included in the organization is needed to truly harness the benefits of their diverse perspectives, experiences, and talent. Additionally, inclusion has been found to be positively related to employee retention and well-being (Shore et al., 2018). Creating a truly inclusive workplace is, however, not easy. According to a recent study by Boston Consulting on diversity in Finland (Uehigashi et al., 2022), diverse employees feel more excluded in their organizations compared to normative employees. Furthermore, during the writing process of this thesis, the most recent survey study on the global experiences of expats (Internations, 2024) made the headlines in Finnish newspapers with its devastating results on how foreign employees feel about Finland. According to the study, Finland ranks as 51 from the 53 studied countries in the year 2024, indicating Finland to be among the worst countries for expats. The study found that expats face challenges especially with career advancement in Finland, unwelcoming Finnish culture and making friends with locals. These recent studies thus indicate that creating an inclusive workplace is still a challenge in Finland. A truly inclusive workplace requires top-management and management level commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion, preventing exclusion and discrimination and an organizational climate, where different opinions are valued and everyone feels safe being themselves (Shore et al., 2018). The organizational climate is not, however, created only by the managers, but by all the employees.

This thesis studies the inclusion of highly skilled foreign employees within the Finnish technology industry focusing on the consulting and engineering sector. I have personally worked in the field for more than 15 years in different companies and I thus know the field as an insider and have a personal interest in the topic.

1.2 Research questions and objective

The immigration studies in Finland generally focus on the labor market integration of foreign employees and they have mainly studied the Finnish national policies and employment barriers of immigrants (Habt & Koikkalainen, 2014). Research on the experiences of highly skilled foreign employees in Finnish workplaces has grown in recent years, but more research is still needed on their personal experiences to better understand their integration into Finnish workplaces and what makes them feel accepted (Kilinc, 2021). Additionally, majority of the previous Finnish studies do not specify, where in Finland the studied highly-skilled

immigrants live and there is a gap in the research in terms of how the experiences of individuals in urban and rural areas of Finland differ (Kilinc, 2021; Koskela, 2019).

The feeling of inclusion is both subjective and personal and it needs to be assessed based on the experiences of those involved. The elements of inclusion can only be determined by the experiences of the key-stakeholders (Ferdman B. M., 2013), which in this study are the foreign employees. This study thus focuses on the personal experiences of inclusion by employees with a foreign background. My research questions are:

- What makes skilled foreign employees feel included / excluded at the Finnish workplaces?
- How does the organization facilitate or hinder the inclusion of foreign employees?
- Which skills / resources foreign employees themselves feel helps them to be included in the organization?

With these research questions my aim is to identify, what are the elements of inclusion and exclusion experienced by foreign employees in Finland and how organizations could address these. The objective of this study is to collect and analyze both foreign employees' experiences regarding the topic and to study how organizations have approached diversity and inclusion in their HR practices within the consulting and engineering field. The topic is important, since the importance of retaining foreign talents in Finland has been recognized within the consulting and engineering field and inclusion is an important antecedent for retention. Furthermore, more research focusing on the inclusion of highly skilled engineers working in Finland is needed and this study aims to give insight particularly to this research gap.

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in Bourdieu's theory of practice. One of the most common theoretical approaches to studying inclusion is the social identity theory, which focuses on how individuals perceive themselves as part of a group and how people naturally see some people as in-group members and others as outgroup members (Randel, 2023). While social identity theory is a widely used approach for examining inclusion, it primarily focuses on internal group dynamics and individual identity processes. Bourdieu's framework, on the other hand, offers a more comprehensive lens to understand the contextual and structural factors within an organization or society at large that influence inclusion. Given that the research questions of this study also address the organization's role

in facilitating or hindering inclusion, Bourdieu's theory provides a more insightful framework for this study than social identity theory would do.

The study is conducted as a qualitative study through semi-structured interviews with foreign employees and HR representatives in two consulting and engineering companies operating in Finland. Both case companies have several offices in Finland both in the capital region and outside the capital region. Thus, the study will also give some insight on how the experiences of foreign employees are possibly affected by the location of their working place in Finland. The study is conducted in cooperation with SKOL ry.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This study begins with a literature review focusing on diversity and inclusion literature, Bourdieu's theory of practice and its use in immigration studies. Additionally, the literature review presents some previous studies on experiences of foreign employees and immigrants in Finland. With the literature review I will introduce the concepts and frameworks related to diversity and inclusion and explain more thoroughly with examples on how the chosen Bourdieusian framework describes inclusion and exclusion in organizations.

Following the literature review I will explain and justify the methodology of the qualitative study in more detail. I have chosen a multiple case study with embedded units as the chosen study method with primary data collection being semi-structured interviews.

Finally, after the methodology section I will introduce the findings of the study with discussion and conclusions. In the discussion section I will compare the study findings to those found in previous literature and discuss the implications of the findings. The conclusions section will include a summary of the key findings as well as limitations, managerial implications and suggestions for further research.

2 Literature review

The literature review of this study aims to give an overview of the existing literature related to diversity and inclusion, challenges related to inclusion of foreign employees and organizational diversity and inclusion practices. I will first define the main concepts of the study, diversity and inclusion and introduce the theoretical framework that I will use in interpreting factors contributing to inclusion and exclusion. Following this, I will summarize previous research related to the experiences of foreign employees both generally and specifically in Finland. Lastly, I will discuss literature related to organizational diversity and inclusion management.

2.1 Diversity

Diversity generally refers to the individual differences between people. Workplace diversity traditionally is considered to include the multiple distinctions among individuals within an organization, covering factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, and ideological beliefs, among others (Patrick, 2011). Hays-Thomas & Bendick (2013) define diversity broadly to mean “the mixture of attributes within a workforce that in significant ways affect how people think, feel, and behave at work, and their acceptance, work performance, satisfaction, or progress in the organization”. Harrison et al. (1998), conversely, give a more detailed specification on diversity by differentiating deep-level and surface-level diversity. They define surface-level diversity as the observable characteristics of an individual (e.g. age, gender, race) and deep-level diversity as the underlying attributes (e.g. skills, personality, values, culture) which are expressed through verbal and nonverbal behavior by the individual and learned only by extended interaction and getting to know the individual. To describe deep-level and surface-level diversity an iceberg model or metaphor is often used to visualize what types of characteristics are visible and which are not. An example of an Iceberg model to visualize differences is presented in Figure 1.

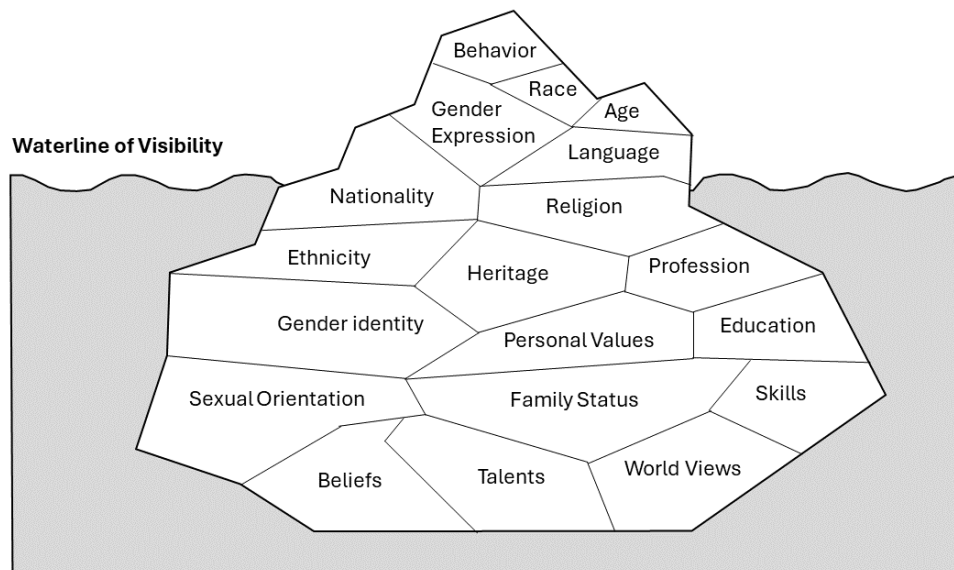


Figure 1. Iceberg of Differences, adapted from Murdoch-Kitt & Emans (2020) p. 83 and Pucik et al. (2022)

Increasing diversity within the organization is often promoted with business-related benefits, which is what the “the business case for diversity” is about. According to the business case for diversity, the benefits of increasing diversity include e.g. a broader pool of talent for organizations, avoidance of discrimination lawsuits, better understanding of markets and a better company image (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Additionally, having multiple different perspectives improves decision-making, problem-solving, creativity and innovation which ultimately leads to better business performance (van Knippenberg et al., 2020; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Research shows, however, that the benefits of diversity are not as straightforward as the business case for diversity leads us to believe. According to Triana & Byun (2021), deep-level diversity especially in team members’ values and culture increases team conflict, discourages team information sharing, collaboration and coordination and hinders team cohesion, collective efficacy and team identification. Research also shows, however, that these negative effects can be mitigated. According to the literature review by van Knippenberg et al., 2020, there are several team conditions that favor the performance benefits from diversity. These include team task complexity, team members relying on others to solve the problem, motivation and skills of the team members, participative team leaders, inclusive team climate and adequate time for the team to integrate the information they need to pro-

cess. Benefits of diversity are thus highly dependent on management, inclusive organizational climate and handling of different individuals. In the next section I will further focus on inclusion.

2.2 Inclusion

The term inclusion is often paired together with the term diversity, and they are often commonly referred to as diversity and inclusion, or shortly D&I. As diversity in the workplace refers to the varied characteristics of employees, inclusion focuses on how employees perceive their ability to contribute to the organization and feel valued (Hays-Thomas & Bendick, 2013; Mor Barak, 2015). Inclusion has been found to be vital in gaining the positive benefits from diversity and retaining diverse talents (Offermann & Basford, 2013; van Knippenberg et al., 2020; Shore et al., 2018). Inclusion is important for all employees, but it is particularly important for those who have historically faced exclusion and discrimination due to their association with specific social identity groups. That is why enhancing workplace inclusion typically targets improving the experiences of employees associated with these specific social identity groups, such as immigrants (Shore et al., 2018).

Shore et al. (2011) define inclusion as “the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness”. By this definition the feeling of belonging is not enough to be included if the “admission price” for the group is giving up or hiding the unique characteristics of the individual. Ferdman & Deane (2013) further define inclusion as “creating an environment that acknowledges, welcomes, and accepts different approaches, styles, perspectives, and experiences, so as to allow all to reach their potential and result in enhanced organizational success”. Shore et al. (2018) have later compiled research on inclusion and recognized six common themes in defining an inclusive organization. These themes are: 1) Feeling safe, 2) Involvement in the work group as an insider, accessing critical information and resources, 3) Feeling respected and valued, 4) Influence on decision making, employees believing they are listened to 5) Authenticity, expressing identities without repercussion 6) Recognizing, honoring and advancing of diversity, top management commitment. With these themes inclusive organization is thus such where all employees feel safe and valued as their authentic selves without need to hide aspects on themselves, such as religion or sexual orientation, no identity group is favored in comparison to others and management actively advances diversity and inclusion climate in the organization.

Feeling included is influenced by the behavior of those the individual interacts with, individual's own attitudes and behaviors, as well as the values, norms, practices, and procedures present within their organizational and societal context. Inclusion can thus involve individual or group experience, a set of behaviors, an approach to leadership, a set of collective norms and practices and/or organizational culture (Offermann & Basford, 2013). The behavior and attitudes of people are not static but change over time. As inclusion is so highly dependent on the time and place, it can be described to be a dynamic, situated state which is constantly recreated through the relationship of the individual and the surroundings and can even coexist with exclusion. Ferdman (2013) calls inclusion “an interacting set of structures, values, norms, group and organizational climates, and individual and collective behaviors, all connected with inclusion experiences in a mutually reinforcing and dynamic system”. This dynamic nature of inclusion is presented in Figure 2.

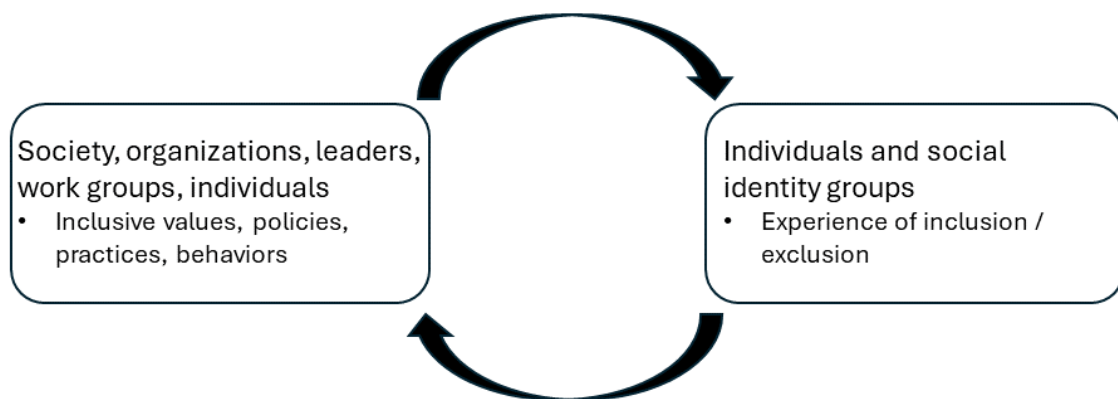


Figure 2. Inclusion as a dynamic process (Ferdman B. M., 2013, p. 15)

Ferdman (2013) further describes the many levels of inclusion with a multilevel framework presented in Figure 3. According to the framework, at the heart of inclusion is the individual experience of inclusion defining the degree of how individuals feel included. This experience is influenced by the interpersonal behavior between individuals, group level interactions, leaders and leadership as well as organizational and societal practices. The framework summarizes the broad descriptions of inclusion and displays the various aspects it entails. When talking about inclusion management the focus is often on the organizational practices and leadership, but as the figure shows, this is insufficient to capture all the aspects influencing

the individual and collective experience of employees. The practice of inclusion is, according to Ferdman (2013), about both everyday behavior and organizational and societal systems.

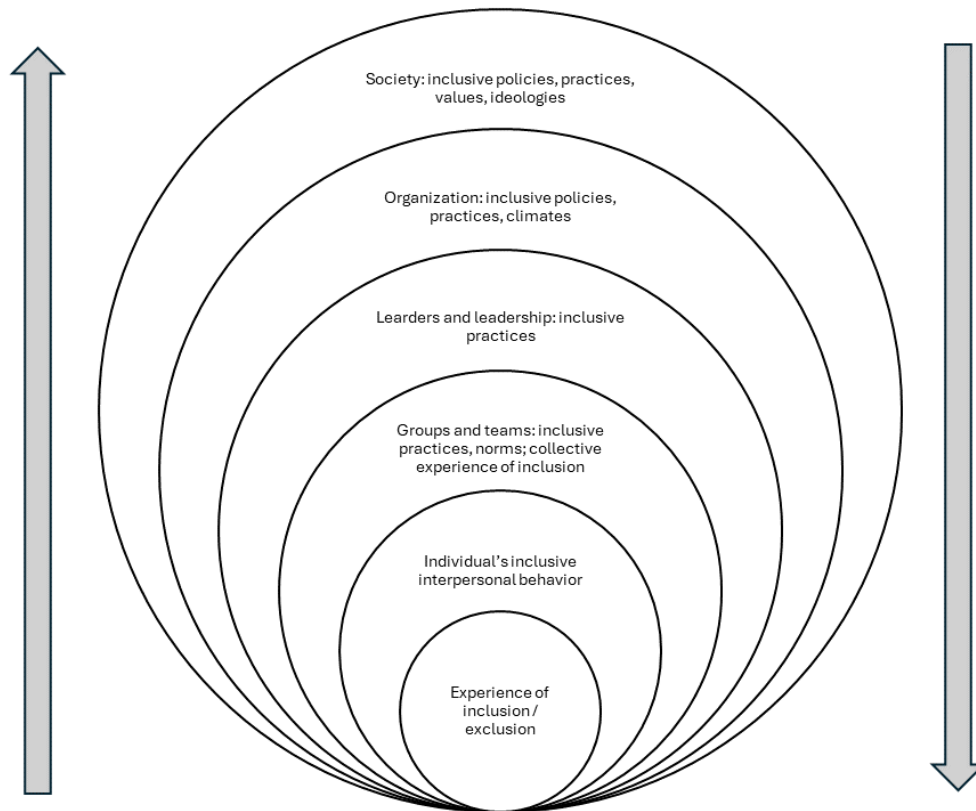


Figure 3. Multiple levels of inclusion (Ferdman B. M., 2013, p. 17)

As inclusion by definition (e.g. Shore et al., 2018) entails that no identity group is favored over another, it is closely linked to both equality and equity. While organizations aim to treat all employees equally and offer equal opportunities, systemic discrimination and historical inequalities have often led to situations where some identity groups are “more equal than others”, as Orwell cleverly phrased in his famous novel. To create a truly inclusive organization, it is not enough to solely focus on the definitions of inclusion and inclusive organizations. Although these definitions are valuable, they often overlook the deeper structural factors that hinder inclusion and equality. Without examining the underlying power dynamics, norms, and social structures in the organization, practices favoring certain identity groups over others can remain hidden and thus prevailing. Therefore, for fostering inclusion the organization must first acknowledge and challenge their own perceptions, attitudes, practices, and behaviors that might prevent diverse individuals from feeling fully accepted, valued, and treated equitably (Hays-Thomas & Bendick, 2013).

Making changes to practices and behaviors is not comfortable as it often involves confronting biases and disrupting established norms. Thus, fostering inclusion requires organizations to tolerate or even embrace discomfort, which can challenge the sense of safety and comfort of employees (Ferdman B. M., 2017). One example of an inclusive practice that can create discomfort among employees is the implementation of inclusive language policies within a multinational and multilingual organization. To fully benefit from having a multicultural and multilinguistic organization, many multinational organizations have adopted inclusive language practices which include using a generally shared language consistently and being open to different ways of speaking and people having various proficiency levels (Lauring & Klitmøller, 2017). Mandating to use a common language, such as English, has been, however, found to cause anxiety and stress among people who do not speak the language natively and has made them even to withdraw from communications where they need to use the foreign language (Neeley et al., 2012). This illustrates the complexity and often paradox nature of inclusion: inclusive practices that are aimed to give more equal opportunities to everyone require people to step away from their comfort zone and adapt to new ways of doing things, such as speaking a foreign language consistently, whereas on the other hand inclusion is about feeling safe and accepting people as they are without need to change (Ferdman B. M., 2017).

Whereas inclusion refers to accepting and valuing people as they are, discrimination is determined as “any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation” (ILO, 1958) or as “not treating the individual as an organizational insider with unique value” (Shore et al., 2011). Thus, by definition, discrimination is a form of exclusion.

Discrimination can take many forms, and it takes place both at the organizational level and at group – individual level. Open discrimination includes e.g. different or unfair treatment based on ethnicity, race or language skill during recruitment, selection, promotion or compensation (Sharma & Mann, 2020; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). Pre-employment discrimination includes organizational practices related to recruitment and selection that exclude members of minority groups entering the organization (Sharma & Mann, 2020) and it is often hidden in the informal practices of the organization due to non-transparent selection processes (Koivunen et al., 2015).

More complex forms of discrimination are the everyday subtle discriminations which are often less visible, enacted unconsciously or un-intentionally and are not easily recognized as discrimination. Subtle forms of discrimination are often unintentional interpersonal discrimination found in common everyday interactions. These include, for example, jokes, microaggressions, avoidance of diverse people and showing tolerance against intolerant behaviors (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). According to a recent study, majority of Finnish people do not even consider such behaviors as racism (Haavisto, 2024), which further emphasizes the complexity of subtle discrimination.

In addition to treating people differently based on their race, gender or ethnicity, language can also be a mechanism of exclusion and discrimination. Back & Piekkari (2024) define language-based discrimination in multilingual organizations as “both spoken and written language-related situations where individuals experience an unfair disadvantage compared to other organizational groups due to their linguistic competence or speech features such as accent”. Organizational language policies and practices can be discriminatory in several ways e.g. by restricting people’s access to information and limiting their recruitment and advancement opportunities. Besides recruitment, language-based discrimination in organizations is most noticeable in the information sharing processes and in social interactions between colleagues. Providing information, training and having meetings and informal discussion only in the local language excludes those who do not have sufficient proficiency in the language (Back & Piekkari, 2024). To fight language-based discrimination, many multinational companies have adopted inclusive language policies, as already discussed earlier in this chapter.

In conclusion, inclusion refers to the degree to which employees feel valued and able to contribute while maintaining their unique characteristics. Feeling included or excluded is influenced by organizational norms and culture, but moreover by the behaviors of the surrounding people. In an inclusive organization no one is discriminated against based on their personal attributes and no identity group is favored over others. To achieve this, organizations must recognize their own prevailing norms and power dynamics that might favor some identity groups over others. To examine the organization’s power dynamics and how societal systems and interactions affect inclusion, I will next introduce Bourdieu’s theory of practice, which is the basis of the theoretical framework I use in this study.

2.3 Bourdieu's theory of practice

Pierre Bourdieu was a French sociologist whose works have impacted not only social sciences but also fields such as anthropology, education sciences, management and organizational studies, gender studies and cultural studies (Tatli et al., 2015). Bourdieu's theories have been used to study the complicated social interactions and power relations of different groups and societies. In management studies Bourdieu's theories offer a multi-level framework to study organizations and how management practices of the "ordinary" workers affect minority groups in the organization (Tatli et al., 2015). I've chosen Bourdieu's theoretical works as my lens to diversity and inclusion since they provide a comprehensive framework to understand both the dynamic nature and contextuality of inclusion in organizations. I will now explain the basic concepts of Bourdieu's theory of practice in more detail and present prior research which has used the Bourdieusian lens to study foreign employees, diversity and inclusion.

2.3.1 Basic concepts of Bourdieu's theory of practice

Bourdieu developed and fine-tuned his theory of practice across several of his works (Bourdieu P., 1977; 1986; 1987; 1990). The key concepts in Bourdieu's theory are capital, field and habitus. Together, these concepts explain how social structures, personal characteristics, and power relations interact in specific social environments.

Bourdieu defined capital not only in economic terms but also in other forms of resources that individuals and groups possess and can leverage for social advantage. According to Bourdieu, there are four types of capital, which are mutually convertible: economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. Economic capital is the easiest to understand and it includes financial resources, such as income, material possessions, savings and other resources, that can be converted into money, such as time (Bourdieu P. , 1986). While economic capital is easily understood and can also be measured, the other three forms of capital are more abstract and exist in relationships, knowledge and prestige individuals accumulate.

Social capital refers to the actual or potential resources and benefits that arise from having networks of relationships or belonging to a group. Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) defined social capital as the benefits that come from "more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition". These relationships, such as being part of a family, organization, or prestigious institution, provide individuals with access to resources,

support, and opportunities that they would not have alone. The strength of a person's social capital depends on the size of their network, the capitals (economic, cultural, or symbolic) possessed by the people in the network and how these connections can be mobilized to benefit the individual (Bourdieu P. , 1986). Thus, the source of social capital an individual has is highly dependable on their position in the social and economic order, as social capital is greater the more influential and powerful people one is networked with or the more prestigious a group one belongs to. According to Bourdieu, social capital is possessed by the individual and it is available only for those who are willing and able to invest in social relationships and turn them into long-lasting ties. These long-lasting ties are successful when they involve feelings of mutual obligation, such as gratitude, respect or friendship, which eases mobilizing these relationships into benefits. These relationships are, according to Bourdieu, strategic, designed to be useful either immediately or in the future, helping individuals to gain social or symbolic advantages over time (Bourdieu P. , 1986).

Cultural capital is the third form of capital defined by Bourdieu and it includes a range of skills and attributes, such as education, knowledge, skills, and tastes, which individuals acquire through socialization. Cultural capital has three distinct forms (Bourdieu P. , 1986):

- Institutionalized, such as e.g. academic qualifications
- Embodied or incorporated, such as previous work experience, cultural and behavioral knowledge, language skills / the ability to use language properly, race or gender
- Objectified, consisting of tangible assets like books, tools, attire, and accessories that symbolize the individual's possession of other forms of cultural capital

Symbolic capital is the final form of capitals. It is the form that other capitals take after they have been recognized in a specific field (Tatli et al., 2015). The recognition can include reputations, honors, titles, and other markers of social esteem. For example, when an individual is promoted to a managerial position, his/her skills and knowledge are transformed into symbolic capital. The managerial title itself is a source of authority and respect for the individual which further enhances the individual's position and influence in social settings. Symbolic capital thus plays a significant role in establishing social hierarchies and determining access to resources and opportunities.

