

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**

The Impacts of the Non-Recognition of Credentials:  
Evidence from Fourteen Highly Qualified Immigrants  
In Calgary and Red Deer, Alberta, Canada

by

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**The Impacts of the Non-Recognition of Credentials: Evidence  
of Fourteen Highly Qualified Immigrants in  
Calgary and Red Deer, Alberta, Canada**

**Abstract**

The intent of this research is to learn how the values of the dominant Canadian society manifest themselves when highly skilled newcomers experience barriers to the recognition of foreign education. In their stories of accreditation, 14 highly skilled immigrants describe how they have experienced barriers to recognition of foreign qualifications. A comparative analysis of existing evidence and data from their stories in relation to an acculturation framework (Berry, 1997) suggests newcomers are overwhelmed by many of the accreditation and job search barriers that exist for the native-born in Canadian society. However, their difficulties are compounded by the need for ESL training, the Canadian experience requirement, the lack of information about networks and the accreditation process, and discrimination based on the country where education was obtained.

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## **DEDICATION**

To Jeffrey and Sarah. I love you so much.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE NATURE AND ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM

### 1.1. Introduction

Many immigrants fulfill the Canadian immigration requirements for high levels of social capital, i.e., "education, job skills, entrepreneurship, ability to speak one official language and little need for social services" (Frideres, 1996, p.460). However, significant barriers thwart the chances of highly skilled workers to integrate into Canadian society. In this thesis, the stories of 14 trained men and women from Poland, China, Bosnia, Romania, Iraq, Pakistan and Korea relate how their skills and training have been received in Canada.

The existence and/or availability of credential agencies, easy public access to human rights commissions, task force recommendations, and research studies imply that safeguards exist in Canadian society to ensure that foreign academic and work experience achievements are recognized. However, present domestic reality negates the time and resources of these considerable efforts. Loss of status, as well as status mobility is common for highly skilled immigrants. Moreover, when highly skilled newcomers are permitted to immigrate, many adaptation problems result because their credentials and experience are not recognized when they search for employment. Evidence of the broad commitment of Canadians to address this problem appears to be obvious in the availability of credential agencies.

## **1.2. Credential Agencies**

The Canadian Information Center for International Credentials (1996) published a report intended as a brief inventory of the activities related to the assessment of credentials in each province, as well as those being undertaken by the federal government, intergovernmental agencies, and non-governmental organizations. In the provinces, the procedures for assessment of credentials for the purpose of entry into post-secondary education are granted at the discretion of the educational institution concerned. Relevant regulatory bodies in each province carry out the assessment of credentials for professionals. The Red Seal program (which facilitates the inter-provincial movement of journey persons and encourages the standardization of apprenticeship training programs in certain trades) negotiates the qualifications assessment for 43 different trades inter-provincially. The Red Seal designation ensures that the trade is subject to standards that are consistent across the country and that the qualifications of workers in the trade are recognized anywhere in Canada.

At the federal level, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the North American Free Trade Agreement, Canadian Heritage and Human Resources Development Canada are widely committed to remove or reduce barriers to the certification of foreign-trained professionals. At the national and intergovernmental level, the following agencies are responsible for credentials assessment: the Canadian Information Center for International Credentials, the Federal-Provincial Working Group on Access to Trades and Professions, the

Canadian Labor Force Development Board, Inter-provincial Trade Ministers, the Council of Ministers of Education Canada, the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Private credentials assessment services are not discussed in the Canadian Information Center for International Credentials report (1996).

In Alberta, there are 30 credential agencies. Although there are a large number of agencies that have some responsibility for assessing foreign qualifications, each has its own purpose for involvement in this area and the degree of expertise of each kind of agency varies. The full range of expertise that is required is not developed because the evaluation of foreign applicants is not a primary role for some of these organizations (Alberta Task Force, 1992, p. 95).

Despite a plethora of agencies at education institutions and at provincial, national and intra-national levels, highly qualified newcomers experience status loss and more importantly, economic loss because their credentials are not recognized. Nevertheless, Canadians expect that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Individuals' Rights Protection Act of Alberta and the Alberta Multiculturalism Act will defend the rights of foreign-trained individuals. Such is not the case.

### **1.3. Human Rights Legislation**

In 1982, multiculturalism became part of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In it, the government supports all of Canada's cultures. It also assists members to overcome barriers to full participation in Canadian society and to acquire one of Canada's official languages. Also, in Sections, 6,7, and 15, the rights of residence, natural justice and equality without discrimination are protected. Further support is evident in the mandate of the Alberta Multiculturalism Commission (Multiculturalism Act, 1990) that works with "public and private sectors to increase awareness, improve access and enhance participation for all Albertans" (Alberta Government, 1992, p. 66).

