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Starting All Over Again?:  
Occupational Mobility from the Immigrant's Perspective

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The majority of researchers in the occupational mobility literature have used large scale data sets testing competing hypotheses to determine whether human capital variables (such as education and work experience) or structural variables outside the realm of personal control (e.g., discrimination) are important determinants in immigrant occupational (im)mobility. The present research seeks to fill a gap in this literature - that of the immigrant's perspective to their own career trajectory. This project analyzed interview data from 41 interviews with Latin Americans in Calgary. The data collected revealed that factors (such as educational attainment in Canada) identified to facilitate mobility did not readily appear to assist these immigrants in obtaining positions commensurate with their Canadian educational standing. Further, the majority of those who have been mobile perceived the same barriers to finding employment as those who had not been mobile both in general and specifically in their occupational field of choice.

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## *Chapter 1*

### *Introduction*



This thesis is an exploration of Latin American immigrant occupational mobility. The study was undertaken in order to examine the perspectives of those immigrants so often studied, but rarely allowed to speak. It was my aim to facilitate those voices to be heard.

Many of the studies in the area of immigrant occupational mobility have focused on numeric data from censuses in Canada, the United States, as well as in Australia. I was interested in understanding, from the immigrant's point of view, what their working experiences have been in Canada. Further, I was interested in determining whether or not the occupations immigrants are working in were what they had expected to work in Canada before moving here. Likewise, since moving to Canada if they have not worked in occupations that they had expected to work in, what do they feel has held them back from working in their chosen field.

Literature in the area of occupational mobility using qualitative data collection is relatively rare (with the exception of Ralston, 1991). Much of the literature in this area seeks to explain the employment situation of immigrants in relation to their wages or their occupations in relation to factors such as: educational attainment, parental educational attainment, and the like. This study attempts to begin looking at the ways in which the immigrants perceive their positioning within the job market. Although there is no way to bridge the gap between the quantitative and qualitative literature on this subject in a project of this nature, this project does make a valuable contribution to the literature in that it examines the ways in which the immigrants make sense of their careers in Canada.

Chapter two outlines the theory and literature in the area of occupational mobility as well as other interrelated theories. The chapter is broken down into the dominant theories and bodies of literature in this area: human capital, discrimination, and labour market segmentation.



It is in this chapter that I place my research problem and questions in the context of the literature that exists to date.

Chapter three describes some of the research undertaken in this area in Canada. As well, some strengths and weaknesses of previous studies are outlined in this chapter. The methods used to collect and analyze data for this project are then described. The design of the project, sampling procedures, and ethical considerations are also included in this chapter. Lastly, I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the research undertaken in this thesis.

In chapter four, the analysis of the data begins by describing the sample and presenting holistic case studies of some of the participants careers in Canada. Then, the research questions posed in chapter two and themes arising from the interviews are presented and discussed. Chapter five interprets the findings described in the previous chapter in a broader context. The final chapter also includes the implications for this study and final conclusions.

## *Chapter 2*

### *Theoretical Perspectives and Literature Review*



Questions regarding the labour market positioning of immigrants have been raised by sociologists and economists in nations with high levels of immigration (i.e., Canada, the United States, and Australia). Researchers in these nations have, over the past forty years, developed and tested theories in an attempt to explain the factors that impact immigrants' occupational standings over time.

#### **Questions Guiding this Research Project**

The questions that guided this research grew both from reading the literature on occupational mobility as well as from my own experiences with adult immigrants as an English teacher. One of the first, and most important questions with which I began this research could be broadly stated as: Why are immigrants in the jobs they are in? Many years prior to beginning this research, I noticed a pattern where many of my former English students were moving into lower skilled service sector jobs. The prevalent pattern was intensely problematic for me, especially given that I knew that many of my former students were highly skilled and had higher levels of education from their home nation. In order to have a greater understanding of why people were in the jobs they were, other questions needed to be answered to fill in gaps that could lead to misunderstandings if left unexplored and uncontested.

I wanted to know what jobs people were working in, in Latin America. What kind of jobs were people expecting to work in before moving to Canada? What positions were people actually able to obtain upon arriving to Canada? Do the types of jobs that immigrants are able to secure change over the duration of their residence? Are the positions held the types of jobs they want to work in? If not, what do they determine to be 'holding them back' from the type

of employment they would want to work in? In essence, this thesis is an exploration of how the immigrant perceives and manoeuvres through the Canadian labour market. Few studies have asked the participants directly what their employment experiences have been and how they make sense of their occupational mobility (with the exception Ralston, 1991 and in a different capacity Gouveia and Rousseau, 1995).

### **Occupational Mobility Literature**

Researchers in this area of study have focused, for the most part, on aggregate data analyses using census data or other large scale data sets. As such, the theories used in this area could be seen to reflect more of a structural perspective. It was recognized from the beginning that the data I was to collect would be on a smaller scale, and the variations eliminated at the aggregate level of analysis may be present at the individual level. My rationale for including these theories was to test their propositions at the individual level as rigorously as possible. Qualitatively, I was expecting that if these theories did not ‘fit’ the data, others would need to be found in order to explain my research results. As Hammersley pointed out, generally many theories fail “to take account of the complex, processual, indeterminate character of social life” (1995:58). It was my goal both to see if any of these theories best captured the complex reality at the individual level and to also expand on aspects not touched upon in these theories. Although other theories could have been included in order to analyse these data (e.g., queuing theory, social capital, assimilation), I chose the following three theories in an attempt to understand and explain the occupational trajectories of the participants interviewed.

The literature surveyed in the area of occupational mobility focused on research where the immigrants’ first language was not English due to my project’s focus on Latin Americans. The majority of this literature explores the intersection of factors such as: educational attainment, labour market experience, labour market positioning, English language ability, and

earnings.

### ***Human Capital***

The human capital theory, derived from Becker's (1964) economic text entitled *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis*, emphasizes the impartiality of the labour market as well as the rationality of individuals within the labour market (*ceteris paribus*). Focusing on an individual level economic explanation of labour market positioning, Becker stressed that over a person's lifetime, decisions made would be functionally important in the labour market. Decisions regarding educational attainment, acquisition of a second language, and so forth, would ultimately situate the individual in the labour market where they could trade their human capital 'input' with a willing employer who would pay them for their labour. Therefore, labourers with a prized bundle of skills and training (i.e., post-secondary or trades training) should be able to locate employment that will reward the individual's accomplishments. Likewise, those who had not invested in their training beyond basic secondary schooling should find employment paying them according to their skill level.

In relation to the occupational mobility of immigrants, those researchers who use human capital as one theory that guides their studies do so testing hypotheses regarding the intersection of (but not exclusive to) educational attainment, labour market experience, wage levels, length of residence, nativity, gender, parental occupational status, and often English language ability. The majority of the research focused on for this literature review included English language ability in their analyses, in part, due to the fact that my own research would be focusing on immigrants whose first language was not English.

Location of acquisition for immigrant's education has become a point of contention in this literature. Researchers have begun to include in their analyses education obtained in the immigrant's nation of origin as well as education obtained in the host country. The results of

researchers testing educational attainment without considering its national origin are understandably mixed. Broom, *et al.* (1980) estimates immigrant education in two variables including any schooling before beginning work, then another variable measuring education begun at least one year after the first job held without specifying where the education was obtained. Greenwood and McDowell (1991) do not distinguish between education obtained abroad and in the host nation. They found that the higher the educational attainment of immigrants facilitates an international transfer of skills. They also report that language similarity to the destination nation (i.e., Canada or the United States) also assists in the transferability of credentials. Other researchers (Baker and Benjamin, 1994; Bloom and Gunderson, 1991; Darvish, 1990) only measure education as total years of schooling for the immigrant population studied. Without distinguishing where the education was obtained, I would question some of their research findings. Admittedly, it has been difficult for researchers to test hypotheses regarding overseas/host country educational attainment and their resulting impact on occupational mobility in the host country given that many data sets do not distinguish where the respondents obtained their credentials or years of schooling.

Other researchers have become aware of the theoretical and methodological problems involved and have included qualifications or years of schooling obtained overseas versus in the host nation as separate predictor variables (Campbell, Fincher, and Webber, 1991; Chapman and Iredale, 1990; Epensshade and Fu, 1997; Evans and Kelley, 1986; Friedberg, 1996; McAllister, 1995; VandenHeuvel and Wooden, 1997). Campbell, *et al.* (1991) found that the overwhelming movement of immigrants was into lower skilled jobs, in part, due to unrecognized qualifications. McAllister (1995) found that due to a number of confounding factors, immigrants fare worse off in the labour market, but concluded that a disruption in anyone's working career by dislocation would end in a similar situation/predicament as the immigrant. VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1997) concluded that those immigrants whose first language is

not English are less likely to be employed in positions that have training possibilities. The authors further indicated that simply increasing one's language skills would not remedy the lower levels of training. Elements of discrimination may be another factor unaccounted for in their model, but they wrote that discriminatory practices by employers in the area of training for immigrants would be difficult to document.

Friedberg (1996) wrote that "[f]oreign human capital often - although not always - earns a lower return than domestic human capital, and this fact alone is sufficient to fully explain the residual earnings disadvantage of immigrants"(1996:2). Her paper focuses on what she calls the 'portability' of human capital. She indicates that primary schooling is more portable than higher levels of education. Upon immigration, the "earnings of both highly educated and less educated immigrants are often compressed upon their arrival in the host country, with both groups working in low-skill jobs that require little language proficiency or other country-specific human capital"(1996:4). Over time, however, Friedberg indicates that immigrants gradually sort themselves into various occupations, resulting in a rise in educational wage differential between immigrant groups. Language is seen to be a key component to the transferral of skills in order to 'translate' them into higher rates of return.

Considering the impact language has, in general, on the ability of an individual to understand and respond to employment specific situations as they arise, English language ability has been identified as an important component influencing either one's position in and/or economic return from the labour market (Aycan and Berry, 1996; Badets and Howatson-Leo, 1999; Campbell, Fincher, and Webber, 1991; Carliner, 1981; Chiswick, 1991; Chiswick, 1998; Chiswick and Miller, 1990; Chiswick and Miller, 1995; Darvish, 1990; Dustman, 1994; Epensshade and Fu, 1997; Friedberg, 1996; Goldman, 1998; Gouveia and Rousseau, 1995; Greenwood and McDowell, 1991; Grenier and Vaillancourt, 1983; Grin, 1996; Iredale, 1994; Irvine, 1989; Kossoudji, 1988; McAllister, 1992; McManus, 1985; Park, 1999; Portes, 1995;

Portes and Zhou, 1992; Repak, 1994; Stolzenberg and Tienda, 1997; Tainer, 1988; VandenHeuvel and Wooden, 1997). Chiswick and Miller (1995) write that language skill satisfies the “three basic requirements of human capital: they are embodied in the person, they are productive in the labour market and/or in consumption, and they are created at a sacrifice of time and out-of-pocket resources”(1995:248). It is theorized that immigrants whose first language is not English, who expect to be rewarded for improving their language skills, will spend the time and effort required to improve their English language skills.

Gouveia and Rousseau (1995) challenge the human capital perspective due to its limited scope of analysis between the relationship between language ability and wages. These authors stress that limiting an analysis to an economic relationship belies power relationships and oppression. Gouveia and Rousseau posit a type of language ‘deskilling’ occurring in the marketplace. “As a skill, language commands different values under different political and economic conditions”(1995:159). Further, the authors posit that “skills and their values are socially constructed” (1995:158). If their analysis is accurate, to be aware that language and skill value vary according to the conditions which the immigrant finds him/herself in creates a conundrum for other researchers to try and solve. Bourdieu’s 1977 article on linguistic exchange also indicates a problematic aspect of analysing language in isolation. He emphasized that “speech always owes a major part of its value to the value of the person who utters it”(1977:652). It could be possible, then, that a person may be devalued in the labour market due to factors such as discrimination of accents or perceived skill level on the basis of a verbal exchange alone.

### ***Discrimination***

Another theoretical perspective prevalent in occupational mobility literature is that of discrimination. Discrimination has been described as an imperfection in the labour market by

economists and as a socially imposed constraint limiting certain individuals on the basis of an undesirable characteristic by sociologists. In relation to immigrants, discrimination could be based on one or an intersection of: skin colour, gender, accent, immigrant status, or other deemed undesirable characteristics. Discrimination may take many forms, but in this research, discrimination is identified and based on the participant's perception. Discrimination, then, may be identified by the participant as an obstacle in obtaining an employment position, altering working relationships within a job on the basis of their skin colour (as one example), or that they were being paid less than a member of the majority for the same work (on the basis of similarity of credentials).

In a functioning competitive labour market (Evans and Kelley, 1986; Lang, 1993) if immigrants are funnelled into jobs that pay less than natives of a particular nation, this market imperfection should be rapidly eliminated. Based on a supply/demand principle, if individuals are discriminated against on the basis of their skin colour/ethnicity, their wages should logically be lower than others who are considered 'more desirable.' However, if all employers wish to maximize profits, logically they will also hire visible minorities at lower wages. As the desire to hire visible minority increases the demand, if there is a labour shortage of visible minority workers, wages will be driven up. This situation is both counterproductive to hiring cheap labour and would ultimately eliminate any discrimination on the basis of colour/ethnicity.

I would posit, however, that if employers are concerned about their customers not accepting the immigrant in the service sector (e.g., on the basis of their skin colour or accent), discrimination could exist in a functioning labour market. The owner or employer who is concerned with their metaphorical 'bottom line' will consider those they hire in light of the customer's acceptance of the potential employee in order to maintain their clientele's business. Indeed, discrimination may be more widespread than simply an employer's preference.

McDonald (1997) writes that discrimination may be able to exist in the labour market



in specific parts of the economic boom/bust cycle. Therefore, while there are many applicants for job vacancies in recessionary periods, it is costless (in relation to hiring employees) to discriminate against immigrants from particular ethnic groups. However, in periods of expansion, employers may find discrimination against potential employees very expensive if the demand for employees in general is high leading to a shortage of available more desirable workers. Discrimination during expansionary times could lead to ineffective operation without enough workers to fill the necessary positions. It would then be necessary to fill positions with the best job candidate the employer can locate.

Research has also focused on whether, as a result of discrimination, immigrants face lower rates of return for their human capital (Evans and Kelley, 1986; Kossoudji, 1988; Loveridge and Mok, 1980; Stolzenberg and Tienda, 1997). In response to overt discrimination and lower returns for their human capital, researchers have also explored whether or not immigrants and visible minorities chose to be self-employed as a result of their labour market experiences, often entering into an ethnic enclave (i.e., those members of a minority group who cluster into a particular occupation or specialty). Portes and Zhou (1992), for example, investigate the possibility that self-employment may be representative of one type of marginalization. Individuals facing discrimination in the larger labour market may counter this difficulty by being either self-employed or seeking out employment by members of their own ethnic group.

Employment ghettoization, as explored by Bolaria and Li (1988) and Loveridge and Mok (1980), is suggested to be one form of discrimination when “stigmatised groups with defined characteristics *but who otherwise possess similar educational qualifications* to those of non-stigmatised groups are crowded into jobs”(Loveridge and Mok, 1980:396-397 emphasis in the original) that are low paying, with no upward career prospects, low employment security, and bad working conditions. Alternatively, if stigmatized individuals move into jobs occupied

by non-stigmatized groups, both requiring similar qualifications yet the stigmatized individual is paid significantly less, this is also said to be a form of discrimination.

### *Labour Market Segmentation*

The labour market segmentation model theorizes that labour markets are divided into a number of partial markets not easily accessible to all workers (as mentioned in the form of employment ghettoization above, labour market segmentation is part of a larger issue of labour market positioning). Edwards, Reich, and Gordon (1973) define the term 'labour market' as "those specific mechanisms and institutions through which the purchase and sale of labor power are arranged"(1973:5). Accordingly, the two major markets are termed the 'primary' and the 'secondary' market. Edwards (1979) defines the secondary market as spanning both production and non-production jobs. Specifically, secondary labour market jobs are considered to be those positions in non-union manufacturing, service sector jobs (e.g., janitors, waiters, personal care workers, security guards), and other lower skill positions (e.g., sales clerks). Jobs in the secondary market rarely require any previous training or education beyond basic literacy.

Employment in the primary market is segmented into two parts (the subordinate and independent primary markets), but the finer distinction between the two parts will not be utilized in this research. In general, primary market jobs require more specific skills often attained in specialized schooling, offer greater job security, and offer higher wages for those employed therein. It is assumed, then, that the primary market jobs are preferable to secondary market positions.