One of the main ideas in Bourdieu's framework is the convertibility of capitals, which means that one form of capital can be used to gain other forms of capital (Bourdieu P. , 1986). For

example, economic capital can be used to pay the tuition fees of an established University to accumulate both cultural capital in the form of academic degree and social capital in the form of friendships and acquaintances formed during the study years. Furthermore, the degree from the established University is a form of symbolic capital in fields where the University is highly appreciated. These acquired social and cultural capitals can then in turn help the individual to be employed and advance one's career to acquire more economic capital. The convertibility of capitals is, according to Bourdieu, a mechanism through which power structures are maintained and social inequalities are reproduced. The individuals who have access to one form of capital, especially economic capital, can transform it into other forms of capital, such as cultural, social, or symbolic capital, that grant them advantages in different social fields. Not everyone has equal access to different forms of capital and thus the ability to convert capital reinforces the position of dominant groups and makes it difficult for those without access to capital to challenge or disrupt existing power relations.

Bourdieu argues that capital doesn't inherently possess value, but its value and significance is dependent on the context and social structures where it is used. He uses the term "field" to describe the social environments where capitals can be used and where their value is determined (Bourdieu P. , 1986). In management studies, the field can be used to describe e.g. organizations, teams/departments and other groups of people within the organization and the society in which the organization is situated. People are situated in several fields simultaneously and within each field, individuals and groups compete for various forms of capital and try to maximize the possession of the most valued capitals and strive to establish and maintain their positions of power and influence. Fields are not static but are shaped by ongoing struggles and negotiations among their participants. As the players compete for the possession of the capitals, they also have an interest to maintain the field as such that their capitals are valued (Bourdieu P. , 1977, p. 169). The players with the most valued capital are the dominant players in the game and have the advantage of setting the rules of the game for the field and decide who can enter the field (Schneidhofer et al., 2015). Besides setting the rules of the game, dominant players also use other forms of power to maintain their position on the field. Language is, according to Bourdieu, one means of dominating others as those who have linguistic capital can control over those with limited resources (Snook, 1990).

According to Bourdieu, inclusion of an individual in a specific field is determined by the volume of different forms of capital the individual possesses and the seemed value of those

capitals (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2013). Exclusion of people from the group is the consequence of power struggle where the dominant group is unwilling to surrender their position in the field or allow entrance to the field for individuals who do not possess enough valued capital. Furthermore, according to Bourdieu groups strive to maintain the group as homogeneous as possible, which means excluding the ones that do not conform to the group values and norms. Therefore, in Bourdieu's framework, groups are not naturally inclusive but social relationships and becoming a part of a group require effort from the individual wanting to be part of the group, such as acquiring the capitals valued in the field and conforming to the group norms. As stated earlier, inclusion is a dynamic process, which is constantly recreated through the relationship of the individual and the surroundings (Ferdman B. M., 2013). Bourdieu's concept of field offers a tool to further understand the dynamic nature of inclusion by describing how individuals aim to position themselves better in the field by constantly building their capital portfolio and shaping the field to value these capitals by affecting the rules and hierarchies of the field. Furthermore, the interplay of capitals and field is effective to describe barriers for inclusion.

In addition to the concepts of capital and field Bourdieu introduced the concept of habitus to explain the context where capital is valued. The concept of habitus refers to the internalized set of dispositions, habits, and embodied practices, such as the way one carries oneself, speaks or dresses that individuals acquire through their socialization within specific social contexts. For example, I remember once a colleague of mine describing someone he knew by saying "you can see from his posture that he served in the military". This example shows how habitus, through subtle embodied cues like posture, indicates an individual's background. Habitus is formed as the individuals are exposed to and internalize the norms, values, and behaviors prevalent in their social environment and learn the "rules of the game" of that environment. Habitus is a concept to explain how people act, feel, think and are in different circumstances and how their previous experience affects their choice to act in certain ways. Habitus is constantly evolving through social interactions in the field and simultaneously the field is shaped by the Habitus (Maton, 2014). Additionally, a person's habitus reflects on the position the person holds on the field implying their adjustment to the position (Mahar et al., 1990). For example, you can often identify company managers by the ways how they dress, act and speak, which are shaped by both their role in the organization and on the expectations set on them. The interplay of capitals, habitus and field is portrayed in

Figure 4. People with similar backgrounds, e.g. due to their social class, education and nationality, exhibit similar habitus. For example, an individual who has grown up in a family where fine arts are appreciated and who is accustomed to visiting museums and discussing arts is likely to show more confidence and interact more fluently with other people in an art gallery opening than a person who visits such an event for the first time. Habitus serves as the mechanism through which cultural capital is expressed and enacted in social interactions (Kelly & Lusic, 2006), which in this example means how the person with knowledge in arts (cultural capital) portrays this in his confidence and ease when discussing the subject. Collective habitus includes the usually unconscious or implicit rules on how to behave in order to belong to a group (Kelly & Lusic, 2006). To gain membership in the group, the individual must demonstrate knowledge and practice of the habitual rules of the group (Girard & Bauder, 2007). “Improper” habitus can thus serve as a means to exclude certain people from the field.

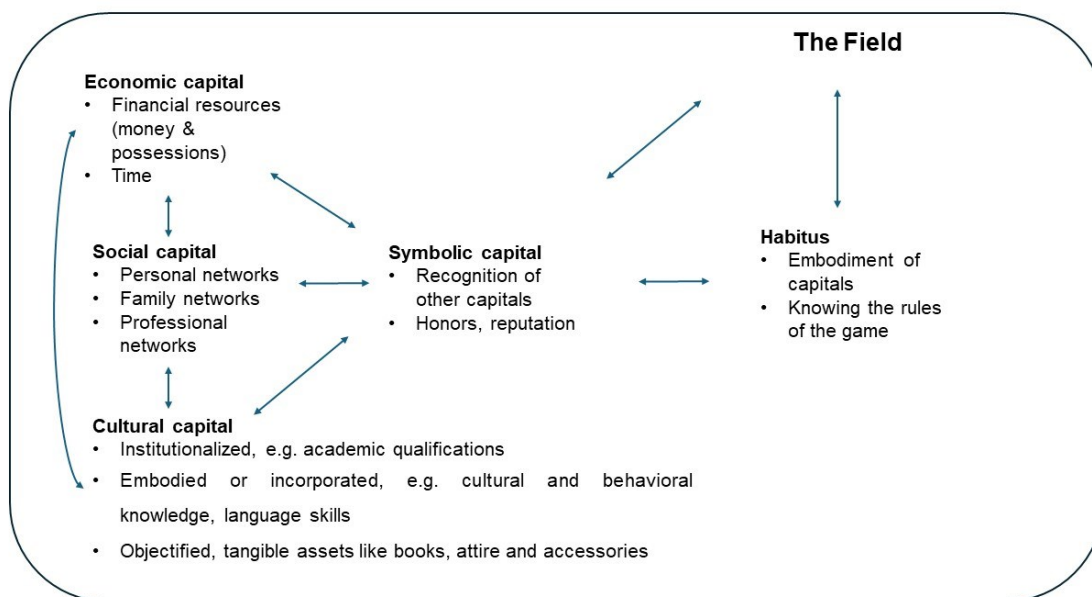


Figure 4. The interplay of capitals, habitus and field according to Bourdieu

Cultural capital and habitus are a way to explain the reproduction of e.g. class differences and inequalities in society and labor market. If the dominant group is very protective of its own superiority in their own field, it will only accept individuals who possess or acquire the “proper” cultural capital and express the habitus of the group. The field is then said to be autonomous. In an autonomous field the structure of the field and accepted habitus reproduce themselves in a continuous cycle resulting, that what is valued in the field continues to be

valued and unvalued continues to be unvalued (Everett, 2002). To be accepted in an autonomous field new members must assimilate with the group norms and diminish their characteristics that are not accepted by the dominant group (Girard & Bauder, 2007). When only people who assimilate with the dominant group are granted access in the group, the privileged position of the dominant group is enforced and the “unproper” people are left as outsiders, as depicted in Figure 5. This is how the group maintains its homogeneity, as discussed earlier in the chapter. If the field, on the other hand, is heteronomous, meaning that it is willing to re-evaluate what is valued and what is not, the field has a chance to be shaped by various cultural capitals and break the cycle of reproduction of certain privileges and norms (Everett, 2002).

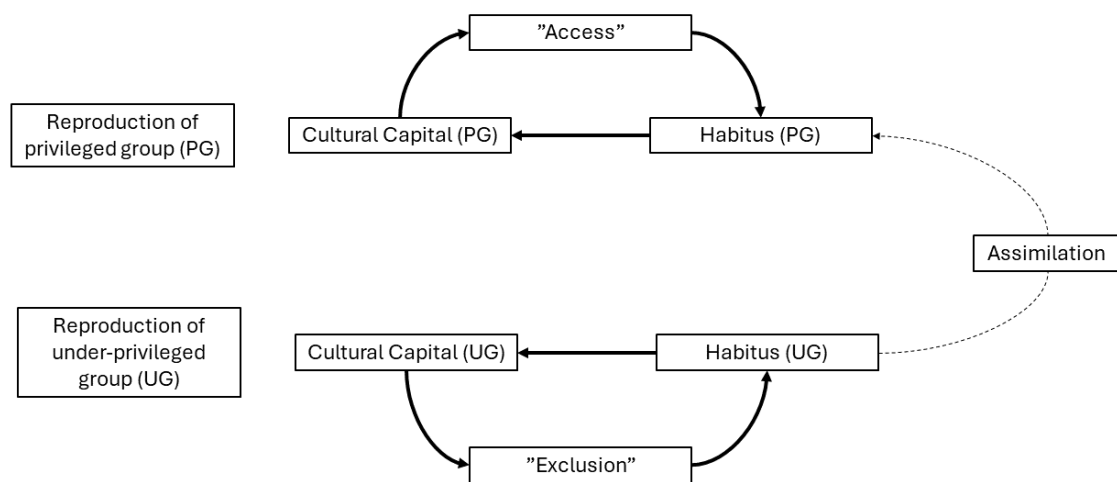


Figure 5. Cycles of reproduction in an autonomous field (Girard & Bauder, 2007).

An example on the cycle of reproduction in an autonomous field can be found in the study by Risberg & Romani (2022) on the employability of highly skilled immigrants in Sweden. Risberg & Romani (2022) conclude in the study, that Swedish organizations are suspicious of immigrants and see them as a threat to organizational normality, which is the “Swedish” way of working. The immigrants can be seen as employable only after they have been “normalized” into Swedish working habits through e.g. mentoring or gaining working experience in Swedish organizations. Risberg & Romani (2022) did not refer to Bourdieu’s concepts or studies directly, but the Bourdieusian lens fits perfectly to explain the findings of the study. The perceived threat to normality implies reluctance of the dominant group to change the organizational field where their Swedishness is seen as a valuable capital. This allows the

dominant group to maintain their position of power and the people acting according to Swedish norms remain the privileged group.

In simple terms, Bourdieusian lens explores organizations as multi-level playing fields, where individuals and groups do their best to advance using their individual resources, which are different forms of capital and habitus serving as knowing the unwritten rules of the game. The appreciation of capital and the proper habitus are different in each field and individuals play on several fields at the same time using their resources to gain more capital and making sure their capital remains valuable to position themselves better. This analogy offers a framework to study the power relations in the organizations and strategies, choices and actions made both by the privileged and underprivileged individuals in the organizational settings. The analogy also captures the dynamic nature of inclusion and explains how the surrounding social relations and structures of the field both enable and constrain the actions of individuals and are simultaneously affected by them.

Next, I will introduce some previous studies that have used the Bourdieusian lens to explain challenges faced by immigrants. The examples from previous studies further explain the usefulness of the Bourdieusian lens in exploring diversity and inclusion in organizations.

2.3.2 Bourdieu's theories in migrant, diversity and inclusion studies

Migration scholars have used Bourdieu's concepts of capital in their analyses on why the skills and educational accomplishments of migrants are often devalued in their new countries of residence and what kind of career strategies migrants use to overcome these challenges. As Bourdieu's theory explains, capitals gain value only in the field they are used, and the value is determined by the dominant group in that field. With this analogy the devaluing of migrants' skills and education is explained by the field, that is the new country of residence and the employers of the country, giving lesser value for the cultural capital of the immigrants compared to that of the dominant group of native residents. Additionally, immigrants' social capital, that is networks and relationships, is not usually sufficient or relevant in the new country of residence which makes it harder for them to be employed due to lack of professional networks and referees (Kelly & Lusic, 2006). When the field devalues immigrants' capital, immigrants generally have three options to enter or position themselves better in the field. They can either acquire new forms of capital valued in their new host country, such as additional training, language proficiency or qualifications, or they settle to position

themselves in alignment with the valuation of their existing capital, for instance, by accepting lower-level employment opportunities (Joy et al., 2020). Alternatively, immigrants can compensate for their lacking or devalued capital by working harder or better than those in the majority to position themselves better in the field (Louvrier, 2013). The need to use these kinds of strategies portrays the struggle and effort immigrants often need to make even to be allowed to enter the field.

There are several studies that have concentrated on the forms of capital that affect immigrants' access and inclusion at work. The capitals promoting access and inclusion include language skills, work experience, knowledge of host country culture and contact with host country people (Knappert et al., 2020). For example, Al Ariss & Syed (2011) found in their study on skilled immigrants from Lebanon working in Paris that prior knowledge of French culture, French language skills and academic qualifications proved to be cultural capital valued in the field. Additionally, the support from their family, friends and professional networks, that is social capital, helped them to gain the economic capital needed e.g. to relocation and tuition fees or scholars for foreign universities.

Lai et al. (2017) studied the challenges with socio-cultural interactions encountered by immigrant professionals in Canadian workplaces using Bourdieu's cultural and social capital to describe the skills and connections of the immigrants. Language and communication as forms of cultural capital were the biggest identified challenges, not only in terms of insufficient language skills but also in lacking proper terminology and speaking with a foreign accent not appreciated by the locals. In the study the immigrants described how the feeling of their skills not being appreciated frustrated them. Building good relationships with co-workers, supervisors and clients, that is acquiring social capital, was seen as vital to workplace integration. Lai et al. (2017) acknowledged that training and education of immigrants on language skills, teamwork and workplace rules is important in their integration, but the burden should not be placed solely on the immigrants, but also other stakeholders should support immigrants by being more tolerant e.g. to differences in communication style. Using Bourdieu's concepts, according to the study, increasing the cultural and social capital of the immigrants facilitates their integration. However, these efforts alone are insufficient for integration if the field remains intolerant towards diversity and does not value the capital of immigrants.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus has been used as a framework to analyze the cultural and social skill differences of immigrants and native people, especially regarding differences between Western people and "the rest" (Wallinder, 2022). Wallinder (2022) found in his study on Swedish expats in the UK and Germany that even the highly skilled Western Swedes experienced difficulties in their new social environment as their habitus did not meet the expectations in the host country. The feeling of "not knowing the rules of the game" caused the Swedes anxiety and fear since they constantly feared that they were not doing the right thing. The Swedes put notable effort into learning the local rules related e.g. to language and how to address other people correctly, but also made efforts to change the rules of the game to their advantage. Acknowledgement and appreciation from the local people for challenging the prevailing norms gave the Swedes a sense of pride. Thus, the Swedes did not fully assimilate with the dominant group's norms but were able to change the rules and thus the field to some extent. This is an example on how the players in the field can influence and negotiate the norms and rules of the field to position themselves better. The study by Lai et al. (2017) on immigrant professionals in Canadian workplaces used Bourdieu's habitus as a framework for understanding social norms and the so-called "soft skills" in the workplace. In their study the immigrants also described a lack of knowledge and understanding of Canadian workplace culture and "unwritten rules" being frustrating.

In addition to cultural capital being used to describe the skills of immigrants, Tatli & Özbilgin (2012) proposed cultural capital as a way to describe workforce deep-level diversity. They argue that surface-level diversity in terms of attitudes and ways of thinking can be understood as part of an individual's cultural capital. Additionally, they highlight that Bourdieu's capital offers a way to present diversity as a form of difference that is appreciated and treated differently depending on time and place. As an example, the current circumstances for Indian immigrants in the UK are different now than they were a century ago, and they are different from the experiences of Indian immigrants in countries like Finland, for example.

The capital categorizations of Bourdieu have been expanded in some studies to describe certain characteristics of individuals more precisely. One such extension is the concept of Identity Capital, which is defined as "the varied resources on an individual basis that represents how people most effectively define themselves and have others define them, in various contexts" (Côte & Schwartz, 2002). Identity capital includes a range of resources, including individual's diverse attributes, both visible and deep level, as well as their belonging with

specific communities (Ali et al., 2021; Ballakrishnen, 2023). Like other capitals, the value of the identity capital is highly dependent on the field where it is used and can either increase the value of the individual's capital portfolio or decrease it. For example, negative stereotypes held by the dominant group regarding e.g. certain ethnic groups devalues the identity capital of individuals from these ethnic groups (Ali et al., 2021). On the other hand, with growing organizational interest in fostering diversity within their workforce, the identity capital of diverse individuals can become a valuable resource during the recruitment phase improving their recruitment possibilities. The value of diversity can serve both the organization and the individual: the organization gains value by showing their commitment to increasing diversity and the individual by getting the job. The way this identity capital is actually valued in the workplace, however, affects how people identifying themselves as minorities feel included in the workplace (Ballakrishnen, 2023).

Critical race theories have examined race as one dimension of habitus and cultural capital. Following these theories Cartwright (2022) suggests that cultural capital is inherently racialized, meaning that those situated atop the racial hierarchy have the privilege to define what constitutes cultural capital and how this is valued for the individuals lower in the hierarchy. This view enables identifying and comparing how cultural capitals are sometimes differently valued based on the racial characteristics of people possessing them. For instance, as highlighted in Cartwright's (2022) study, when white individuals choose black candidates for specific roles, they prefer black candidates who exhibit calmness, whereas for white people such attribute is not regarded as essential.

Metz et al. (2022) studied in a recent study the effects of Social Capital and Human Capital on feelings of inclusion and exclusion in a multi-cultural professional academic association. They did not utilize Bourdieu's concepts of Cultural Capital and Habitus as such, but instead defined Human Capital as "knowledge, skills, and other attributes held by an individual, such as level of education and work experience", which is included in Bourdieu's definition of Cultural Capital. The study findings indicated that people's Social Capital (access to networks) is strongly linked to feelings of inclusion whereas exclusion is linked both to Social Capital and Human Capital (e.g. academic degree, work experience). Metz et al. (2022) proposed that Human Capital was not perceived as an important factor in inclusion since people do not consider it relevant once they have been admitted to a certain in-group. Those excluded from the group, on the other hand, felt their exclusion was due to a "wrong" kind of Human Capital (e.g. degree from a less appreciated University) which limited their access

to Social Capital. The study also highlighted that individuals can simultaneously feel both inclusion and exclusion, as they simultaneously identify themselves with several social groups and can feel included in some of them and excluded in others.

In conclusion, when studying immigration and diversity using the Bourdieusian lens, the skills, attributes and social networks of the immigrants can be described in terms of their portfolio of different capitals. Additionally, the concept of habitus can be used to explain the cultural differences of immigrants and native people. The capital portfolio of immigrants either increases or decreases their chances of integration in their new country of residence, depending mainly on how the field values these capitals and is willing to re-evaluate the “normal” in the field. Immigrants can strategically invest in new capitals to enhance their position in the field and to some extent also try to negotiate the rules of the field to their advantage. The successfulness of these strategies depends, however, on how strongly the dominant players in the field hold on to their positions of power and are willing to accept new players in the field. If the strategies fail or the immigrants do not have enough resources to invest in these strategies, such as economic capital to pay for trainings or time to attend them, the immigrants generally must settle for the position the field is willing to give them, meaning lower-level jobs, or they can try to compensate their missing capital by working harder than the dominant group. Both the feeling of one’s own capital being devalued in the field and not knowing the “rules of the game” causes anxiety.

In the next chapter I will present previous studies on the experiences of foreign employees in Finland. There are not that many Finnish studies that have used the Bourdieusian lens directly but have focused more on describing how the labor market at macro level is affected by foreign employees and how foreigners have experienced the Finnish labor market and workplaces. These studies are valuable in describing the dynamics of both the national and organizational fields in general within the context of Finland and give also insight on which capitals are valued by Finnish employers.

2.4 Experiences of Foreign employees in Finland

The study by Yamazaki (2022) is one of the few Finnish studies using the Bourdieusian lens as such. The study focuses on the capitals that Japanese highly skilled immigrants used in their job seeking efforts in Finland. In the study language skills, nationality and knowledge of Japanese culture were regarded as cultural capital. The study findings indicate that knowing English was vital for the immigrants when seeking for non-Finnish-speaking jobs in

Finland. Additionally, possessing Japanese nationality, a deep understanding of Japanese culture and Japanese as native language were highly regarded by some Finnish employers who were engaged e.g. in international markets. For these employers, possessing these capitals compensated for the lack of fluency in Finnish. Some Japanese immigrants utilized their social networks, that is social capital, such as professors and Finnish acquaintances when looking for a job. Work experience gained in Japan was not, however, valued by Finnish employers and the Japanese immigrants felt that not even their prior work-related experience helped them in Finland. The study emphasizes that the Finnish labor market is divided into several separate fields which value the capitals of immigrants very differently. Cultural capital of immigrants can benefit the immigrants only when they find the specific field in the Finnish labor market where they are appreciated. Similar findings are presented also in the study by Li (2020) on experiences of Chinese tertiary students in Finland. In the study it is stated that skilled foreigners are most likely to find jobs in positions which are either undesirable to Finns or where Finns lack the required expertise. Additionally, the study indicated that cultural capital the Chinese students themselves felt useful in their job search include fluency in English language, job-related skills and additionally soft skills such as confidence, honesty, communication skills in general, team-player mentality and entrepreneurial attitude for job-seeking. Additionally, social relationships with Finnish people was recognized as important in job search since these contacts can act as referees and help to find professional contacts from their own network.

There are several studies on immigrants in Finland focusing on how foreign people see Finnish people. These studies give an overall picture on how Finland as a national field is experienced by those whose Identity Capital is not Finnish. According to these studies, foreign employees generally feel that Finnish people are a closed homogenous group who feel that “there is only one way of being a Finn” (Koskela, 2013) and it is difficult to make friends with them (Li, 2020). Finnish culture is perceived as unwelcoming to foreigners due to the Finnish communication style, characterized actually by the tendency to avoid direct communication and maintain a certain level of distance and privacy (Hosseini & Kotilainen, 2021). Finnish people themselves also joke and tell myths about how Finns are silent people who do not engage in small talk (Habtı & Koikkalainen, 2014). Indeed, the esteemed Finnish poet Eino Leino eloquently captured the quietness of Finns as early as 1912 by writing: “The boreal owl on its branch was so wise, wise / Because it didn’t say a word – In Finland even

that was plenty!”. Because of the closed and unwelcoming nature of Finnish culture, foreigners in Finland feel it’s very challenging to see themselves as part of the Finnish society. In terms of inclusion, immigrants generally do not feel belongingness in Finnish society but rather seek belongingness among other immigrants. Even skilled foreign employees feel they find belongingness among other skilled immigrants and “internationally minded Finns” rather than from the Finnish society in general (Koskela, 2013). For Finnish workplaces and organizations, foreigners feel that the working environment in general should become more multicultural and use English as a working language to make the foreigners feel more welcome (Li, 2020).

When talking about immigrants in Finland the role of the Finnish language always comes up. Upon reflecting on my personal experiences, it appears that whenever the topic of foreigners in Finland arises in conversations between native Finns, someone inevitably expresses contempt regarding foreigners who live in Finland without even making an effort to learn Finnish. From the point of view of foreigners, learning Finnish is difficult and time-consuming and not seen that attractive since it is globally spoken by only a highly limited number of people (Hosseini & Kotilainen, 2021). Additionally, in the study by Hosseini & Kotilainen (2021), the reluctance of Finnish people to socialize and communicate with foreign students negatively affects their willingness to learn Finnish, since it is not deemed worth the effort as nobody talks to them anyway. In Finland it is also easy to get by with English since most Finnish people speak English, multinational companies use English as their working language and the Finnish Universities offer study programs in English (Hosseini & Kotilainen, 2021; Li, 2020). Li (2020) argues that for foreign students in Finland investing time on obtaining work-related skills appreciated in the labor market can benefit them more than studying Finnish during their studies, although lack of Finnish language skills is constantly seen as a barrier for employment for foreigners in Finland. But as the international students are more likely to be employed in international companies in Finland, their knowledge in English and work-related skills are often more important for them than the basic level of Finnish they could achieve by studying the language during their studies. Additionally, there are studies indicating that knowing Finnish does not necessarily even help foreigners to be employed in Finland. The requirement for fluency in Finnish is interpreted flexibly by the employers and even immigrants speaking Finnish can be prejudiced due to their accent (Koivunen et al., 2015; Lai et al., 2017; Näre, 2013).