The protection of human rights in the private sphere is accomplished through provisions in the common law and human rights codes, such as the Individual's Rights Protection Act. Section 10 of the Act explicitly prohibits occupational associations from excluding a person from membership, expelling or suspending a member or discriminating against any person or member because of "race, religious beliefs, color, gender, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, age, ancestry or place of origin (Alberta Government, 1992, p.64).

However, the ability of the Alberta Human Rights Commission under the Individual's Rights Protection Act to act in cases of discrimination is limited, since it can act only if a complaint has been received. Human rights commissions have the potential to serve as an additional avenue of redress for professionals

and trades people unable to achieve recognition of their foreign credentials. If there is adequate cause, a complaint is heard. A board of enquiry may award compensation to a complainant with respect to out-of-pocket losses, and may also award damages for humiliation, pain and suffering caused by discrimination.

If the professional association is required to comply with the human rights code of a province such as Ontario changes in the general policies and procedures may be required in addition to the specific relief granted the complainant. By comparison, if the complainant takes his or her case to court, the court has the power to reverse the decision of the licensing body or to declare the legislation governing the profession to be unconstitutional. Thus, the remedies available to a commission may be more extensive.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Individuals' Rights Protection Act and the Alberta Multiculturalism Commission protect the rights of foreign-trained professionals. However, hesitation to interfere with assessment procedures, administrative requirements to justify a racist remark and an unwillingness to question the almost absolute right of a professional association deter individuals whose credentials have been inadequately, improperly or inappropriately evaluated from seeking litigation in Canadian courts. Only a few immigrants challenge the non-recognition of their foreign credentials.

#### **1.4. Current Research**

It is evident that the obligation of evaluation agencies and the power of

legislative initiatives have not changed the chances for highly skilled newcomers to obtain full employment and to participate actively in the Canadian economy. Numerous studies provide ample evidence of the continuing cost of the devaluation of foreign credentials to Canada: Equity in Employment: A Royal Commission Report by Judge Rosalie Abella, 1984; Equality Now! Report by the Special Committee on Visible Minorities in Canadian Society, 1984; Barriers to Recognition of the Credentials of Immigrants in Canada by Kathryn McDade, 1988; Access! Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades in Ontario by P. Cumming, 1989; "Immigration and Economic Integration in Quebec: The History of A Cohort" by Victor Piché, Jean Renaud, Lucie Gingras, 1996. The economic loss that newcomers sustain because of the non-recognition of their credentials is addressed in these studies.

The following studies focus on the human loss that non-recognition incurs for immigrants: "Unemployment, Underemployment and Depressive Effect Among South East Asian Refugees" by Morton Beiser, Phyllis J. Johnson and R. Jay Turner, 1993; "Impact of Employment Related Experiences on Immigrants' Psychological Well-Being and Adaptation to Canada" by Zeynap Aycan and John W. Berry, 1996.

A brief survey of other literature is revealing. Since the Second World War, over half (53%) of the immigrants to Canada experience downward occupational mobility (Richmond, 1967, cited in Maraj, 1996, p. 21). Nine years later, Ramcharan (1976, cited in Maraj, 1996) reaffirms that in order to achieve

“successful immigrant absorption” a positive reception from the host society is paramount to its newcomers (p. 295). In 1983, K. Moodley states that according to Manpower and Immigration, about “two-fifths of new immigrants, even after a year in Canada, were unable to find work for which they had been trained. One in five said the reason was professional, as well as trade associations’ refusal to accept or recognize his or her qualifications” (p. 329). Evidence of the problem of the non-recognition of foreign credentials has been in existence for more than 30 years.

Nevertheless, an increase in the numbers of highly skilled immigrants is wholeheartedly supported by the government and Canadians, in general (Hawkins, 1991, cited in Maraj, 1996, p. 4). Professionals continue to be attracted to Canada where improved marketability, sales image and increased international business are indications of the extent to which cultural diversity is or ought to be valued. By operating in conjunction with the labor market, rather than in opposition to it, the “multicultural policy... assures the loyalty of the minorities by strengthening an overall belief in equality” (Bolaria and Li, 1985, cited in Lewycky, 1992, p. 385). Furthermore, discrimination in professional organizations (treatment based on class or category rather than individual merit) deems professional credentials obtained in non-English speaking countries as less creditable than those earned in the United States or the United Kingdom (Fernando and Prasad, 1986). Satzewich and Li (1987), corroborate other scholars’ conclusion that migrants from non-white countries retain their status

disadvantage and income disadvantage after three years. Immigrants from Europe and the United States have a definite advantage due to their country of origin.