If labour market segments are not as easily accessible to all labourers, how then would the segmentation theorist explain the partitioning of the labour market? One explanation may be that labourers are funnelled into segments deemed to be appropriate on the basis of the Marxian forces and relations of production. Historically, jobs less favoured by the native

populous, such as manufacturing and lower level service sector positions (i.e., the lower paying and/or 'dirty work'), have been filled by ethnic minorities and youths. Specifically, in Canada and the United States, lower skilled immigrants were permitted to immigrate in order to fill these less desirable jobs. Over time, the need for these positions to be filled has remained, but immigration quotas have increasingly been filled with more highly educated immigrants. As a consequence, today, secondary market positions are being filled by immigrants with higher educational levels than in the past (Campbell, *et al.*, 1991).

Alternatively, other authors have suggested that immigrants may choose to work in certain areas of the segmented labour market due to either barriers perceived in the larger labour market or lower levels of English proficiency (Evans, 1987; Gouiva and Rousseau, 1995; Kossoudji, 1988; McAllister, 1995). As a result, immigrants cluster into 'ethnic enclaves' or particular jobs in the segmented market. Immigrant nation of origin has also been documented to have an effect on the immigrant's location within the labour market (Campbell, *et al.*, 1991; Miller, 1987; Satzewich and Li, 1987; Wanner, 1998). As has been noted previously, this initial movement is frequently into lower service sector jobs.

One distinct ramification of this initial movement into the secondary market is that researchers have also documented that the segmented market is stable over time (Blossfeld and Mayer, 1988; Campbell *et al.*, 1991; Kossoudji, 1988). Those immigrants who move into the secondary market, then, are expected to be limited in their future employment possibilities. Once an immigrant obtains a position within the labour market, be it within the primary or secondary market, it is increasingly difficult to be occupationally mobile moving from one market to the other.

## **Discussion**

If the theories described above were to more or less accurately predict the general trends

of results in this research, what labour market experiences could be expected of the immigrants interviewed? In relation to the human capital theory, it is to be expected that the human capital attainment from Latin America will be discounted with regularity, especially if no further education is obtained. If this theory were to be a good predictor, we should generally see those immigrants who are more highly educated in Canada, with more labour market experience, and better English skills move into the primary market or trades at some point in their Canadian residency.

In relation to discrimination, those immigrants who perceive discrimination to have blocked their movement into the primary labour market or trades due to their skin colour, ethnicity, or accent may indicate this to have been the case during the interview process. Further, those immigrants who explain they have been able to secure a position in a desired occupation but were unable to be paid at the same level as others with the same certification and experience will also be considered to have been discriminated against. Due to the fact that the manifestation of discrimination is both highly contested and difficult to document in a rigorous manner (i.e., I was unable to ask questions that included discrimination in the question's wording due to possible reactivity problems), this theory is not expected to be prevalent in the interviews.

Labour market segmentation poses a distinctly structural dilemma for a highly skilled incoming immigrant. If this theory can accurately predict the employment opportunities of immigrants, then in this project, we should see consistent movement of the immigrants into the secondary market. Further, with the stability of the labour market segments, the immigrants in the sample should remain in the secondary market regardless of length of residency in Canada.

The main differences between these theoretical perspectives permitting comparison revolve, to some extent, around the agency vs. structure debate in sociology. That is, if the individual actor can control their career trajectory by obtaining more education, experience, and

English skills, then the human capital theory may lend greater insight into these data to be examined in the following chapters. If, however, the career trajectory of the immigrant is perceived to be controlled to a greater extent by forces beyond their control (i.e., societal or market factors constraining movement within the labour market), then the more structural theories of discrimination and labour market segmentation may clarify the occupational (im)mobility of the immigrants in this sample. Prior to delving into the analysis of these issues, methodological considerations need to be outlined in the next chapter.

### *Chapter 3*

#### *Research Design and Methods*



#### **Research Designs Previously Used in the Literature**

The literature that exists around immigrant occupational mobility, for the most part, has been generated in Canada, the United States, and Australia. Methodologically, the majority of research in this area utilizes census data or other large data sets. Due to the specific nature of national labour markets and economies therein, this section will only focus on Canadian research designs. Satzewich and Li (1987) used longitudinal data collected by the Department of Manpower and Immigration over a period of three years through three cohorts (1969 to 1971) in a series of three waves of surveys per cohort. The immigrants were surveyed six months, one year, then three years after arriving in Canada. Although this study was useful to track the occupational standing of immigrants in relation to both monetary returns and location in the labour market, its age limits the applicability and usefulness for understanding the positioning of immigrants in today's market.

Richmond's (1991) article tracks the trend of foreign born labour in Canada through immigration statistics. He documents structural changes in the Canadian economy since 1971 and the resulting impact of these changes on the labour market positioning of incoming immigrants. He notes that although incoming immigrants' educational levels have risen, the gap between the expected and actual income, given the higher educational attainment, has increased over the years. His 1994 text delves into greater detail over a longer time span, but echoes many of the same issues and conclusions of his earlier article.

Termote (1995) used the 1986 Canadian quinquennial census to track the university level educational attainment of immigrants entering Quebec and the rest of Canada. He found that the percentage of "skilled" immigrants (i.e., those holding a university degree) rose from

the 1981 to the 1986 census. In relation to the total population of Canada in 1986, immigrants had, on average, six more years of schooling. Baker and Benjamin (1994) also used micro files from the 1971, 1981, and 1986 censuses confirming Termote's findings of higher immigrant education levels in comparison to native Canadians. Baker and Benjamin concluded that immigrant earnings for successive cohorts have fallen over time. They also determined that immigrant and native Canadian earnings were becoming more disperse over the fifteen-year time period.

Sorensen (1995) also used the 1986 census exploring the match between education and occupational categories for both immigrant and native-born males and females. The findings in this article suggest that there were no significant differences between the match of educational attainment and occupational categories for immigrant men and immigrant women. She concludes that the disadvantage seen to be attributed to women - known as the 'double jeopardy' of being both a minority and female - does not seem to apply to the highly educated immigrant woman.

Wanner (1998), using the 1991 census, found that those who migrated in childhood and were schooled in Canada did not suffer lower returns to their schooling, but those educated abroad (especially post-secondary schooling) did have lower returns for their schooling. He concluded that the returns to schooling also varied by nation of origin; migrants from less developed nations had lower levels of return for their overseas education in the labour market.

Aycan and Berry (1996) surveyed 250 Turks in the Montréal area (in what they termed a convenience sample). Their findings showed that the "majority of well-educated and qualified immigrants experienced difficulties integrating in to the labour force" (247). They determined that challenges in the language barrier and a lack of transferability of Turkish credentials were two major reasons for this difficulty in integration. Ralston (1991) conducted qualitative interviews of immigrant women in Atlantic Canada. Her preliminary findings indicated that the

immigrant women she interviewed faced situations unique to them as members of visible minority groups in the Atlantic region. Participants expressed the continuing felt need to compete for scarce jobs and if successful in securing employment, perform at higher levels than their Canadian counterparts.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of Previous Research**

Many of the data sources used by researchers in this area are unable to distinguish between education obtained abroad in the immigrant's home nation and education pursued in the host nation. As has been noted by researchers in this area, the location where the immigrant's education was obtained is vital in the analysis of their mobility in the host country. I would also point out that many of the data sources do not adequately measure the English language ability of the immigrants. As is the case with large scale censuses and data sets, it becomes understandably difficult to include a 'complete' set of questions to tap into every variable of interest, but the fact remains that researchers using these types of data sets are not precisely measuring essential variables of interest. Further, a single, uniform measure of occupational mobility does not exist in the literature. Different researchers are using dissimilar methods to determine the type and whether mobility has taken place. This makes comparison between research projects and their findings difficult. It would be helpful if there were a more standardized way of determining mobility.

Another type of weakness rests in the nature of surveys and censuses. These types of data collection do not allow immigrants to have a voice, nor do they allow the immigrant to explain their perceptions of their experiences in Canada. As Himani Bannerji writes in her anthology *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism and Politics*, permitting groups that have previously been silenced, or solely studied by 'experts', to speak is "a necessary intellectual and political task" (1993:x).



The strengths of research in this area include the possibility of generalization of results due to the high rate of completion of the general census. Also, the methodology of element selection for large scale surveys permits the generalizability of results due to the sample's representation of the population of interest. The large number of respondents in such surveys facilitates a type of representativeness small scale surveys are incapable of without limiting the population being studied.

### **Research Design of this Project**

Although the articles discussed in the previous chapter and above have been helpful in understanding the larger situation of immigrants in the labour market over time, it is also crucial to explore how the immigrants themselves make sense of their occupational positioning. The immigrant perceptions of their position within the labour market disclose ways in which patterns are reified at the micro level. Although this project is researching micro level data on occupational mobility, it is my understanding that society and individuals are mutually constituting and are mutually constituted. As society enforces norms and rules, so too individuals reenforce those same or similar norms and rules by living in accordance with them in their daily lives.

This study will not be documenting the structural factors directly - although an understanding of the macro historical circumstances are important in comprehending the context in which the immigrants I interviewed are situated - it is equally critical to understand the perceptions of these immigrants. It is understood that the interviewees live in a specific historical context that was not created by their making. They are interpretively trying to make sense of their surroundings and manoeuvre through the institutional structures they are faced with. In doing so, they either intentionally or unintentionally maintain (or may alter) the structures constraining their occupational lives.

This project, then, was intended to add to the literature on occupational mobility. I chose to employ a method of data collection that is not as frequently used in this literature. I was interested to see if the patterns in the literature were also evident at the micro level. Further, I was interested to explore whether the participants viewed their positioning in the occupational structure to be more of their own accomplishment or was their situation seen to be structurally determined. In addition, I had hoped that this research would explore some of the mechanisms of mobility.

Before I began this project, my methodological preference had more of a positivist orientation. However, as I started interviewing, I recognized the importance of exploring the actor's interpretation of their employment positioning in the research questions posed. After the interviewing commenced, I desired more to be a guide during the interviews rather than the expert. Although interviewing did not allow me to 'get inside' the interviewee's head, it did facilitate a type of data collection that, to some extent, was empowering in that I was asking the expert as opposed to objectively analysing the day-to-day lived experience of those being studied.

My interest in this project has been personal in nature as well as academically oriented. After living in Latin America for a year, and being an English as a Second Language instructor for six years in Canada and abroad, I recognized and have experienced the struggle immigrants endure when adjusting to a new culture and language. I have walked in the shoes of those I interviewed (recognizing that my experience in Latin America was one of a privileged white woman who chose to move and then return at will, whereas those moving to Canada from Latin America may have come from war-torn countries, as hopeful migrants, or for other distinct reasons I would not be able to directly relate to). My experience in Latin America was one of intense frustration, yet was rewarding as I learned the language, learned to navigate in the city I lived, and built social networks. In Canada, of those I taught over the years, I have seen

similar states of frustration as students try to navigate in their new home environment.

After the classes I taught in Canada were finished, I maintained contact with a few of my former students. What became apparent to me was the fact that many highly skilled people were not finding employment in their fields of study. In actuality, many I kept in contact with were discouraged in their inability to find quality employment, and were - as they put it - 'stuck' with cleaning or other manual labour jobs.

My underlying question, was: Why *are* many immigrant doctors cleaning hospitals? What is standing in the way of immigrants working in the professions or jobs they are highly qualified for - both in experience and education? How do these people make sense of their situations? Although few of these questions were answered sufficiently, they were the types of critical questions that prodded me to undertake this research project. The apparent contradiction between skill levels and the resulting employment alerted me to the possibility of an employment mismatch for some immigrants (specifically those whose first language is not English). If over half the 'points' awarded for immigration purposes are related to education, employment, etc., then why does this not translate into an occupational reality for most of the immigrants I kept in contact with? It is with these questions in mind that we move onto discuss the research design in greater detail.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This project obtained ethics approval from the department of Sociology in the University of Calgary in May 1999. The consent form used during data collection was in accordance with the University of Calgary ethics board. Due to a concern regarding the importance and necessity of understanding the contents of the consent form - given the unknown English language reading ability of participants - the consent form was translated into Spanish by a Master's student in the Spanish department at the University. The translation was then

inspected by other native Spanish speakers to confirm its accuracy. Both the English as well as the Spanish translation was included on the consent form. Each interview began with the consent form being given to the interviewee to read. Time was then taken to answer any questions the person had about the study. A consent form was left with the participant in case they had future questions or wished to contact the ethics review board. After both the participant as well as the interviewer signed the second form retained by the interviewer, the interview began.

### **Sampling**

I initially attempted to derive a random sample of immigrants who had completed English as a Second Language classes through the Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment Referral Centre (a service of the Calgary Immigrant Aid Society) database over a period of two years. Due to client confidentiality issues, access to this extensive database was denied. I then approached six of the largest English as a Second Language (E.S.L) providers in Calgary to obtain a random sample through files of those clients who had completed courses over a two-year time span. This request was denied due to the legislative implementation of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act across Canada (proclaimed October 1, 1995 and came into effect for local educational and governmental bodies October 1, 1999 - [www.gov.ab.ca/foip/](http://www.gov.ab.ca/foip/)).

After attempts to obtain a random sample had failed, I decided to narrow my focus to Latin American immigrants as a purposive sample rather than the entire immigrant community in Calgary. I produced posters with information about the study, then glued slips of paper with my e-mail address and office telephone number on the edge of the poster so interested individuals could contact me for more information. These posters were distributed to five businesses owned and operated by Latino businessmen/women catering to the Latin American

community. I also hung posters at the August 1999 Latino Fest in Prince's Island Park in central Calgary.

This thesis reports on data collected from 41 Latin American immigrants in the Calgary region. The non-random sample was selected on the basis of participation in the workforce in Latin America as well as in Canada. Participants were also selected due to their attendance in English as a Second Language classes. It was expected that if the immigrants had taken even a basic English class, this would form a foundation of English knowledge for the purposes of speaking and listening comprehension in the interviews. Canadian citizenship was not a basis for selection.

Of the 41 participants, five individuals volunteered themselves through the posters distributed to the stores and during the Latino Fest. Of those five interviewed, two of the interviewees gave me other names of people they thought would be interested in participating. During the early phases of data collection, I was interviewed and an article on the study was included in the September/October 1999 edition of one of the local Latino newspapers (*El Latino*). Two participants responded to the article. I also called people with business ads in the Latino newspapers. One ad holder agreed to be interviewed. From that interview, a list of thirty-one other potential participants was given to me.

Of all the names I was given through the snowball sample, twenty-seven people did not return my call after I explained the study and left details of how they could reach me if they wanted to participate either to a family member or on their answering machine. Eight individuals directly refused my request to be interviewed. Early on in the study, I decided not to leave messages either with family members or on answering machines, so I continued to call back if the potential participant was not at home. There were another eighteen people that were uncontactable after repeated attempts to reach them.

The sample was designed to encapsulate a relevant range of experiences from the wider

population of Latin American immigrants (realizing that one non-random sample could not represent the population directly). The relevant range included a variety of employment experiences, length of residency in Canada, age at immigration, sex, and educational attainment both in Latin America as well as Canada. Although I would have preferred to interview a larger sample to test hypotheses and quantitatively analyze the data collected, I am satisfied that at the conclusion of the sampling stage, the theoretically drawn sample did have a sufficiently broad set of experiences.

### **Data Collection**

I collected these data in English using a fairly structured face-to-face interview format. Face-to-face interviews were chosen for this project due to the varying English levels of participants. Due to the nature of this type of interview, the researcher was able to gauge the participant's understanding of the questions, and was able to rephrase questions if necessary for the participants. Interviews lasted, on average one hour and forty-five minutes. Twenty-nine of the forty-one interviews were conducted in the respondents place of residence. The remaining interviews were held either in the respondent's workplace or in a coffee shop of their choice. The intent was to facilitate a feeling of ease for the participants in an environment they felt comfortable in.

I recognized that being a white, Canadian born, middle-class female may, to some extent, have been a reactive factor with those I interviewed. In part, the possibility of reactivity became a constant in that I interviewed all the participants, so the effect should be similar though all the interviews. This form of data collection, however, was seen to be the most appropriate for the research questions outlined in the previous chapter, thus interviewing was deemed to be worth the risk of this type of systematic bias.

Interviews began in September 1999 and concluded January 2000. The majority of the

interviews were taped (33 of the 41 interviews). My tape recorder stopped working as I began the third interview; I purchased another recorder by the eighth interview. Transcriptions of the interview tapes began near the end of November 1999 and concluded April 2000.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument used in the interviews consisted of an initial section of questions regarding the participant's nation of origin, year of immigration, status upon immigration, present status in relation to citizenship, and expectations prior to migration. The second section asked questions regarding connection with various communities in Calgary, both of the same national origin, other Latin American communities, as well as contact with Canadian born individuals. Further to this, questions regarding the present living situation were asked along with the frequency of communication with family members in Canada and abroad. The third section inquired about the level of education received in the nation of origin, parental educational attainment, and the highest level of education achieved in Canada by the respondent. A section of language perception and length of time attending English programs were asked. The last section inquired about the occupational status of the participant in the nation of origin, and the final two sections asked the respondents to report on their first and present jobs in Canada.