Discrimination is one of the major challenges faced by foreign employees not only in Finland but globally (Sharma & Mann, 2020; Alho, 2023; Henttonen & Alhanen, 2023). Many studies group immigrants and foreign employees into one homogenous group, but there is evidence showing that the experiences and struggles faced by immigrants are highly influenced by their country of origin and ethnicity. Koskela (2013) describes this with the term “migrant hierarchy” and states that at the top of the hierarchy are the “wanted” highly skilled Western immigrants and at the bottom the “unwanted” humanitarian migrants from non-western cultures with visible ethnicities. The foreigners at the bottom of the migrant hierarchy face more challenges and discrimination than the ones at the top of the hierarchy. This is shown e.g. by how immigrants with qualifications from non-Western or North American countries face the greatest challenges in having their credentials acknowledged by Finnish employers (Chang & Holm, 2017; Koivunen et al., 2015). Furthermore, immigrants situated at the lower levels of the migrant hierarchy frequently find themselves in jobs that do not align with their educational qualifications, even if their degrees are from Finnish universities or institutions. This discrepancy is partly caused by stringent immigration and work permit regulations in Finland which compel the skilled immigrants studying or graduated from Finnish institutions to accept these lower-level roles to maintain their residence permit. Consequently, these skilled immigrants encounter obstacles when attempting to progress beyond these lower-level initial positions (Ndomo, 2024). Thus, acquiring local cultural capital does not automatically grant immigrants a better position in the Finnish labor market field, especially if the immigrant is from the lower levels of the migrant hierarchy. Similar results have been reported by Ahmad (2020) in his correspondence feedback study. In the study he sent out job applications to Finnish employers using five fictional candidates with Finnish, English, Iraqi, Russian and Somali backgrounds, who had the same qualifications and differed only in their names. According to the findings of the study, the applicants with immigrant origin received significantly fewer invitations to job interviews although their CV indicated that they speak fluent Finnish and hold degrees from Finnish Universities. The applicants with Iraqi and Somali backgrounds received the least call-backs. In addition to the study by Ahmad (2020), there are several other Finnish studies where immigrants have repeatedly reported on their personal experiences on discrimination due to their foreign name, language skills, ethnic background and skin color especially at the recruitment phase (Henttonen & Alhanen, 2023; Chang & Holm, 2017; Koivunen et al., 2015). Using the Bourdieusian lens it can be interpreted that Finnishness as an identity capital or part of cultural capital is valued highly in the Finnish labor market field being even more valuable than knowledge in Finnish language.

According to the experiences of immigrants seeking employment in Finland, it is common that job opportunities and vacancies are not openly or publicly announced but they are filled solely through networks and contacts (Henttonen & Alhanen, 2023; Chang & Holm, 2017; Jauhiainen et al., 2024). Furthermore, if there is information about job vacancies, they are often only in Finnish making it harder for immigrants to find these opportunities (Henttonen & Alhanen, 2023). These recruitment practices all together marginalize immigrants with limited social connections and limited Finnish skills and exclude them in many ways from the recruitment process (Sharma & Mann, 2020). The closed labor market in Finland with hiring practices favoring native Finns is yet another textbook example on the cycle of reproduction of the privileged group as explained in Bourdieu's framework (see Figure 5 in chapter 2.3.1). As the hiring practices favor native Finns and discriminate ethnic minorities, the native Finns remain in the privileged power position and the ethnic minorities are categorized and marginalized as the unprivileged group both in organizations and in the Finnish society (Chang & Holm, 2017; Koivunen et al., 2015). Additionally, at the national level the immigration laws and policies themselves restrict the opportunities to enter the organizational fields from non-European countries. The immigrants who have managed to enter into Finnish organizations experience they have only limited advancement opportunities in the company as the manager positions are primarily given to native Finns (Chang & Holm, 2017; Jaakkola, 2005; Alho, 2023; Henttonen & Alhanen, 2023; Jauhiainen et al., 2024), which further reproduces the privileged group of native Finns.

In addition to direct discrimination, foreign employees often face subtle forms of discrimination at workplaces. Examples of subtle discrimination in Finland can be found for example in the study by Louvrier (2013) on experiences of ethnic minority employees in Finnish workplaces. In the study, ethnic minority employees describe how their Finnish colleagues constantly ignored them or refused to talk or even work with them. Similarly, in Back & Piekkari's (2024) study on language-based discrimination within a multinational company in Finland, migrant professionals expressed considerable difficulty in socializing and participating in informal discussions with their Finnish colleagues as Finnish employees predominantly used their native language during such interactions, disregarding the presence of foreign employees. Subtle forms of discrimination can also be found in seemingly harmless incidents such as Finnish people not sitting next to foreigners on a bus (Koskela, 2019) or in less-subtle situations when jokes targeting minorities have been told by colleagues or racism

from clients and coworkers has been downplayed or dismissed and seen more as an interpersonal problem between colleagues that is out of reach of the management (Louvrier, 2013). Furthermore, several studies (Alho, 2023; Louvrier, 2013; Henttonen & Alhanen, 2023) state that foreign employees feel they are judged more heavily on their performance and if they make a mistake, it is seen to be caused by them being a foreigner.

Generally, previous studies imply that from the perspective of Finnish employers, foreign employees are seen to be deficient in comparison to Finnish employees: they lack skills, knowledge in workplace norms, proper behavior, and Finnish culture (Louvrier, 2013). Therefore, Finnish employers have, according to studies, many doubts regarding hiring foreign employees. Employers see hiring a foreign employee as a risk, as they cannot be sure whether the level of competence of the person can be trusted and whether the person's working style fits the company (Henttonen & Alhanen, 2023; Koivunen et al., 2015). These studies further confirm, that in Finnish organizations the cultural capital and habitus of foreign employees is often seen deficient and not as valuable as that of Finnish employees.

In conclusion, the biggest challenges foreign employees face in Finland in terms of their inclusion in organizations are the exclusive and discriminatory practices related to recruitment and especially to language requirements. Finnish employers generally value fluency in the Finnish language highly, but even mastering the language does not guarantee access to the Finnish employment market, especially if the immigrant is from the bottom of the migrant hierarchy. Additionally, foreign employees find it difficult to socialize with Finnish colleagues due to the language barriers and introversion of Finns and do not see they have similar advancement opportunities as native Finns have. Furthermore, racism and discrimination are still prevalent in Finnish society and workplaces. However, there are some specific fields in the Finnish labor market, where knowledge in other languages and cultures besides Finnish are deemed valuable.

In the next chapter I will focus on organizational diversity and inclusion practices and discuss the motivations behind their adoption and the goals they aim to achieve. I will then analyze these practices through a Bourdieusian lens, exploring the challenges they face and the prerequisites for their success.

2.5 Diversity and inclusion practices

As depicted in the multiple level framework for inclusion by Ferdman B. M. (2013), described in chapter 2.2, organizational practices and how leaders/managers act on them dynamically influence the feelings of inclusion at the group and individual level. Much of the emphasis on diversity and inclusion research is on the organizational level discussing what organizations must do to be diverse and inclusive. These practices are therefore discussed in this chapter.

Organizational HR practices have originated from the need to ensure equal treatment for the increasingly diverse workforce (Offermann & Basford, 2013). This trend, originating in the USA, has led to global adoption of equal opportunity legislation to prevent discrimination. At the organizational level, diversity management focuses on fair implementation of HR practices and demonstrating commitment to diversity. This includes targeted recruitment, mentoring, training programs, fair evaluations, equal pay measures, and clear communication of diversity commitments (Offermann & Basford, 2013; Dwertmann et al., 2016).

Whereas the equal opportunity and fairness driven approach to diversity management aims to increase diversity by decreasing discrimination and biases, another perspective on diversity management is focusing on inclusion. This approach concentrates on practices and procedures that create positive outcomes of diversity by inclusive environment, focusing on employee involvement, creating equal access to decision-making, resources and promotions and integrating diversity into organizational systems (Dwertmann et al., 2016; Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2018). The approach is often labeled as inclusion management or diversity and inclusion management.

Modern HR management books offer several best practices on diversity and inclusion management. When using the Bourdieusian lens, the diversity and inclusion management practices can be seen as intentions to increase the cultural and social capitals of diverse people and to change the field (the organization) itself. Increasing the cultural and social capitals includes practices related e.g. to training, mentoring and creating networks for diverse people. Practices aimed at changing the field include e.g. diversity and inclusion training for managers and employees, recruitment practices aiming to increase diversity, portraying diversity and confronting discriminatory practices (Offermann & Basford, 2013). According to the study by Louvrier (2013), in Finland the diversity practices in organizations have generally aimed at altering the assumed behavior of minority groups by giving them information

regarding the norms and expectations in Finnish working life and providing the majority population information on how the minority people are different. Thus, the focus in Finland has traditionally been more on fixing the individual immigrant than changing the field to be more inclusive to differences. The expectation for individuals to change and conform to prevailing norms contradicts Shore et al.'s (2011) definition of inclusion, which emphasizes that individuals should experience both a sense of belonging and be accepted as their unique selves.

The Bourdieusian lens can also explain the challenges of diversity and inclusion activities. Although several best practices on diversity and inclusion management have been recognized, their effectiveness is not clearly demonstrated. Research has found diversity practices having inconsistent, weak, or short-lived benefits for employee attitudes and behaviors or having even opposite effects with increased stereotyping and biases among employees. (Dawson et al., 2024; van Knippenberg et al., 2020; Nishii et al., 2018; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). The Bourdieusian lens would explain this with the dominant group in the organizational field resisting the change and refusing to include individuals with capital and habitus seemed inferior to the dominant group to prevent the devaluing of their own capital. To understand this resistance better, the organizational field needs to be examined more closely. Tatli & Özbilgin (2009) describe the organizational field to include the organizational culture, organizational diversity management structures and organizational support for diversity. They recognize several constraints in an organizational field which can resist diversity promotion, such as an unsupportive national political environment, culture of discrimination and resistance, absence of structures for management, management disengagement and lack of resources for diversity management. Overall, it is important for diversity managers to understand the organizational culture and the power dynamics of the organization to recognize sources of resistance (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2009).

Leaders are important in fostering inclusion not only by their own example, but by connecting organizational goals with inclusion and holding people accountable for their behavior. Leaders can facilitate inclusion in groups and help to spread inclusion across different levels in the organization (Ferdman B. M., 2013). Additionally, managers are generally the ones who decide, who can enter the organization and who can be considered for promotion. Managers are thus crucial in shaping the organizational field either to accept or reject diversity. Managers' interpretation of diversity practices significantly affects their implementation and the extent to which they are carried out. Research indicates that diversity initiatives may be

perceived as threatening by managers if they believe these programs prioritize the advancement of other demographic groups over their own, which can make them more reluctant to implement the practices (van Knippenberg et al., 2020). This is again an example of how according to the Bourdieusian lens those in the dominant position protect their own position and capital. Additionally, managers can react negatively to practices that have been imposed on them, such as mandatory diversity training for example (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

The best proven practice to motivate managers to implement diversity initiatives has been, according to van Knippenberg et al. (2020), to hold them accountable by setting e.g. targets for diversity. Dobbin & Kalev (2016), on the other hand, found on their analysis of U.S. companies that the best practices for diversity initiatives are the ones that are not forced on but framed positively and aimed to increase contact with diverse people e.g. with teamwork or draw on people's desire to look good to others. Additionally, diversity practices should be implemented as a systematic organizational effort including multiple diversity practices which are consistent with each other and supported by the top management (Nishii et al., 2018).

According to the multiple level framework for inclusion by Ferdman B. M. (2013), shown in Figure 3, at the core of inclusion lies the individual. To enable the individual feeling of inclusion individuals themselves can behave in an inclusive manner and receive such behavior in return as they interact with others. Some inclusive behaviors recognized in research include increasing self-awareness, acknowledging, connecting and engaging with others, listening and openly sharing information, engaging a broad range of perspectives and being willing to learn and be influenced by others (Ferdman B. M., 2013). Furthermore, groups foster inclusion by engaging in suitable practices and behaviors and establishing appropriate norms (Ferdman B. M., 2013). Inclusive leadership behaviors include manager being available and open to discussion, supporting group members, helping them to contribute and share their perspectives, developing and facilitating good relationships, ensuring justice and fair treatment and promoting psychological safety (Shore & Chung, 2022). The Bourdieusian lens would explain the inclusive behavior of individuals and groups being the result of appropriate social and cultural capitals and a field, where curiosity, acceptance and openness are seen as valuable.

2.6 Summary and conclusions from the literature review

The literature review examined the concepts of diversity and inclusion and the Bourdieusian lens to examine the inclusion of foreign employees / immigrants in organizations. The Bourdieusian lens clarifies how foreign employees are often excluded in organizations due to power dynamics in the organizational field and the field devaluing their capitals. According to Bourdieu, fields are characterized by an ongoing struggle for capitals and best positions in the field which results in reinforcement or transformation of the field's structure, as dominant players strive to maintain their privileged positions and other players try to challenge these positions and access the resources in the field. Previous research on immigrants and foreign employees through the Bourdieusian lens have recognized that the lack of relevant social capital (Kelly & Lusia, 2006), cultural capital valued in the organizational field (Knappert et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2017) and habitus misaligning with the field (Wallinder, 2022) often limit the foreign employees' possibilities to enter the organizations and access the organizational resources and possibilities in comparison with the dominant local employees. The strategies used by foreign employees to enter the field and advance in it include acquiring cultural capital valued in the field and social capital needed to make the relevant connections (Joy et al., 2020).

The Bourdieusian lens is used in this thesis as a framework to capture the dynamic nature of inclusion and explore how both the individual, the organizational practices, colleagues and managers around the individual affect how the individual can access organizational resources and thus feel included or excluded in the organization. An individual's access to organizational resources reinforces their inclusion or exclusion within the organization, as argued e.g. by (Metz et al., 2022), and in Bourdieu's framework the players in the field constantly compete for the resources in the field. As discussed in the literature review, inclusion and exclusion can coexist, meaning that cycles of both inclusion and exclusion can occur simultaneously. An individual may be included in some aspects of the organization while being excluded in others.

The cycle of exclusion and the reproduction of the privileged group occur when organizations grant access only to foreigners who possess capital valued within the organizational field and who conform to the norms established by the dominant group (Girard & Bauder, 2007). This demand for conformity contradicts Shore et al.'s (2011) definition of inclusion, which emphasizes fostering both a sense of belonging and appreciation for individuals'

unique qualities. Moreover, even when foreigners gain access to the organizational field, restricting their career advancement by excluding them from promotions reinforces the privileged status of the dominant group. Inclusive organizations are willing to break this cycle of reproduction by accepting differences and re-evaluating what is considered normal and valuable in the organizational field. The organizational field is not one clearly defined field but consists of several sub-fields in forms of different departments, teams and other groups of people within the organization. These sub-fields interact with each other and are shaped both by the organizational level as a whole, national field and by the individual players (employees and managers) in the field.

The framework according to the Bourdieusian lens is presented in Figure 6 with findings from the literature on the factors affecting the inclusion and exclusion and factors limiting access to organizational resources. The framework includes both cycle of inclusion and exclusion, which an individual can encounter even in the same organizational field. In the framework organizational resources comprise of social interactions with colleagues as social capital and sources for cultural capital, meaning information and trainings. Here information refers both to the knowledge and expertise of the employees working in the company as well as to all data available within the organization, such as intranet resources or documentation from previous projects. Managers, colleagues and organizational practices together either facilitate or restrict an individual's access to these resources and accessing the resources increases the amount of capital the individual possesses and reinforces inclusion. Restricting or denying access, on the other, reinforces exclusion and limits the volume of capitals the individual can accumulate in the field.

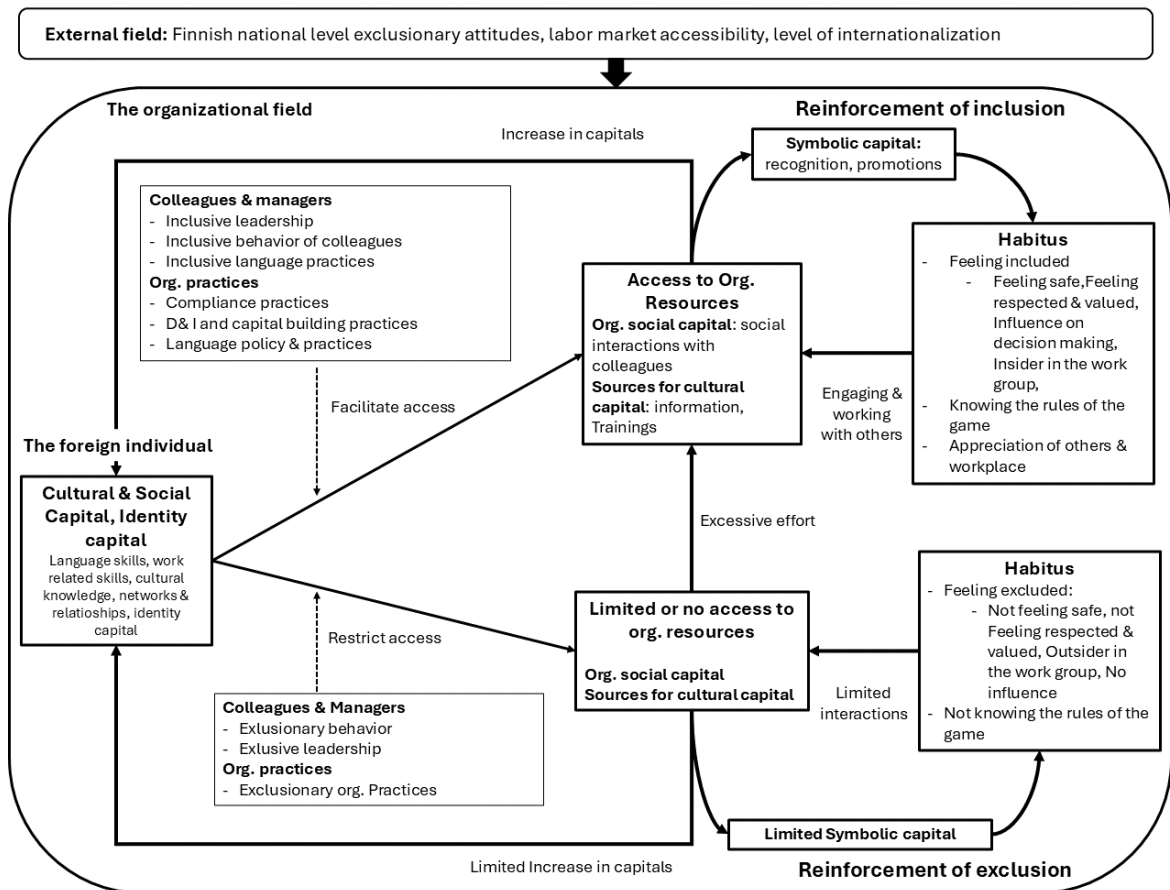


Figure 6. Framework on individual's perception of inclusion and exclusion. Adapted from (Girard & Bauder, 2007).

As described in the literature review, foreign employees have often found Finnish people to be closed and introverted and prejudicious towards foreigners (Koskela, 2013; Li, 2020; Hosseini & Kotilainen, 2021), which makes it harder for foreign employees to interact and become friends with Finnish people. Such exclusionary behavior ultimately limits foreign employees' ability to accumulate both social and cultural capital in Finnish organizations which further reinforces their marginalization and especially social exclusion in the organization and increases perception of exclusion and unequal treatment (Louvrier, 2013).

Managers have a crucial role in setting the norms for behavior and increasing diversity in the organization through their hiring decisions and inclusive leadership practices. For this, the managers themselves need to be open-minded towards diversity. Inclusive behavioral practices of both managers and colleagues related to inclusion are connecting and engaging with others, sharing information and being involved in the work group (Ferdman B. M., 2013). Inclusive leadership behaviors include the manager being approachable and open for

discussion, supporting team members, encouraging them to contribute and share their perspectives, fostering strong relationships, ensuring fairness and justice, and promoting psychological safety (Shore & Chung, 2022).

In addition to the managers' and colleagues' behavior, discriminatory organizational practices related to e.g. hiring and promotion and having discriminatory language policies limits the foreign employees' access especially to cultural capital, whereas non-discriminatory organizational practices and practices to promote inclusion aim to ease the access. Furthermore, the organizational language policy and communication practices influence how non-Finnish speakers feel welcomed in the organization (Li, 2020). As for the organizational field itself, the organizational practices to support and advance diversity aim to both increase the social and cultural capital of the employees and shape the organizational field including the organizational culture, norms and structures by making it more diverse and affecting the attitudes of the managers and employees. If this fails, however, the field is maintained as it is, and the privileged group remains to be favored, and inclusion is not advanced although diversity would be increased. Additionally, the national level attitudes towards diversity and the level of internationalization in Finland affect the organizational field by shaping the attitudes, experiences and expectations on "normality" of the employees and managers which also affects the possibilities of foreign employees to acquire capital in the organizational field.

As habitus describes an individual's internalized dispositions and attitudes towards the environment, I have used it in this framework to describe whether an individual feels included or excluded. For the individual perception of inclusion in the framework, I have chosen four out of the six themes defined by Shore et al., (2018) to describe the feeling of being included. These four themes are *feeling safe*, *feeling respected & valued*, *insider in the work group* and *influence on decision making*. For the perception of exclusion, on the other hand, I have used the opposite terms: *Not feeling safe*, *Not feeling respected & valued*, *Outsider in the work group* and *Limited influence on decision making*. The habitus is shaped by the field and by the social and cultural capital the individual can access and accumulate in the field. When an individual feels included, he/she is more likely to have the social confidence to further engage with others and accumulate more cultural and social capital in the field, which further reinforces feeling included.

The social and cultural capital of the foreign individual describe the resources and skills of the foreigner. These resources and skills can either ease their access to the organizational resources or limit that. According to prior research, language skills, especially skills in English and Finnish (Yamazaki, 2022), knowledge of country's culture through e.g. work experience, work-related experience especially from Finland (Yamazaki, 2022; Knappert et al., 2020) and social networks with Finnish people (Li, 2020; Knappert et al., 2020) ease individual's access to and within organizations. In the framework it is pre-assumed that these same capitals also ease the individual's access to social interactions and resources inside the organization. Knowledge of the Finnish working culture (Li, 2020) is further portrayed in the habitus of the foreign employee by "knowing the rules of the game". Identity capital refers in this study to foreign employees' origins and other distinguishing characteristics, besides just their native language, that differentiate them from Finnish employees. Symbolic capital is the form that other capitals take once they have been recognized in the field. Insufficient social networks, language skills and lack of knowledge of Finnish working culture, on the other hand, limit the foreign employees' possibilities and access to resources. Despite these limitations, however, foreign employees can attempt to overcome the barriers by investing in extra effort either by working harder or by acquiring additional forms of capital that are valued in the organizational field.

3 Methodology, methods and data

This section provides a more detailed description on how I conducted the empirical part of the thesis study and how I collected and analyzed the data. First, I will introduce the selected research method for the study and the context of the study by describing the chosen case companies. Finally, I will outline the data collection and analysis procedures and evaluate the trustworthiness of the research study.

3.1 Case study method

Qualitative case study was chosen as the research methodology for this study. Qualitative study gives the researcher an opportunity to focus on complex phenomena (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) and on the behavior of people in certain social contexts looking deeply into the quality of their social life (Holliday, 2007). The epistemological viewpoint in the study is subjectivistic, as the research is based on perceptions and authentic experiences of employees (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

The study was conducted as a multiple case study with two multinational Engineering and consulting companies operating in Finland. A case study method is suitable for covering contextual conditions that are relevant to the phenomena under study and where the boundaries between the phenomena and context are not clear. Furthermore, multiple case studies can be used to understand the similarities and differences between the cases (Yin, 2003). Case studies are popular in business-related studies due to their “ability to present complex and hard-to-grasp business issues in an accessible, vivid, personal, and down-to-earth format” (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Both case companies have offices in several locations in Finland, which offered a further level on the multiple case study. The units of analyses in the study are thus not only the two different companies, but also their capital region offices vs. offices in other cities in Finland. Thus, the case study design for this study is multiple case study with embedded units, where the embedded units of each case are the foreign employees in the capital region office(s) and foreign employees working in offices outside the capital region. Additionally, the diversity and inclusion practices of the companies are analyzed, which makes a third embedded unit of analysis. The study design is presented in Figure 7. The benefit of a case study with embedded units is that it allows to analyze the data within the sub-units separately, between the sub-units and across all the sub-units (Yin, 2003).