Three authors mention institutions as the origin of barriers to accreditation. Mata (1994) states that the multiple layers, which "cut across a wide range of institutional layers" impede the success of Canada's foreign-educated immigrants (p. 3). Skills for Change (1995), a Toronto-based organization providing job search support to refugees and immigrants, concurs that the root of the problems of under-utilization of skills and underemployment are in the "impartial policies and practices of government, licensing bodies, educational institutions and others (p.3). Finally, Cecile DePass (1994) states that " the selection procedures operate in such a manner that quite unintentionally, sizable numbers of qualified and trained men and women of color tend to be excluded from jobs in some of Canada's major organizations and high status professions" (p. 138).

The non-recognition of foreign credentials has immediate and enduring consequences and long term disadvantages for the newcomer. Bolaria (1992) declared that these disadvantages are "primarily in the form of economic exploitation and legal, political and social subordination" (p. 211). Immigrants are more likely to earn "below-average wages for work that many Canadians are loathe to do" (Stafford. 1992, p. 73). When these immigrants occupy low-paying jobs with little security and opportunity, a visible underclass creates the opposite effect to that proposed in the immigration rationale. Ng (1993) asserts, "when

low-skilled, poorly paid, menial work is treated as Canadian experience, [women are] subsequently locked into similar jobs”(p. 288).

When expectations to practice the occupation in which newcomers have training and experience are not met, “frustration, alienation from a familiar working environment, erosion of skills and ultimate loss of human potential to the Canadian economy” result (The Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues, 1988, p .20). Maraj (1996) learns that barriers leading to occupational and economic dislocation in Canada make immigrants feel disempowered, excluded, underemployed and uninformed. Their personal relationships and relationship with Canada are also affected (p. 85).

Disillusionment with the country they chose for its reputation of being a just, egalitarian society that purportedly respects and appreciates diversity was put forth by the participants. In the case of one participant, he no longer trusted or respected Canada; he felt cheated and duped (p.93).

Maraj also concludes, “there was a dearth of information regarding accreditation procedures available to the participants and that this information was, at best, inconsistent” (p. 98). Finally, Basok (1997) finds that Soviet physicians are reluctant to pursue collective action to overcome barriers to accreditation because they are negatively influenced by their previous political experience in the Soviet Union where injustice towards immigrants was acceptable. They perceive previous efforts here by their counterparts to have been futile.

The previous research studies are convincing of the economic and personal cost of the non-recognition of foreign credentials to Canada and its immigrants. Highly skilled newcomers are welcomed to Canada, where cultural diversity may be valued. Credentials from non-English speaking countries are deemed less creditable than those earned in the United States, or the United Kingdom. Economic exploitation, stress, depression and strained personal relationships, for example, result from economic, administrative and cultural barriers, especially within certifying bodies. Women are often locked into menial job opportunities. Furthermore, many newcomers do not feel that they have any power to improve the situation. Little formal economic literature is available for support.

In a review of immigration literature, the Metropolis Project (1997) has determined that there is a consensus that the earnings of immigrants do catch up, in a decade or so, with little evidence of discrimination by sex, ethnic group or visible minority status in terms of realized incomes. However, possible discrimination through occupational streaming has not been explored. Immigrants do not use more income support mechanisms than native-born Canadians do. Retaining ethnic identity and connections appears to hinder economic success slightly. Finally, immigrant 'quality' measured by average endowment of human capital, has declined. Statistics Canada reports that the average employment income of immigrants who came between 1986 and 1990 is \$21,538 or 18% lower than non-immigrants. The average employment income of

the most recent immigrants, those who came after 1990 is \$16,673 or 36% lower than the average earnings of non-immigrants (May 12, 1998). Thus, the contribution of recent immigrants to the Canadian economy is diminishing as compared to those who came before 1990.

Facts and Figures: Immigration Overview, 1996, Citizenship and Immigration Canada records that 33% of the total who immigrated to Canada, 97,542 are skilled workers. 41,898 are principal applicants (those who will enter the labor force as employees). 2,608 principal applicants came to Alberta. Principal applicants and dependents total 6,231 (p. 3). However, whether these people actually have their credentials evaluated or whether they found jobs in their fields is uncertain. In 1989, the Task Force for the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications report that in Alberta of the 16,211 immigrants who arrived, approximately 10 percent of these, 5,268 had their educational qualifications evaluated as part of an admissions process to a professional association or to an educational institution. The remaining 90% of immigrants with post-secondary education had no access to equivalency evaluation of their foreign qualifications.