Closed ended questions were derived in part from previous studies' variables listed which were then expanded into groupings of questions. Open ended questions in part came from the literature review, from my own interest, and also arose from the first few interviews. A stable instrument with consistent questions was solidified by the fifth interview. As was indicated previously in this chapter, the instrument used was intended for both qualitative and quantitative purposes.

## **Data Analysis**

I began the data analysis simply describing the sample (e.g., where the participants came from, how old they were when they arrived in Canada, educational attainment in Latin America). Then, I systematically answered the research questions posed in the second chapter. The majority of the questions were answered by simply taking the interviews, locating the appropriate questions in the interviews that tapped into the research questions posed, then determining and presenting the patterns in the analysis section.

What was more problematic in the analysis was understanding the intersection between the answers and the employment outcome for the participants. In other words, the ‘why’ of the participant’s positioning in the labour market. After considering many data analysis techniques, I decided that it was important to analyze the data both cross-sectionally by theme and holistically by ‘case’ (Mason, 1996:128-131). I determined that cross-sectional theme analysis was not sufficient in and of itself to analyze the data, nor did it capture the life story of the participants. The holistic case method was used to ascertain whether or not the structural changes that took place in the labour market altered either the initial or the present positioning of the participants. The case method was also important to understand the immigrants’ stories as a whole as opposed to a purely segmental analysis. The reasoning behind presenting the cases as part of the analysis was due to a felt responsibility to the participants to allow them to tell their stories. In essence, only analysing the data by theme was less respectful to the participants in my mind. Furthermore, presenting cases solidified the credibility of the theme analysis in the sense that both the common experiences as well as the anomalous cases could be demonstrated.

After presenting the case studies, I analyzed the various factors in combination with one another in order to see if any of the factors had more or less of an impact on the employment situation of the immigrant. Categorically indexing people into different groupings to try and



gain a sense of why people were in the situations they were in was the next step. Finally, after various attempts at categorical sorting over a number of months, in an attempt to distinguish a definitive pattern that would explain why some had succeeded in the labour market over others, I decided that I needed to write what I had found to that point. I have concluded that definitive answers regarding why people have been (im)mobile do not exist in these data, and in fact the explanations for (im)mobility are very similar. What does differentiate the groups, however, seems to be on the basis of present employment satisfaction. This will be expanded upon in the next chapter.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Present Research**

I feel that having a smaller number of participants could be viewed by some as a weakness of my study. Qualitatively, the information gathered became redundant, so there was no further need to continue interviewing. In this sense, the small number of participants was not a weakness, however, I also wanted to use quantitative methods to triangulate the findings of the study. Quantitatively, with forty-one participants, running statistical tests was futile.

A second weakness was that I was told by people who refused to be interviewed, that they are tired of being studied. They indicated that too many researchers have studied immigrants and they have reached study fatigue (although not in those exact words). This has serious consequences for a study such as this in the future.

As I was analysing the data, I realized I should have probed more in-depth during the interviews. Probing is a skill that I did begin to develop as I went through the interviews, but takes time to fully develop. Since these were the first interviews I have ever conducted, it is understandable (yet unfortunate) that this skill would not have fully matured over the course of these interviews. I wished that I could have probed more to be sure that the information I gleaned was as complete as it could have been.

The strengths of my research include the fact that I could ask questions that directly tapped into issues of interest for occupational mobility. I could also take into consideration the level of understanding of the various participants, adjusting and rephrasing the questions if necessary.

· Undoubtedly, one of the greatest strengths of this research was that I was able to listen to the participants and try to understand their experiences in their own words. As Becker states

[t]o understand why someone behaves as he does you must understand how it looked to him, what he thought he had to contend with, what alternatives he saw open to him; you can understand the effects of opportunity structures, delinquent subcultures, social norms, and other commonly invoked explanations of behavior only by seeing them from the actor's point of view (1970:64).

In part, listening to the participants opened my eyes to the realization that not all people necessarily desire mobility (which was an assumption of mine prior to beginning this research). As an example, for some, safety was and is more important than what type of job they obtain here. Further, by listening and later trying to analyze the data, I have begun to understand how complicated the social realm is and that, at times, upward mobility seemed to be almost random in the participant's point of view. Finally, the type of data collected is rich and is not normally available to researchers. In turn, this provides potential insight into the occupational careers of these immigrants.

## *Chapter 4*

### *Data Analysis*



#### **Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sample**

The sample consisted of just over fifty percent (51.2%) females and almost forty-nine percent males; the majority of the individuals were married (83%). Religious composition consisted of fifty-one percent Mormon and forty-nine percent Catholic/other. Religiosity was not intended to be an item of exploration, but became an item to report after beginning a new node of entry in the snowball sample into the Spanish speaking Mormon church.

Participants in this study were from a total of ten nations. Almost half the sample was from three Central American nations (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Costa Rica). Forty-one percent originated from six different nations in South America (Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil) and almost ten percent were from North America (Mexico). Fifty-one percent of the sample identified their status upon arriving to Canada as landed immigrants. This number represents both those immigrants who were accepted on the basis of the Canadian point system as well as refugees given landed immigrant status before arriving in Canada (as was the case with Chileans arriving in the 1970s and Salvadorean in the 1980s ). The self-identified refugee/designated class made up twenty-two percent of the sample and the other twenty-seven percent consisted of those who arrived in Canada as part of the family class, on a tourist, student, or work visa.

The majority of the sample (59%) was between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine upon arriving in Canada. The second largest category was the thirty to thirty-nine year old group comprising of thirty-two percent of the sample. The number of years the participants have been in Canada was quite evenly distributed between the categories. The lowest number of people have been in Canada less than five years (12%), whereas the largest number in one

**TABLE 1: Latin American Socio-Demographic Characteristics (N=41)**

	N	%		N	%
<b>Age at Immigration</b>			<b>Present Age</b>		
18-29	24	58.5	29-39	13	31.7
30-39	13	31.6	40-49	21	51.2
40-49	3	7.2	50-59	6	14.6
≥50	1	2.4	≥60	1	2.4
<b>Yrs. in Canada</b>			<b>Nation of Origin</b>		
1-5	5	12.2	North American (1 country)	4	9.8
6-10	14	34.1	Central American (3 countries)	20	48.7
11-15	9	22.0	South American (6 countries)	17	41.5
≥16	13	31.7			
<b>Status at Immigration</b>			<b>Religious Affiliation</b>		
Landed immigrant	21	51.2	Mormon	21	51.2
Refugee	9	22.0	Catholic/other	20	48.8
Family class/tourist/work visa	11	26.8			
<b>Marital Status</b>			<b>Gender</b>		
Married	34	82.9	Female	21	51.2
Single/divorced	7	17.1	Male	20	48.8

**TABLE 1: Latin American Socio-Demographic Characteristics (N=41)**

N		%	N		%
<b>Education in Latin America</b>			<b>Education in Canada</b>		
High school	6	14.6	Only English as a Second Language	7	17.1
Non-trade certification	2	4.9	Some high school	2	4.9
Trade certification	2	4.9	High school equivalency	3	7.3
Post secondary	9	22.0	Non-trade certification	5	12.2
Some university	7	17.1	Trade certification	7	17.1
Bachelor degree	12	29.3	Some post secondary	11	26.8
Masters degree	2	4.9	Post secondary	2	4.9
Medical degree	1	2.4	Bachelor degree	3	7.3
			Doctorate degree	1	2.4
<b>Took English in Latin America</b>					
Yes	34	82.9			
No	7	17.1			

category have resided in Canada between six to ten years (34%). Over fifty percent of the sample have lived in Canada over eleven years (53%).

Educationally, twenty-nine percent of the participants had obtained a bachelor's degree in Latin America. Almost five percent held masters degrees and one participant (2.4%) attained a medical degree. Twenty-two percent identified themselves as having post secondary training, and just over seventeen percent had begun university before leaving Latin America but did not complete their studies. Ten percent of the sample obtained either trade or non-trade certification and almost fifteen percent of the sample completed only high school. Eighty-three percent had taken English in school in Latin America. This number, however, needs to be understood in context. Some nations, despite having English in the classroom during Junior or Senior High School, were war torn; as a result English classes were infrequent. In other nations, participants said classes were sporadic due to a lack of funding for English teachers.

In Canada, seventeen percent of the sample has taken only English as a Second Language classes and have not pursued further education. Five percent have taken some high school and seven percent have obtained a high school equivalency. Twelve percent of the sample has pursued non-trade certification and seventeen percent either challenged the trade certificates or have obtained training in the trades. Twenty seven percent began some post secondary education, but have not completed their training. Five percent completed post secondary training, and seven percent obtained a bachelor's degree in Canada. One participant completed a doctorate degree in Canada. These numbers suggest that many of the participants have actively attempted to further their education in Canada in addition to their educational attainment in Latin America.

### **Employment Experiences in Latin America**

Many participants stated they had multiple occupations over the course of their working

lives in Latin America. The people in this sample are, on the whole, skilled in many areas. They indicated that due to the economic changes in the labour markets in Latin America, they have had multiple employment experiences as a result. In order to remain employed and employable, individuals emphasized that employment flexibility was an important key to their survival. If jobs were scarce in one part of the labour market, other skills could be used to find employment either in similar occupations or in other employment sectors.

For this analysis, I asked participants what they considered to be their main occupation in Latin America. The professionals referred to the following fields: archaeology, engineering, medical fields (both in research and practising medicine), psychology, and teaching (spanning from kindergarten to university). Others denoted their employment in various public and private occupations such as accounting, administration, animal technician, human resources, journalism, managerial, sales (both retail as well as owning a small business), and varied secretarial fields. Trades such as: electronic technician, goldsmith, refrigeration, surveying, and welder fitting were also mentioned.

### **Pre-Migration Expectations**

In order to understand the lived situation of the individuals I interviewed, I asked questions relating to the expectations of employment in Canada prior to moving. Distinct patterns of responses emerged. That is, there were participants with definite employment expectations (four participants), safety expectations (fifteen people), familial expectations (nine participants), and what I termed general standard of living expectations (thirteen people). It is in these terms that I will now describe them.

#### ***Employment Expectations***

Part of the sample were under the impression that they would be able to continue their

main occupation from Latin America. For various reasons, these participants believed that upon arriving in Canada, they would find employment in their chosen field. Mr. C. said “I thought I could have do the same thing I was doing before, yeah administration. Even my landed immigrant papers I have, that was my occupation. I came to Canada with that occupation.” Ms. O. thought she would be able to continue in the same field “because in the embassy they ask for all the papers, background, things like that because they said that we’re going to need it here too. So, we thought that we are going to work in the same field.” Unfortunately, neither Mr. C. nor Ms. O. were able to obtain employment in their occupations of choice. Others, like Ms. W. expected to open a daycare; Ms. X. said that she “was in business in South America and I thought I could just continue, you know? It didn’t work that way.”

### *Expectations of Safety*

A portion of the sample came to Canada for safety reasons. This segment indicated that, for the most part, they were not focused on what type of employment they would be able to obtain after arriving in Canada. They were concerned for their safety and the safety of their family. Mr. H. had many skills in Latin America that he brought with him to Canada. The ambivalence of expectations regarding employment was clear when he said that “If you have to leave then you know, to me, it doesn’t matter what kind of thing I’m doing. I wanted political freedom [pause] not everybody needs freedom.” Another refugee, Mr. A., said “Here? Uh, I think when we plan to come with many problems in our country, we don’t think about what kind of job we can do. Anything we can do.” Mr. N. said that “We didn’t know exactly where we were going, we knew the name, but it didn’t mean anything to us. My main expectation was to learn the language and I said ‘whatever will be will be.’”

Ms. E. talked about not knowing what would happen after arriving in Canada, but she said



you have your dreams. Like I remember that maybe we thought that, I thought that, maybe if I take some classes or something, I could be a teacher or, with some education, get into something that I really like. We knew that the beginning is going to be hard, but after a while you think that you will go on.

Mr. W. echoes this sentiment. Although he said that he had no plans to move, he came here thinking that along with safety, because of his background, it would be relatively easy to move into a field related to his previous occupation. He reflected on what he had envisioned before moving to Canada, “I have a good experience, you know, and I have a background, some degrees, and uh, when I get that, it’s just a matter of learning English and that’s it. And I will find a job in a bank and [pause] easy, you know?”

### *Familial Expectations*

A third segment of the sample came to Canada with their husband, to marry their present husband, or because their husband, who was already in Canada, made arrangements for their arrival in order to start a family. From this group of women (9 in total), the majority did not have employment expectations before arriving. Two typical examples of this group were Ms. R. and Ms. B. Ms. R., in talking about whether or not she chose to come to Canada, said that “[t]hat’s what I’m coming here for my husband. I has to come, only because he is coming, I have to support for him. But I really like the idea when my husband say ‘you like to go to Canada?’ I say ‘sure, I like to go.’” Ms. B. said, “No, I didn’t think about working at all because, like I said, you know, I was married I got pregnant right away and women usually tend to stay home and take care of the children, and so no, I didn’t think about getting a job or not even have the idea that I was going to work at all.”

Although employment expectations were not their primary expectation, when asked what kind of job they thought they would be able to work at upon arriving, the majority of these

women explained that they expected to continue on in similar types of employment as they were working in, in Latin America (i.e., administrative assisting, secretarial, and running a small business).

### *General Standard of Living Expectations*

The final group to be discussed in this section were those who came to Canada with expectations of obtaining a higher standard of living. Mr. S. said that “Canada has a very positive image in Latin America. It’s [pause] it has the advantages or at least that’s the vision that we have. It has the advantages of North America without the disadvantages. I mean living standards are higher here, but without the social cost.” As well as having expectations to raise the standard of living for himself and his family, he also expected to be able to work at the university or in a consulting company in his field.

Ms. S. said that “my husband and I talk about Canada and is one of the countries that has the best people - value of people, and quality of life and more equity.” She believed that she would be able to continue researching as she had in Latin America.

In this group, there were some who came without employment expectations, but built theirs on the expectations through others’ experiences. Ms. C. said “Well, I didn’t think too much because I didn’t know. So, I say any job is okay. In my mind I thought any job was okay. It’s a new country, so you have to come with your open mind to do anything because you have a family to raise.” Her sister had informed Ms. C. that life here was easier, safer, and was cheap to live in comparison with the large city she was living in, in Latin America. When she was reflecting on what she would have done differently before moving here, she said that “I think that I had to get more informations about Canada because I came with imagine that my sister has about the country, and that makes me a lot of troubles. [pause] And she says that ‘salaries are very, very high, are very good.’ Yeah, I say ‘Wow, it’s incredible to live there, it’s quiet,

it's peaceful, it's cheap.'”

### **First Employment Experience in Canada**

The subsequent analysis of occupational mobility utilizes Edwards' (1979) definitions of secondary and primary markets (see also page 11 for definitions of each market in chapter two). The overwhelming majority of individuals experienced a dramatic decline in their occupational status. Fourteen of the forty individuals found jobs as janitors or housekeepers. Four were childcare workers, another four found employment in the food and beverage industry. Another five were in other types of service jobs (e.g., security guard, porter). Two were employed as receptionist/secretaries. Three people found positions as bookkeepers. Four worked in manufacturing jobs. Two individuals were working at the university with work visas as students. Another two were self employed, one woman's husband purchased a franchise business, and another woman rented a cart to sell the items her husband crafted.

The ways in which people have found their first jobs have changed over time. In the 1970s, a wave of landed immigrants came from Latin America, many of them said they went from business to business to find employment, relied upon employed family members and friends from Latin America, or jobs were located through job counsellors - specifically the federal manpower office. In the 1980s, jobs were located through job boards, newspapers, sponsors, family members or friends (both Latin American and Canadian), employment and immigration job counsellors/employment centres, job finding clubs, and volunteer work. In the 1990s, jobs were still found through family members and Latin American friends, newspapers, but were also found by sending out résumés to targeted locations, through professional relationships, or as part of a university program.

Over the thirty years of incoming immigrants, the majority experienced downward

**TABLE 2: Employment Characteristics (N=40)**

N			%		
N			%		
<b>Number of Paid jobs since Moving to Canada</b>			<b>Employment Status in Latin America</b>		
1-5	18	45.0	Secondary Market	2	5.0
6-10	16	40.0	Trades	5	12.5
11+	4	10.0	Primary Market	29	72.5
			Entrepreneur	2	5.0
<b>Employment Status in Canada (first job)</b>			<b>Employment Status in Canada (present job)</b>		
Secondary Market	33	82.5	Secondary Market	14	35.0
Trades	0	0.0	Trades	5	12.5
Primary Market	6	15.0	Primary Market	19	47.5
Entrepreneur	1	2.5	Entrepreneur	2	5.0
<b>Employment Mobility</b>			<b>First to Present Job in Canada</b>		
<b>Latin American Employment to First Job in Canada</b>			Downward	1	2.5
Downward	34	85.0	Upward	22	55.0
Upward	1	2.5	Same	17	42.5
Same	3	7.5			
<b>Present Job in Canada from Latin American Employment</b>			<b>NOTE: Latin America to Canada (2 participants were students in Latin America)</b>		
Downward	22	55.0			
Upward	5	12.5			
Same	11	27.5			

mobility in their first jobs in Canada from their occupations in Latin America. How did people make sense of this dramatic decline of their statuses? The next section outlines case studies exploring the employment histories in time periods ranging from the 1970s to the late 1990s. Cases from each time period were chosen to be included in the next section on the basis of their commonality and difference to demonstrate a relevant range of employment experiences during and between the time periods.