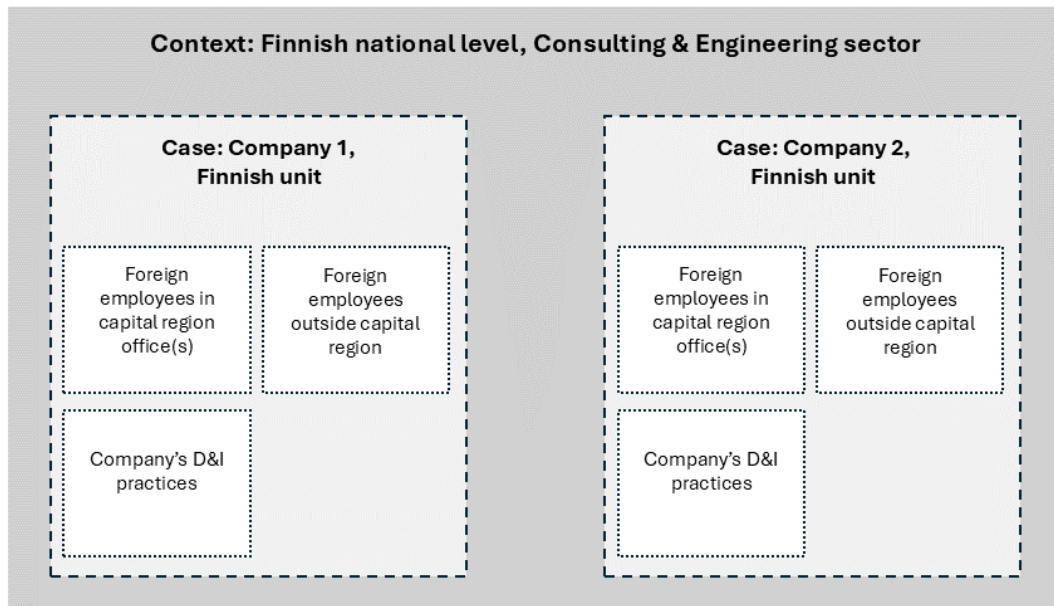


Figure 7. Set-up for the case study: multiple case study with embedded units, modified from Yin (2003)

A qualitative case study cannot exist in isolation but instead, its primary objective is to explore a phenomenon within the broader framework of its social, cultural, historical, geographical, and economic contexts (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Therefore, I will describe the context of the case companies briefly before going into further details regarding the data collection and analysis.

The national context of the study is Finland. As described in the literature part of the study, Finland is on one hand recognized the need to attract international talent but on the other hand many employers are, according to research, still hesitant to hire foreign employees. Additionally, as discussed in the literature review, many studies have indicated that foreigners find Finnish people closed and introverted and difficult to socialize with (Koskela, 2013; Li, 2020; Hosseini & Kotilainen, 2021).

Furthermore, the context of the study is the consulting and engineering sector in Finland. The sector employs approximately 54,000 professionals in Finland (SKOL Ry, 2024) with the majority holding either a Bachelor's or a Master's degree in engineering from diverse fields (Teknologiateollisuus, 2024). Many of the engineering and consulting companies operating in Finland are multinational companies with either subsidiaries or headquarters abroad. The need for foreign employees and retaining foreign students who have studied in Finland has been acknowledged by the field to make-up the shortage of talents (SKOL ry, 2019).

Regarding the organizational context, as already mentioned, both case companies are multinational engineering companies operating in Finland. This study focuses particularly on their Finnish units from the perspective of foreign engineers working in them. Both case companies are committed to advancing diversity and inclusion and have formal diversity and inclusion policies. The case companies operate both in the Finnish market working on local projects for Finnish customers and on international markets in international projects. The companies have acknowledged the need to attract and retain foreign employees, especially due to the shortage of talents in engineering.

I do not work for either of the case companies, but I do work in the field of engineering and consulting, and I can thus describe the field generally as an insider. The engineering and consulting industry predominantly employs engineers from various disciplines, including e.g. civil engineering, mechanical engineering, process engineering, and electrical engineering, to name a few. The engineers and consultants are knowledge workers, and they are mostly engaged in project type of work. The customers of engineering and consulting companies include e.g. manufacturing and industrial companies, government agencies, energy producers, and transportation companies. These customers are typically from traditional industries with long-standing practices, established terminology, and country-specific regulations and legislation that govern engineering work. Thus, the national context affects the engineering work greatly and always needs be considered when working on engineering.

The case companies for this study were selected based on voluntary participation of the companies. With the help of SKOL, an invitation to participate in the study was sent to the HR managers of several large engineering and consulting companies operating in Finland. The two companies that volunteered were then chosen as case companies for the study.

3.2 Data collection

In qualitative studies, the primary data is the data collected by the researchers themselves e.g. by interviews or observation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). In this study the primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interview consists of a pre-prepared set of questions that guide the interview but do not restrict the interviewer to modify both the order and exact wording of the questions according to the research situation. The researcher may also ask new questions as necessary to delve deeper into the aspects and insights shared by the interviewee (Lee & Saunders, 2017).

The interviewed people included employees with a foreign background who do not speak Finnish as their native language and who are currently living in Finland and working at either of the case companies. Additionally, I interviewed the HR representatives of the companies to have an understanding of the diversity and inclusion practices the companies have. The aim was to interview 5 employees per company + the HR representatives. A narrowly defined sample of 9-17 is, according to Hennink & Kaiser (2022), sufficient to gain a satisfactory depth of insight in an interview-based study to observe consistency in the findings. A summary of the research participants' demographics is presented Table 1. The participants were from different office locations, the majority being from the capital region, and from different departments representing various engineering disciplines, which is likely to provide a variety of perceptions.

Table 1. Demographics of the foreign employees participated in the study

	Company 1	Company 2
Country of origin	Africa – Middle East Africa – Middle East Middle – South America Russia Europe	Africa – Middle East Russia Europe Asia
Years in the company	0 – 2 years, 3 participants 5 – 10 years, 1 participant > 10 years, 1 participant	0 – 2 years, 1 participant 2 – 5 years, 2 participants 5 – 10 years, 1 participant
Gender distribution	3 males, 2 females	3 males, 1 female
Reason for moving to Finland	Studies: 3 participants Job: 1 participant Other: 1 participant	Studies: 3 participants Job: - Other: 1 participant

I contacted the HR managers of the case companies after receiving their contact information and confirmation of the companies' willingness to participate in the study. After that the foreign employees of the case companies were approached by sending an invitation to participate in the study through the contact persons in the companies. The invitations to participate were sent to particular e-mail lists or social media groups connecting foreign employees

of the company. After the invitations to participate were sent, the participants for the interview were selected from the people who approached me voluntarily and expressed their willingness to participate. Before conducting the interviews, the participants received a written data privacy notice detailing the information gathered during the study and how this information will be handled. The final group of participants were those who gave their informed consent to participate in the study after familiarizing themselves with the data privacy statement. The number of foreign employees participating in the study was 9.

The interviews were conducted between April and May 2024. The interviews were organized with Microsoft Teams which allowed recording and transcription of the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 70 minutes. The interviews of the foreign employees were conducted in English except for one person, who spoke Finnish better than English. The interviews of the HR persons were conducted in Finnish. The interview guides for the interview are presented in Appendix 1.

3.3 Data analysis

The interview transcriptions were analyzed using the thematic analysis approach by Braun & Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing and reporting of the themes within the data to provide a clear and detailed way to organize the dataset to uncover patterns. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is proposed as the primary tool for qualitative research due to its flexibility and suitability for various data types and studies. The phases of the thematic analysis are presented in Figure 8.

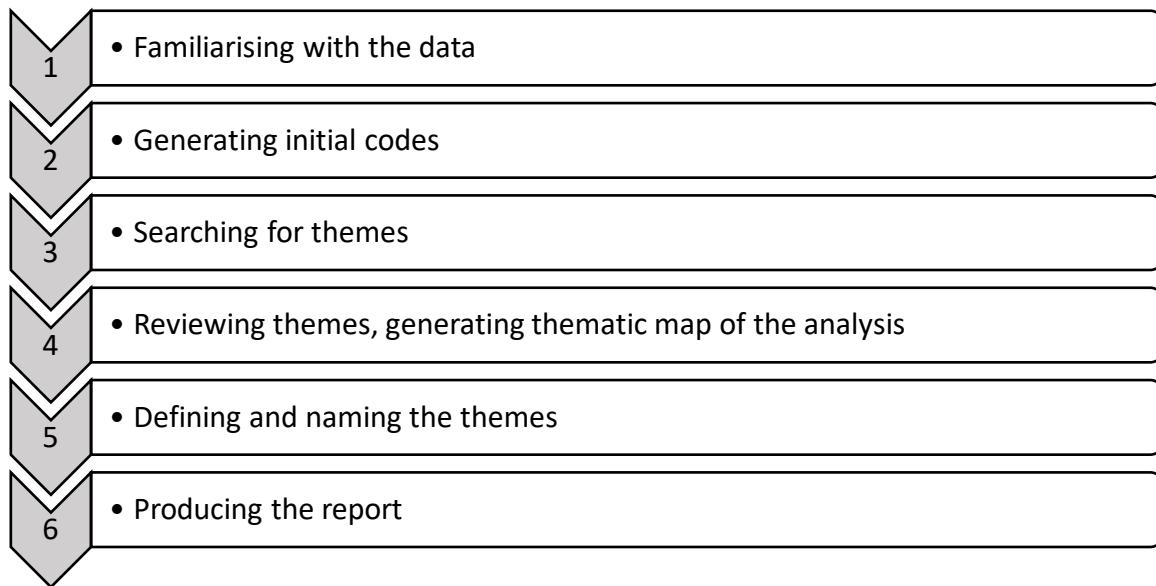


Figure 8. Phases of thematic analysis according to Braun & Clarke (2006)

Thematic analysis allows interpreting the data from either a realist/essentialist or constructionistic perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this study I chose the realistic approach where language is viewed as a direct reflection of experiences. From the realist perspective, thematic analysis expresses the experiences, meanings, and reality as reported by the interviewees. This study focuses on perceptions that are grounded in the subjective experiences with the studied organizations. Despite the subjective nature of these experiences, the realist perspective assumes that an objective reality exists beneath them (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Analyzing the data thematically can generally follow deductive, inductive or an abductive research design. In inductive analysis themes are generated directly from the data without predefined theories, whereas in deductive analysis existing theories or research questions guide the identification of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Abductive analysis, on the other hand, combines both inductive and deductive analysis with engagement both with empirical data and theoretical understanding (Thompson, 2022). I chose the abductive approach to analyzing the data. The deductive approach guided the analysis of the data through the research questions and to determine if the collected data aligned with previous research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The inductive approach was used during the coding stage and in generating potential explanations for the phenomena under study. The objective of abductive research is not to find one objective truth but to find the most logical and useful explanation for the studied phenomena (Thompson, 2022).

As illustrated in Figure 8, the first step in thematic analysis is to familiarize oneself with the data. The familiarization was started by reviewing the recorded transcripts and correcting possible errors with the help of the interview recordings. Simultaneously the transcriptions were pseudonymized to protect the identity of the research participants and avoid storing personal data no longer than necessary. Besides the pseudonymization, the interview transcripts were left unchanged. However, I refined the text extracts used as quotations in the data analysis section to enhance their readability by removing e.g. repetitive words.

The second phase of analysis was creating preliminary codes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The initial codes were assigned to data extracts of various sizes. The codes arose from the data itself, but they were categorized already initially based on the interview questions and presumed themes from the literature. I kept the transcripts of the interviews conducted in Finnish in their original language, but I coded them in English, just like the other transcripts. The Finnish text extracts used as quotations in the Findings section were translated into English when writing the section. I used a data analysis software QDA Miner Lite v.3.0.5 for assigning the preliminary codes to the data and for categorizing the codes. The free version of the software does not include any AI assistance tools for data analyzing, but it was merely used as an editing tool for organizing and keeping track of the codes and extracting the codes and their corresponding text extracts to Microsoft Excel for further processing. The preliminary codes were then reviewed, and some similar codes combined.

In the third phase of the analysis the codes were re-categorized for identifying and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The main categories used were inclusion, exclusion and dynamic inclusion. After categorization, second order themes were developed. The aim of the second order themes is to explain the observed phenomena with emerging theoretical concepts or themes (Gioia et al., 2012). In phase four the initial themes were reviewed against their corresponding text extracts and modifications were made as seen necessary.

In phase five, the initial names of the themes were revised against prior research and the developed 2nd order themes were then further suppressed into aggregate themes (Gioia et al., 2012). The aggregate and 2nd order themes were further revised and finalized when writing the Findings section. The aggregate themes were assigned deductively using themes from prior research to explain inclusion and exclusion and describe the individual resources of the participants that either helped or hindered them to feel included, as presented in the theoretical framework in section 2.6. As explained in the section when introducing the framework,

the themes defined by Shore et al. (2018) with minor modifications are used in the framework to describe feeling included and they were also used as aggregate dimensions. For exclusion I used the opposite of the themes presented by Shore et al. (2018), such as Feeling safe → Not feeling safe. For the individual resources I used the Bourdieusian framework with Cultural Capital, Social Capital, Identity Capital and Habitus as aggregate themes, as illustrated in the theoretical framework. In addition to the theory-determined categories, an additional category, Dynamic inclusion, was added as it rose from the second order themes. This aggregate dimension describes specifically the factors that influence how an individual can have varied feelings regarding inclusion.

Braun & Clarke (2006) do not give a clear interpretation on what counts as a theme but leave the researcher freedom to define that. When I revised the first order concepts, I gave a priority to such concepts that were present in more than one interview. However, as inclusion and exclusion are opposite terms to each other, I accepted some first order concepts related to exclusion that had similar opposite first order concepts under inclusion although the concept related to exclusion was present only in one interview. For these cases I accepted the existence of a stronger opposite concept as additional reasoning and evidence backing the concept.

Finally, the initial framework in the theoretical framework in section 2.6 was revised to portray the results of the analysis. The revised framework is presented in more detail at the end of chapter 4.

The main data categories and the used aggregate themes are summarized in Figure 9. An example of how an aggregate theme *feeling respected and valued*, as part of inclusion, is developed from first level codes with some example quotes is illustrated in Figure 10.

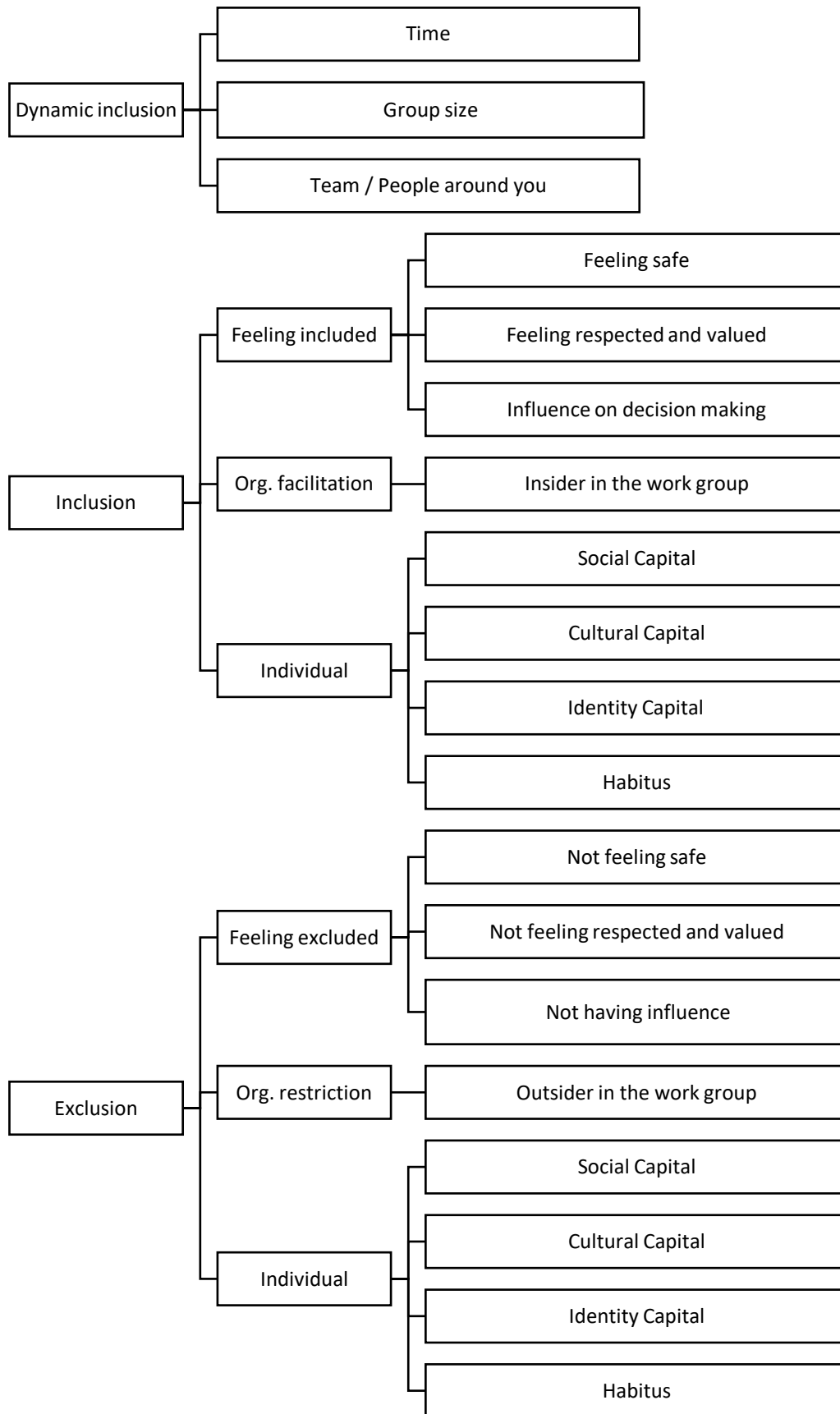


Figure 9. The main categories and aggregate dimensions of the data analysis

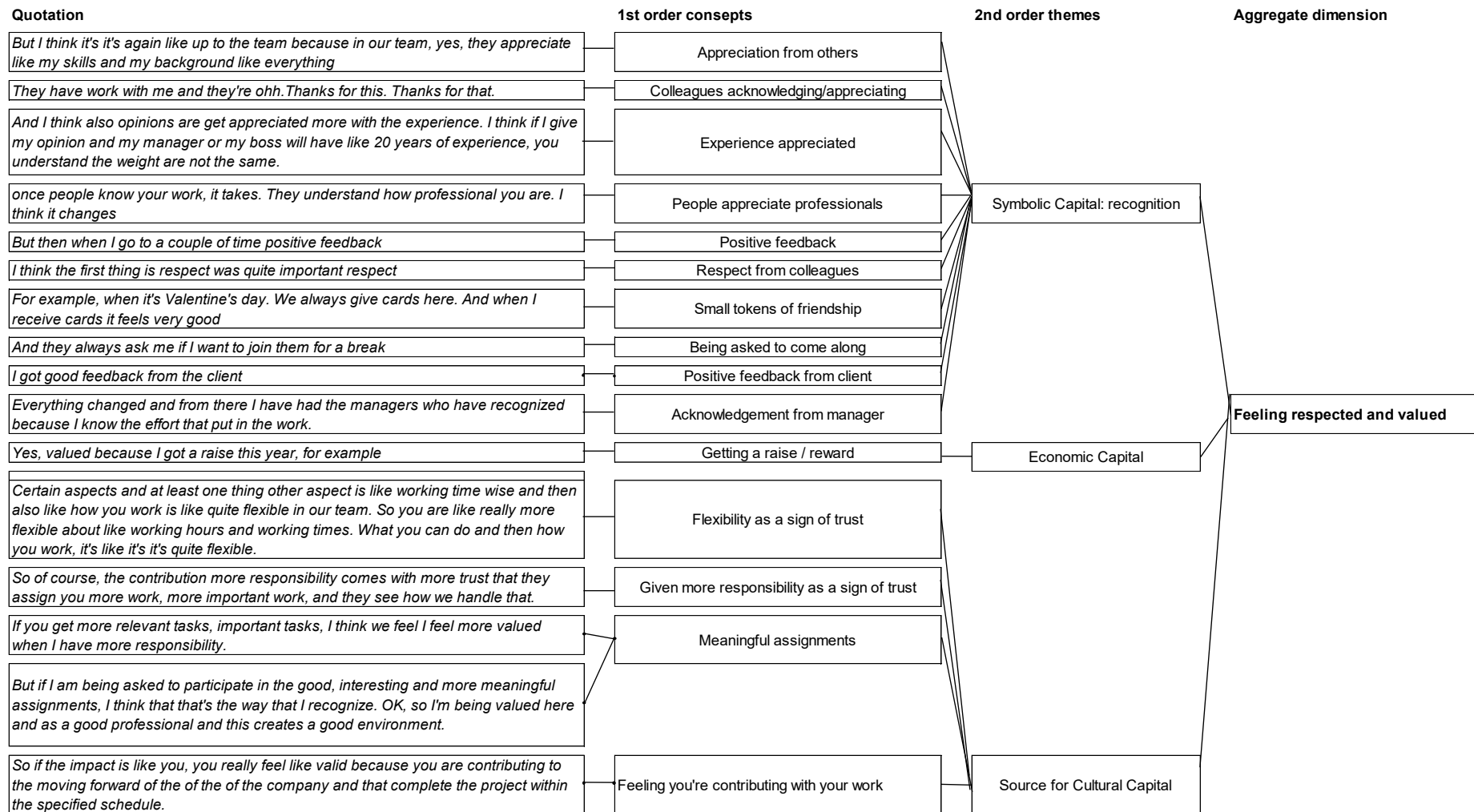


Figure 10. An example of the thematic analysis from quotations to the aggregate theme

3.4 Trustworthiness of the study

Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) advise using dependability, credibility, transferability and conformability as ways to assess qualitative research. In this section I will examine the trustworthiness of this study in terms of these concepts and additionally discuss the ethical concerns and limitations of the study.

Dependability means offering enough information to the reader about the process of research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Additionally, Tuomo & Sarajärvi (2018) add external party auditing and following general research guidelines in the study as dimensions for the dependability of the study. To ensure dependability of the study the research questions used are documented as an appendix of this thesis. Furthermore, the coding process of the data is described in the previous section of the thesis. There is no external party as such to audit the results, but the study has a supervisor who supervised the research methods and commented on the interview guides.

Credibility of the study refers to the adequacy of the data, sufficient description of the data and logicality of the links from data to conclusions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). This is achieved in this study by describing the data collected and the process of analyzing the data in detail and making sure that the conclusions made match the results.

Transferability concerns the responsibility of the researcher to show any degree of similarity to other research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) and how relevant the results are to other similar organizations (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). The study includes a literature review presenting other relevant research on diversity and inclusion and perceptions of inclusion. The discussion section of the study will compare the results of the study to previous studies. Furthermore, the theoretical framework used for presenting the study results relies on previous results. According to Yin (2003), the transferability or external validity of multiple case studies is stronger than that of single case studies. Additionally, transferability in a qualitative study can be accomplished with analytic generalization where the results of the study are generalized over a broader theory.

Conformability is about linking findings and interpretations to the data in an understandable way (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). To enhance the conformability of the study illustrations and diagrams are used to visualize the findings of the analysis. Additionally, an external

party to audit the results can be used to increase the conformability of the study (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018), which is achieved by having a supervisor for the study.

In sum, the quality of the qualitative research depends heavily on the quality of reporting the phases of the study and justifications for the claimed results. Additionally, research ethics guides both integrity and how the interview materials are handled, and how the study participants are informed. As the study will focus on delicate and personal matters, protecting the anonymity of the interview participants is a top priority. The names of the case companies are not disclosed both to further protect the interview participants and by the wish of the companies themselves. Additionally, only a limited amount of information is disclosed about the research participants.

Another important ethical consideration is to do with privacy and security of the data collection. For this reason, GDPR legislation guided the data collection practices. Before the interviews, participants indicated by e-mail that they had read and accepted the conditions of the study.

Additionally, while many topics emerged during the interviews, only those relevant to the research questions are reported or considered in the findings. The interview data, including recordings and transcriptions, were stored securely in a password-protected location. The interview transcripts were pseudonymized for the data analysis and the files with personal data were destroyed during the analysis phase.

4 Findings on factors contributing to inclusion and exclusion of foreign employees

This section presents the main research findings of this study, offering interpretations and examples from the conducted interviews. First, I will cover the dynamic nature of inclusion/exclusion and how passing of time affects both the organizational field and the individual. Secondly, I will cover the interview findings exploring the findings associated with how organization can either facilitate or restrict foreign employees' access to organizational resources. Following this, I will describe the study findings related to what makes foreign employees feel included or excluded. Finally, I will describe the findings related to the skills and resources of the individual contributing to inclusion or exclusion by using the Bourdieusian concepts social capital, cultural capital, identity capital and habitus. The following chapters and sub-chapters are titled according to the research questions and aggregate dimensions used in the data analysis. The second order themes are bolded as they are discussed for the first time to differentiate them better.