### **1.5. The Reality**

Recent articles in the Calgary Herald and the Globe and Mail confirm the present day reality of the non-recognition of credentials for immigrants. In a letter to the editor, Guido E. Reuter wrote in the Calgary Herald, August 3, 1997 (A15):

Calgary faces a shortage of qualified workers. Wonderful, but the

boom does not reach out to all of us. I am a civil engineering technology honors graduate unable to find a career-related occupation since May 1996. I work as a carpenter's helper. This is a perfectly honest occupation, but it does not use my skills obtained through personal efforts and financial commitment.

Secondly, Pat Lorjé, MLA for Saskatoon Southeast in Saskatoon, wrote in the Globe and Mail, May 10, 1997:

I recently interviewed and wrote about a doctor who fled to Canada from El Salvador, who couldn't qualify as a doctor in Saskatchewan no matter how hard he tried. Despite his very legitimate horror of the military, he went so far as to enlist in the army reserves (only after he qualified as a middle-aged recruit was he told that the army had no training spots available for him, but he might want to try the navy). He also raised the necessary \$40,000 for internship training in his specialty, rehabilitation medicine, only to be told that funding from "own sources" was not acceptable. Meanwhile my neighbor's son, a graduate of a European medical system, has been accepted into the same training program where the Salvadorean doctor is denied entrance. Something about this whole process strikes me as terribly suspicious and incredibly unjust.

Finally, Darius Azimi from Orleans, Ontario wrote to Time June 1, 1998:

It's not only a higher salary or a shiny workplace that makes the US attractive. There is another element: job discrimination against

professionals in their field. A great many of these people including scientists, engineers, physicians, surgeons and teachers, who came to Canada with the hope this country could benefit them, are working as taxi drivers, deliverymen, restaurant workers and security guards. It's said that Toronto has the largest number of highly educated taxi drivers in the world!

The significant education and work experience of foreign immigrants continues to sift through Canada's fingers "like sand in the hand" (SML, p. 8). Despite the support of many Canadians for multiculturalism, existing studies that expose the barriers to recognition of foreign credentials and the efforts of credential agencies and human rights legislation, these previous stories testify to the persistence of the barriers to foreign accreditation.

A few studies elaborate on the economic adaptation or maladaptation of immigrants. With a view to understanding the persistence of the barriers to foreign qualifications, the data collected here is analyzed to understand what positive and negative impacts that newcomers have experienced in the course of their accreditation. This study elaborates on three elements of economic adaptation, i.e. migration motivation, perception of relative deprivation and status loss on first entry into the work world, a need identified by John W. Berry (1997).

## **1.6. Barriers to the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications**

In Bridging the Gap, the Alberta Task Force on the Recognition of

Foreign Qualifications (1992), identify several problems: lack of access to information, evaluation of education obtained abroad and access to retraining, professional training and work experience, registration examinations, language training, language testing and access to income support. To understand how immigrants experience the devaluation of credentials, three questions to explore the newcomers' access to information about the regulations of professional organizations, four questions about the evaluation of credentials and two questions relate to professional training. Two more questions about work experience precede three questions about registration examinations. The areas of language testing and language training are explored with two questions each. Two questions are asked about access to retraining. One question each is asked about access to income support programs and other circumstances. In open-ended conversations, more categories (below) emerge to reveal the extent of the problem of barriers to accreditation.

#### 1.6.a. Lack of Access to Information

Maraj (1996) finds that information available prior to and upon immigration was lacking to prepare immigrants for what they might expect with respect to their professional aspirations in Canada (p. 101). More information about networking and the complex process of qualifications and evaluation of experience, standards and methods, necessary documents and the time required would have enabled them to make a fully informed decision about their move.

Knowledge about the Canadian work experience requirement, the necessity of finding work and the direct and indirect discrimination would have also helped them to be prepared for their job search experience in Canada.

#### 1.6.a.i. Networks

The names and numbers of professional associations, credential bureaus, and immigrant-serving agencies were not available prior to arrival. Exclusion and alienation from their occupational field and contact with similarly educated and trained professional colleagues had a negative economic and affective impact on the participants of Maraj's (1996) study. This sense of isolation was exacerbated by the alienating jobs they had. Lacking the network (family, friends or professional colleagues) to provide, for example, a list of places to offer credential services, implement counseling pertinent to their fields, translate documents, made them feel lost, alone and invisible in mainstream society (p. 85-86).