### **Immigration in the 1970s**

#### ***Mr. D.***

Mr. D. moved to Canada in the 1970s and upon arriving, he said that “I knew only two words, and I have confidence that I will be able to survive, to find a job, whatever. I think that was very positive, I have that confidence I could work whatever.” He found a cleaning job by going door to door and worked in that job for six months.

Subsequently, he decided to pursue the same kind of employment he was working at in Latin America as a welder. In relation to education, Mr. D. discussed the economic situation at that time. “That was the late ‘70s and was the boom here, so they were more open to give opportunity to challenge [the trades exams] and make easier to get people into the work.” He has worked in the trades since he challenged the exams in the late 1970s. Along with the welding ticket he obtained, he has also acquired two other trades tickets. In the trades, with the seasonality and temporality of jobs, it has been important for him to have the other qualifications. If there were no jobs in one segment of his trade, he has been able to survive with his other tickets.

Mr. D. discussed the situation of immigrants in Canada in relation to employment. In his mind, his experience has been one of constant comparison; comparing his work and attitude with that of others from his nation of origin as well as Canadians. Others from his country of

origin, he said that others who did not have the confidence in their ability “went to clean and are still cleaning.” Whereas he “was really confident about my ability to do.” He stressed that he does not feel superior to his friends from Latin America, but has also had the desire to do the best he can occupationally.

In relation to his co-workers, he emphasized that it was very important for him to learn new work skills, processes, and techniques quickly.

I have to learn very, very quick if that's what have been with another process and like, right now we have one guy who is training, we have to train him, and he's been quite slow. Myself being an immigrant, I could not afford that, I have to even as soon as I was assign a job I have to keep look how others are working, how others are doing and so on, so [pause]

*So, the man that you are training right now, he's not an immigrant?*

No. He's from here. He have way more opportunity than I ever, we every have.

Later on in the interview, he continued this train of thought by saying

I know one of the, some of the people have the advantages - one of that we can not afford too is to make mistake and because lots of time the employer or co-worker has this conception we are less skilled. So, we cannot make mistake because that reinforce the impressions that they have against us. My first job, an Englishman used to say - always question my ability to weld. He say [about Mr. D.] “I come from [nation of origin], I used to work in the field picking tomatoes. What do I know about welding.” That was his question all the time.

*Ms. A.*

Ms. A. came to Canada in the mid 1970s, around the same time as Mr. D., but her experience has been quite different. Before moving, Ms. A. was an accountant and had thought that she would be able to work in a restaurant after moving to Canada. Upon arriving, she began working in a cleaning job found by a Latin American friend. She worked in that job for

three months before moving to Calgary. After working for several years in cleaning, she injured her back and has consistently worked in childcare since that time.

She does not think she could get any job she wanted because she feels that she needs to improve her English ability. When reflecting on why she never went to school to become an accountant in Canada, she said, "I have to study. I never did. I always [pause] see, I was so tired. Go to school at night? I can't leave my children alone." Combining education and work have been difficult for her as a single mother. Ms. A. was able, however, to take a daycare administration course due to its short length. Despite having the qualification, she indicated that she would not be able to move into an administrative position where she works. She is confident in her administrative potential, but has not been able to move into a more desirable position.

### **Immigrants in the early 1980s**

#### ***Mr. B.***

Mr. B. thought that he would be able to do the same thing he had done in Latin America after taking five months of English. He said "what I thought was, well, I know how to do this, and I can find a job doing the same thing. Then I was from place to place, and nobody wanted me. So, I come to a point where I have to take whatever I was able to find. So my first job was a porter in a hotel." Over a two-year time span, Mr. B. was able to move up in his job. He went from being a porter in the hotel to being a purchasing manager. Unfortunately, the owners who gave Mr. B. the opportunity to move up in the hotel sold their business. The new owners began to 'weed out' the seasoned managers in the hotel. Mr. B. reflected about the day he was approached by the new owners. "When they come to me, they offer me the same position, they will cut my benefits, even salary, and I had to do something, more work." With that, he decided to leave the hotel because he felt confident in his abilities. He said "I have Canadian experience,

I know more English, and I know how to write too, and I can leave and find some position. I left but I couldn't find another one doing the same thing."

After deciding to go back to school, he took his high school equivalency. After finishing, he decided that he was "ready to go to SAIT." Unfortunately, although he was granted a student loan to upgrade his high school, the loan granted for SAIT (Southern Alberta Institute of Technology) was not enough to both cover the cost of tuition as well as provide for his family. "I still paying for the loan I took for high school, and that was over 5 years ago, and for nothing because I took the high school to go to SAIT, but I couldn't go because of the money they gave me, it wasn't enough." He felt he was left with "no choice but to forget about this school and do something else to work."

When asked what kinds of things were holding him back from getting the kind of job he would like to work at, he said that

Well, it's like this. If you know somebody in a higher position, and you know they can help you. Or, if your parents know somebody in a good position, you can get help too. You know they bring your hand and hold you up. But it's very difficult or impossible to get a good position without knowing anybody. Unless you have a good education you know, a degree or something that qualifies you for a good paying job. But I don't have either one.

He has been working in a union job for the past five years. He said this job has been both beneficial and detrimental for him. When asked how he would define success in a job, he said that "I can accept an entry level position in any company, and if I can move up with time, you know, then I can say I am successful in this company. In my present job, it's - I don't know - for some reason it's very difficult to move up."

When asked about what he might have done differently before coming to Canada, he said that "I would have think it over to come, because education wouldn't help because a degree from [nation of origin], they don't recognize it here. Nobody. [pause] Just think it over,



don't rush because we thinking that being something good coming here." The advice he would give to a person from Latin America was clear: "If they have an education, a profession, I will recommend them to stay over there. I will explain the benefits you know, like safe, the peace and all that, but they will probably not get the job that they have over there. In that, they have to start all over again."

*Mr. R*

Mr. R. has had a difficult time occupationally in Canada. In Latin America, he was a teacher, but has been unable to return to his profession. When discussing the difficulty he has had in Canada, he said "If we are able to adapt to any other society, you know, increase the desire or the wish for it. But when you don't have [pause] when you see the doors are closed, to a certain point you are not allowed to use your career or experience, or any other skills, you're shot." Despite the number of years he has been here, he talks about the fact that he is cleaning again. "I'm not saying cleaning is bad, because it's a way of living, you know, but it's not good." He has repeatedly attempted to better his working situation. As a consequence, he has had many jobs (he estimated between thirty-five and forty jobs) while living in Canada

He discussed the dilemma of not having appropriate Canadian experience for the type of job he would want to work in and the feeling of helplessness as a result.

To ask experience for you from Canada when no one is going to give you a chance to get the experience. It's, I can understand that point, it's a nonsense when they put it that way, you must have a Canadian experience, you know, and I always ask. You know I apply - lately I apply a couple jobs as an accountant and one they ask me to write a test. I wrote it and they guy come and say this is pretty good. But I don't want to know if it's pretty good, I want to know I get the job. And then he say we'll call you. I can understand when they say "I'll call you," that means no chance.

When Mr. R. came to Canada, he tried to have his education accredited from Latin America. Due to his situation before he left the country as a refugee, his papers were sealed by

his country's government. When talking about his education in Latin America and how that has affected his outlook in Canada, he said that

it's nonsense to limit yourself know that you have an education, and then you wanna [pause] it's like a sleeping giant. It's not possible, you know what I mean? We don't want to die as cleaners. Even inside, you know, it's like if someone is screaming in your skull. No, it's impossible. You know, seriously, you know, myself, we know we have potentials. We don't want to sleep, we want to get up, wake up, and do it.

When he went to university to upgrade his credentials, his potential was recognized by one professor who began to mentor him during his program. Unfortunately, Mr. R. had to drop out mid way through his degree. In talking about his family's financial situation, he said "We had food in storage, when the end of the semester, we were really making a miracle out of what we had. That was impossible. I couldn't keep going." In a state of genuine despair, Mr. R. said "I want to do what I know, what I studied for. You know, like what my wife say every morning, we both wake up saying 'oh, there's no way, we won't give up no,' and hoping that things will, you know, days will be brighter, but sometimes I worry they won't." He expressed feeling trapped in a life where he is unable to change his circumstances regardless of how hard he tries, he said that "I would say that there's a kind of, how should I say, sometimes you can meet out of the circumstances, you can make good things, but under other circumstances you cannot do anything."

I asked Mr. R. if he would change jobs if he knew more English, and he said "actually I wouldn't. That's kind of tricky question because [pause] oh, I would love to change jobs, I would love to, but it's not the English. It's not the English. It's true, it's reality, you know, it not English that it changes." So, when I asked what has held him back from getting the type of job he would like to work in, he wistfully said that the lack of certification has kept him back. When I asked what he would have done differently when he first came to Canada, he responded

Sad, but it's true, I would choose something else, somewhere else, because like I tell my friends, I've been here sixteen years and I'm nowhere. Nowhere. Exactly how I came here, well actually I didn't bring all this stuff, but I'm saying exactly how I came, that's how I am. I started with odd jobs that I didn't want to do, and I'm still the same.

In talking about his profession, he said that "if you have a career or a profession, you must love it, otherwise you wouldn't do it." So, in the advice that he would give another Latin American thinking about moving to Canada, he said that "I've done it before because they have asked me, and this is what I have to say, I say 'If you are a profession just think about it before you do it because I tell you, you won't work in your profession.'"

*Ms. G.*

Ms. G. has experienced hardship since moving to Canada. She began working as a janitor to provide for her daughter and herself after she and her husband separated. Since then, she has had fifteen jobs that have not led to any form of advancement. At the time of her interview, she had worked as a nanny in the morning and as a caretaker in the afternoons; she had only worked in her jobs for two months. When asked about why she had not been able to move into an occupation she wanted, she said that she would be able to if she had gone back to school and had obtained a degree. She said could not go back to school though because "I was too busy working than having any time to go back to school." Although she has been able to take a few technical college courses, in her opinion, they have not helped her get a better job.

*Ms. I.*

Ms. I. had not really considered what she would do when she came to Canada before arriving. Although she came on a work visa as a nanny, she had long term goals of completing a university degree to become an architect, then return to Latin America. As was echoed by

others in the sample who had not gone to university or college in either Latin America or Canada, Ms. I. expressed her desire to have a degree in order to have “a paper that says I am somebody.” After her work term with her employer was complete, her only thought was to find a “job that will keep me here. It didn’t matter.”

Reflecting on her employment experiences in Canada, she explained both the opportunities people had given her along the way as well as her negative experiences. Initially, she discovered that when she tried to find a job as a secretary (her experience in Latin America), “If I told them I was a secretary down in [Latin] America, they wouldn’t hire me. Anywhere I went they wouldn’t hire me because “that’s not your experience here. Yes you were a secretary in [Latin] America, but you were just a nanny here.” So, in my own mind, okay so after being a nanny, what else am I going to do? Clean floors, that’s all I could do.”

She recalled one job in data entry she had that was very upsetting for her. She said that “I quit one [job] because they made me cry, and they were very racists. There was no other word for it. They treated me differently. Any single mistakes that were made in the office were mine, although I knew it wasn’t mine.” Fortunately for Ms. I., after quitting the data entry job she had, she began working as a cleaner. In that job, she met a woman who noticed her capabilities and offered her a job as a microfilm technician. The woman who hired Ms. I. trained her and sent her to college for a year of training. After the training, Ms. I. became the evening supervisor but quit due to the desire she had to raise her children. At the time of interviewing, she had begun working in an international company in a translations and records management position. In the end, she had this to say about her work experience in Canada “I’ve done all sorts of things, data entry, microfilming, babysitting, nannying, toilet cleaning, everything. You name it, I’ve done it. But now I am where I want to be.”

**Immigrants in the late 1980s*****Mr. O.***

Mr. O. had hoped to be an accountant here as he was in Latin America. After moving to Canada as a refugee, he reflected that he needed to leave Latin America as a result of his beliefs. He said that he had “lost everything” in relation to his career after moving to Canada. He lived in the United States for a time prior to obtaining refugee status, and he said that for him,

the worst thing that happen to me was when I came to Canada. I came here to work as a cleaner. I didn't mind to do that but what I needed to have is food for my kids, but I didn't want to stay like that. I didn't want to stay there, so I find ways how I can get rid of that. Not because it is something that is nothing for me no. I have a value and I lost that value at one point. I need to recuperate that and I'm still fighting for that, I'm still fighting for that, and maybe I'm going to died and I won't be reaching the same position that I was in (country of origin).

Mr. O. came to Canada and began his working career as an iron cutter (also working in other jobs concurrently). He worked for three months in the iron cutting job before leaving. Over time, he volunteered as an accountant and subsequently found the position where is working now as a book keeper.

He has found working in his present job to be very difficult. He feels he is being discriminated against by his employer. After working as a book keeper for five years and training others who begin working after him, he has been passed by for promotion on different occasions. When he inquired why he was not promoted, he was told that his communication skills were lacking, but after pressing his supervisor for answers, he discovered he was not promoted due to his accent.

He has found that his accent has made quite a difference in his ability to obtain interviews to find a new job. He said that “the difficulties we can find is like when people listen

to our accent, they start to make some kind of a decisions because what happen is I phone to request an interview or something like that, once they listen to my accent, I am losing chances.” Later in the interview, he said that “my accent is making a big, big difference for me to succeed. I would be one of the things that will stop me to succeed. But if I have another opportunity that I can show that I am capable and they give me the opportunity then yes, I can be successful.”

*Mr. T.*

Mr. T. came to Canada as a young man who had just finished his degree from university. He arrived as a landed immigrant and although he had plans to begin working in his profession, he realized “nope. No way. I’m not going to be able to get a job as an accountant.” He was disappointed to realize that his education was not recognized in Canada. However, he described himself as a very resilient person, and was determined to go to SAIT for upgrading. He completed the second level of the Certified Management Accountant (C.M.A.) course, but was unable to complete all the levels of the C.M.A. due to an illness his daughter had. Reflecting on this, he said that had never really wanted to be an accountant even in Latin America (he was placed in the accounting program in Latin America), and has been planning to return to school and begin an applied engineering program when the opportunity arises.

Due to the fact that he returned to school shortly after finishing his English classes, he was able to obtain employment as an accountant. He found his first job (as an accountant) through the newspaper, and after a year of working there, he left for a job he solicited by sending out résumés to targeted employers. He has worked in the same job ever since. He said that “if you have the skills and the schooling, they [Canadian employers] will give you the opportunity. They will definitely give. See, you have to be given a chance to show yourself you can do it. So, once you’re there, as we say we have a name. So, you have to show me, you know? Just give me a base line and a paper, that’s all I need.”

*Ms. E.*

Ms. E. did not think of what she would be able to do after arriving in Canada as a refugee. She said that “you have your dreams. Like, I remember that maybe we thought that, I thought that maybe if I take some classes or something, I could be a teacher, or with some education, get into something that I really like. We knew that the beginning is going to be hard, but after a while, you think that you will go on.” Once arriving, she said that “we have to make life and work wherever is available. I realize that when I came to Canada I see I cannot speak English you know and that you really need it for anything. Even if you were educated in your country, you cannot do it over here because you needed the language.”

Interestingly, Ms. E. discussed the fact that once she arrived here, it took her quite a while before she began to feel more like herself. She said that during the early years it is “like you are not yourself, you lose your personality. Maybe at home no, because you speak Spanish, and your family, but at work you completely are a different person than you used to be. You’re not able to use your talents. Is like you’re from scratch. You’re a new person but in an adult body and it’s very frustrated, very frustrated.”

When she arrived in Canada, Ms. E. was a waitress, and after being an educator in Latin America, she reflected how difficult it was to come to a nation where the dominant language was not hers. “It’s awful, because when you get some education and you got some stuff that you achieve in life, and then you don’t know how to write ‘fritters,’ and then I just feel so small, but that’s the way life is, so you get to, getting used to, not being ashamed, and continue.” In relation to what life was like at the beginning, she said that “It’s scary when you start. You only know that you have to feed the kids and have to pay bills, and that’s reality.”

She found her present job as a bank clerk through a friend. “Not because of my qualities. Mostly if you are lucky to get a better job is because a friend has help you.” After working in the bank for seven years, she said that “now it’s kind of getting in a point that it’s

my own decision. It's no more the social pressure, and the [pause] this losing situation that I was before. At a point where I have to decide to get more education to get what I want."