The interview participants from both case companies had very similar experiences working in engineering in Finland, and I will thus not distinguish the interview quotes between the companies. I will compare the companies, however, as I discuss the organizational practices and diversity & inclusion practices of the companies. The biggest differences in the experiences of the study participants seemed to be between those working in the offices located outside the capital region and those working in the capital region, regardless of the case company.

4.1 Dynamic nature of inclusion

In this chapter I will discuss the dynamic nature of inclusion as indicated by the study findings. It became clear from the interviews, that the distinction between inclusion and exclusion is not that straightforward and feelings of inclusion and exclusion can coexist, as already discussed in the literature review. Feeling included or excluded is highly dependable on the people around you and on the time and place. The sub-themes under the Dynamic nature of inclusion in this study are thus *Team/people around you*, *Group size* and *Time*. I will next explore these themes more closely.

Team/people around you affect the feeling of inclusion or exclusion greatly, as will be also further discussed in the following chapters. A person can feel simultaneously included in

one's own team and excluded in the bigger organization or, for example, in a particular project team. This occurs due to Finnish employees in both case companies having very diverse attitudes towards diversity and foreign employees and people working in various types of project teams. As one research participant summarized:

“There are people who are super open-minded and very inclusive, that is are interested on understanding the differences, understanding the different cultures and talk about it. And there are people, that don't care.”

The organizational field is thus not homogenous regarding people's attitudes towards diversity, which can result in very different experiences in the organization for foreign employees.

Besides the people around you, **Group size** is another factor influencing how a foreign employee experiences being included or excluded. Several study participants shared similar experiences: as non-Finnish speakers still learning the language, they find it easier to practice the language in smaller groups. Additionally, in larger groups Finnish people tend to speak only Finnish with each other and ignore the presence of the non-Finnish speaker, whereas in smaller groups it is easier to maintain the conversation in English to also include the foreign employee in the conversation. Here is how one study participant described his experiences:

“But once you started to increase the group, there will always be someone talking to other, and if they're not directly talking to me and then they would talk in Finnish because that's natural. But then this, if that conversation starts to engage more people, then quickly, the whole group is talking in Finnish.”

Time was an additional dimension to the dynamic nature of inclusion that emerged from the interviews. Feeling included or excluded is strongly linked to the time and place where you happen to be. Additionally, an individual's skills and connections, that is cultural and social capital, increase with time. For cultural capital, especially learning the Finnish language takes time and patience, according to the study participants.

For the organization itself the landscape where the organization operates develops and changes with time. Finland itself is becoming more international and there are thus more international talents applying for jobs than before and companies are also more interested in hiring diverse people.

“So when I came to Finland, it was not yet that multicultural 2005. I arrived in Finland, so I actually have seen Finland grow”

Additionally, the organizational practices related to diversity and inclusion develop as the companies themselves learn more about which practices work for them and what needs to be developed further. As the HR representative of one of the case companies described, they are on a learning path with their diversity and inclusion practices. This aligns with the Bourdieusian concept of field which acknowledges the field being continuously shaped by the struggles and interplay of the players in the field.

In conclusion, feeling included or excluded is not a static feeling but changes over time and is dependent on the people around you and size of the group, as summarized in Figure 11. This is important to keep in mind when reading and interpreting the findings presented in the following chapters. The findings in the following chapters are not tied to any particular moment of time but describe factors contributing to the feeling of inclusion and exclusion the study participants have experienced throughout their time in Finland.

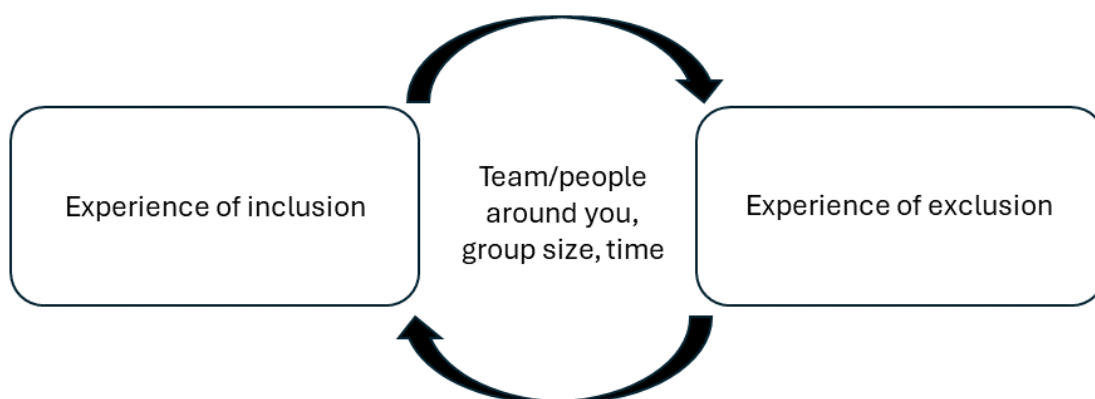


Figure 11. Dynamic nature of inclusion & exclusion

4.2 Organization facilitating and restricting access to capitals

As described in the literature review, in Bourdieu’s framework inclusion of an individual in a specific field is determined by the volume and quality of the capitals the individual possesses and how the individual can use these capitals to position oneself better. Thus, inclusion in this framework is mainly about how an individual can access organizational capitals and how the individual sees their capitals are valued in the field. Exclusion is correspondingly about the field restricting the individual from accessing organizational resources and

devaluing the capitals the individual possesses. As Shore et al., (2018) defined “involvement in the work group” refers to an individual feeling like an insider and having access to critical information and resources in the organization. According to this definition, being an insider is about having access to organizational resources, which very much aligns with the Bourdieusian framework used in this study. I used the aggregate dimensions *insider in the work group* to describe the factors related to how the organizational field facilitates foreign employees’ access to organizational resources and *outsider in the work group* to correspondingly describe how the field restricts access. The organizational resources in this study refer to social interactions with colleagues and managers, information, trainings and monetary rewards. Furthermore, the career advancement possibilities within the organization offer the individual symbolic capital in the form of titles, recognition and prestige. Thus, the findings related to these aggregate dimensions give answers to the research question on how the organization facilitates or hinders the inclusion of foreign employees.

The sub-themes related to facilitating access to organizational resources related to managers and colleagues that emerged from the interviews are *inclusive leadership* and *inclusive behavior or colleagues*. Being an outsider in the organization is the opposite of being an insider, and it thus entails sub-themes *exclusive leadership* and *exclusionary behavior*. In addition, several organizational practices that either facilitate or restrict access to resources emerged. I will describe the findings related to these themes in the following sub-chapters.

4.2.1 Inclusive leadership vs. exclusive leadership

As discussed in the literature review, inclusive leadership includes manager being available and open to discussion, supporting group members, helping them to contribute and share their perspectives, developing and facilitating good relationships, ensuring justice and fair treatment and promoting psychological safety (Shore & Chung, 2022). The study participants described several such inclusive leadership practices they had experienced and expressed their appreciation towards these. Next, I will describe behaviors and practices of managers found in this study that relate to facilitating or hindering foreign employees access to organizational resources.

Several study participants recognized that it is important for managers to be open-minded to diversity since the managers’ attitude towards diversity has an impact on the whole team. Additionally, managers’ attitudes also influence on the recruitment of diverse people and therefore can facilitate their access to the organizational field:

“I think the manager, uh, attitude makes a big difference. First, it takes some courage from him to hire someone that is abroad -- and then his attitudes also influence a lot how other people see the situation”

In addition to the manager being open-minded to diversity, manager actively reinforcing inclusion and inclusive behaviors was brought up by several interview participants and they saw it as the managers' responsibility to promote and reinforce inclusion. As managers are among the dominant players in the organizational field, it is their responsibility to show examples of inclusive behavior for the team and to encourage them for inclusion. This way managers enable each individual to fully engage and access the benefits of being a member of the team. One participant told an example on how his team manager had enforced the team to use English in a meeting:

“-- and there were occasions that at least one person was saying that she didn't want to speak English because it's easier for her to speak Finnish. And then at that time, the manager said no, this is a meeting for everyone. Now we have a English speaker here, so the meeting will be in English and this should not be a big deal because we all work in international projects. So, we all need to talk in English at some point, and so I think these attitudes makes a lot of difference”

Some study participants described, how their managers had facilitated in building relationships and interacting with other employees. Managers had, for example, introduced the foreign employee to other employees of the company during onboarding and encouraged the Finnish employees to interact and connect with the foreign employee. These kinds of behaviors facilitate the foreign employees' access to social interactions with colleagues which can ease and speed the accumulation of social capital of the new employee. This is how one participant described his onboarding and how his supervisor helped him:

“So, he was now and then telling. OK, so there is this our new colleague. So just invite him here and then just guide him through this one. And then he was also little bit of pushing here and there. So, it was more like easy for me to adopt to this environment at least.”

The responsibility of the direct supervisor to facilitate building contacts in the company for the newcomer was also acknowledged by the interviewed HR representatives. In addition to the onboarding phase, facilitating communication between team members overall was found to be important. One participant described how his team, which is scattered around several

offices in Finland, has regular weekly virtual coffee meetings where they can speak both about work and other issues.

Equal and fair treatment is at the core of being an insider in the work group. This relates to both organizational practices and how e.g. managers treat employees. Several participants from both companies described that they feel they are treated just like other employees despite their foreign background and/or that they haven't witnessed racism or discrimination at the workplace

“When everyone is the same, it doesn't feel like I am a foreigner here.”

“I've never heard you know about. Some kind of racism you know at [company] like direct racism that you know, the management would insult someone because of their race or discriminate somehow because of their whatever appearance, gender, whatever. Never, never heard these kinds of stories. And never happened to me personally.”

Additionally, the feeling that tasks are distributed according to your skills and that there is no discrimination in salaries contributed to the perception of equality among the study participants.

The study participants from both companies were mostly satisfied with their direct supervisors and managers and examples of exclusive leadership practices were hardly brought up. One participant shared an experience from the past of unfair and discriminatory treatment during layoffs, where a manager prioritized foreign employees as the first ones to receive layoff notices:

“He [supervisor's supervisor] was actually telling him [direct supervisor], that you have to get rid of the foreigners first -- during the layoffs”

In conclusion, managers can in many ways facilitate foreign employees' access to social interactions and other resources in the company by inclusive leaderships practices, such as reinforcing inclusion and facilitating communication and relationship building between foreign and Finnish employees. Exclusive leadership practices, on the other hand, can hinder foreign employees access to organizational resources and evoke feelings of injustice.

4.2.2 Inclusive and exclusionary behavior of colleagues

Inclusive behavior includes, according to Ferdman (2013), connecting and engaging with others, listening and openly sharing information, engaging a broad range of perspectives and being willing to learn and be influenced by others. These kinds of behaviors by surrounding people facilitate individual's access to information and social interactions at the workplace as other people are more approachable. Exclusionary behavior of others, on the other hand, are behaviors that restrict an individual's access to these organizational resources. Several inclusive and exclusionary behaviors of colleagues were found in this study, and I will next describe these.

At the core of inclusive behavior is open-mindedness to diversity. In the presence of colleagues who are open-minded to diversity, diverse people are free to be themselves. As one participant described:

“You can just be who you are, who you want to be, and there everyone is just fine with that. They don't really care who or what you are or where you come from.”

From the interviews it became clear, however, that not all colleagues are open-minded towards diversity and also managers' attitudes differ. Therefore, like discussed in 4.1 on the dynamic nature of inclusion, the feeling of inclusion or exclusion depends on the people around the employee and the team he or she is working with.

The diverse feelings of Finnish employees regarding increasing diversity were also brought up by the HR representatives when asked about the feedback received regarding the diversity and inclusion practices. The feedback on the practices has been both positive and doubtful regarding e.g. on how increasing the share of women in management positions affects the advancement possibilities of men. This is an example of how through the Bourdieusian lens the dominant group in the organizational field resists practices that could devalue their own capital and risk dispositioning them in the field less favorably.

In this study open and approachable colleagues and colleagues helping and sharing information were recognized by several participants to have contributed on them feeling welcomed in the organization. Many interview participants described how in their team their colleagues are friendly and nice, and it is easy to approach them and ask for help. Colleagues helping and supporting is especially important for new employees in a new environment, as

it helps them to learn how to navigate the new environment, access organizational resources to accumulate new capitals and to learn the rules of the game. Support can be related to work, learning how systems work in Finland or e.g. helping with the Finnish language. Here is how one participant described his experiences:

“I mean, probably the biggest help I have received actually was at my previous working place and it was just that I had I had the colleague who spent really a lot of time to by that is that he had literally explained to me like, what are the labor unions? Should you be involved or not and how it all works? How the banking system works in Finland? Like what kind of codes are used in Finland. What kind of software is used?”

Inclusive language practices of Finnish people when interacting with a foreign employee were additionally brought up by several study participants. For the foreign employees who are still not skillful or confident enough with their Finnish it is important for the colleagues to know and be willing to speak English with the foreigner. This is how one participant replied to the question on how colleagues could help a foreigner feel more welcome:

“Well, maybe as well. Uh. Kind of the same like be more, Uh, open to speaking English or to start a conversation. Uh, yeah. Or maybe don't switch to Finnish that quickly if they're, you know, there is someone who doesn't speak Finnish, try to keep it in English”

Additionally, for foreign employees learning Finnish, other people can support this by adjusting their own way of speaking to be more easily understandable for the foreigner:

“I try to speak Finnish as long as possible and they speak in a good pace and with understandable Finnish, maybe if you can say so. Not a strong accent or more like kirjakieli [standard language] instead of the spoken language”

Whereas open and approachable colleagues who help foreign employees and use inclusive language practices facilitate access to information and social interactions, exclusion is related correspondingly to exclusionary behaviors and language practices from colleagues. I will next share examples of such behaviors experienced by the study participants.

Although Finnish people generally know English well, the study participants had experiences where their Finnish colleagues were not able or willing to speak English with them. The experiences of exclusion or being an outsider in social interactions described by the

study participants were mostly related to their experiences of being around people not speaking to them. Like one participant described:

“Like the lunch breaks for example. Yeah. If I sometimes went with a group up of Finnish people and most of the time it's just Finnish being spoken and then yeah, I'm just sitting there eating or listening, trying to catch. Yeah, if I can get something of the conversation, but usually not. So, then it's a long lunch break to say so. So yeah”

The above quotation presents an example on exclusionary language practice and behavior of colleagues. Such behaviors often leave foreign employees feeling like outsiders, both in work settings and in casual conversations and social interactions. This significantly hinders the foreign employees' ability to build social capital. Study participants both from the capital region offices and from offices outside the capital region had encountered colleagues, who cannot or do not want to speak English. For participants outside the capital region, the reluctance or inability of their Finnish colleagues to speak English increased their sense of isolation since these study participants were often the only foreign employees in those offices with only Finnish colleagues to interact with face-to-face.

In addition to language barriers, the study participants also described the closed and introverted nature of their Finnish colleagues, which they felt made it even more challenging to socialize with them:

“Cause yeah, they are a bit closed off, so it's a bit difficult for me to just start the conversation with them if they are, if they already look a bit closed off or they don't, they don't look like they're open for any conversation. They're just maybe looking away or. Yeah, I don't know.”

Due to the introverted nature of Finnish people the study participants felt, that having social interactions with Finnish people requires a lot of effort and activity from their side since Finnish people hardly make initiatives. Furthermore, it was recognized that some Finnish people do not really engage and interact with their colleagues but rather focus on working. Like one study participant described:

“Engineers come to work and go”

As inclusive behavior includes being willing to learn and be influenced by others, exclusionary behavior can be interpreted as being resistant to new perspectives. As an example of this,

one study participant described, how in international projects Finnish employees often exhibit a sense of superiority and believe they possess greater knowledge than project personnel from other countries. This kind of behavior reinforces the field to favor employees with capitals acquired from Finland and limits the possibilities of others in the field.

In conclusion, accessing organizational resources such as information and interactions with colleagues is facilitated colleagues who are open and willing to engage with others, help and support and use inclusive language practices. Exclusionary behavior and language practices, on the other hand, limit the foreign employees access both to information and social interactions.

4.2.3 Organizational practices

In this section I discuss about organizational practices that either facilitate or hinder foreign employees access to organizational resources. These practices include *organizational compliance practices, diversity and inclusion practices, capital building practices, language policy & practices* and practices related to *team composition and location*.

Equal and non-discriminatory treatment of all employees is mandated by legislation, and it was emphasized by the interviewed HR representatives, that the company processes related to e.g. recruitment and promotion adhere to these non-discriminatory principles. **Compliance practices** describe all the organizational practices that are related to organization's commitment to prevent exclusion and discrimination as required by legislation.

As discussed in the literature review, when using the Bourdieusian lens, organizational **diversity and inclusion practices** generally have two objectives: change the organizational field including the organizational practices, norms and culture to be more diverse and inclusive and to increase the social and cultural capital of employees. The interviews with the case company HR representatives showed, that both companies have diversity and inclusion practices that aim to either change the organizational field or increase the social and cultural capital of employees. The diversity and inclusion practices of the case companies are summarized below in Table 2.

Table 2. Diversity and inclusion practices of the two case companies

	Company 1	Company 2
Changing the organizational field	Targets for share of women in management Trainings for all personnel & managers regarding D&I Information regarding D&I in intranet Company communication both in English and Finnish Theme events on diversity topics	Targets for share of women in management Trainings for all personnel & managers regarding D&I Information regarding D&I in intranet More recruitment adds published in English Increasing use of English in company communication
Increasing the social and cultural capital of the employees	Language courses Tutors/buddy for onboarding	Language courses Tutors/buddy for onboarding Increasing the amount of training material in English Discussion groups for non-Finnish speakers on various topics, including D&I

Both companies state they are committed to advancing diversity and inclusion at the company and they want to be a good place to work for all people. Both companies are multinational companies, and diversity is therefore also an important value for them. Additionally, it was brought up by one of the interviewed HR representatives, that their customers also find commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion important. Both companies promote diversity and inclusion and educate their personnel regarding the topics by providing information emphasizing the benefits of diversity in their intranet and organizing training for managers and employees. Additionally, both companies have focused on communicating both in English and Finnish in their internal communication and additionally in external communication in e.g. job postings. In regards of increasing social and cultural capital of employees, both companies offer Finnish courses for their foreign employees and appoint a tutor or buddy for the onboarding period for all new employees to facilitate the formation of networks in the company.

Neither of the companies offer training related specifically to Finnish working culture, although they have thought about this as a possibility. One of the interviewed HR representatives acknowledged that the foreign employees working with them have generally studied in

Finland or worked already for some other Finnish employer and have thus learned the Finnish working culture already.

Measuring the impact of diversity and inclusion practices is conducted in both companies mostly with personnel surveys. Additionally, they have targets for increasing the share of women in management positions, which is considered important but challenging in a male-dominated field. Neither company has set targets for increasing diversity in terms of nationalities, as data privacy legislation prevents them from collecting information about their employees' countries of origin and such targets would therefore be impractical to implement.

In addition to the D&I practices aiming to increase the social and cultural capital of the employees, also trainings offered by the company and team get-togethers are a way to facilitate building networks and acquire social and cultural capital within the company. These are thus called **capital building practices** in this study. Company get-togethers facilitating networking was brought up by one of the interviewed foreign employees:

“I think they could organize more of those local activities where people meet each other, not outside the work place. It doesn't have to be something fancy, just some activities so that the colleagues become like more as a family”

To summarize, the organizational compliance and D&I practices together aim to ensure that foreign employees have equal access to organizational resources in comparison to Finnish employees and some practices aim to further facilitate this access. The interviewed foreign employees acknowledged that both companies are doing a lot to promote diversity and inclusion and expressed their appreciation for the initiatives and practices. Many participants recognized, however, that the influence of the practices on their everyday life in the organization is rather limited. As one participant summarized:

“The intranet doesn't change my daily situation”

This quotation affectively reflects on the limited ability of organizational diversity and inclusion practices to make an impact. Like one participant said about the voluntary diversity trainings organized by the company:

“The hard thing about this kind of program is that people who are open minded are the ones interested in going to this kind of training. Uh, and the ones that would most likely need them the most, they are the ones not wanting to go.”

Through a Bourdieusian lens, the ineffectiveness of organizational diversity and inclusion practices in changing attitudes and behaviors of the employees is caused by the Finnish employees wanting to maintain their privileged position in the field. Due to this, they resist any changes that might jeopardize their position or devalue their capitals, which further contributes to maintaining the field as it is instead of shaping it to be more inclusive. As a result, it is challenging for the D&I initiatives to truly change the field.

In addition to the limited effect of the D&I practices, the study participants also recognized that some **exclusionary organizational practices**. These include, for example, practices related to recruitment and career development. All the interviewed foreign employees had obviously managed to get a job in the case companies, but they all also recognize that not all Finnish companies and not all managers are open to diversity and willing to recruit foreign employees. Therefore, discrimination in recruitment is still a reality although organizations are committed to eliminating it. Furthermore, when asked about the career possibilities for foreign employees in the case companies, most of the study participants felt that it is more difficult for foreign employees to advance to management positions in comparison to Finnish employees. Therefore, the practices related to career development are not free of discrimination or bias either. Most of the study participants felt that barriers for career development relate mostly to language issues and knowing Finnish is a prerequisite for management positions. Some participants, however, reckoned that language is not the only barrier, but felt that also social connections with the current managers in the company and having similar cultural capital and habitus to theirs is needed:

“Uh, it's the culture thing. Like you, you usually people usually um select the ones that they are more that they are. They related more and this is very likely to be a Finn, a Finnish person, and because of the backgrounds because the kind of, schools and university, they have studied and the kind of projects that they have worked on in the past. It is more likely that a Finnish person will be chosen”

“It's not because you're not qualified, it's just because there is still like, uh, I generally call it like it's still like uh. That club, it's still like a club that you need to be recommended by someone. Who knows someone before you can be where you wanna be or where you have to be.”

These quotations highlight the participants' feelings of lacking adequate social and cultural capital restricting their opportunities for career advancement. These feelings were expressed by participants from both case companies. Additionally, several study participants described, how they feel that foreign employees need to work harder or be more qualified than their Finnish colleagues to advance on their career or to be recruited in Finnish companies in the first place. One of the study participants, who had advanced to a management position, felt that the process took an excessively long time and that he needed to be overqualified for the role to get the position. The organizational field favoring and prioritizing capitals that are predominantly possessed by Finnish employees thus restricts the foreign employees' possibilities to position themselves better in the field and acquire symbolic capital in the form of titles and promotions.

Another organizational practice that restricts foreign employees' access to organizational resources is the **language policy** and its associated practices. For non-Finnish speakers having equal access to information is mostly related to having as much information available in English as there is in Finnish. Both the interviewed HR representatives told that increasing use of English in company's internal and external communication is part of the companies' diversity and inclusion practices. Some of the interviewed foreign employees, however, had a more critical view of the information available. Some participants said that they had realized more information being in the intranet in Finnish than in English. Additionally, they shared stories about meetings they were invited to that were held in Finnish, group e-mails sent in Finnish although there are non-Finnish speakers on the mailing list and difficulties in getting some trainings in English. Therefore, although both companies have made efforts to increase information and trainings available in English, it still does not match the level of information available in Finnish, which restricts the foreign employees' access to information within the organization.

Lastly, **the practices related to team composition and location** emerged from the interviews as factors either facilitating or restricting access to social interactions with colleagues. These practices include the diversity levels within teams and work groups, as well as the geographic distribution of team members and employees. Diversity in work groups in regards of nationalities first of all makes it easier to use English as the working language in projects and also maintain speaking English in informal discussions when there are more than one non-Finnish speakers present. This eases the foreign employees' access to social interactions. According to the participants working in the capital region offices, diversity at

the company level is already visible and in addition in international projects collaboration is often made with foreign offices. In the smaller offices outside the capital region, however, there is less diversity. With only one or two non-Finnish speakers in these offices, the reluctance of their closest Finnish colleagues to engage with them severely restricts their social interactions and leaves them largely dependent on virtual connections with people in other offices. One such example was shared by a study participant whose team consisted of people from different office locations and the team had never even met in real life. Furthermore, the team members worked on different projects and did not thus work together as a team. The study participant worked in an office outside capital region where there are only a few foreign employees. As her closest Finnish colleagues hardly speak to her due to language barriers and lack of common projects, she feels being excluded socially. Thus, besides the exclusionary behavior of Finnish employees, also the organizational structure and the geographical location of employees have an influence on the relationships between colleagues and team members. Multi-located teams make interaction and forming relationships between team members more difficult, which can lead to superficial relationships between colleagues and limit the accumulation of social capital.