Networking is key to securing employment in Alberta. A marketing strategies pamphlet used by the Columbia College Job Search Program sponsored by Human Resources Development Canada states "80% of [the] job possibilities will come from only 20% of the recruiting or placement businesses... An essential part of [the] job search is to discover the "hidden job market", to find those hundreds of jobs that are never advertised" (Columbia College/Human Resources Development Canada, 1998, p.2). Being alone in a new country with

no support severely limits one's access to crucial information about such hidden job markets regarding employment. A lack of networks keeps the names of those businesses and organizations that employ individuals with specific skills and experience out of the reach of newcomers.

#### 1.6.a.ii. Professional Organizations

For most professions in Alberta, the Universities Coordinating Council, structurally independent of both the professions and the government, is charged with evaluating qualifications in Alberta. However, when the UCC enters into arrangements with professions and delegates responsibilities to fulfill its duties, powers or functions, for example, the independence and objectivity of the UCC is suspected. The checks, balances and controls may not be visible. Many people suspect that some professions "inappropriately increase required levels of education to limit membership in the profession, thus enhancing the income status and employment opportunities of current members" (Alberta Task Force, 1992, p. 107). Neither the professions of engineering, nor medicine has an arm's length body to assess educational qualifications in Alberta.

In Overcoming the Obstacles: the Case of Former Soviet Physicians in Toronto, Dr. Tanya Basok (1997) demystified the barriers for foreign-trained doctors in Ontario. To become licensed to practice medicine, a medical school graduate must first pass the Medical Council of Canada (MCC) qualifying examination and successfully complete a one-year rotating medical/surgical

internship position through the Canadian Internship Matching Service (CIMS).

In Ontario, the government covers the salary and expenses of the interns. Since some Ontario graduates seek internship outside of Ontario, there are some internships available to graduates from other Canadian provinces and from accredited US schools.

Foreign-trained physicians (other than those from the US) have to:

- a) complete the MCC Evaluating Examination (324 multiple choice questions, written in two sessions, offered twice a year, limited trials permitted),
- b) demonstrate a fluency in English by passing TOEFL with a minimum score of 580, and
- c) complete internship.

However, since 1986, funded and unfunded internships are no longer available to graduates of unaccredited medical schools. Due to a projected national surplus of 6,000 physicians, a Joint Working Group of Graduates of Foreign Medical Schools recommends that internship be granted to foreign-trained physicians only to the extent that human resources needs in the province could not be met by licensed physicians of Canadian physicians-in-training. The report recommends the completion of a pre-internship training program that involved a rotation process occurring over a 36-48 [month] period which is similar to the clinical clerkship of Canadian trained graduates.

This additional qualification for internship implies a written problem-solving examination that includes questions to test knowledge and case-analysis skills in

a number of medical disciplines. Seventy-two candidates with the highest scores are allowed to take the next exam with aims at assessing communication skills, clinical skills, and clinical management skills. The final decision is based on the results of the written and clinical examinations, along with the curricula vitae and written references of the applicants. From the 72 candidates, only 24 are offered positions in the Pre-Internship Program (PIP). After the successful completion of the PIP, candidates are eligible to apply for internship (Basok, 1997, p. 10).

The premise for the changes is based on a predicted surplus which would entail higher health-related expenditures for the government because the doctors would inflate the quantity of services provided and lower the quality of health care as the number of physicians increases. Competition for jobs would produce unemployment and consequent deskilling due to lack of practice and would force some to attempt to obtain work by practicing in areas outside of their expertise. Furthermore, the number of internship positions available to Ontario medical school graduates would not be limited since their medical training is achieved at great expense to the province. Instead, it is those trained "outside Canada who should be limited in their opportunities to pursue licensure (Basok, 1997, p. 11).

The Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades (1989) questioned these views. First, the critics of the policy suggested that the aging population with its increased demand for health services would absorb the surplus and might even create a shortage. Second, they argued that

under-serviced northern communities offered ample opportunities to relieve the surplus created in urban areas. Thirdly, they pointed out that the need to service immigrants in Canada called for an increased number of physicians trained abroad. A failure to find alternate personnel to service these groups would result in inequality to access to adequate medical care for some members of society. Fourthly, they suggested that there were serious shortages in some specialties, such as psychiatry, ophthalmology, anaesthesiology, and laboratory medicine. Furthermore, some maintained that the increasing cost of health care should be attributed mainly to the use of highly sophisticated equipment and high administration costs related to the use of new treatments and tests. Finally, the surplus argument is premised on a "a considerable level of bad faith on the part of medical practitioners in this province, assuming that they will, as a group, act from motives of self-interest above all others (Cumming, et. al., 1989, p. 295, cited in Basok, 1997, p. 11).