Although she is satisfied that she has been able to obtain a job where she has the possibility of advancement, she wished she could continue as a teacher. "I'm still frustrated about myself. I don't think so can get where I want. Because I am not educated here. Here, whatever I did in the past it doesn't count over here. And see, maybe is in my mind that I'm thinking that to get into the education field, it could be so hard, but I cannot take many years at the university, not at my age, I cannot."

*Ms. T.*

Once Ms. T. arrived in Canada, she was informed by a social worker that she would be able to continue working as a legal secretary as she had been in Latin America. "I was very please with that! I knew that my English wasn't enough so I went to school because the government pay for that. But, when I was trying to get a job, I couldn't get any job in my career because I have to get a diploma, a Canadian diploma, so it was kind of hard because at that time I have to work." She went on to say that "I had another impression when I came, and then I find out that it's very hard for an immigrant to come here because you have to start all over again. Even if you're a doctor wherever you are, you have to start all over again. It's not the same."

When asked about her first job, she said she was working as a maid at a hotel. She said it was "totally depressing. Over there I was an important person and here I was just a maid. You know? It's totally different. That's what I mean, the point is really that's what kills my - yeah - when I start doing that, I used to look at myself in the mirror and cry." She went on to talk about what it was like for her in the early years of living in Canada.



I worked really hard. Yeah, sometimes I had three or four jobs. So, then I have to quit school because it was too much, and I applied for a, you know, a student loan but I didn't get anything because they told me that I have to - I think that they put a minimum that I have to be making, and I was making more money, so they say that I was making enough money to pay own courses and so on. That was pretty hard, and I decided not to apply anymore, and then you know, I think so I get used to the idea just to work hard and that's it. And to survive I have whatever I have in my dreams, in my hopes one day [pause] then they just stop for a while.

Ms. T. was studying to be a lawyer in Latin America. She, like Ms. I., wants to go to university in Canada "for my own satisfaction, and to prove that when I start something I can finish it."

At present Ms. T. is working in a furniture factory. When she spoke of trying to get a better job, she said "I'm scared, and that's what happens when you come here because the doors are closing for you, and so it's very hard to open them and then you get scared, then lost confidence in yourself and that's what happened to me. I lost my confidence." She talked about the young Canadians that work in the factory, and compared herself to them saying "I was never like that in my country, I was finish and I went and I look for a good job, and I never take anything lower than what I was, and here it's different, because if I want to do something better I have to, you know, go back to the beginning, and it's hard to go back when you've already been there."

### **Immigrants in the early 1990s**

*Mr. S.*

Mr. S. came to Canada on a student visa. Because his first degree had no direct equivalence, he needed to retake some undergraduate courses, then move through the graduate and postgraduate degrees. Although his first job was in his field, he was unable to find employment after he completed his Ph.D. A few weeks after our interview, he moved to Australia to take up a teaching position in a university, leaving to support his family here in

Canada. His story is quite different from most of the other individuals I spoke to in that he had obtained his first job through the university as a teaching assistant.

After completing his Ph.D., he tried unsuccessfully to obtain contracts in Calgary. He visited the companies in his area to drop off his CV, and he had this to say about his experience.

Most of the time, and this is what I find disturbing, you don't, you're not even allowed to deal with the direct employer. You often through secretaries. They will give you the look and they will determine that you are worthy or not of the thing you are applying for. Before getting this job [in Australia], I had to do cleaning. Because I tried several consulting companies, and some of the most important one have a reception and I submitted my CV and they say "well, it's solicited so I'll just put it away. The unsolicited put it on file." And I really never got through

the secretaries to speak directly with the employer. As he indicated, the only job he could find to support his family before he left the country was as a cleaner.

*Mr. W.*

Before coming to Canada as a refugee, Mr. W. thought "well, I have good experience you know and I have a background, some degrees, and when I get that, it's just a matter of learning English and that's it. I will find a job in a bank and [pause] easy, you know?" With his experience as a credit manager, he thought he would be able to at least work in a bank as a clerk. He went to a CGEP school in Montréal, and then to a private school where he finished accounting courses in one year. After finishing his courses, he found his first job as an accountant in Montréal by sending out his CV's to targeted companies.

Mr. W. left Montréal because he could only find short term contracts. He decided to move to Calgary to see if he could find a permanent job here. In Calgary, he was funded by Unemployment Insurance to take English classes for two months. After finishing English classes, the only work he could find was as a cleaner, so he decided to go back to school to take

a three-month accountant technician course. He applied for another student loan from the government to attend the night classes while also working during the day. At present, he is working in two part-time book keeping positions in the nonprofit sector.

When asked what advice he would give someone from Latin America, he said “Stay there.” *Why?* “Because up there, you know the way things are presented are not true.” He went on to say

[y]ou know, a lot of people comes here because they think they will find money on the street, but I know a lot of people, professionals that have been told, we need engineers in Canada, we need doctors in Canada, we need professionals in Canada, you know and there’s Canadian embassies, everywhere made this kind of promotion. When somebody is been through the process you know of selection of coming to Canada. There’s a kind of schedule that gives you points, if you speak English you get these kind of points, toward your qualification for becoming a landed immigrant.

He discussed the difference between individuals who came to Canada without high school who are working in manual labour and compared them to professionals who come saying “But somebody that has skills, somebody with this kind of training, somebody that has a profession, this is not the place to be. Because in your country, if you are an accountant you will be an accountant, you’re in your country. You move to Canada, you’re an accountant you will be a cleaner.”

### **Immigrants in the late 1990s**

*Mr. A.*

Mr. A. came to Canada as a refugee. He recounted his first experience in the Canadian labour market saying he found his cleaning job through a Latin American friend. In time, however, he was hired as a surveyor and has worked in the same company for two years.

After being asked what kind of work he has been able to get in Canada, he said

“fortunately, I do it the same, yes? I was a surveyor in [country of origin] and I am a surveyor here too. And I started like a roadman, help the surveyor, and after about one year and a half, I am the chief and I have road men too.” After being asked about whether or not his education has been recognized by his employer, he commented that “they recognize my experience.”

*But not your education?*

I think they believe I am surveyor, they test me. They say ‘Okay, you say you are surveyor? Okay, do that.’ I did it, ‘Okay, now do that.’ and I did it, and they say ‘Okay, I believe you, you are surveyor.’

For Mr. A., although he has the skills and experience and is now the chief of a road crew, he also understands his positioning between the other workers and himself. In talking about other workers, he commented that “Now I know other situations and they make more by hour than me. It’s what the difference is my English and improve my English and take maybe SAIT course and after that I can make more, but not now.” When asked about what he considered to be problematic in getting the kind of job he wants, he said that “main is the language, the other one is the companies in Canada they look every time they look for quali [pause] how do I say, the high skilled, this is the person they contract. Sometime immigrant we are low and we can look up and say cheese. We can’t go up.”

The competition in this field has been increasing since Mr. A. moved to Canada. For him, he identifies education to also be a factor that is holding him back. In this respect, he said that

[e]ducation is my barrier because right now I doing the same job for the SAIT student. They are working now with the companies, I doing the same job. Now I understand the job, but now I know that they are working for oil companies, and now they finish school and they get contracts in oil companies or for the City of Calgary. And they say ‘yeah, now I’m making \$30 an hour.’ I say I’m doing the same job, and I’m only \$15, but it’s the education.

In talking about what he could do to obtain more training, he said that “I try one time to get a loan, and have the interview and they say ‘I’m sorry you are working you can’t get a loan.’ I said ‘What? I want to be successful in my profession.’ ‘Yeah, but you are working, you must work, work, work.’” Mr. A. has passed the entrance tests in both math and English, but is only waiting to either make enough money or have his student loan approved to go back to school.

***Ms. M.***

Ms. M. did not have preconceived notions about what kind of employment she wanted to work in before moving to Canada. She was an animal technician in Latin America, but after trying to translate her degree, she said the courses she took did not have a Canadian equivalence. After moving to Calgary to be with her Canadian husband, she has worked as a server in two coffee shops. She feels that she would be able to get any job she wanted, but would need to return to school. She would like to do something related to her degree, but it has been difficult to find a pertinent job in Calgary. She said she would need to move to British Columbia to locate employment in her field.

**Making Sense of the Situation**

The above representation of holistic cases in each time segment outlines the typically successful careers of some and frustrated efforts of others. Some have been able to successfully move into careers that have either been related to their employment in Latin America, or employment that has afforded them what they would deem a successful career in Canada. On the whole, all the cases demonstrated the typical difficulty surrounding migration, the common adult immigrant experience of trying to find one’s place in a new society both socially and occupationally.

The following cross-sectional investigation both raises the level of analysis from the

individual to the collective and compares both case study material presented as well as the interview data not presented above. Themes and patterns emerged from the interviews as to whether or not the participants perceived they had been occupationally mobile. Two general categories emerged regarding employment satisfaction as a result of the (im)mobility.

### *Employment Satisfaction in Canada*

Twenty-two participants considered themselves to be satisfied with their present employment. Everyone in this group has either moved from the secondary market (i.e., cleaning jobs, childcare positions, and other lower end service sector jobs) into the primary market (e.g., administrative assisting, custom brokering, accounting) or began and remain in the primary market over the course of their employment in Canada. The present occupational standing attained by members of this group is relatively similar in that they have all obtained positions within the primary market. During the analysis of this group, two subgroups became apparent.

The smaller subset of this group (six people) was distinctive in that none in this group indicated any barriers to their employment status during their interview; neither in the past nor in locating future job prospects. Furthermore, the confidence level of these participants was extraordinary. They mentioned that they felt they had achieved their occupational standing due to their confidence in themselves and their abilities, their persistence, and the opportunities that have been given to them.

Three of the six people in this group identified that the opportunities afforded them were, in part, due to important contacts that facilitated locating their present employment situations. As well, three people saw their educational attainment in Canada as fundamental in securing their present job. That is, due to their training, some in this group believe they have found positions that are rewarding and offer future opportunities. In fact, all of these

individuals (except one) have reached occupational levels equal to or higher than their employment levels in Latin America. These people emulate the immigrant success story and the typical “American Dream.” That is, if a person believes in themselves and works hard enough, they will succeed.

While relating her employment history, Ms. N. said that she “hasn’t stopped learning because things are changing all the time.” If other immigrants want to get ahead and obtain jobs they want to work in, she advocated being “very well informed, research, and have a positive attitude.” Ms. B. said that she found jobs easily in Canada, mainly through religious ties and previous co-workers. She emphasized that “I just feel that if anybody wants to work, they can find a job. If anybody says “oh, I can’t find a job,” that’s just an excuse. To me, it’s an excuse because all you need to do, I guess, I don’t know, but you know, feel confident that you can do it and you can.”

Mr. H. was in a fortuitous position to be able to challenge the non-trade field he wanted to work in. He then was given the opportunity to work in the field related to his profession in Latin America. During the interview, he noted that he was grateful for the opportunity he was given and that he feels he could get any job he wanted because “I believe in me, I mean I believe that we can become who we want to be.” Later on, he emphatically stated that he did not “think that society has the power to stop your dreams.”

The second group in this category consisted of 16 people who are satisfied with their present employment situation, but do not maintain that they would be able to obtain any job they wanted. This group made fewer references to their confidence. In fact, some in this group discuss their confidence diminishing when they first came to Canada, and that their confidence in themselves needed to be rebuilt over time. Five of the sixteen people mentioned that they had important contacts that helped them obtain their present employment.

Twelve of the sixteen were able to move from the secondary market into the trades or

the primary market. Two of the remaining people in that group began and remained in the primary industry. The last two people are entrepreneurs. One has been an entrepreneur since arriving to Canada (but has changed businesses). The other purchased his own business after working at various jobs over the years.

The major difference between this group and the smaller group of six discussed above is the fact that this larger group perceives there to be barriers in obtaining jobs they may wish to procure. Twelve people in this group indicate that a lack of credentials prevents them from getting jobs they would want to work in. Some in this group (6 people) needed to stop school or have been prevented from going to school, beyond English as a Second Language or taking high school courses, due to their felt need to provide for their families. Time and financial limitations were stressed by the six. Two of these six said they have not been able to go to school because of a lack of funding. They said that they had difficulty obtaining enough money in student loans to provide for their own schooling as well as their family. They also found it difficult when loans officers told them that because they were working full time, they did not qualify for more loans. The other four in this group of six needed to stop or were prevented from continuing in school due to familial situations that required their attention.

Another barrier identified was a lower English language ability. Four of the sixteen said that English is an obstacle that is preventing them from advancing in their present position, or getting what they see as a better job. Two of the four identified that if they improved their English, they would also be able to go on to higher education.

This group also perceives there to be other external factors that have inhibited their ability to advance in their present job, be in a more stable job, or move to a job that would be more satisfying. Prejudice and discrimination are mentioned by six in this group to be one factor that hinders their movement. Some said that they felt they needed to learn quickly in order to keep their job, unlike their Canadian co-workers who were perceived to be able to



make mistakes and learn at a slower pace. Others cite that Canadians are not as understanding about the skills that immigrants bring with them, so the knowledge and skills are discounted before they can be proven in an employment situation. One woman said that she would not be able to get any job she wanted because she does not feel that Canadians are “ready to work with immigrants. Many, many places, they want to include some members of their clientele reach more immigrants, but they are not ready. They are not walking their talk in the level of the hiring of their staff.” In attempting to understand why immigrants have not been able to reach higher level positions (such as administration), despite the three decades of some Latin Americans, she wonders whether “we have been labelled as communists or trouble makers, but I think that over time that there would be more who could be managers.”

One man, despite the fact that he was a teacher in Latin America and subsequently earned a bachelor’s degree here in Canada, wonders whether or not the professional area is being “saved” for Canadians. He notes that if you are physically fit, that employment is easy to find, but that for those positions that require skill, “it’s a different story.” In his experience, he notes that “maybe you can get the skills, but not necessarily means you are going to get the job.” Another man, despite his confidence in his own abilities, when asked if he felt he could get any kind of job he wanted, he said “[t]o be honest no because I have found out that there is some type of discrimination in this country.” Later, he continued saying “If you don’t know anyone, you could be the best in your area. The best professional in that field, but you won’t go ahead. How can you show to them if they don’t give you the opportunity?”

Other external factors were also identified by this group. A sluggish economy was said to be one factor that has prevented them from what they perceive to be ‘getting ahead.’ Also, others specified that they needed to go back to school for upgrading in order to remain both employable and employed due to the changes that have taken place in their immediate workplace (this need for education was identified as separate from a general need to meet

educational requirements for jobs). In general, people were frustrated with the lack of educational information which ultimately hindered credential transferral. Lastly, insufficient settlement services were identified as a problem to finding employment that was related to their employment in Latin America.

### *Employment Dissatisfaction in Canada*

Eighteen individuals have had employment experiences that they perceive to be dissatisfying. Twelve began and have remained in the secondary market to this date. One woman only worked in secondary market employment and subsequently stopped working to raise her children and begin academic upgrading. One man began in the primary market but has since been downwardly mobile moving into the secondary market.

Four identify themselves to be dissatisfied, but have been mobile moving from the secondary market to the primary market. This is quite different from the other fourteen in this group that have not been mobile. For those in this smaller group, English was not deemed to be problematic. In fact, these people were confident that they had done everything they could think of to try and be in positions they wanted to be in. They cite external constraints that have hindered both their occupational careers in the past and feel that these barriers also limit what they will be able to do in the future. Three of the four also believe that these external barriers are ultimately insurmountable in relation to their future job prospects. When asked if he would change jobs if he knew more English, one man said that “if I knew more English I would finish my [educational qualification], and I probably wouldn’t get that above what I’m doing right now.” They cite forms of discrimination to be part of the problem that they do not feel they can overcome.

From the larger group of this segment, eight of the thirteen said that education is one of their main barriers. Seven of those eight identified that familial obligations hindered their

ability to either go to or continue in school to obtain what they see to be credentials that would help them move out of the secondary market. Time and financial limitations were said to be ways in which these seven felt obligated to provide for their families. In essence, due to the fact that they were working in low wage jobs, in order to provide for their families, these people had to work long hours. To go to school, they would still need to provide for their family, as well as study for classes. Given the long working hours, taking time for school work as opposed to spending the little free time they had with their families, many felt that taking away this time would have split their families apart.

However, even for those who were able to complete further education in Canada, they did not think that their level of educational attainment was sufficient. These individuals believe that they too need to go back to school to continue to try and improve their occupational standing. The dissatisfied group verbalized a sense of frustration that their educations brought from Latin America have been discounted and that the backgrounds brought with them (e.g., experience) from Latin America have not aided in their struggle for better employment in Canada.