To summarize, both case companies are committed to advancing diversity and inclusion and have implemented several practices aimed at shaping the organizational field to be more inclusive and to increase the social and cultural capital of the employees through various trainings. These practices, however, are not alone enough to shape the organizational field, if the people in the dominant and privileged positions resist the practices. According to the study participants, the organizational field is heterogenous regarding the attitudes towards diversity and especially those resisting the idea are usually the ones ignoring the events and trainings related to advancing diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, the foreign employees feel that despite the companies' commitment to advancing diversity, the foreign employees do not have equal development opportunities or access to information in the company in comparison to Finnish employees.

The summary of how managers, colleagues and organizational practices can facilitate or restrict foreign employees' access to organizational resources is presented in Figure 12.

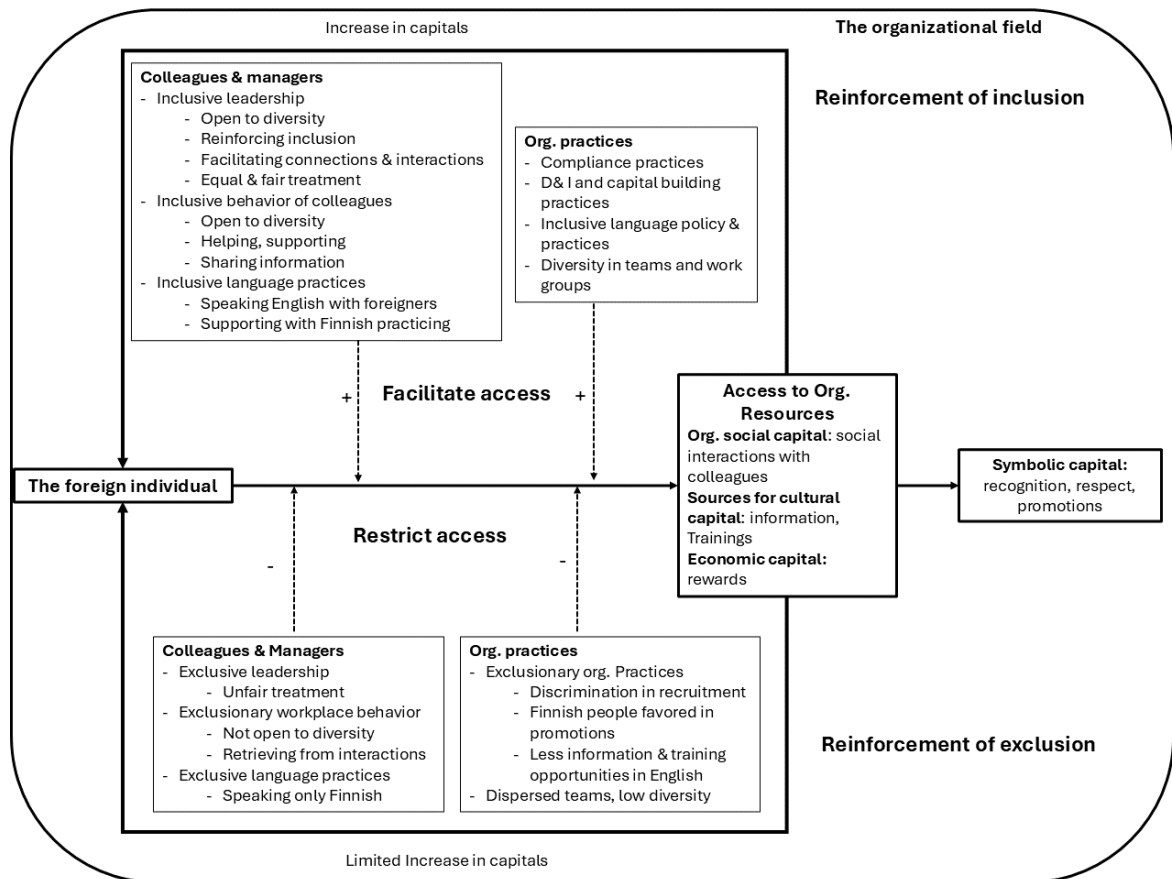


Figure 12. Summary of findings related to organizational field facilitating and restricting access to resources

I have discussed in this chapter how the organizational field influences inclusion and exclusion in terms of providing or limiting access to organizational resources. In the next chapter I will focus more on what makes the foreign employees feel included in the organization.

4.3 What makes foreign employees feel included or excluded in organizations

In this section I will describe the findings from the interviews on what makes the study participants feel included or excluded. There were several questions in the interview guide that touched on the subject and additionally the study participants were asked to determine what diversity and inclusion mean to them. All the participants knew what is meant by the term diversity. Definition for inclusion was given by only a few study participants and their responses included definitions such as “equal treatment”, “freedom to be yourself”, “not feel excluded”, “treating others as professionals”, “everyone is free to give opinion”, “no discrimination” and “safe/good place to work for everyone”. These definitions as part of inclusion fit the themes defined by Shore et al., (2018), *Insider in the work group, Feeling safe,*

Feeling respected and valued, and *Influence on decision-making and being listened to*. I used these themes in the initial theoretical framework in chapter 2.6. to describe the individual's feelings on being included. As the themes align with how the study participants understand inclusion, I kept them as the final aggregate dimensions for interpreting the findings. As exclusion is in many ways an opposite to inclusion, I used the opposite terms to describe the themes related to exclusion than I used for inclusion. Thus, the themes describing exclusion are *Not feeling safe*, *Not feeling respected and valued*, *Outsider in the work group* and *No influence on decision making*.

The aggregate dimensions *Insider in the work group* and *outsider in the work group* were discussed in the previous chapter on how the organizational field facilitates or hinders foreign employees' access to organizational capitals. I will next discuss the remaining aggregate themes related to inclusion and exclusion.

4.3.1 Feeling safe vs. not feeling safe

Feeling safe as defined by Shore et al., (2018) refers to the “psychological and physical safety associated with sharing different opinions and views from others” and it is one of the elements of feeling included. In this study I expanded the theme not to involve only safety regarding expressing different opinions but also on how comfortable the participants feel in their team/organization, how they feel they can ask questions or help and generally how safe they feel. “Being a safe place to everyone” and “everyone being free to give opinion” were also definitions for inclusion used by the study participants. Whereas *Feeling safe* is related to inclusion, *not feeling safe* as an opposite term is used in this study as an element of exclusion.

The factors related to feeling safe identified from the interviews include elements from the organizational field, external field and from the resources of the individual. The sub-themes are: *Inclusive leadership*, *compliance practices* and individual's *social capital*. Correspondingly, the sub-themes identified for *not feeling safe*, are *exclusionary workplace behavior*, *labor market accessibility* and *national level exclusionary attitudes*.

Promoting psychological safety is part of **inclusive leadership** (Shore & Chung, 2022) and it is essential for shaping the perception of being safe in the organization / one's own team. Promoting psychological safety within the team and organization was brought up by some study participants. For the study participants this meant, for example, managers encouraging

the foreign employees to ask for help or to ask questions in English in a company meeting where everyone else is speaking Finnish. Additionally, colleagues and managers backing up and defending a foreign employee against prejudices of other employees were brought up. The importance of promoting psychological safety was more clearly visible in the answers of employees from company 2, which could suggest that the term “psychological safety” and its advantages has been discussed inside the company and the employees were thus more familiar with the term and its implications. Psychological safety is, according to Shore et al., (2018), an end-result of inclusive organizational practices whereas the study participants in this study described it being linked to more concrete actions specifically by the supervisors and top-management.

Organizational compliance practices include organizational processes and practices for management of harassment and discrimination that are mostly mandated by law. These include, for example, whistle-blowing channels to ensure that employees are protected when reporting misconduct and that such misconduct is dealt with appropriately. Both official channels for reporting misconduct and trust in managers dealing with “incidents” were mentioned by the study participants and they were confident, that these channels work. Shore et al., (2018) use the term “compliance practices” to describe all the organizational practices related to organization’s commitment to prevent exclusion and discrimination as required by legislation. These compliance practices also include managing microaggressions and subtle discrimination. Themes or topics related to managing or preventing microaggressions or subtle discrimination did not, however, come up in the interviews.

As colleagues and managers are important in promoting and creating a psychologically safe environment, they are also at the heart of doing just the opposite, creating the feeling of not being safe. The sub-theme related to this is **exclusionary behavior**. The effects of exclusionary behavior were discussed already under the aggregate dimension *outsider in the work group*, but it influences also the feeling of security. The study participants of both companies acknowledged that not all colleagues are friends, and they are aware that some people have very negative attitudes towards foreign employees. Many have at least heard of negative stories about discrimination if not experienced them personally. As one participant described this:

“And it's not basically that someone would be totally negative toward immigrants, but I know some people that have had this kind of situation. So even if you don't see, you are

wondering. OK, so among those 80 people, I'm sure there are some people that are hating that this company is hiring some foreigners.”

Contacts and instances with prejudicious colleagues were also brought up in the interviews. Subtle forms of discrimination that were described included, for example, instances where a Finnish colleague openly showed to be surprised when the expert in a project is with a foreign background.

“For some people it is the first time to see say the [field of engineering] they see someone from a place they didn't expect, and yeah and you can always see that when you're starting that kind of project your numbers of people viewing your profile in LinkedIn anonymously gets higher, people are viewing your profile more because they want to know that who is this person”

Additionally, **national level exclusionary attitudes** were brought up by some of the research participants and also by the HR representatives. Besides knowledge of Finnish negative attitudes towards foreigners, the recent political discussions regarding immigrants in Finnish newspapers bring worry to the foreign employees and the ongoing war and other geopolitical conflicts increase negative attitudes especially towards people originating from these countries. One study participant, for example, described how several Russian people he knows were actually afraid to return to the office after the pandemic due to concerns about their colleagues' negative or even hostile attitudes. Furthermore, one study participant described how when he started at work, he was worried about not being accepted and how he was afraid that if he made a mistake, it would ruin the chances of all the other foreign employees as well. From the HR perspective there are also worries about possible conflicts between people due to geopolitics. Generally, the participants still felt that people can keep geopolitics outside the office and work together, although the fear of this not happening is present. Thus, knowledge of negative attitudes and discrimination both at the national and organizational level creates anxiety and fear among foreign employees, contradicting the element of inclusion *feeling safe*.

In addition to managers and colleagues, organizational practices and national level contributing to the feeling of safety, person's own networks also play a crucial role in shaping their overall sense of job security and re-employment possibilities. Several study participants from both companies brought up themes related to Finnish **labor market accessibility**.

Study participants described both their personal challenges in job-hunting and those faced by other foreigners they know and felt the labor market to be discriminatory, as discussed also in the previous chapter on organizational practices. Additionally, the study participants also recognized that foreign employees have very limited employment opportunities due to the different levels of internationalization in Finnish companies. On the other hand, also talent shortage in the field of engineering and consulting was brought up by both the interviewed HR representatives and was also identified by the foreign employees. Talent shortage is one motivation for the companies to invest in diversity and it might offer the foreign employees better chances of getting a job in Finland.

The insecurity from discriminative labor market with limited job opportunities for foreign employees is further emphasized by periodical economic downturns, such as the recent corona crisis and the financial crisis back in 2008, as they add to the struggles of finding or keeping a job in Finland. As one study participant described, during an economic downturn when the company executed layoffs, he understood more clearly, what it is to be a foreigner in Finland. Together these external factors thus affect negatively to the feeling of safety of the foreign employees. Feeling of safety, on the other hand, comes from having a wider professional network, that is **social capital**. In this case, the expected benefit from this social capital is finding information about job opportunities and getting other forms of help in finding a new job, which brings security especially during hard and uncertain times.

The findings on factors related to *feeling safe* vs. *not feeling safe* are summarized in Figure 13. As discussed above, *Feeling safe* is mostly related to being surrounded by colleagues and managers who promote psychological safety. Perception of discrimination and negative attitudes towards foreigners both at national and organizational level and knowledge of the discriminative and limited labor market in Finland together contribute to insecurity. Additionally, periodic events such as economic downturns add to the feeling. On the other hand, there is talent shortage in the field of engineering and consulting, which might contribute to the sense of security, since talent shortage eases employment in the field. This was not confirmed in the interviews and thus it is indicative in the figure. It is important to recognize that already awareness of negative attitudes toward foreigners can significantly affect an individual's sense of security. This highlights the interconnectedness between the national field and the organizational field as the Finnish national level attitudes contribute to foreign employees expectations on how their Finnish colleagues might act or feel.

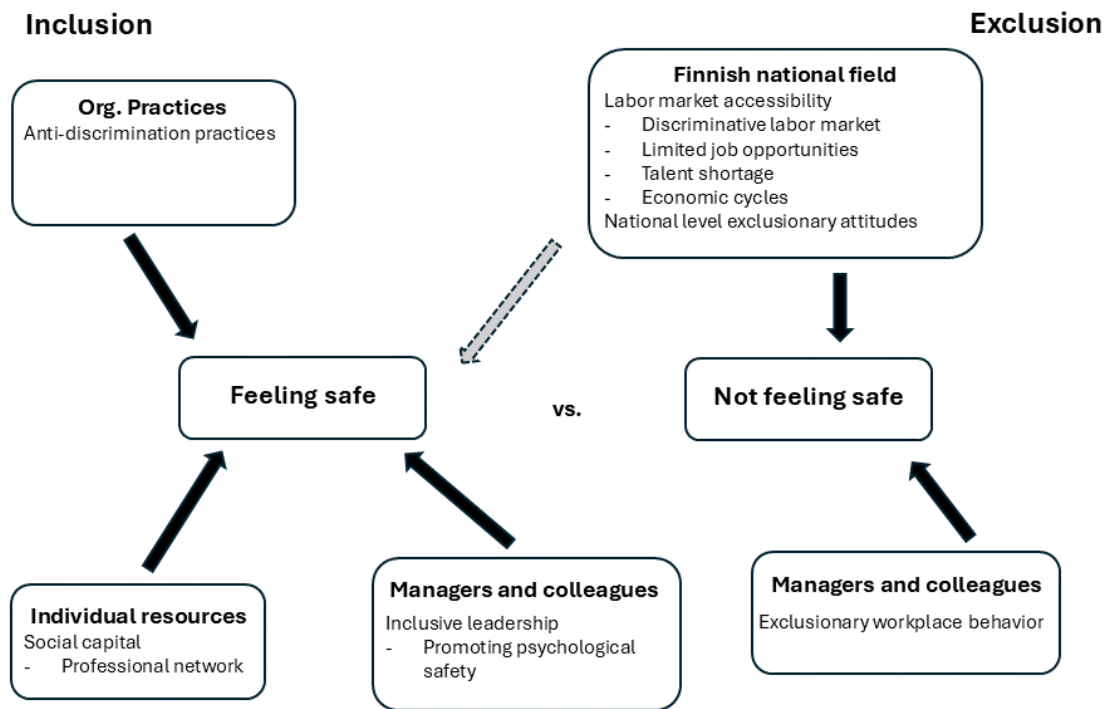


Figure 13. Sub-themes related to Feeling safe vs. not feeling safe

4.3.2 Feeling respected and valued vs. not feeling valued

Feeling respected and valued as an element of inclusion is determined by Shore et al., (2018) as “being treated as an appreciated and esteemed member of the group and organization”. The study participants also recognized “treating others as professionals” and “judging people based on what they deliver” to describe inclusion. The interview guide I used for the interviews contained a question on what makes the participants feel valued in general. According to the answers, the feeling of being respected and valued or not feeling valued are linked to organizational resources in the form of *sources for cultural capital* and *economic capital* and in individual’s personal *symbolic capital*. Additionally, *inclusive behavior* of colleagues contributes positively to the feeling.

Sources for cultural capital inside the organization include e.g. all the information and trainings available at the organization. A form of cultural capital that arose from the interviews was meaningful and responsible assignments. I consider this to be a source for cultural capital in this study as work assignments provide an individual the opportunity to accumulate valuable knowledge and expertise to enhance their career development. The importance of meaningful assignments and being given more responsibility were according to some study

participants also signs of appreciation and trust from their managers. Like one participant described:

“But if I am being asked to participate in the good, interesting and more meaningful assignments, I think that's the way that I recognize. OK, so I'm being valued here and as a good professional and this creates a good environment.”

From the study participants' answers it can be concluded that meaningful assignments are a highly valued source for capital in the organizational field and therefore given access to this is appreciated and sought after. Therefore, meaningless assignments, on the other hand, were mentioned as a sign of the company not being a good place to be. Thus, the interviewed professionals both judge the company based on the assignments given to them and also weigh their own valuation based on them.

Economic capital as an organizational resource in the form of rewards or salary increases was additionally mentioned by some study participants to contribute to the feeling of being valued and respected. One study participant additionally shared, how not being awarded fairly by his previous manager contributed to the feeling of not being respected by that manager. Additionally, knowledge of being compensated equally compared to Finnish employees was mentioned to contribute to the feeling of being equally and fairly treated.

Symbolic capital is the form which other capitals take when they have been recognized by the field, such as respect, recognition or titles. It was clear from several answers, that people in both companies appreciate professionals and one can earn respect from colleagues by being professional and demonstrating expertise. Strong professionalism can even help to fade initial prejudices of colleagues:

“But when they find out that you know, you know your job, they easily get quiet”

The above quotation highlights, how professionalism, that is mainly cultural capital of the individual, is transformed into symbolic capital of the employee as he/she gains the respect from colleagues. In addition to respect, another form of symbolic capital that had made several study participants from both companies feel valued was recognition from manager, colleagues and clients in the forms of positive feedback. Lack of recognition was similarly associated with not being valued. Giving recognition and positive feedback to colleagues is also a form of **inclusive behavior** between colleagues. The importance of friendly, inclusive

behavior was highlighted by one participant who described how she feels valued when her colleagues always ask her to come along for example on coffee breaks or lunch and do various other kind acts. According to Hart & Hart (2023), kindness towards others involves recognizing and showing respect for the person. Thus, in addition to being recognized for professionalism, also informal social recognition through kindness contributes to the feeling of being valued.

In conclusion, *Feeling respected and valued* is according to the study participants highly dependable on managers and colleagues giving recognition both in the forms of respecting the employee’s professional skills and giving positive feedback and having meaningful assignments. Lack of recognition and meaningless assignments are, on the other hand, signals of *not being respected and valued*. Shore et al. (2018) emphasize in their inclusion model that respect and valuing are more linked to respecting and valuing different identities in the organization, whereas in this study also merit based recognition was appreciated and acknowledged by the study participants. The factors related to Feeling respected and not feeling respected are summarized in Figure 14 below.

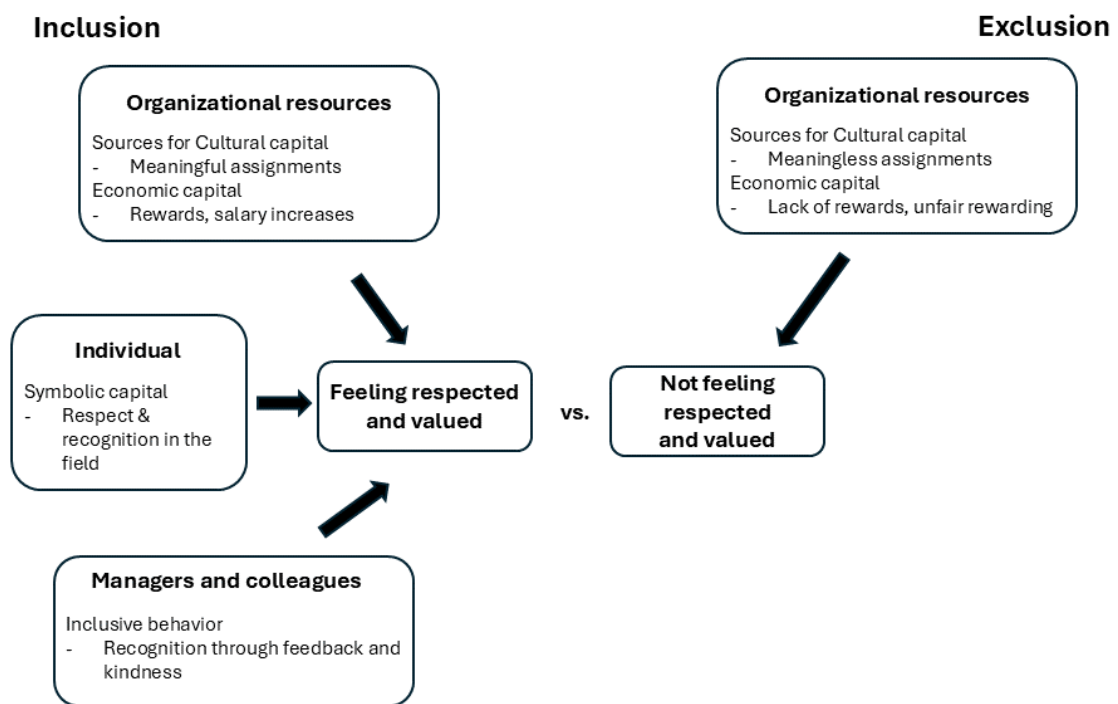


Figure 14. Sub-themes related to Feeling valued & respected and Not feeling valued & respected.

4.3.3 Influence on decision making vs. Not having influence

The final element of inclusion is *Influence on decision making*, which relates to the employees' perceptions and beliefs that their ideas and perspectives are listened to, and they have an effect. As the study participants defined inclusion, they recognized "freedom to give one's opinion" to be part of inclusion, which fits under the theme *Influence on decision making*. The sub-themes for this aggregate dimension in this study are *Inclusive leadership* and *Organizational channels*. The opposite of having influence on decision making is obviously *not having influence* which is used to describe exclusion. The sub-theme under this aggregate dimension is *inability to change things*.

Inclusive leadership includes manager being available, supporting group members, helping them to contribute and being open to listen to employees (Shore & Chung, 2022). The study participants described such managerial behaviors from their own supervisors and expressed their appreciation towards this. Some study participants described, for example, that their managers are very active in asking what kind of support the employees need and what kind of e.g. training or guidance they need. Additionally, one study participant expressed his appreciation on how his manager always listens to his suggestions for improvements and shows appreciation on the suggestions:

"Like if I think certain things, what we can do differently, then I'll go up to a manager and then tell him about like, OK, so this is my opinion on this kind of things and what we can do is this and then he takes it like seriously and then like we discuss about this. It's not about like, OK, so he just listens and does that thing. But we start discussing about like we start discussing about the topic and then we are going somewhere soon."

Listening to the employee is not only up to managers' own activity, but there are **Organizational channels** and practices in place for this also. Annual development discussions with the manager are part of these practices and this was seen by the study participants also as a signal for equal advancement possibilities and contributed to the feeling that they are heard. Other organizational official channels for listening to employees are personnel surveys and discussion groups on different topics. HR representative of one of the two case companies described that they have a discussion group for employees whose mother tongue is not Finnish, and they collect feedback on the company's diversity and inclusion practices also

through this discussion group. These kinds of discussion groups and other forms of encouragement from management to give feedback are additional examples on managerial encouragement for discussion.

Although both organizations have official organizational channels for giving feedback and several participants described they have good relationships with their managers, some study participants expressed, however, frustration over not being able to change the fact that people around them constantly speak Finnish to each other and ignore the presence of non-Finnish speakers. Thus, these study participants felt **Inability to change things**. These kinds of feelings were described particularly by the study participants working in the offices outside the capital region. Like discussed already in previous chapters, Finnish language is an appreciated capital in the field and the use of Finnish in both formal and informal settings reinforces the exclusion of non-Finnish speakers. Thus, although there are feedback channels in place, they fail to address deeper cultural norms and practices that maintain the dominance of Finnish language and culture. Consequently, the foreign employees feel powerless to effect change within an organizational field that inherently favors those who align with its linguistic and cultural norms.

In summary, *Influence on decision making* includes both organizational official channels for getting feedback from the employees and managers willing to listen and support the employees and encourage discussion. As an opposite theme is the *No influence*, refers to the inability to change the organizational field. The sub-themes related to *Influence on Decision making* and *No influence* are summarized in Figure 15.