#### 1.6.a.iii. Evaluation of Education Obtained Abroad

Although there are several agencies in Alberta that have responsibility for evaluating foreign qualifications, the service is fragmented and the responsible organizations do not have the specific expertise required to handle foreign education. In addition, people report confusion and frustration when they interact with several administrative structures, registration committees, boards of

examiners, appeal committees and educational committees in the accreditation process. They argue that the UCC does not provide adequate information about educational deficiencies and how they might be corrected, nor do they provide complete information about its evaluation processes and procedures. Many applicants can not fully understand how their qualifications have been evaluated (Alberta Task Force, 1992).

Employers report that Alberta is losing a significant source of manpower because the province does not have reliable capacity to evaluate qualifications. They are unlikely to hire a foreign applicant because they (the employers) do not have sufficient information to make a rational recruitment decision. "This results in positions being left vacant, in less than optimal productive and competitive capacity, and in unnecessary under or unemployment (p. 101).

Brian Piotrowski affirms this loss to the Canadian economy in a letter to Time, June 1, 1998.

Your report of the exodus of skilled workers and specialists (May 11) pointed out some of the reasons why so many Canadians (including myself) leave for the stronger economy of the US. As a recent honors graduate, I found that 95% of US companies responded to my application, while Canadian companies either did not answer at all or did so months later.

Thus, many employers do not have enough information about foreign credentials to recruit workers and they do not always acknowledge job applications.

#### 1.6.a.iv. Professional Work Experience

For many professions and trades, applicants must meet requirements for work experience that gives them an opportunity to obtain experience in their profession or trade and to further develop the knowledge, and skill that they obtain during their academic training. Several organizations and individuals told the Alberta Task Force (1992) that professional work experience is relevant regardless of the country where it is obtained and that repeating work experience requirements in Canada is a waste of time, energy and resources for the applicant (p. 120). On the other hand, access to the same technologies and equipment and variations in laws and regulations such as building codes, criminal law, tax law, professional codes and ethical standards are distinct differences. The issue is really how to evaluate non-Canadian experience.

#### 1.6.a.v. The Canadian Experience Requirement

New comers report that the requirement for Canadian experience is a "catch-22" situation (cited in Maraj, 1997, p. 80). They cannot join a professional organization without Canadian work experience; they cannot get a job without a membership in their professional organization. That is, employers are hesitant to hire foreign-trained people unless they have attained memberships in the appropriate professional association. However, professional associations cannot register them because they do not have the Canadian experience necessary for registration.

#### 1.6.a.vi. Registration Examinations

In Alberta, a variety of national, provincial and professional examinations are usually administered after the candidate has met all other requirements. In some cases, an examination is used as an alternative to a detailed assessment or period of training. Although immigrants recognize that properly constructed examinations do afford individuals an opportunity to demonstrate qualifications, foreign-trained individuals and organizations report that "some [examinations] are arbitrary and unfairly screen out qualified applicants" (Alberta Task Force, 1992, p. xv). Maraj (1996) also reports that participants of her study were unable to prepare themselves adequately for qualifying exams in their profession because books and core content information were not available.

#### 1.6.a.vii. Language Training

The central issue related to ESL training is that it focuses to a considerable extent on the acquisition of basic English skills for survival purposes. Likewise, there is a consensus that "a serious gap exists between what is available and what is required to provide immigrants with a level of English proficiency, which would enable them to communicate effectively in the work place or to pursue studies to upgrade their foreign qualifications" (p.153).

#### 1.6.a.viii. Language Testing

Although none of the groups or individuals reports that measurement of

language competence is unnecessary, many voice concern about the TOEFL examinations. Many believed that they must achieve a level of proficiency that is largely unrelated to the language requirements of the workplace they are seeking to enter. The manner in which scores are arbitrarily set and rigidly applied is considered by many to be inappropriate and unfair (Alberta Task Force, 1992; Maraj, 1996). The participants of Maraj's (1996) study also felt that the language tests they studied were comprised of vocationally irrelevant content. They did not feel that finding metaphors in a passage (one of the components of the examination) tested or reflected their professional ability (p.65).