Ms. O. said "I think for me there is no way. Yes, because I know people who - they are doctors when they come here - the background doesn't count. They have to start cleaning job." After deliberating over what she wanted to say, she continued saying that "this peaceful place has a price, and the price for the peace that we have here is very expensive." Mr. X., who is working toward his certification, feels that he "has the skills, but doesn't have the ticket" (i.e., trade certification). He has been working in maintenance since moving to Canada, and said that "I work the extra mile. Face it, there are 5 behind you." For him, and others who consider themselves to be skilled workers, this lack of credentials also creates a sense of frustration.

These people identify life to be a struggle in Canada, which it has been very difficult to balance both school and work. Mr. G. said "no matter what you are taking over there [pause]

you have to start again. They don't give you the opportunity to work here in your field. You have to study here, always start again." Later on, he reflected on his time in Canada saying "I felt so disappointed, because we thought that we would have the opportunity to improve and have a better life but..." after trailing off into thought, it was clear in the interview that he felt that having a 'better life' was not his lot. When I asked him what was holding him back from working in a job he wanted to work in, he said that "We don't have so many opportunities because of no enough school." This comment was indicative of the sentiment of many in this group. Opportunities were seen to be circumvented due to a lack of Canadian education. As an extension, others in this group, who were able to go to school, feel that regardless of how much education they achieved, they will never stop struggling. Another man, when asked if he would change jobs if he knew more English, said that "if I knew more English I would finish my [educational qualification], and I probably wouldn't get that above what I'm doing right now."

A small number of people identified English to be a barrier to better employment. Those that felt that their English was not at a sufficient level, indicated that improving their English would facilitate moving beyond the types of jobs they have been working at in the service industry. For those who mentioned English being a barrier in obtaining better employment, a lack of confidence in their English ability was distinct. Three people in this group recounted being informed by government officials that they did not "need more language to go cleaning."

The vast majority in this group verbalized a sense of helplessness and a loss of control over their present employment and future. They indicated that they have not had opportunities to demonstrate their skill so they could obtain better employment. Ms. C. said in relation to the job choices she has that

you have only clean office, or 'Walmart,' or [pause] and sometimes you don't feel good doing that because inside of you, you know that you have

capacity to do something better for you and your family, but it's like the saying that I always say: 'They put rocks in your way and you cannot grow.' Give us the opportunity to show what we know. Okay? But they say "No." They don't listen to you.

This woman's statement captures the sentiment of this group. Another man spoke in metaphor saying that the 'doors were closed' for him and he was not able to use his Latin American knowledge or experience in the types of jobs he was able to obtain here.

As could be expected, some in this group mentioned the lack of good connections to better jobs. It was found that fifty percent of this group did use connections to find the jobs they were working in presently. The types of jobs located through their connections, however, did not aid in their upward mobility.

## **Theoretical Analyses**

### ***Factors Influencing (Im)Mobility***

While the above descriptions portray the ways in which these two major groups saw their employment situations, it is at this point where more theoretically meaningful patterns are sought to make sense of the participant's occupational careers. One of the questions that guided this research was: Why are people in the jobs they are in? Unfortunately, the factors were not as easily identifiable as I had expected they would be. Analysing micro data does not lend itself to testing models while holding variables of interest constant (as I would naturally do quantitatively). I cannot simply conclude that lower levels of educational attainment in Latin America led to lower levels of educational attainment in Canada, which then, in combination, result in current lower occupational standings. The actual life stories of the participants were complicated and, at times, decisions made by the participants were difficult for me to understand given their resulting occupational trajectories.

In an attempt to see if education (as the most cited barrier) facilitated upward mobility,

I have divided the sample into those who: began and are still in the primary market, began in the secondary and moved into either the primary market or the trades, and finally those who began and remained in the secondary market. The educational categories in tables three and four represent distinct categories that cannot be collapsed into larger groupings. With such a small sample size as well as many cell counts equalling zero, no statistics were run to test for the percentage's significance. While there appears to be a weak association between Canadian educational attainment and occupational mobility, I am hesitant to comment on this association due to the categories distinctness and the small numbers in some of the following cells.

**TABLE 3: Educational Attainment in Latin America by Occupational Attainment (N=40)**

**Latin American Educational Attainment**

<b>First Job (Canada) Present Job</b>	<b>Primary Primary</b>	<b>Secondary Primary</b>	<b>Secondary Trades</b>	<b>Secondary Secondary</b>
High School	14 (1)	14 (2)	20 (1)	14 (2)
Non-Trade Certification	0	7 (1)	0	14 (2)
Trade Certification	0	0	20 (1)	7 (1)
Some Post Secondary	29 (2)	7 (1)	40 (2)	21 (3)
Post Secondary	14 (1)	43 (6)	0	7 (1)
Bachelor Degree	14 (1)	21 (3)	20 (1)	36 (5)
Masters Degree	29 (2)	0	0	0
Medical Doctor	0	7 (1)	0	0
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: The number in brackets denotes actual number of participants in that cell.

In relation to Latin American education, there is a wide distribution within each category with few evident patterns between the categories. With the participants Canadian education, although the numbers are too small to make definitive statements, there appears to be a possibility for upward mobility for those who obtain post secondary schooling, but again, the

**TABLE 4: Educational Attainment in Canada by Occupational Attainment (N=40)****Canadian Educational Attainment**

<b>First Job (Canada) Present Job</b>	<b>Primary Primary</b>	<b>Secondary Primary</b>	<b>Secondary Trades</b>	<b>Secondary Secondary</b>
English as a Second Language	14 (1)	21 (3)	20 (1)	14 (2)
High School	0	21 (3)	0	7 (1)
Non-Trade Certification	14 (1)	29 (4)	0	14 (2)
Trade Certification	14 (1)	0	60 (3)	21 (3)
Some Post Secondary	29 (2)	14 (2)	20 (1)	36 (5)
Post Secondary	0	7 (1)	0	0
Bachelor Degree	14 (1)	7 (1)	0	0
Masters Degree	14 (1)	0	0	0
Doctorate	0	0	0	7 (1)
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: The number in brackets denotes actual number of participants in that cell.

distributions within categories appear to be wider than between categories.

For the participants who tried to overcome the major identified barrier (i.e., education) in Canada, few of the interviewees were satisfied with their educational accomplishments. Very few of the participants were content that their educational achievement was a means that would invariably lead to better job prospects. As identified by some of the participants, given the changing marketplace, the educational requirements were a moving wall, impossible to definitively reach or transcend.

To explore another factor, were the participant's expectations in part responsible for their occupational fate? Table 4 outlines the primary expectation of individuals prior to migration by their occupational attainment.

As can be seen, the only group that could be identified as faring better than other groups would be those who came to Canada for safety reasons (i.e., refugees). Members of this group

**Table 5: Expectations Prior to Migration by Occupational Attainment (N=40)**

<b>First Job (Canada) Present Job</b>	<b>Primary Primary</b>	<b>Secondary Primary</b>	<b>Secondary Trades</b>	<b>Secondary Secondary</b>	
Husband/Family	37 (3)	25 (2)	0	37 (3)	100%
Work	0	50 (2)	0	50 (2)	100%
Standard of Living	15 (2)	38 (5)	8 (1)	38 (5)	100%
Safety	13 (2)	33 (5)	27 (4)	27 (4)	100%

Note: The number in brackets denotes actual number of participants in that cell.

moved from the secondary market (or were never employed in the secondary market) in a ratio of almost three to one. Those women who came to Canada with their husbands or for family reasons and the group of people who migrated due to a hope to improve their standard of living improved their lot at a ratio of just over one and a half to one. Those who migrated with expectations of work did not fare better than those who migration for other reasons.

In relation to English as a barrier, unfortunately, due to the nature of the questions in the interview schedule, there did not appear to be a relationship between the self reported English knowledge and the actual levels. Almost all participants indicated a fairly high level of English proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The likelihood that so many people are at the same level of English proficiency is highly improbable. As well, I was unable to situate the participants into various levels of English proficiency during a single interview per participant. In my experience, language assessment is a complicated matter and should not be undertaken in a cavalier manner on the basis of one verbal interview without further testing. Despite my experience teaching English, I do not feel comfortable assessing these participants without an objective measure. As a consequence, I am only able to report that some participants felt that English was a factor that hindered their occupational mobility.

Other factors frequently in the occupational mobility literature used were also used to try and determine patterns in the data (e.g., gender, parental educational attainment, parental



occupational attainment, nation of origin). None of the factors mentioned above were useful in explaining the occupational (im)mobility of the participants.

### *Human Capital*

What do the findings above mean in light of the theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 2? Had these data clearly confirmed the major propositions of the human capital theory, those who had greater input to their personal capital (e.g., higher levels of education) would also have higher occupational standings in the labour market. The hypothesized relationship between educational attainment, a key component of human capital, and occupational mobility is not evident in these data. As has been documented elsewhere regarding educational attainment in countries outside the host nation (Friedberg, 1996), the participants generally agreed that the education obtained in Latin America was not recognized in Canada. As was explored above, it is unclear whether or not the educational level obtained in Latin America had any direct impact on the occupational attainment for many of the participants in their present occupations.

As for the educational attainment in Canada, as was noted in the previous section, there was greater variation within than between the categories of those who were able to leave the secondary to the primary market and those who remained in the primary or secondary markets through the duration of their occupational careers. If education were an important factor in determining one's occupational standing, it would be logical to argue that those who began and remained in the secondary market should have had lower levels of educational attainment than those whom either began and remained in the primary market, or who moved from the secondary to the primary market. This pattern did not manifest in these data.

Other typically included aspects of human capital revolve around labour force experience and language proficiency. As stated above, I was unable to give an objective test to

demonstrate language ability in relation to participant occupational attainment. I did, however, carry out all the interviews in English, and with minor exceptions, there were infrequent evident linguistic misunderstandings. If misunderstandings arose, they seemed to be easily remedied by rephrasing the question. With this in mind, it was clear to me that the participants were capable of verbally expressing themselves in English. Obviously, some participants were more skilled than others; however, the levels of both auditory comprehension and verbal ability were conducive to interviewing. Unfortunately, there is no way to extrapolate from the interviews English levels of the participant's on-the-job English ability, especially given the fact that many occupations have specific sets of vocabulary needed to function competently in those positions.

As for labour force experience, the relationship between the participant's Latin American labour market experience and their perception of its relationship to the labour force experience in Canada was weak. For the majority of the sample, they expressed that their experiences in Latin America had no bearing on their initial job upon moving to Canada. It seemed that the majority of the people felt that whatever they were occupationally before arriving in Canada changed or even 'died' upon migrating. Many felt that their Latin American experience did not transfer nor did it help them obtain similar positions in Canada.

Given that the majority began in the low end service industry (82.5%), this type of employment could hardly be seen as an important form of Canadian occupational experience as a human capital endowment. In fact, some participants said that this type of employment negatively affected feelings of self worth. For some, the loss of self worth has never been regained, and has had ramifications throughout the working careers of some of the participants (as had been noted in the previous sections).

In short, it does not appear that the majority of participants are in their present positions due to their investments in human capital. This conclusion is based on both my interpretations of their labour market experiences as well as the participants' perceptions of why they are in

their present employment situations.

### ***Discrimination***

As had been expected in chapter two, few of the participants directly identified discrimination as one factor that had blocked their mobility. Of those who did mention discrimination, most frequently, they identified it as a situation that was circumvented by leaving a job. It is clear that roughly a quarter of the sample has experienced either a discriminatory event(s) in the workplace or have felt that they have not had equal opportunity to obtain an employment position due to discrimination. It is clear that some of the participants felt that discriminatory behaviour has impeded their mobility.

### ***Labour Market Segmentation***

The labour market segmentation model seems to be a more useful theoretical framework to analyze those who entered into the primary market upon arriving in Canada. Those who began working in the primary market retained their positioning in the labour market (with one exception). Labour market segmentation theory was also helpful in predicting that many immigrants begin their employment career in the secondary market upon arriving in Canada. That prediction held true for the vast majority of the sample (82.5%). This theory, however, was unable to offer viable explanations of why some who began in the secondary market were able to move into the primary market.

In these micro data, labour market segmentation was partially confirmed and partially disconfirmed. It is clear that it has been difficult for many of the participants to access jobs that were related to those they worked in, in Latin America. Although it is impossible to comprehensively determine the structural factors that led to the positioning within one labour market over the other, it was possible to ask the participants what they perceived to hold them

back from either obtaining a job they would wish to work in or moving into the field they would like to work in.

I have been cognizant of the different levels of analysis (i.e., theory used to explain aggregate patterns being explored at the micro level) and have attempted to analyze accordingly given that limitation. Using these theories to see if similar patterns are consistent at the micro level was difficult given their theoretical breadth. It was possible to find evidence to support and fail to support these theories in my data.

Considering the problems posed in the theoretical perspectives chapter, the human capital and labour market segmentation theories seem to embody the dualistic agency vs. structure debate. Which has greater explanatory power? The undersocialized or oversocialized account of humanity? As I have noted, with these data, neither theory is sufficient in and of itself.

## *Chapter 5*

### *Discussion and Conclusions*



Among the many challenges for those who move to Canada as immigrant/refugee adults, new arrivals face the challenge of establishing themselves in occupations in an increasingly competitive job market. One result of this movement, at least for this sample, was that the employment experience and education obtained in the home country were perceived by many to have been negated. With this being the case, although a small minority were able to retain some of their occupational status by locating employment in the primary market (i.e., those positions that offer greater job security, higher wages, and status), the vast majority were only able to find positions in the secondary market (e.g., low level positions in cleaning, childcare, the food and beverage industry). For many of these migrants, initial downward mobility from occupations held in Latin America to the first job in Canada was common. The difficulty of this research was to understand why some people were occupationally mobile from their first job to their present job while others were not.

#### **Theoretical Implications**

As was derived from the theoretical discussion in the previous chapter, no single theory was sufficient in and of itself to explain the complex arrangement of immigrants' work experiences. Examples could be found in these data to support and fail to support all three theories. As well, theories frequently used in analyses of occupational mobility on an aggregate level understandably overlap one another. For example, researchers using discrimination or labour market segmentation as two theories in their models need to realize that the labour market is segmented in part on ethnic/racial boundaries. Therefore, in essence, part of the theories overlap and are not completely theoretically distinct from one another. The

ramifications are obvious methodologically. If a person has only been able to obtain employment in the secondary market and cites discrimination as a barrier, which theoretical perspective best describes the lived situation of that individual? Assumably, both perspectives would somewhat describe that individual's occupational trajectory.

· Richmond (1994:pp.117), in discussing his previous analyses of immigrant work experiences in Canada via census data, notes that drawing conclusions on the basis of these types of theories (e.g., human capital and labour market segmentation - the two most widely used theoretical perspectives in the occupational mobility literature) is incomplete and may even be misleading given the structural changes in the labour market over the past fifty years. It was clear that the immigrants I interviewed were initially concentrated in the secondary labour market, but why some move out of the secondary market was not explained using these theories.

It would seem that one of the reasons the abovementioned theories have not been expanded or refined, may be due to the types of data collection used. Census data are collected with specific purposes in mind. The construction of the census is standardized, and although some questions may be added or deleted over time, it is, on the whole, a stable instrument. Unfortunately, with the construction as it stands, few questions tap into other explanatory variables for immigrant occupational mobility (e.g., nation where the immigrant received their post secondary schooling). Further, other theories that may be used in relation to labour market positioning (such as social capital or network theories), cannot be tested via Canadian census data. For the participants in my sample who were occupationally mobile (or begin in the primary market upon arrival), what theoretical perspective(s) could be applied to interpret the results found in this study?

When I compared those who moved into what they deemed to be more satisfying occupational positions to those who did not, I was surprised to find few differences in the

perceptions of the participants occupational trajectories. Other than those who were mobile and used non-Latin American contacts to obtain their present positions, there were few other apparent patterns to explain their mobility. The exceptional group, where patterns were more evident, were those in the trades, half of whom came when the trades exams could be challenged (i.e., an individual did not need to return to school, but could demonstrate their knowledge in a subject area by taking a standardized exam) in the 1970s. Those workers in the trades who moved to Canada later than the 1970s found that they needed to return to school and re-certify as opposed to simply challenging the exams.

For those not in the trades, it was difficult to discern patterns that led to either to mobility or immobility. I pursued analysis by attempting to understand how people believed they came to their occupational positions. For both the mobile and the immobile, participants cited the *same* barriers in obtaining a future position of choice. The puzzle of mobility becomes an enigma: Why were most of the people in this sample perceiving the same barriers, regardless of their occupational status? Although these two groups of people have diverged occupationally, why are they seeing their employment possibilities (and barriers) through similar lenses?

The fact that the occupationally mobile participants do not perceive these barriers to have been overcome may be an indication of systemic problems. As Giddens (1984) explains, “study[ing] the day-to-day life is integral to [the] analysis of the reproduction of institutionalized practices” (282). It is through day to day living that larger structural patterns emerge. In essence, the feminist adage of ‘the personal is political’ begins to come into play. Politicizing the personal facilitates “the private, subjective experience of the individual woman to be read in terms of/for its significance with respect to larger issues, to stand as/for “the issues” of contemporary society” (Leach, 1987:172). It is my opinion that this type of analysis should also include other peripheral groups (e.g., immigrants).