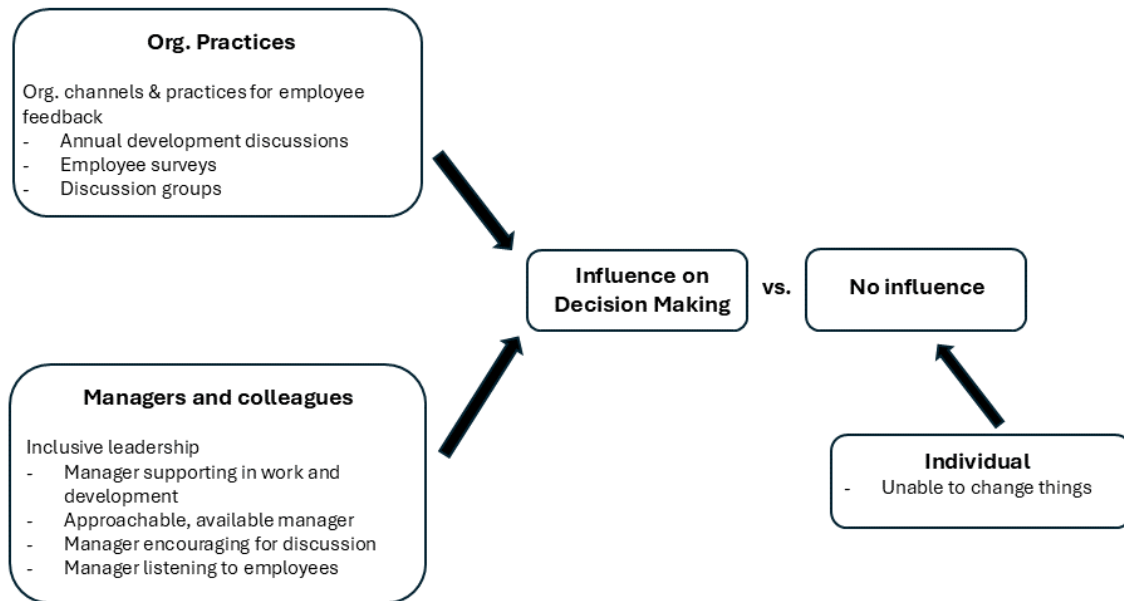


Figure 15. Sub-themes and practices related to Influence on Decision Making and No influence

To conclude, this chapter has examined the key factors that contribute to foreign employees feeling included in the workplace through the elements of inclusion feeling safe, respected and valued and having influence in decision-making. It is clear from the findings that recognition from managers and colleagues, meaningful assignments and being listened to affect positively to the sense of inclusion. Conversely, exclusionary practices such as lack of recognition, meaningless assignments and inability to influence contribute to feelings of isolation and exclusion. In the next chapter I will explore the individual skills and resources that influence whether foreign employees feel included or excluded in the workplace.

4.4 The skills and resources of the individual contributing to inclusion or exclusion

In this chapter, I will discuss the skills and resources of the foreign employees contributing to their inclusion and exclusion through the Bourdieusian concepts social capital, cultural capital and habitus. Additionally, I will use the concept Identity Capital. With the Bourdieusian concepts I aim to answer the research question: Which skills / resources foreign employees themselves feel helps them to be included in the organization? In the Bourdieusian framework, the individual's capital portfolio influences on how the individual can access and navigate within the field. *Social capital*, *Cultural capital*, *Identity Capital* and *Habitus* were used as aggregate dimensions in the data analysis of this section.

4.4.1 Social capital

In the Bourdieusian framework social capital benefits individuals in several ways. Social capital can ease access to resources, further networks and knowledge about the social and cultural norms appreciated in the field which help the individual to navigate the field more easily and learn strategies useful in the field. The social capitals the research participants felt that have enabled or restricted them in entering and navigating the Finnish working environment are their *networks*, *relationships* and *level of trust*. I will next describe how these forms of social capital have contributed to the inclusion or exclusion of the study participants in practice to be included.

Most of the study participants had some Finnish professionals in their **networks** who had helped them to get the job in the company by acting as their referee or just connecting the foreign people to the right people in the company. Besides granting access to the Finnish engineering field, professional networks also bring security to the individual in case they need to find employment elsewhere, as the networks can ease access to other organizations as well. This relates to the feeling of safety of the individual, which is an element of inclusion. Additionally, social networks with Finnish people outside the work, like neighbors, teachers or former colleagues, are a way to connect to the Finnish way of life and get further support e.g. in learning Finnish language or about opportunities available. Thus, networking with Finnish people in general helps the foreign employees to increase their cultural capital. Social networks with other foreigners were also mentioned by the study participants. Many had befriended with other foreigners, and some had also received help from their foreign contacts in getting a job. More stories were, however, shared about Finnish people helping with connecting to recruiting managers, helping with Finnish language and culture and showing the way things are done here. Furthermore, family support was mentioned by some participants. The support from family the study participants had received was financial support when studying abroad and a Finnish spouse as a connection to Finnish culture and tradition increasing the cultural capital of the foreigner.

Having good **relationships** with colleagues and managers in the organization contributed further to the feeling of being included in the team/organization as an insider:

“We've been at Aalto together. We met, so we have some other common interest and so on. So I'm definitely part of the team.”

Having good relationships with colleagues and managers eases asking for help and support, which further contributes to the accumulation of cultural capital and knowledge about the unwritten rules and norms of the organization. Additionally, the positive feelings related to friendly relationships are also valuable. Having only superficial relationships with hardly any social interaction was correspondingly related to feeling excluded in the study findings.

Level of trust relates to how the foreign employee is trusted by managers and colleagues. As already discussed, meaningful and responsible assignments are a valuable resource in the field and trust is needed to receive such assignments. Some study participants expressed difficulties in gaining trust of their colleagues and felt that earning the trust requires additional effort from them. Lack of trust means the foreign employee is easily excluded from valuable information, assignments, support, networks and recognition in the field or they need excess effort to access these. This makes it more difficult for them to build social, cultural and symbolic capital within the organization.

In conclusion, the social capital that helps foreign employees to gain access to resources and accumulate cultural capital are their networks, good relationships and trust. Having only weak relationships with colleagues and managers in the organization and lack of their trust hinders access to valuable resources in the organization and affects negatively to several elements of inclusion. Next, I will discuss the effects of cultural capital on inclusion and exclusion.

4.4.2 Cultural capital

Like social capital, having cultural capital appreciated in a specific field eases access to further resources in the field and makes it possible to advance in the field. The cultural capital that the participants themselves acknowledged to either facilitate or limit their possibilities in the organization included *language skills*, *work related skills* and *cultural knowledge*.

The participants felt that **language skills**, especially English skills, had proven useful in their work. English is widely used in multinational and multilingual organizations in Finland and in international projects, and thus knowing English proved to be a useful form of cultural capital for the study participants. One participant had also been able to use his skills in other languages as well at work.

The importance of Finnish skills divided the interviewees to some extent. Knowing Finnish was recognized to be important by the participants in both case companies to better connect with Finnish people and to work in an engineering field where documents are mainly in Finnish. Additionally, knowing Finnish was seen essential in advancing one's career. Insufficient Finnish skills was seen as the biggest barrier both for socialization and career advancement by several participants and they felt that the only way for them is to learn Finnish. On the other hand, some study participants felt that in international projects knowing English should be enough. Contrary to this, in some engineering disciplines knowing Finnish is especially important since in local projects there is a lot of field specific vocabulary in Finnish and all the documents and instructions are in Finnish. As an example, construction engineering was brought up:

“While yes, I've mentioned probably like the biggest barrier in the beginning, it was that simply English is not enough to work in the construction industry in Finland because the blueprints are in Finnish. So, I had to know all the terminology”

As it was discussed in the literature review, the Finnish labor market is divided into separate fields where the capitals of foreign employees are valued very differently (Li, 2020; Yamazaki, 2022). Similarly, the necessity of knowing Finnish differs greatly depending on the field. The case companies in this study are interesting since they both serve multiple customer segments which have different knowledge and skill requirements for the engineers working in the field. On some engineering fields Finnish skills are not that essential, whereas on others it is required. This is one of the reasons why the study participants have mixed experiences on the necessity of knowing Finnish.

Knowing Finnish to connect and interact with other people was seen as important especially by the participants working in offices outside the capital region where the study participants had experiences of social isolation due to their colleagues speaking only Finnish with each other. Additionally, some study participants from the capital region offices described that young people generally are more open to speak English with the foreign employees than the more experienced colleagues. Thus, the necessity to know Finnish is highly dependent on the skills and attitudes of the people around the foreign employee.

The study participants felt that learning Finnish is not easy and takes a lot of time and resources. Here is how one participant described learning Finnish through courses:

“Has been offering a Finnish classes for three months, an hour and a half per week. This is very good. Uh, but not enough? Like now it has stopped [for summer]. Finnish courses is like I go to Kansalaisopisto [Adult education centre], it's relatively cheap, but it's also whoever can be teacher, so the quality is not necessarily there. A private class then, I've checked opportunity for private class during the summer, it's minimum 60 euros per hour. Uh. Some companies 80 euros per hours. It's a huge budget.”

To be able to enter engineering companies a relevant education and relevant **work-related skills** are naturally required. Most of the participants had studied in Finland and they had a perception that their Finnish education is appreciated by their employer. Additionally, working experience in general increases the cultural capital of people and is considered valuable in the eyes of the employers. Possessing skills that are valued in the field and lacking from the Finnish candidates offers the foreign employees better chances of getting a job in Finland. Like one interview participant expressed this:

“I still have an impression that it is much easier to recruit a foreigner when the type of job is when they are not able to find somebody in Finland who can do the job and it's easy like in our area.”

Additionally, as was discussed in chapter 4.3.2, feeling respected and valued vs. not feeling valued, professionalism and job competence are highly valued in both case companies even among colleagues. Demonstrating work related skills is thus a way for the individual to earn respect from colleagues.

Cultural knowledge especially on the Finnish way of working was seen very important by the study participants. They had mostly learned the “Finnish way of working” by working in Finland and/or Finnish companies before starting in their current company or e.g. during studies.

“So I think understanding of Finnish way of working is really, really important before you know like OK, so how it is and why how to do it or feel welcomed in Finnish work life I would say.”

When asked more about the Finnish way of working the participant described how in his opinion being open and straightforward about challenges is important in Finnish working life:

“So just try to live up to that and then in certain cases, whenever you have trouble or you feel like there is trouble, or if you feel like you cannot achieve something or you are struggling with something, then as fast as possible, just try to talk with colleagues or immediate manager or supervisor or project manager. Just try to like be as open as possible about the problems.”

Besides knowledge about the Finnish working culture, knowledge about Finnish everyday culture helps in interacting with Finnish people when you can talk about things they are interested in:

“Connection with people. Or uh. Yeah, like I can talk about skiing or have done ice fishing before I pick mushroom and this kind of stuff.”

The participants thus acknowledged that knowing the Finnish way is important for being integrated / granted access to Finnish working life and it also eases social interactions with Finnish people. According to one participant, the foreign employees who lack cultural knowledge have more difficulties working with Finnish people. Foreign employees feeling they need to learn Finnish and the Finnish way of doing highlights how highly these capitals local to Finland are appreciated in the organizational field. The study participants have learned the importance of these capitals and see investing in them as a good or even as the only strategy to be accepted in the field and advance in it.

Some participants also felt that their prior international experience of living and/or studying abroad helped them to adapt to Finland. These experiences have taught them to adapt to different environments which has been useful also in settling in Finland.

In conclusion, the Finnish national field and Finnish organizational fields hold local Finnish cultural capitals in a high position which is reflected in the perceptions of some of the foreign employees that they need to learn Finnish and the Finnish way of working. The necessity to know Finnish is, however, highly dependent on the field of engineering and the people around the foreign employee.

4.4.3 Identity Capital

As discussed in the literature review, identity capital includes both visible and deep-level diverse attributes of an individual. In this study, identity capital refers specifically to foreign

employees' origins and other distinguishing characteristics, besides just their native language, that differentiate them from Finnish employees.

Some study participants acknowledged the existence of migrant hierarchy, as described by Koskela (2013). One study participant of European origin felt, that “looking like a Finn” has helped him and Finnish people easily approach him by talking Finnish to him. Additionally, some study participants had observed that being a foreigner of non-European origin in Finland is much more challenging than being of European origin or having a European appearance.

“Even though I still feel sometimes it's more difficult than being Finnish, but for the foreigners outside of Europe, I think it's even more tough and more difficult than for me or European Europeans.”

“We have to admit that there are also levels of foreigners. It's actually more challenging for foreigners, from African origins.”

The identity capital of foreign employees thus clearly influences their ability to access organizational resources. The foreign employees positioned lower in the migrant hierarchy often face greater barriers in the organizational field which requires them to exert more effort to gain access to these resources.

In the next chapter I will discuss habitus, which is the last Bourdieusian concept I am using to describe the skills and resources of the individual.

4.4.4 Habitus

As already discussed, feeling included or excluded is part of an individual's habitus. Besides this, habitus describes how an individual sees the social surroundings and it has also been used to describe “knowing the rules of the game” and soft skills of immigrants (Lai et al., 2017). Thus, in addition to feeling included or excluded, the themes under habitus related to inclusion found in this study are, *Knowing the rules of the game*, *Appreciation of others & workplace* and *Social confidence*. Themes related to exclusion are *Not knowing the rules of the game* and *Social insecurity*.

Knowing the rules of the game means knowing how the system works, what are the common norms and what is expected e.g. at work. As part of one's habitus this means that the

person has internalized the norms and practices of the field and acts according to them. This is closely linked to the cultural capital *cultural knowledge*, which is acquired through working in Finland and other people teaching the rules and ways. By possessing this capital and portraying it in one's habitus there are hardly any contradictions e.g. between different national cultures:

“And there are cultural differences. But it is nothing. So, nothing that big. It's not nothing so big that would create any problem.”

Not knowing the rules of the game, on the other hand, refers to a person's habitus not aligning with the norms and practices of the field, which causes frustration and friction / conflicts between people working together. This was mentioned by one study participant to be a problem especially with multinational projects, where there are people from several different countries working together. In this type of project, the project itself forms its own field with its own norms and rules and friction occurs, when there is lack of shared understanding of “the rules of the game”.

The study participants held mainly **appreciation of others and workplace** and appreciated especially the Finnish working culture.

“Here in Finland, they are more relaxed and take free time quite serious, which is good, and also the I guess they care more about wellbeing. So, take your time off, or if you have troubles let your manager know. Or contact occupational healthcare, for example”

The positive perception of the working culture and colleagues & managers implies that the organizational values and practices align with the values of the employee, which can positively affect their commitment and sense of belonging in the organization and thus also contribute to feeling included.

Social Confidence, meaning believing in oneself, being open and sociable and keeping on trying, was seen as an important trait for foreign employees themselves by the study participants. Many study participants acknowledged that proactiveness is needed for getting access to social networks and getting to know Finnish people. Additionally, believing in oneself helps to get through the difficulties and struggles. Like one participant summarized:

“If you are active, be happy and you meet people, meet new people and make new friends”

Social confidence also involves the person engaging with others actively and contributing to making the working environment good for everyone. Whereas social confidence contributes to inclusion, social insecurity, such as being shy, was acknowledged by some participants as a handicap that limits their social interactions with other people. One participant also suggested that the limited sociability of Finnish employees may be caused by them being shy. Shyness was not, however, the only reason for limited interaction with others found in the study. Colleagues repeatedly excluding the foreign employee from conversations and social interactions can lead the foreign employees choosing to avoid interaction with others which further isolates them from their Finnish colleagues. Study participants described, for example, how they have chosen to eat alone or skip coffee breaks with colleagues since their colleagues only speak Finnish with each other and ignore the foreign employee:

“So then I'd rather skip the coffee break and keep working or at my desk drink some coffee, because otherwise I don't really. Feel like, I feel like I said a waste of time sitting there.”

One participant shared that, although she considers herself social and enjoys interacting with others, the constant exclusion from conversations with her Finnish colleagues and the need to always initiate interactions have led her to gradually withdraw and limit her social engagement at the workplace. This is an example on how the field shapes an individual's habitus and how this affects the individual's actions in the field.

Additionally, fear of discrimination or hostile attitudes of colleagues can lead the foreign employee to avoid interacting with the Finnish employees. An example of this was discussed in chapter 4.3.1, Feeling safe vs. not feeling safe, where Russian employees especially feared returning to the office after the pandemic due to the changed geopolitical situation.

In conclusion, a person's habitus shapes how they interact with others in the workplace. A foreign employee with a positive perception of Finnish work culture, confidence, who is open and social and has internalized the organizational norms is typically better positioned to access resources and feel included in the organization. Conversely, a socially insecure individual who is unfamiliar with the “rules of the game” may struggle to access organizational resources. However, habitus is continuously shaped by experiences in the field. If the field constantly restricts an individual's access in the field, even a previously confident per-

son may become socially insecure which further limits the individual's interactions and reinforces exclusion. Ultimately, this dynamic nature of habitus highlights how both individual attributes and the organizational field contribute to foreign employees' inclusion.

4.5 Summary of the findings and the finalized theoretical framework

The graphical summary of the findings is presented in the final revised theoretical framework in Figure 16. The additions to the initial framework include team composition and location and organizational channels as organizational practices either facilitating or restricting access to organizational resources. Additionally, economic capital was added to organizational resources, as rewards and pay raises also affect how a person feels valued, and social confidence was added under habitus.

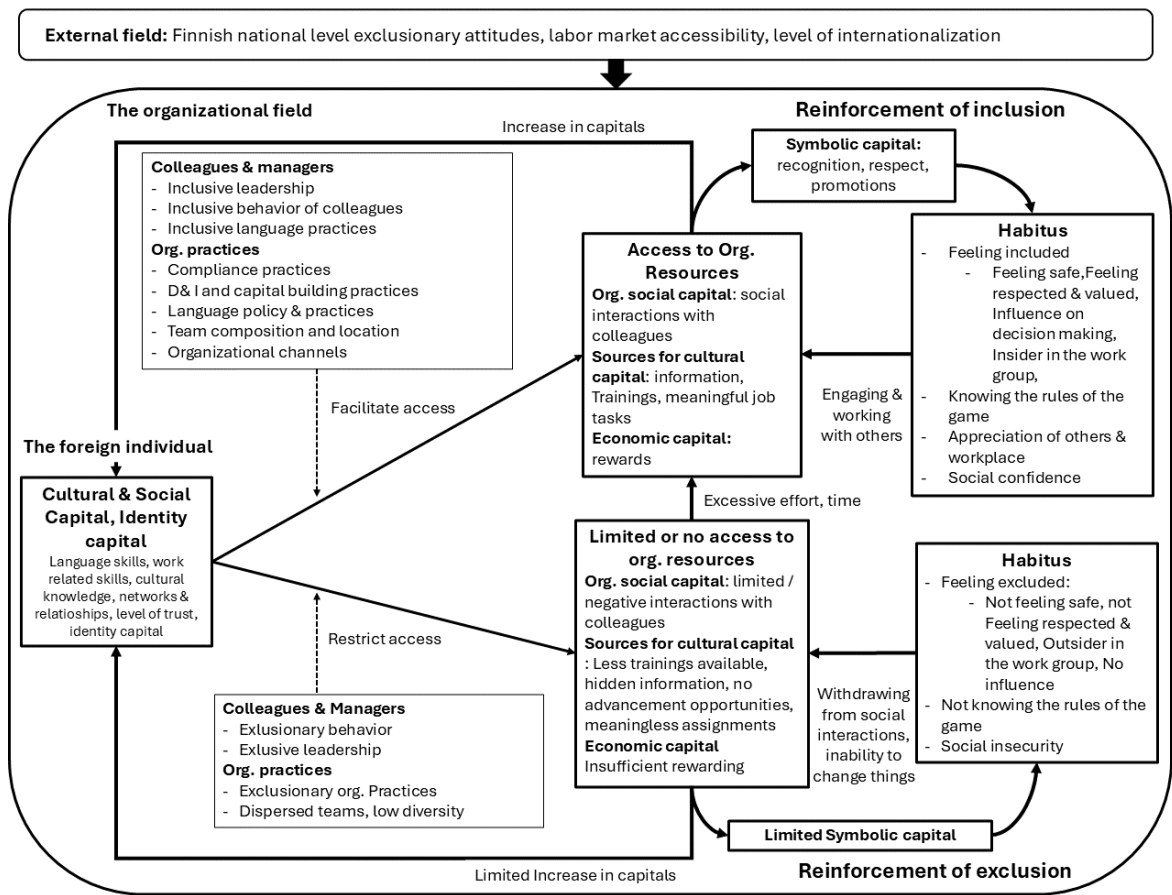


Figure 16. Final revised framework

The dynamic nature of inclusion in this study included sub-themes *Team/people around you*, *Group size* and *Time*. These sub-themes together describe, how feeling included or excluded is dependable on place and time.

Inclusion was studied through four aggregate dimensions, feeling safe, feeling respected & valued, influence on decision making and insider in the organization. Correspondingly, exclusion was studied through aggregate dimensions not feeling safe, not feeling valued, not having influence and outsider in the organization. The sub-themes related to feeling safe identified in the study included *Inclusive leadership*, *compliance practices* and individual's *social capital*, whereas *exclusionary workplace behavior*, *labor market accessibility* and *national level exclusionary attitudes* are sub-themes for not feeling safe. The aggregate dimension feeling respected & valued includes sub-themes *sources for cultural capital*, *economic capital* and individual's *symbolic capital*. *Lack of recognition* is correspondingly a sub-theme for not feeling respected. Aggregate dimension influence on decision making included sub-themes *Inclusive leadership* and *Organizational channels* whereas not having influence was connected to *inability to change things*.

The aggregate dimensions insider in the organization and outsider in the organization described, how an organization can facilitate or restrict individual's access to organizational resources. The sub-themes related to these included *inclusive* and *exclusive leadership*, *Inclusive and exclusionary behavior of colleagues*, *organizational compliance practices*, *diversity and inclusion practices*, *capital building practices*, *language policy & practice*, *team composition and location* and *exclusionary organizational practices*.

Finally, the skills and resources of the individual affecting inclusion or exclusion were studied. The aggregate dimensions related to this research question included Social, Cultural and Identity capital and habitus. The sub-themes related to these are *networks*, *relationships*, *level of trust*, *language skills*, *work related skills*, *cultural knowledge*, *Knowing the rules of the game*, *Appreciation of others & workplace* and *Social confidence*.

In the next section I will discuss the study findings in more detail and compare them to previous research.

5 Discussion

In this chapter I discuss the findings of the study and compare them to prior research. I will discuss the research findings in relation to the research questions they address.

The aim of the thesis was to identify the elements of inclusion and exclusion experienced by foreign employees in Finland and what is the role of organizations in these. The case companies studied were both multinational engineering and consulting companies operating in Finland. The research questions this study aimed to answer were:

- What makes skilled foreign employees feel included / excluded at the Finnish workplaces?
- How does the organization facilitate or hinder the inclusion of foreign employees?
- Which skills / resources do foreign employees themselves feel helps them to be included in the organization?

The interview transcripts were thematically analyzed to determine what makes foreign employees feel included or excluded in the organization, and which organizational practices and individual skills contribute to these feelings. The data was analyzed using the themes of inclusive organizations by Shore et al. (2018) with minor modifications and with the Bourdieusian concepts to describe both the resources and skills of the individual and the organizational resources.

In the next sub-chapters I will explore more thoroughly the findings related to the research questions

5.1 Feeling included consists of recognition and inclusive behavior of others

The first research question is about what makes a foreign employee feel included at work. Inclusion is a dynamic and context-dependent state that is continuously shaped by the interaction between individuals and their environment and can even co-exist with exclusion (Ferdman B. M., 2013). The dynamic nature of inclusion became evident in the study and most study participants described both factors related to inclusion and exclusion. A person can feel included in their core team and simultaneously excluded at the organization level mainly due to the heterogeneity of attitudes towards diversity in the organizations. Surprisingly, the effect of group size on the feeling of group-level inclusion came up in the study.

Several study participants felt that it is easier to interact with their colleagues if the size of the group is small. When the group size grows, Finnish language easily becomes the dominant language in the conversation making it more difficult for the foreign employee to join the conversation. Through the Bourdieusian lens, the larger group size reinforces the social norms and dynamics of the field. Thus, as speaking Finnish is considered “normal” in the field, this normality is reinforced as more people mastering the language are gathered.

According to the study by Metz et al. (2022), an individual’s social capital is strongly linked to how they feel included in an organization. The importance of social capital in inclusion is also supported by prior research indicating that a foreign employee's sense of inclusion at work is largely influenced by the inclusive behaviors of those around them. According to Ferdman B. M. (2013) inclusive behaviors include acknowledging others, connecting and engaging with others, sharing information and being open to learning and being influenced by others. The findings of this study agree with the crucial role of colleagues and managers in making a foreign employee feel included and welcome in the organization. When asked about what makes them feel welcome, the answers mostly involved friendly and helpful colleagues and managers listening and supporting them. The inclusive behavior and characteristics of colleagues and managers that foster inclusion recognized in this study included promoting psychological safety, interacting with the foreign employee with inclusive language practices and being open both to diversity and interactions. Together these behaviors along with some organizational practices contributed to feeling safe, respected and valued, being an insider in the work group and having influence on decision making.

Feeling valued was found in this study to be related to receiving recognition from professional achievements as well as through acts of kindness from colleagues. Recognition and respect from colleagues are, in the Bourdieusian framework, part of an individual's symbolic capital, which not only enhances their status within the organization but also contributes to their overall sense of belonging and inclusion by reinforcing their identity and worth in the social settings of the workplace. Additionally, the interviewed foreign employees viewed meaningful assignments and increased responsibility as signs of appreciation. This finding highlights how valuing merits and professionalism in the case organizations is perceived important, as employees interpret challenges and greater responsibilities as tangible forms of recognition for their contributions. Furthermore, the finding indicates that study participants primarily wish to identify themselves as professionals.