#### 1.6.a.ix. Access to Income Support Programs

The Alberta Task Force (1992) learned that many new Canadians are willing to take additional training to obtain Canadian experience or to bring their qualifications up to Canadian standards but cannot complete the requirements for financial reasons. The Task Force recommends that newcomers be made aware of available income support programs for all Canadians. Maraj (1996) finds that lack of financial resources, closely connected with the cost of program/course fees and credential assessment, books and exams, prohibited the participants from proceeding through various stages of accreditation. Abella (1984) finds that time spent working to earn enough money to finance books and examinations left little time for study, especially in the case of women who assume the main responsibility for raising a family.

#### 1.6.a.x. Necessity of Finding Jobs

Obtaining evaluations for foreign credentials often becomes less of a priority for highly skilled newcomers when they are faced with rapidly dwindling resources. After arrival, high and unexpected costs force them to look for employment, any kind of employment, to support themselves and their families. Consequently, newcomers are vulnerable to exploitation as they take jobs for which they are over-qualified.

One part of the problem of the recognition of foreign credentials lies in the relevance of foreign qualifications in the Canadian work force. Another part of the problem resides in the differential access to information about networks, professional organizations, evaluation, registration examinations, language training, language testing, access to retraining, access to income support programs, the Canadian experience requirement, and the necessity of finding jobs. "Administrative, economic and cultural barriers in the entry requirements of certifying bodies" (Cumming, 1989, cited in Maraj, 1996, p. 30) exacerbate the difficulty of the accreditation and job search process.

#### 1.6.a.xi. Direct and Indirect Discrimination

Some immigrants experience direct discrimination. In Maraj's (1996) study, for example, many of the participants observe a difference in the way they were treated and perceived once they began to speak with mainstream

Canadians. "People exhibited an unwillingness to tolerate non-Canadian accents" (p. 81).

Another form of discrimination, institutional discrimination, identified by the participants in Maraj's study (1996) is the credibility awarded to immigrants who had credentials from universities in the United States or the United Kingdom. Cecile DePass distinguished between two types of institutional discrimination: direct institutional discrimination and systemic or indirect discrimination. In the first case, the negative and discriminatory effects of exclusion are deliberate and intentional; in the second, they are not deliberate. "Direct institutional discrimination occurs where laws or legally endorsed customs intentionally discriminate between various categories of people". By way of contrast, "indirect discrimination occurs whenever individuals and groups conform to traditionally accepted institutional policies and practices which systematically exclude certain groups" (DePass, 1994, p.138).

When the organizational rules and regulations of evaluation agencies on the one hand conflict with the real histories of qualified, experienced foreign professionals on the other, ambivalent uncertain individuals are reluctant to take chances, which may cost them their jobs or result in sanctions. That is, individuals interpreting policy are not programmed to act in prejudicial ways, but they just cannot separate themselves from the wider political, social and economic context. (Elliott and Fleras, 1992, p. 56). Thus, foreign individuals must deal with the values of past and present immigration policies that are

embedded in the everyday consciousness of the taken-for-granted and powerful Canadian cultural and social institutions. Although real differences in qualifications account for part of the problem of the recognition of foreign credentials, Canadian cultural influences and expectations in institutions also influence individuals in Canada to act in ignorant or prejudicial ways.

John W. Berry suggests that a study of the barriers to the recognition of foreign qualifications must take into consideration cultural changes resulting from group encounters in Canadian society (acculturation) relative to changes in the individual as he/she tries to re-establish in the new society (psychological acculturation). A review of the changes in Canadian immigration policy facilitates an understanding of acculturation. Adversarial, racist, ethnocentric and profit-oriented attitudes emerge from the survey of past immigration policies. Values related to family, trade, international understanding, Canada's humanitarian tradition, obligation to refugees, health, safety, security, and good order of Canadian society emerge from an examination of today's policy.

### **1.7. Acculturation: Changes in Canadian Immigration Policy**

From as far back as 50,000 years ago, Canada welcomed a diverse gathering of immigrants and refugees from different parts of the world. The First Nations moved in the first of many waves. Both French and English traders/adventurers/explorers comprised the second wave of immigrants. These colonizers eventually displaced the aboriginal populations and assumed the

status of official founding or charter nations of Canada. The preoccupation with the adversarial relationship between the French and the English is such a 'natural' of Canadian politics that all other inhabitants are only a minor part of the problematic of 'national' identity" (Bannerji, 1996, p. 106). The third wave consisted of various non-English and non-French-speaking immigrants who arrived en masse during the twentieth century to assist in Canadian nation building (Elliott and Fleras, 1992, p. 227).