It is duly noted, however, that immigrant perception is only one part of the analysis. Perceived barriers are important in analysing institutionalized practices, but it is equally imperative to explore other perceptions as well (e.g., employers, co-workers, customers, patients, government officials). Each grouping of perceptions forms another piece in this social puzzle. Although this type of analysis goes beyond the scope of this project, it would be useful for future research to undertake other qualitative studies in order to gauge levels of civic acceptance of immigrants and refugees.

What are some of the constraints for these actors? As noted in the last chapter, there is greater variation within the categories of mobility (i.e., movement from the secondary market to the primary market/trades or remaining in the secondary/primary market) than between the categories. This became evident when groups were compared in relation to: pre-migration expectations, educational attainment both in Latin America and Canada, as well as other important variables. In the end, however, the combination of constraints is unknown. I have poured over the groupings and categories for hours trying to determine the differences and patterns between and within the groups. Other than what I have noted in the previous chapter and tried to show with the time case studies, I do not readily have an answer as to why these people perceive their situation to be as it is.

How, then, can researchers determine whether or not the above mentioned constraints are structurally determined or internal perceptions? If structure could be defined to be external to human action, ultimately constraining the free initiative of the actor, and agency as 'doing' (c.f. Giddens, 1984), then one argument could conclude that some of the actors are reproducing the barriers by continuing to perceive them as existing, even after the barriers have been overcome. If this is the case, if the barriers are internalized, can barriers ever be overcome if people perceive that they perpetually exist?

Do the barriers perpetually exist for the immigrant regardless of action taken? When



some participants were forced to move from one job to another (for various reasons), many indicated that they found the same barriers to still exist when they tried to obtain employment at the occupational level they had just left. It would appear that the reason why this group of immigrants still perceives the barriers to exist may be due to the fact that the barriers are real and may never disappear, regardless of: length of residency in Canada, English competency, employment tenure, or educational attainment in Canada. This argument would conclude that due to external structural constraints, nothing an immigrant could do, in and of themselves, would help them overcome the tangible barriers confronting them.

In essence, the two arguments above are difficult to definitively document. One argument blames the victim whereas the other blames society. Undoubtedly, both are too simplistic and are, in fact, quite precarious. The next sections begin to explore other theoretical vantage points that will hopefully begin to place these data into perspective.

### *Situational Adjustment*

Could the participants have gone through a type of “situational adjustment” (Becker, 1970:279) upon moving to Canada? Is it possible that there is a type of socialization that takes place for migrants to *become* immigrants?

As Becker explains, situational adjustment is part of the development of an adult in various times of change. The participants themselves iterated that they had undergone a change upon moving to Canada. Some indicated that they had lost who they were or that the old person they were, was dead. This imagery and forceful language was curious. Due to the fact that many of the participants echoed very similar sentiments, this part of their employment experience could not be overlooked. Furthermore, some participants reflected on their expectations prior to moving to Canada and what actually faced them as, what they termed, ‘reality.’ What they expected and what they faced with were distinct. From this observation,

I interpret their experiences to be one of change in order to exist within the Canadian framework.

As Becker states, if we

view situational adjustment as a major process of personal development, we must look to the character of the situation for the explanation of why people change as they do. We ask what there is in the situation that requires the person to act in a certain way or to hold certain beliefs. We do not ask what there is in him that requires the action or belief. All we need to know of the person is that for some reason or another he desires to continue his participation in the situation or to do well in it (1970:279).

Although Becker was referring to people who were situationally adjusting to medical school, prison, and other institutions where people are required to adjust in order to function satisfactorily within, I would like to extend his analysis beyond to a larger situation - that of immigration. I do not think that the same adjustment takes place for all immigrants (e.g., Americans moving to Canada), but does occur for the majority of those whose first language is not English and especially for those who come from 'Southern' nations.

The immigrant begins to adjust from the time they arrive in Canada. Many, when they try to find a job in the field they worked in prior to migration, find that their education is discounted. For those who were educated beyond high school, this educational lack of recognition may come as a rude awakening - or as one of the participants said that they were "coming to reality." For others that had not built their educational reserves prior to migrating, their employment experience is discounted and found they needed to rebuild their experience.

On the whole, the adjustment that takes place is one of 'beginning again' and rebuilding a life that *was* built, then shattered due to migration. The migrant learns to adjust to perpetual beginnings. As was mentioned before, even for those who had worked their way up in one company in Canada, when laid off, needed to begin again even though they had accrued

valuable Canadian experience. What one employer recognized as skill may not be what another employer recognizes; thus, the need to begin again in another work setting. This type of experience should be compared to the individual who was born and was raised as a Canadian (although this terminology could be vehemently disputed). Due to the fact that the 'Canadian' has completed their schooling and entire work experience within the Canadian context, employers are not likely to turn them down for similar reasons as they would the immigrant (especially those immigrants whose first language is not English).

The need to re-certify is another way in which immigrants adjust to the 'immigrant situation.' What is most unfortunate is that many are unable to re-certify to the level they had attained in Latin America due to factors such as: age at immigration and familial obligations among many factors that can be pointed out. As an adult, it becomes increasingly more difficult to begin anew the older one grows as well as the higher one's certification.

So, should this study be touted as an indication of a systemic problem, or is this type of situation part of a wider issue of worker displacement? Many Canadians are also facing uncertain work situations and, in fact, are still being displaced despite the relatively recent economic upturn. For some Canadians who have been displaced, depending on their age (among other factors), obtaining work in their chosen field is also becoming difficult to locate - as is the case for the majority of immigrants. The Marxian 'reserve army' is growing. However, for those whose first language is not English, whose credentials are not from Canadian institutions, what could be seen as a growing 'job pinch' (i.e., fewer positions at higher levels and fewer lower level positions with upwardly mobile prospects) affects immigrants more severely than the average Canadian.

To reiterate, as was the case of Mr. B. who began as a porter in a hotel and over time advanced to a managerial position in the same location, when he found himself looking for another position, he needed to "start all over" yet again. The immigrant who is laid off or

pushed out of a job (as is the case of managers made unbearably uncomfortable - e.g., increasing work load with lower pay - by new owners) is left with the disheartening situation of needing to go back, almost to the beginning, only to start again in another location.

### *Downward Mobility*

It is understood that the challenge of (re)establishing oneself is not limited to immigrants. Individuals laid off during mid life, with skills that are dated or industry specific (e.g., miners, middle managers), also need to reestablish themselves either by retraining for another vocation or accepting positions that do not reflect their experience and education. In essence, these groups (the miners, middle managers, and immigrants) have all experienced downward mobility.

Newman (1999) explains that those who have been downwardly mobile experience a sense of loss and disorientation. Many immigrants in my study echoed Newman's sense of loss. The immigrants and refugees repeatedly stated that they felt as though they needed to start again. To reiterate what was stated in the last chapter and earlier in this chapter, some of the participants interviewed said that the person they were in Latin America had died. Others, said that what was expected occupationally prior to migration did not reflect the 'reality' that faced them after moving to Canada.

Many thought they would be able to continue on in their former occupation, or at least in something related to their field of study, but after arriving in Canada the majority realized that this was not to be the case. As Newman states, there is a period of transition for the middle manager in her study (as one example) where they try to find work, are initially hopeful, but then realize the direness of their situation. 'David,' in Newman's research, was a middle manager who was laid off and was trying to obtain a new position.

David was sure, in the beginning, that it wouldn't be long before a new position opened up. He had some savings put aside to cushion the family in the meanwhile. He was not worried. By the third month of looking, he was a bit nervous. Six months down the line he was in a full-fledged panic. ...David continued to look for an executive job, but the massive downturn in the mid-1980s in the computer industry virtually ensured that his search would bear no fruit. From Silicon Valley to Boston's Route 128, the shakeout in his field was stranding hundreds of equally well-qualified men. David could not get past the personnel offices of firms in other industries. He was not given the chance to show how flexible he could be, how transferable his managerial experience was to firms outside the computer field. (Newman, 1999:2)

As David realized, his employment experience was useless both in his field of choice as well as other fields, his and his family's world were turned upside down. This description sounds very similar to the experiences of the immigrants I interviewed.

Newman goes on to discuss the effects of downward mobility. She explains that experiencing downward mobility in one's career is a type of loss that engenders "a common feeling of failure, loss of control, and social disorientation" (1999:10). For those who have, as she calls it, 'fallen from grace' a feeling of helplessness ensues. As those who have experienced downward mobility attempt to regain their position and rectify the situation they find themselves in, the external factors seem insurmountable. "Industry conditions were such that, as Dave saw it, even people with good reputations and strong contacts were unlikely to find positions" (1999:67).

Echoes of what could be called 'the immigrant experience' (from my research) resonates in David's experience in being downwardly mobile. Newman writes that "[t]he downwardly mobile have been betrayed by the forces of the market, by the ambitions of political figures, by husbands who promise a lifetime of partnership and protection, and in some instances, they feel they have betrayed themselves" (1999:230). The immigrant is never sure whether their fate is due to the 'forces of the market' or if they have facilitated their own downward mobility by

immigrating to Canada.

It should be noted that the experience of the downwardly mobile can only overlap to a certain extent with that of the immigrant. It is true that there was an obvious overlap when I read Newman's description, and that there are commonalities that cannot be dismissed between the downwardly mobile and the immigrant experience. There are, however, distinct differences that need to be explored.

### **The Role of Education**

What is different for the immigrant as opposed to the downwardly mobile manager (as one example), is that the majority of the immigrants in this project were never sure whether or not they had finally reached an appropriate level of education in Canada. If the middle manager returned for upgrading, s/he would know that their training had educated them for a certain position and would pursue it. I would argue that the immigrant is never secure in this assurance. The immigrants in this study demonstrated that they could never conclusively be sure if they needed to improve their English, take more courses, find better job connections, or if their employment situation was due to factors beyond their control (e.g., economic boom/bust periods, discrimination).

The role of education cannot be ignored. For those who completed post-secondary schooling in their home nation, these participants expressed that if they were to work in the same field, they would need to go back to school and re-take most of what they had already completed. Other researchers have stated that educational attainment in some nations, specifically post secondary schooling from 'Southern' nations (also known as the "Third World"), does not readily transfer and is not as valuable as post secondary education from Canada or the United States (Aycan, 1996; Friedberg, 1996; Lie, 1985; Madamba 1997; Richmond, 1991; Sorensen 1995; Wanner, 1998). This has distinct ramifications for the highly

educated immigrant.

What can be taken from this research project, in part, is the response to a ‘loss of education’ as it affected the individual’s job prospects. If the participants were to regain their status from Latin America, re-training or upgrading would be necessary (for the majority) -- but would not be solely sufficient. The reasons behind choosing to or not to re-certify or upgrading diplomas and degrees from post-secondary institutions was seen in this research to be complex and multi-faceted.

## **Future Research**

### ***Familial Obligations***

The dominant response to intercontinental downward mobility was one of felt responsibility to tending not only employment and education, but also to family matters. This concern weighed heavily upon the majority of the participants who came to Canada with families. Unfortunately, I did not probe sufficiently during all the interviews to understand the full ramifications from the point of view of all the interviewees. I am confident in stating, however, that of those who cited family responsibilities as one reason they did not complete or begin academic upgrading, these participants did not perceive that they would be able to both take care of their families financially as well as return to school. Although definitive conclusions cannot be drawn about the exact role of the family in relation to educational upgrading in this study, its importance should not be overlooked in future research.

### ***Optimal Educational Attainment***

Another aspect that could be explored in future research would be the notion of an optimal level of Canadian educational attainment for the immigrant or refugee. For those participants who were successful in completing higher levels of education in Canada, although

there were only two people who had completed higher levels of post-secondary education, it became clear that those two people could not find jobs commensurate to their level of educational attainment. They were clear about the fact that they had difficulty securing satisfactory employment due to factors they deemed to be beyond their control. Although nothing can be concluded from two individuals in a sample of forty-one, further study should be undertaken to determine the benefits of obtaining advanced education in Canada. It is important to explore whether the experiences of these individuals are commonplace or anomalous for other immigrants, specifically whose first language is not English.

### **Contradictions and Questions**

The situation most of these immigrants found themselves in after arriving in Canada seems somewhat contradictory. According to the experiences of the participants in this study, 'mixed signals' are being given to immigrants/refugees from embassy workers, Canadian government employees, and social workers. These signals inform the immigrant/refugee that they can work in the same field they were working in, in Latin America. This information, for the most part, is incorrect if taken at face value. Immigrants may find themselves needing to re-certify before being considered for positions similar to those pursued in Latin America.

Those immigrants allowed to enter Canada on the basis of the point system were *chosen on the basis* of their education, specific vocational preparation, experience, occupation, and personal suitability. Questions remain. What do those awarded points amount to? Is the Canadian immigration system fostering false hope for those brought to Canada believing that their education, experience, and occupation from their home nation will aid them to continue on a similar employment path?

Why is Canada not moving toward helping their chosen landed immigrants transfer their credentials if the immigrant was accepted under the auspices of their occupation and education?



If Canada is unwilling to move toward this end, why is the point system being used, especially for ‘Southern’ nations? Is it not Canada’s responsibility to give those hopeful applicants more accurate information regarding their likely employment future (i.e., that a very long, hard road may await them as they begin trying to upgrade, meanwhile taking menial jobs that they never imagined working in, in Latin America)?

How important *are* skilled immigrants in Canada? It is common knowledge that immigrants are seen to be a valuable employment resource, but to fill what types of jobs? Is Canada bringing skilled people from other nations to be labourers? If so, why should the entrance standard be as high as it is for labouring jobs? In this research, various participants expressed that the Canadian job market is friendly for labourers, but not skilled people. Finding labourer jobs, they declared, is easy but finding a job related to their vocation is rather difficult.

The implications and questions stemming from this research are legion. Unfortunately, although the Canadian job market is changing rapidly, the way in which immigrants and refugees are treated by the larger population has not changed at the same pace. The situational adjustments that are expected of immigrants are out of step with the job market. The individuals in this sample are, on the whole, skilled in various occupations, flexible, and are willing to manoeuvre in the job market. These same people have experienced, however, the contradiction of the present day job market. I would conclude that the structural changes in the Canadian job market have left the immigrant/refugee in this sample at a disadvantage.

### **Contributions, Implications, and Conclusions**

The main contributions of this thesis have been iterated above, but in summary, the following are seen to be the most important findings and contributions to the literature on occupational mobility. The assumption that upward mobility is a universal desire has been challenged by the life stories of the immigrants and refugees interviewed. It should no longer

be taken for granted that all migrants desire mobility; the resulting consequences have distinct ramifications for future research. Researchers who do not acknowledge differing expectations (e.g., refugees who solely desire safety in Canada), in essence, are measuring an artifact of research. To discuss those who have “failed to be mobile” without recognizing that those same people may not wish to be mobile is both methodologically and theoretically problematic.

The second contribution of this thesis arose from the realization that many of those who were mobile perceived the same barriers as those who were not mobile. The precarious nature of employment for the immigrant and refugee has been highlighted since interviewing. I have begun to contact the participants to share my results, and of those I attempted to contact, 3 of the five have left their place of employment. For the participants, leaving one job frequently meant starting yet again at the bottom in another job. In extension, for those who had obtained a position with long term prospects for advancement, the security of the job was often seen to be tenuous.

The third contribution was a recognition that over time, due to various market shifts, absorption into the Canadian labour market has changed. I also recommended that future research try to track and correlate the participant’s migration and subsequent labour market positioning, with the larger labour market cycles. As mentioned above, as a fourth contribution, the applicability of the point system for migrants from the ‘Southern’ nations was also called into question.

The last two contributions revolve around the type of data collected. A fifth contribution recognizes that few research projects in Canada have actively attempted to facilitate the migrant’s voice to be heard in relation to their own labour market experiences. I would posit that this is my greatest contribution. I hope that these data faithfully reflect what the participants expressed. Finally, the last contribution was that the type of data collected was very rich in its description of labour market positioning over time. Data from the nation of

origin, the first job in Canada, and the present job in Canada is sparse if not non-existent to the best of my knowledge.

For those who began and remained in the secondary job market (and desire mobility), it is understandable that they feel that they are out of control of their fate to some extent. They have faced the Canadian job market and lost their occupational standing. As far as they are concerned, they have tried to improve their lot, but for the vast majority circumstances beyond their control stunted their job prospects. They know that some of their Latin American counterparts have achieved some semblance of success but neither they nor their counterpart seems to be able to fully explain why. In part, this success may have been a function of the time they arrived, the type of employment they were looking for, whether or not they had familial obligations that limited educational upgrading, and who they knew (Canadians) who could introduce them into a better employment situation.