The first research question also addresses the factors that contribute to a foreign employee feeling excluded. As inclusion is mostly related to inclusive behaviors by colleagues and managers and recognizing him/her both as an individual and professional, exclusion is the opposite. It is closing the person out of the interactions, information and opportunities to advance one's career. Since interaction and engagement are key aspects of inclusive behavior, the study identified several barriers and forms of exclusionary behaviors that hinder foreign employees from interacting with their Finnish colleagues. These included Finnish employees seeming unapproachable, refusing or not being able to speak English with the foreigner, expressing prejudices and ignoring the presence of foreigner in a group and casual conversations. These findings are consistent with previous studies on Finnish culture being unwelcoming (Koskela, 2013; Hosseini & Kotilainen, 2021; Li, 2020), Finnish people seeming closed and introverted (Hosseini & Kotilainen, 2021; Habti & Koikkalainen, 2014) with a tendency to avoid socializing or engaging with foreigners (Hosseini & Kotilainen, 2021) and ignoring the presence of foreign employees by interacting exclusively in Finnish with each other especially during informal discussions (Back & Piekkari, 2024). These exclusionary behaviors were the most notable factor contributing to the feeling of exclusion among the interviewed foreign employees. This was particularly evident in the smaller offices outside the capital region, where the study participants were often the only foreign employees in the office and the reluctance of Finnish people to interact with them left them in social isolation. This finding aligns with the study by Metz et al. (2022) indicating lack of social capital being closely linked to feeling of exclusion.

Prior studies on inclusive organizations emphasize the need for people to be open to differences and to tolerate the discomfort of change and doing things differently (Ferdman B. M., 2017). According to the experiences of the study participants, some of their Finnish colleagues had refused to speak English because "it's easier to speak Finnish". This response reflects an unwillingness to tolerate discomfort or to change well-established practices in the field to accommodate people with diverse cultural capital. The dominance of Finnish language in the workplace limits the foreign employees' access to social interactions, connections, information and other possibilities within the field. Due to this, the foreign employees need excessive effort to access the organizational resources and advancement possibilities, as suggested also in earlier research (Louvrier, 2013).

This study highlights the crucial role of managers in building relationships and facilitating communication. As there are several potential barriers to interaction between foreign and

Finnish colleagues, managerial facilitation is essential to mitigate these obstacles. Additionally, according to Dobbin & Kalev (2016), contact between diverse groups can reduce bias towards each other. Although Dobbin & Kalev (2016) recommend increasing contact with diverse people specifically for managers to positively influence their attitudes towards diversity, it can also benefit employees, as suggested by this study.

In conclusion, key factors contributing to feeling included found in this study are inclusive behaviors of managers and colleagues. Additionally, in an organization where professional merits are valued highly, meaningful assignments and recognition of professionalism add to the feeling of being valued. Barriers for inclusion include closed, prejudicial colleagues who avoid interaction with the foreign employee either due to their avoidance of discomfort, prejudices or lack of language skills. Since feeling included largely depends on the attitudes of surrounding colleagues and the inclusive leadership practices of managers, the feeling is fragile in environments where attitudes towards diversity are mixed. A change in team composition or management can easily jeopardize this sense of inclusion.

In the next chapter I will focus on the organizational practices enhancing or hindering inclusion.

5.2 Organizational practices have only limited influence on the attitudes and behaviors of employees

The second research question touches on the organization's role in facilitating or hindering inclusion of foreign employees. Organizational practices have already for decades aimed at ensuring equal treatment for all employees and to prevent discrimination e.g. in recruitment, rewarding and career advancement (Offermann & Basford, 2013). Although discrimination is prohibited by law in Finland, research indicates that foreign employees face significant challenges in finding employment due to discrimination at the recruitment phase (Alho, 2023; Henttonen & Alhanen, 2023). Additionally, prior research indicates that foreign employees often have limited advancement opportunities within organizations, as managerial positions are predominantly reserved for native Finns (Chang & Holm, 2017; Jaakkola, 2005; Alho, 2023; Henttonen & Alhanen, 2023). This study supports the earlier research on the difficulties of foreign employees to find employment and advance on one's career in Finland, as the interviewed foreign employees shared their experiences on the matter.

Inclusion, with its various definitions and themes, involves “equal opportunity for members of socially marginalized groups to participate and contribute” (Shore et al., 2018). Achieving this in a multicultural and multilingual workforce is, however, challenging. In this study the equal opportunities were studied through the Bourdieusian lens by exploring, how organizations facilitate or hinder foreign employees’ access to organizational resources and other opportunities in the organization. The obstacles that foreign employees encounter in their career advancement illustrate the challenges of establishing truly equal opportunities for all groups. Participants of both case companies felt that advancement opportunities of foreign employees are limited, and Finnish employees are more likely to advance to management positions than foreign employees. Through a Bourdieusian lens, the limited career development opportunities for foreign employees in Finnish organizations highlight the organizational field to value the cultural and social capital, such as language proficiency and social networks, of native Finns more highly than those of foreign employees. The capitals of the native Finns tend to be local, such as fluency in Finnish and having social connections with the Finnish people, which makes it challenging for foreign employees to acquire them. The value of these capitals was highlighted in this study as the foreign employees themselves felt that such capitals are needed for manager positions. Being overqualified in comparison to Finnish employees was seen in this study as one strategy to overcome these barriers, as also acknowledged in previous literature (Louvrier, 2013).

The case companies of this study are both committed to advancing diversity and inclusion in their organizations and have adopted various diversity and inclusion practices to complement the compliance practices mandated by legislation. These practices include e.g. training personnel and offering information on the importance of diversity and increasing the use of English in the company communication. Louvrier (2013) claimed in her study dating over ten years ago that Finnish organizations generally aim with their inclusion and diversity practices to alter the assumed behavior of minority groups and educating Finnish people on how these minorities differ from the Finnish norms. Neither of the case companies in this study seemed to have this kind of approach to the matter. The HR representatives of the case companies emphasized their training and information offered to the personnel to involve more about e.g. the importance of diversity and how to manage diverse teams. The foreign employees are offered language training, but cultural training to “become more Finnish” is not part of the practices at either company. This implies that diversity and inclusion practices overall have developed in Finland during the years.

The interviewed study participants appreciated the D&I practices and initiatives of the companies, but they also recognized the limited influence of them on their everyday lives. This is consistent with prior research indicating, that diversity practices have often inconsistent or weak effects for employee attitudes and behaviors and can even have opposite effects (Dawson et al., 2024; van Knippenberg et al., 2020; Nishii et al., 2018; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). The interviewed foreign employees recognized that it is especially the managers' attitudes that make a difference in promoting diversity and inclusion and managerial reinforcement of inclusive practices is needed. This is in line with previous research on the crucial role of managers in spreading inclusion across different levels in the organization and reinforcing inclusive practices by holding people accountable for their behavior (Ferdman B. M., 2013). Colleagues with negative attitudes toward diversity and inclusion are unlikely to change their views through training alone, but managerial intervention can at least influence their behaviors to some extent.

The organizational language policies were one of the biggest factors influencing the foreign employees' access to information, which is an element of inclusion. Although both case companies have increased the amount of information given in English inside the company, the foreign employees still feel it lacking in comparison to information provided in Finnish. Furthermore, training possibilities in English were found to be fewer than those in Finnish. This further strengthens the dominance of Finnish language in the organization and limits the possibilities of non-Finnish speakers. These findings are very similar to the recent findings by Back & Piekkari (2024), who recognized in their study several organizational practices, such as providing training and having company meetings mainly in Finnish, that disadvantage foreign employees.

As discussed, the exclusionary behavior of Finnish employees hinders foreign employees from interacting with them and building social capital. However, this is not the only factor restricting social interactions found in this study. Additionally, the organizational structure with multi-located teams and employees working on various projects poses significant challenges to interactions between colleagues. This challenge affects both foreign and Finnish employees and especially the ones located in smaller offices who primarily collaborate with colleagues from other locations. However, for foreign employees, this issue is more noticeable. Working on different projects than their closest colleagues add to the difficulties of

socializing with them due to the lack of common projects and a common language. Therefore, although working at the office is often promoted with the benefits of socializing with colleagues, for foreign employees this benefit is not self-evident.

To conclude, key factors related to the role of organizational practices in fostering inclusion involve reinforcement of inclusion by managers through inclusive leadership, compliance practices to ensure fair and non-discriminatory treatment and a truly inclusive language policy. Exclusion factors included all the practices favoring native Finns and Finnish-speakers over other groups of people. Participants felt that particularly career advancement practices favor native Finns resulting in the need for foreign employees to be overqualified and work harder if they wish to advance for higher positions.

In the next chapter I will discuss some national level factors contributing to inclusion and exclusion that emerged in this study.

5.3 National level attitudes affect negatively to the feeling of safety

The research questions in this study focused on the organizational level and how organizational practices and behaviors of colleagues and managers influence the feeling of inclusion. However, some factors related to the external field, that is the Finnish national field, emerged from the interviews and I did not want to exclude them from the findings. Therefore, I will briefly also discuss these factors in this chapter.

National level negative attitudes towards foreigners in Finland were acknowledged by several study participants as well as the negative effects of geopolitics to foreign employees originating from the conflicting countries. Awareness of such negative national level attitudes and the discriminative labor market in Finland affects negatively to the feeling of safety among foreign employees, which is an element of inclusion. Additionally, recent political discussions regarding immigration policies in Finland were viewed negatively. This sentiment aligns with the results of a recent survey, where the majority of foreign experts living in Finland felt worried over the current immigration policy debate (Jauhiainen et al., 2024). The negative effect of national level attitudes to inclusion is acknowledged in previous research by Tatli & Özbilgin (2009), who list an unsupportive national political environment as one of the constraints to promoting diversity in organizations. The organizational field does not exist in a vacuum but is affected by the surrounding environment. Through the

Bourdieuian lens, the national level field and organizational field are interconnected, and the power dynamics and values of the national field influence the structure and values of the organizational field. Even if the foreign employees hadn't experienced discriminative or hostile behaviors at the workplace themselves, the national level attitudes make them anticipate and fear such instances. Additionally, the discriminative labor market adds to the feeling of insecurity especially during uncertain economic times when the risk of unemployment increases.

To summarize, negative national attitudes and geopolitical tensions significantly affect foreign employees' sense of safety and inclusion in Finland. When the national level attitudes are negative, the anticipation is that same kind of negative feelings are also prevalent in the organization.

In the next chapter I will discuss the skills and resources enhancing the inclusion of foreign employees.

5.4 Language skills, work-related skills and social networks enhance inclusion

The final research question is about the skills and resources of the foreign employees that help them to be included in the organization. Regarding skills, which are mainly cultural capital, language skills, knowing Finnish working culture and job-related skills were recognized in this study to be valuable cultural capital for the foreign employees, which aligns with previous research (Li, 2020; Yamazaki, 2022). In the study by Yamazaki (2022), work related skills not gained in Finland were not seen valuable in the eyes of the employers. In this study most of the study participants had mainly work experience gained in Finland or in a Finnish company. A few participants had previous experience working in Europe and they felt that this experience had served them in Finland. This finding thus somewhat differs from the findings by Yamazaki (2022), which might be caused by the greater perceived cultural difference between Finland and Japan in comparison to Finland and other European countries. Nevertheless, importance of knowing the Finnish way of working was emphasized in the findings of this study and this was mostly accomplished by previous work experience in Finland.

The study participants had mixed feelings about the necessity of knowing Finnish. Some saw it as essential for local projects or because their field of engineering predominantly used

Finnish. For some it was considered essential for communicating with colleagues, especially in offices outside the capital region. Others managed to work and interact in English and didn't view Finnish as crucial, though they were learning it. However, nearly all participants agreed that not knowing Finnish was a restriction for career advancement. While Finnish is a highly valued capital, its necessity varies depending on job tasks, the field of engineering, and the language skills and attitudes of surrounding colleagues. Certain tasks and roles, such as managerial roles, which require fluency in Finnish highlight the field's dominant language and cultural norms which shape the competence requirements for the role. The foreign employees who have faced this dominance consistently can themselves also internalize the necessity of knowing Finnish and feel, that without this capital their possibilities in the organization are limited. This finding aligns with the study of Metz et al. (2022) on effect of cultural capital on feeling excluded.

As already discussed, the behaviors of colleagues and managers are essential in fostering inclusion, and therefore also good relationships and trust among colleagues and managers as part of social capital contribute to inclusion. This social capital benefits foreign employees by facilitating access to information and resources within the organization, fostering sense of belonging and helps them to accumulate more capital. Additionally, relationships and connections with Finnish people in general are valuable to gain access to various possibilities and increase cultural knowledge, as also acknowledged in previous research (Knappert et al., 2020; Li, 2020). Superficial relationships with colleagues, on the other hand, limit the foreign employees' access to social interactions and other organizational resources.

In this study, habitus is used to describe an individual's sense of inclusion or exclusion, social confidence, and understanding of social norms. The findings regarding the importance of confidence to inclusion and navigating the field aligns with Li's (2020) research. While confidence and certain forms of social and cultural capital may facilitate an individual's inclusion, it is, however, ultimately the organizational field that grants or restricts access to social interactions and resources within the field. According to the findings, repeated exclusion from social interactions can lead the foreign employee to choose voluntary isolation despite one's initial social confidence. This voluntary isolation further reinforces the cycle of exclusion and hinders access to further social interactions and resources.

6 Conclusions

The final chapter of this thesis presents the conclusions of the study through a summary of the study. Additionally, the chapter presents recommendations for practice, limitations of the study and suggestions for further studies regarding the topic.

6.1 Research Summary

This thesis studied the inclusion of highly skilled foreign employees in Finland through a case study method. The research questions the study aimed to answer are, what makes a foreign employee feel included or excluded, how can the organization facilitate or hinder inclusion and what skills and resources of the individual ease inclusion.

The interest in diversity and inclusion has grown over the years also in Finland. One reason for the growing interest is finding ways to retain highly skilled foreign employees and recent foreign graduates from Finnish institutes in Finland. Previous studies on the experiences of foreign employees in Finland indicate that inclusion of foreign employees is challenging due to discriminatory recruitment practices, stringent language requirements and difficulties of foreign employees in socializing with their Finnish colleagues. Despite these barriers, some sectors value foreign language and cultural skills, though racism and discrimination remain prevalent in Finnish society and workplaces.

The theoretical framework used in this study was based on Bourdieu's theory of practice, since it enables studying the dynamic nature of inclusion and the effects of various social interactions and organizational practices from the perspective of the individual. The Bourdieusian concepts of social capital, cultural capital and habitus were used to describe the skills and resources of the foreign employees and field to describe the organization and Finnish national context as external field. The key elements in the initial theoretical framework were based on previous research on inclusion of foreign employees and they were modified and complemented with themes emerged from the study findings.

The qualitative data for the study was gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with employees from two case companies in the engineering and consulting sector. The interviewed employees included foreign employees working in the case companies as well as HR representatives from those companies.

The study's findings highlight the crucial role of positive social interactions between colleagues in fostering inclusion among foreign employees. Furthermore, the attitudes and behaviors of managers are crucial in reinforcing inclusive practices within organizations. Conversely, limited and negative interactions contribute to exclusion. Organizational practices that promote non-discrimination, inclusive language policies, and managerial support are essential for enhancing inclusion. Limited amount of information available in English and career advancement opportunities favoring native Finns, on the other hand, create barriers to inclusion. Furthermore, language skills, social networks, confidence, and relevant work experience can facilitate inclusion, if colleagues and managers are open and willing to engage with foreign employees.

The findings from both case companies are very similar and the same kind of experiences were reported by employees of both companies. The biggest difference between the units of analysis was found between employees working in the capital region and those working in smaller offices outside the capital region. Lower diversity in regards of nationalities in offices and towns outside the capital region highlighted the challenges faced by foreign employees especially in their interactions with Finnish colleagues.

6.2 Practical Implications

Given the crucial role of managers in implementing inclusive practices, it is important for organizations to invest in supporting managers and supervisors with inclusive leadership practices to foster a more inclusive environment for all employees. Additionally, as the challenges faced by foreign employees were mostly related to interactions with their Finnish colleagues, supporting and facilitating building social connections between employees is vital. Both case companies in this study have already adopted several practices related to this, such as an onboarding buddy, discussion groups and supervisors encouraging both Finnish employees and foreign employees to interact with each other. The importance of these practices cannot be emphasized enough and supervisors are to be encouraged and held accountable to constantly implement them. In addition to strengthening and facilitating social connections between team members, in a multi-located work place the social connections between employees working in the same office also need to be strengthened, since they play a crucial role in the everyday life at the office.

As part of facilitating the social connections between the employees, the language policies and practices need to be assessed. As discussed by Back & Piekkari (2024), when the organization's language policy is not formalized, those who do not speak the dominant language are left dependent on their colleagues goodwill and voluntary actions to ensure fair treatment and equal access to information. According to the conclusions of Back & Piekkari (2024), an inclusive language policy involves a consistent use of a shared language by managers and colleagues both in formal and informal situations. Formalizing such policies is, as found in this study, especially challenging in the offices where there are only a few foreign employees and who do not have their own supervisor at the office. This emphasizes the need for all managers and supervisors, not only those who have foreign employees in their own team/department, to set an example on inclusive language practices.

As there are some engineering disciplines where the role of Finnish language in local projects is still particularly important, supportive measures related to the language are needed especially for the foreign employees working on these fields. Besides Finnish courses, this can include, for example, providing field specific vocabulary for the foreign employee to aid in learning the particular terminology.

As suggested by both previous studies and this study, foreign employees often find their advancement opportunities limited compared to their Finnish colleagues. The limited advancement opportunities in Finland have been identified as a factor contributing to the country being considered undesirable for expats (Internations, 2024). Addressing this issue is thus crucial for attracting and retaining foreign employees in the future. To ensure fair and non-discriminatory development opportunities, people development practices should be thoroughly examined to ensure that processes are transparent, based on merits and do not disproportionately favor certain groups of people over others. Additionally, transparency regarding the qualifications and requirements for advancement is crucial. Some study participants shared their perceptions that having similar backgrounds to current management and the right connections are necessary for career progression. These perceptions suggest a lack of clarity in the advancement process which is reflected in the concerns about fairness among the employees.

Lastly, as was discussed in the study, the national level negative attitudes and political discussions affect negatively to the foreign employees' feeling of safety. This presents a chal-

lenge for organizations, as they have limited influence on the source of the problem. Therefore, promoting psychological safety and taking a strong stance against any form of discrimination or hostile behavior towards foreign employees is crucial to mitigate the effects of negative national level attitudes. Managers must also be knowledgeable about the many subtle forms that discrimination can take so they can recognize and address these issues as they occur.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted as a multiple case study, which according to Yin (2003) offers a stronger transferability than that of single case studies. Additionally, the study findings of this study on the factors related to feeling included or excluded are very similar to those found in previous studies, as discussed in the Discussion section. Furthermore, the challenges faced by foreign employees identified in this study are consistent with the findings of other studies conducted in Finland regardless of sector of employment. Therefore, it can be concluded that the findings of this study are widely applicable and offer insights into the factors influencing the inclusion of foreign employees across different sectors in Finland. However, as discussed in the Discussion section, the challenges related to Finnish language are affected not only by the social context of the organization itself but also by the organization's field of operation and the dominant language used in the field. Therefore, the study findings related to the necessity to know Finnish experienced by the study participants in this study might not resonate with feelings of foreign employees working in a field where English has a more dominant role, such as the IT sector.

6.4 Suggestions for further Study

As recognized by Kilinc (2021), there is a gap in research on how the experiences of foreign employees differ in urban and rural areas of Finland. This study shed some light on the matter by comparing the experiences of foreign employees situated in the capital region and in smaller towns outside the capital region. However, due to the limited number of interviews, it cannot be concluded that the differences in experiences are solely explained by office location. Other factors, such as office size and level of diversity, may have a more significant role than the actual office location in shaping these experiences. Therefore, further research is needed to explore this topic more.

Additionally, the effect of time on feeling included was touched in this study, but it needs further studies for theory building. For this a longitudinal study would be needed to explore the events and conditions over time that favor increasing or decreasing the feeling of inclusion.

As discussed in the theory part of this study, there are several studies indicating the challenges of foreign employees to advance on their career and this study is consistent with those. The topic needs further studies that would focus, e.g., on the strategies used by foreign employees who have managed to progress into managerial positions and what obstacles they faced on their journey.

Furthermore, in this study the feeling of exclusion seemed to be strongest among the research participants who were working in local offices where their own team members were not located at the same office. The effect of multilocal work on the feelings of inclusion among employees, despite their nationality, is a bigger research question which has become especially topical with the increased amount of remote and hybrid working in recent years. It is a vast topic where further research is needed.

7 References

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8 Appendices

1. Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Interview of the HR manager / Specialist

The questions were originally in Finnish, since the interviews were conducted in Finnish. Below I will present the original questions in Finnish and their [English translations]

Introduction:

1. Kertoisitko itsestäsi ja tehtävästäsi yrityksessä?
[Could you tell me about yourself and your role in the company?]

The diversity and inclusion policy of the company:

2. Miten yritys määrittelee diversiteetin ja inklusion omassa toiminnassaan?
[How does your company define diversity and inclusion in its own operations?]
3. Voisitko kuvailla yrityksen nykyistä diversiteetti- ja inklusiopolitiikkaa ja -strategiaa?
[Could you describe the company's current diversity and inclusion policy and strategy?]
 - a. Miksi yritys haluaa panostaa näihin?
[Why does the company want to invest in these?]
 - b. Mikä on diversiteetti- ja inklusiopolitiikan tavoite?
[What is the goal of the diversity and inclusion policy?]
4. Millaisia käytännön toimenpiteitä yritys tekee diversiteetin lisäämiseksi?
[What kind of practical measures does the company take to increase diversity?]
5. Entä inklusion? [What about inclusion?]
 - c. Miten tuette / koulutatte esihenkilöitä?
[How do you support/train supervisors?]
 - d. Entä henkilöstöä?
[and employees?]
6. Miten olette vuosien varrella kehittäneet näitä toimenpiteitä?

Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

[How have you developed these practices over the years?]

7. Miten yritys arvioi diversiteetti- ja inklusiopolitiikkansa vaikutusta?

[How does the company assess the impact of its diversity and inclusion policy?]

8. Minkälaista palautetta olette saaneet diversiteetti- ja inklusiotoimenpiteistä henkilöstöltä?

[What kind of feedback have you received from staff on diversity and inclusion practices?]

9. Mitä haasteita monimuotoisessa työpaikassa olette kohdanneet?

[What challenges have you faced in a diverse workplace?]

The foreign employees

1. Mitä positiivisia asioita ulkomaalaiset osaajat ovat tuoneet mukanaan?

[What positive things have foreign experts brought with them?]

2. Mitä haasteita ulkomaalaisten sopeutumisessa työpaikalle mielestänne on?

[In your opinion, what challenges do foreigners face in adapting to the workplace?]

Interview of the employees

Introductory questions:

1. Please tell about yourself?
 - a. What do you do?
 - b. Do you usually work in international projects or in Finnish projects? Do the projects have both Finnish and international employees?
 - c. How did you end up moving to Finland?
 - d. Where are you from originally?
 - e. Is your current job your first job in Finland?
 - f. How do you feel about working in Finland?

The Field

1. How would you describe your working environment?
2. How would you describe your colleagues and managers?
 - a. How do they act in your presence?
3. How do you feel differences are appreciated in your workplace?

Inclusion / exclusion

1. What do diversity and inclusion mean to you?
2. What is your organization doing to promote inclusion and diversity?
 - a. Can you describe any initiatives or efforts on diversity and inclusion?
 - b. How do feel about these practices?
3. Do you feel you are valued in your workplace?
 - a. In what kind of situations have you felt valued?
4. Do you feel you are part of your work community?
5. Can you describe a time or situation when you felt excluded or overlooked at work?
 - a. What kind of behaviors led to this?
6. Have you ever felt that you need to change something in yourself to be more accepted at work?
7. Do you feel that foreign employees have the same opportunities in your workplace as the Finnish employees?
 - a. Why / Why not?

Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

Social and cultural capital

1. How is your previous experience or background appreciated in your workplace?
 - a. Have there been occasions when it has been dismissed?
2. What has helped you to adapt to working in Finland?
3. What kind of barriers have you faced at work?
 - a. What has helped you or what do you think you would have needed to overcome these barriers?
4. In your opinion, what do you think helps foreign employees feel welcomed in Finnish workplaces?
 - a. What is needed from the organization?