Although these findings are not new revelations in and of themselves, they do shed light on how this sample of immigrants made sense of their employment trajectories in Canada. For the immigrants who have come and remained in Canada, there has been a documented shift in the opportunity structure (Greenwood and McDowell, 1991; Kreckel, 1980; and Richmond, 1994). It could be argued whether or not the shift has been beneficial or detrimental to all immigrants, but for these Latin American immigrants arriving with English as their second language, coupled with an increase in job market competition, their labour market experiences have taken their toll. As one woman said “this peaceful place has a price, and the price for the peace that we have here is very expensive.” She sacrificed her profession as did a number of others in this sample. Ultimately, it was her choice to sacrifice her profession, however, what could be done to facilitate a greater transferral of skills? It would seem that a combination of an increased civic awareness as well as a commitment from governmental bodies/professional associations to enable educational transferral would begin to lessen the sting of migration.

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**APPENDIX A - CONSENT FORM*****Forma de Consentimiento  
Consent Form*****The Function of English as a Second Language in the  
Occupational Mobility of Latin American Immigrants****Jane V. Mitchell  
University of Calgary**

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Esta forma de consentimiento, de la cual ha recibido una copia, es sólo parte del proceso de consentimiento notificado. La forma debe darle la idea básica del motivo de la investigación y de su participación en ella. Si quisiera tener más información detallada sobre lo mencionado aquí o información no incluida en esta forma, por favor haga preguntas. Sea tan amable también de tomarse el tiempo para leer esta forma cuidadosamente así como para entender toda la información que la acompaña.

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please ask. Please take the time to read this form carefully and understand any accompanying information.

El propósito de este proyecto consiste en explorar la movilidad ocupacional de inmigrantes cuyo primer idioma no sea el inglés. Usted ha decidido participar en este estudio debido a su experiencia laboral previa en su país de origen así como en Canadá. También ha tomado cursos de inglés como segundo idioma en Canadá. El propósito de esta entrevista incluirá además el entendimiento de cómo su educación, experiencia laboral y comunidad han afectado su movilidad ocupacional en Canadá.

The purpose of this project is to explore the occupational mobility of immigrants whose first language is not English. You have chosen to participate in this study due to your previous work experience in your home country as well as in Canada. You have also taken English as a Second Language classes in Canada. The purpose of the interview will include understanding how your education, work experience, and community have affected your occupational mobility

in Canada.

La participación en este estudio requerirá de una entrevista personal con duración de 1 a 2 horas. Durante la entrevista, se le pedirá información general así como información sobre su comunidad, experiencia laboral, logros académicos y manejo del inglés. Usted tiene el derecho de no contestar a cualquier pregunta. No incurrirá en ninguna merma financiera ni recibirá remuneración alguna por su participación.

Participation in this study will involve one personal interview lasting between 1 to 2 hours. During the interview, you will be asked for general information as well as information about your community, employment history, educational attainment, and English language ability. You may refuse to answer any question. You should not incur a financial cost nor will you receive any financial reward for participating.

La información recaudada a través de estas entrevistas, puede ser grabada. La información será confidencial y sólo accesible a la persona investigadora y sus supervisores. Su nombre permanecerá en confidencia y cualquier referencia subsecuente a su persona será hecha a través de un pseudónimo. La tesis terminada será un documento público y cualquier publicación adicional podrá incluir la información recaudada a través de las entrevistas.

Information collected from these interviews may be audiotaped. Information will be held in strict confidence and all primary information collected will be accessible only to the researcher and her supervisors. Your name will remain confidential and any subsequent reference to you will be done through the use of a pseudonym. The finished thesis will be a public document and any further publication may include information gathered from the interviews.

Su firma en esta forma indica que ha comprendido a satisfacción todos los datos referentes a su participación en este proyecto investigativo y que accede además a participar como sujeto de estudio. De ninguna manera cede sus derechos legales ni libera a los investigadores, patrocinadores o instituciones involucradas de sus responsabilidades legales y profesionales. Es libre de retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento. Su participación continua debe ser tan clara como su consentimiento inicial, por lo que puede sentirse libre de pedir aclaraciones o nuevos datos durante su participación. Si tiene más preguntas relacionadas con

este proyecto, por favor póngase en contacto con:

• Jane Mitchell - 220-6521

• Dr. Jim Frideres - 220-6437

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

• Jane Mitchell at 220-6521

• Dr. Jim Frideres at 220-6437

Si tiene cualquier pregunta relacionada con el aspecto ético de este proyecto o la manera como ha sido tratado(a), puede ponerse además en contacto con el Comité de Ética del Departamento de Sociología y buscar al presidente(a) al teléfono 220-6501.

If you have any questions concerning the ethics review of this project, or the way you have been treated, you may also contact the Department of Sociology Ethics Committee, and ask for the Chairperson, at 220-6501.

-----  
Participant

-----  
Date

-----  
Interviewer

-----  
Date

Una copia de esta forma de consentimiento le ha sido otorgada para su historial y futura referencia.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you for your records and reference.

## APPENDIX B - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Interview Schedule**

*Pseudo:*  
*Grammar:*  
*Results:*

*Name:**Number:**Date:**Location:***BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Marital status: ☐ Single  
☐ Separated/Divorced/Widowed  
☐ Married/Common Law
3. If married/common law, is your mate Canadian born? ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. What country were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your first language? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is this the dominant language of the country where you were born?
7. How old were you when you moved to Canada? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What year did you immigrate to Canada? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What was your status when you came to Canada?  
☐ Landed Immigrant ☐ Family Class ☐ Designated/Refugee Class  
☐ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
10. Are you presently a Canadian citizen? ☐ Yes ☐ No
11. If not, are you planning to become a Canadian citizen in the next 6 months?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
12. Do you think you will live in Canada for the rest of your life?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
13. *If not/so, why?*
14. *Did you choose to come to Canada? If not/so why?*
15. *Before coming to Canada, what kind of job did you think you would be able to work?*

**COMMUNITY/LIVING SITUATION**

16. That you know of, how many people from your country live in Calgary?
17. How often do you come into formal contact with people from your country in one week?  
☐ Always    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never
18. How often do you come into informal contact with people from your country in one week?  
☐ Always    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never
19. Are you in regular contact with people from other Latin American countries in Calgary?  
☐ Yes    ☐ No
20. In one week, how often do you come into formal contact with people from Latin America?  
☐ Always    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never
21. In one week, how often do you come into informal contact with people from Latin America?  
☐ Always    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never
22. *What kinds of situations do you come into contact with people from Latin America?*
23. In one week, how often do you come into formal contact with English speaking Canadians?  
☐ Always    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never
24. In one week, how often do you come into informal contact with E. speaking Canadians?  
☐ Always    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never
25. *What kinds of situations do you come into contact with English speaking Canadians?*
26. How many people live in your house/apartment? \_\_\_\_\_
27. Are all the people you live with family members?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No
28. If not, how many people of the people living with you are family members?
29. Do you speak only English in your home?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No
30. If not, how often do you speak English in your home?  
☐ Always    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never

31. How often do you speak English to your children?  
☐ Always    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never
32. How often do you speak English with your spouse?  
☐ Always    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never
33. Do you presently have family members living in Canada?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No
34. If so, do they live in Calgary?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No
35. How often do you communicate with your family members in Canada, outside Calgary?  
☐ Always    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never
36. How often do you communicate with your family members in Calgary?  
☐ Always    ☐ Often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Rarely    ☐ Never
37. Are you financially supporting any family members in another country or in another location in Canada?  
☐ Yes    ☐ No

### EDUCATION

38. What was the highest level of education you completed in your home country?  
☐ None    ☐ Some Elementary    ☐ Elementary  
☐ Some Middle School    ☐ Middle School  
☐ Some High School    ☐ High School    ☐ High School Equivalency  
☐ Trade Certification (cf. Campbell 1991)  
     Eg./ Construction, Agriculture, Electrical, Metals, Automobile, Furniture, Clothing  
☐ Non-Trade Certification  
     Eg./ Home Economics, Nursing, Education  
☐ Some Post-Secondary    ☐ Post-Secondary  
☐ B.A./B.Sc    ☐ M.A./M.B.A.    ☐ Ph.D    ☐ M.D.
39. Is the level of education you received in your home country (e.g., degree from university) recognized by the employers you have worked for in Canada?  
☐ Yes    ☐ No
40. What was the highest level of education your *father* completed in your home country?  
☐ None    ☐ Some Elementary    ☐ Elementary  
☐ Some Middle School    ☐ Middle School  
☐ Some High School    ☐ High School    ☐ High School Equivalency  
☐ Trade Certification (cf. Campbell 1991)  
     Eg./ Construction, Agriculture, Electrical, Metals, Automobile, Furniture, Clothing  
☐ Non-Trade Certification  
     Eg./ Home Economics, Nursing, Education  
☐ Some Post-Secondary    ☐ Post-Secondary



52. *Where have you attended English classes in Calgary?*
53. *Why did you stop going to classes?*
54. Do you think you would be paid more in your present job if you knew more English?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
55. Would you change jobs if you knew more English? ☐ Yes ☐ No
56. Do you think you would be able to get a better job (i.e., higher wage, flexible hours, etc.) if you knew more English?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
57. Do you wish you knew more English? ☐ Yes ☐ No
58. *Why do you want to learn more English (e.g., read more, watch t.v., understand friends conversations, be able to converse on the telephone, etc.)?*
59. *How would you obtain more English training if you wanted to expand your knowledge of English?*
60. Do you think that having more English training will improve your English ability?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
61. How many hours a day do you read English?
62. How many hours a day do you speak English?
63. How many hours a day do you listen to English?
64. Do you feel frustrated trying to communicate in English? ☐ Yes ☐ No
65. How often do you feel frustrated trying to communicate in English?  
☐ Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
66. *How do you feel frustrated trying to communicate in English?*
67. In speaking, out of 10, how much do you think people understand what you are trying to say in English?
68. Do you feel you have an accent when you speak English? ☐ Yes ☐ No
69. *If so, in what ways does this affect your communication with Canadians?*
70. In listening, out of 10, how much do you think you understand what people are trying



to say to you in English?

71. In reading, out of 10, how much do you think you understand of what you read in English?

### ***OCCUPATION AND JOBS***

72. What was your occupation in your home country? \_\_\_\_\_
73. Which industry did you work in in your home country?
- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural, forestry | <input type="checkbox"/> Mining          | <input type="checkbox"/> Electricity, gas/water          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing          | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction    | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholesale/Retail Trade          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation/storage | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication   | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance/property/business serv. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Administration  | <input type="checkbox"/> Community serv. | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation/personal/other serv. |
74. What was your last job in your home country?
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manager/administrator          | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional/para-professional        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trades person                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Clerk/sales/ personal service workers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plant/Machine operator/ Driver | <input type="checkbox"/> Labourer                              |
75. How many people worked in the company you held your last job?
76. How many years in total did you work in your home country before coming to Canada?
77. What was your father's dominant job in your home country?
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Father/homemaker               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manager/administrator         | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional/para-professional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trades person                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Clerk/sales                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plant/Machine operator/Driver | <input type="checkbox"/> Labourer                       |
78. What was your mother's dominant job in your home country?
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Mother/homemaker               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manager/administrator          | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional/para-professional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trades person                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Clerk/sales                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plant/Machine operator/ Driver | <input type="checkbox"/> Labourer                       |

### ***FIRST JOB IN CANADA***

79. Did you work in more than one job while working in your first job in Canada?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
80. What was your dominant first job when you came to Canada? \_\_\_\_\_

81. How did you find your first job?  
☐ Friend ☐ Acquaintance  
☐ Neighbour ☐ Member of religious affiliation  
☐ Family member (immediate house) ☐ Newspaper/ Job Board  
☐ Family member (extended family) ☐ Job counsellor  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
82. If found by a friend, acquaintance, neighbour, member of religious affiliation, was that person from Latin America? ☐ Yes ☐ No
83. How many months did it take you to find your first job? \_\_\_\_\_
84. Were you formally interviewed for your first job? ☐ Yes ☐ No
85. How did you use English in your first job?  
☐ To speak to my boss ☐ To speak to my co-workers  
☐ To speak to customers/clients ☐ Did not need to speak English  
☐ To read instructions ☐ Did not need to read English  
☐ Did not need English at all
86. How many months did you work at your first job? \_\_\_\_\_
87. How did your first job compare to your last job in your native country in relation to the skill level required?  
☐ Same ☐ Very Similar ☐ Similar ☐ Not very similar ☐ Different
88. Why did you leave your first job in Canada? (cf Campbell 1991)  
☐ Closure of firm/plant/business ☐ Ill health/ injury ☐ Laid off  
☐ Movement of firm/plant/business ☐ Retirement ☐ Vacation  
☐ To look after house/family ☐ To study ☐ Pregnancy  
☐ Changed addresses within Canada/Calgary ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
89. How much training did you receive for your first job in Canada?  
☐ None ☐ 1 day ☐ 2-5 days ☐ 6+ days
90. Did you receive any additional training after your initial training? ☐ Yes ☐ No
91. If so, what kind of training did you receive? \_\_\_\_\_
92. If known, what was the nationality of your first employer? \_\_\_\_\_
93. Was your first employer a friend? ☐ Yes ☐ No

94. Was your first employer an acquaintance? ☐ Yes ☐ No
95. Was your first employer a relative? ☐ Yes ☐ No
96. Was he/she self-employed? ☐ Yes ☐ No
97. Were you self-employed in your first job in Canada? ☐ Yes ☐ No
98. Were you a member of a union in your first job? ☐ Yes ☐ No
99. Was your first job seasonal or temporary? ☐ Yes ☐ No
100. Was your first job full time? ☐ Yes ☐ No
101. If not, how many hours a week did you work? \_\_\_\_\_
102. Did you live in Calgary while working in your first job? ☐ Yes ☐ No

### ***PRESENT EMPLOYMENT***

103. Are you presently working in more than one job? ☐ Yes ☐ No
104. What kind of job are you employed in presently? \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Manager/administrator ☐ Professional/para-professional  
☐ Trades person ☐ Clerk/sales  
☐ Plant/Machine operator/ Driver ☐ General labourer
105. How did you find your present job?  
☐ Friend ☐ Acquaintance  
☐ Neighbour ☐ Member of religious affiliation  
☐ Family member (immediate house) ☐ Newspaper/ Job Board  
☐ Family member (extended family) ☐ Job counsellor  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
106. If found by a friend, acquaintance, neighbour, member of religious affiliation, was that person from Latin America? ☐ Yes ☐ No
107. Were you formally interviewed for your first job? ☐ Yes ☐ No
108. How many months have you worked in your present job? \_\_\_\_\_
109. How much on the job training did you receive for your present job in Canada?  
☐ None ☐ 1 day ☐ 2-5 days ☐ 6+ days

110. Did you receive any additional training after your initial training? ☐ Yes ☐ No
111. *What kind of training did you receive?*
112. Do you feel the training you received will help you to obtain a better job if you wanted to change jobs? ☐ Yes ☐ No
113. Is your present employer a friend? ☐ Yes ☐ No
114. Is your present employer an acquaintance? ☐ Yes ☐ No
115. Is your present employer a relative? ☐ Yes ☐ No
116. If known, what is the nationality of your present employer? \_\_\_\_\_
117. Is he/she self-employed? ☐ Yes ☐ No
118. Are you self-employed in your present job? ☐ Yes ☐ No
119. Are you a member of a union in your present job? ☐ Yes ☐ No
120. Is your present job seasonal or temporary? ☐ Yes ☐ No
121. Is your present job full time? ☐ Yes ☐ No
122. How do your present job skills compare to the first job you had when you came to Canada?  
☐ Same ☐ Very Similar ☐ Similar ☐ Not very similar ☐ Different
123. How does your present job skills compare to your last job in your home country?  
☐ Same ☐ Very Similar ☐ Similar ☐ Not very similar ☐ Different
124. How many paid jobs have you worked at since moving to Canada? \_\_\_\_\_
125. Do you feel that you could get any kind of job you wanted? ☐ Yes ☐ No
126. *If not, what kind of things are holding you back from getting the kind of job you would like to work at?* \_\_\_\_\_
127. *Is there anything you'd like to say about finding employment in Canada?*

128. *If you knew what the situation/circumstances regarding working in your field, is there anything you would have done differently before coming to Canada?*
129. *What advice would you give to a person from Latin America who wanted to come and work in Canada?*
130. *Do you think the Canadian system has valued your education from Latin America?*
131. *Do you think the Canadian system has valued your skills from Latin America?*
132. *Do you think the Canadian system has valued your work experience from Latin America?*
133. *Is there anything Canada could do to use the skills that people bring with them from Latin America?*
134. *How would you define success in a job/career for yourself? (e.g., high wage, freedom to work at your career of choice)*
135. *How would you define mobility for yourself? Would it be to rise to the top of a CEO position, working in the field you want to work in?*
136. *Are you working in the field you want to work in?*
137. *If not, what's holding you back?*
138. *Do you think you will ever be able to move into your field?*