At first the wheat boom aimed recruited Europeans as settlers for agricultural settlement and later as workers for industrial expansion. In the Immigration Act of that time (1919), classes were established on the basis of a pecking order which established that immigration from the British Isles and Northern Europe were deemed culturally superior to immigrants of central or south European origins. A host of reasons were given to justify why immigrants from "undesirable countries" were denied entry to Canada. Immigrants were proclaimed undesirable for "climatic, industrial, social, educational, labor or other conditions or requirements, or because their customs, habits, modes of life and method of holding property were deemed to result in probable inability to become readily assimilated" (Elliott and Fleras, 1990, p. 52).

The second phase relied on skilled labor that resulted from the industrial boom of the post-war decades. Most immigrants were white and from Western Europe. Hawkins contends that Conservative government changes in 1962, which replaced ethnicity and country of origin with education and training, as the

two foremost criteria upon which immigration was granted were implemented not because of

parliamentary or public demand, but because some senior official in Canada... rightly saw that Canada could not operate effectively within the United Nations, or in the multiracial [British] Commonwealth with the millstone of a racially discriminatory immigration policy round her neck (cited in Maraj, 1996, p. 9).

In 1967, "immigrants became subject to competition in which their suitability was determined by job-related skills, age, official language knowledge, and education, as well as, by personal assessment by an immigration officer" (Elliott and Fleras, 1992, p.240). The "point system" continued to provide points [for] education - up to 20 points, vocational preparation - up to 15 points, experience - up to 8 points" (Frideres, 1996, p. 452) (See Appendix A). This color-blind selective process paved the way for an influx of immigrants from non-European countries, such as Asia, the Caribbean, and South and Central America (Elliott and Fleras, 1992, p. 227). Since then, many Canadians have developed ambivalent attitudes to the rainbow hue replacing the WASP-ish character of Canadian identity.

In the third phase, the growth of the wage labor market in Canada indirectly had an effect on immigration policy. In realigning itself to the forces of production, Canadian society mirrored the struggle in the greater number of women in the work force, the fewer children born and the aging population. The

government took steps to commend to the public the social, cultural and economic benefits of increased immigration. A widely publicized government report on the demographic trend of Canada warned, "without immigration, continuation of Canada's below-replacement fertility rates would eventually lead to Canada's disappearance" (Department of Health and Welfare, 1989, p. 2). Consequently, quotas were relaxed and a ceiling of about 250,000 was established so younger immigrants would underwrite the future costs of social services delivery, lessening the fears of Canada's baby boomers (Elliott and Fleras, 1992, p.243). (One percent of the population – about 260,000 – is required to sustain the current population. This promotion responded to demographic and ethnocentric concerns.

In the late 1970's and eighties, the Canadian government responded to a period of economic recession and fiscal crises by "tightening the entry of immigrants while facilitating the flow of international capital into Canada" (Li, 1996, p.97). The main objectives of bills C55, C84, C86 in the 1976 Immigration Act are pursuit of demographic goals; strengthening the cultural and social fabric; family reunion; facilitating immigrant adaptation; promoting trade, tourism, culture science, and international understanding; and fostering a strong and viable economy. It upholds Canada's humanitarian tradition with respect to the displaced and persecuted and its international obligations to refugees. For the first time, the act incorporates the UN Convention definition of a refugee into the law. The act also notes the need to protect the health, safety, security, and good

order of Canadian society, all without discrimination on grounds of race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, or sex.

Permanent residents are admitted in three broad categories. First, members of the independent class are selected primarily for their potential economic contribution. Secondly, close relatives may nominate members of the family class. And thirdly, individuals in the refugee class are required to meet the UN Convention definition of a refugee. As well, they may fall into one of several designated classes deemed to warrant humanitarian consideration (Richmond, 1996, p. 126).

Convention refugees are "persons who, by reason of well-founded fear of persecution, for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, are unable or unwilling to return to their home country" (cited in Alberta Task Force, 1992, p.23). Designated class immigrants are individuals who Canada deems to be displaced by refugee-like situations but who do not meet the strict definition of a convention refugee. Special humanitarian measures provide for persons requiring resettlement even though they may not meet the definition of a refugee, but for whom Canada has a special interest.

Since 1994, the immigration policy is biased increasingly toward those with business experience and capital. High levels of social capital, i.e. education, job skills, entrepreneurship, ability to speak one official language and little need for social services, are required to enhance the positive beneficial effect of

immigration on the economy and to ensure that immigrants secure a place in Canada. It is believed that individuals with these qualities will be able to move quickly into the labor force and generate incomes. [Furthermore], "given an unwillingness to invest in training programs, only immigrants who fill niches (labor shortages) which have been defined by employers would be given priority to enter Canada" (Frideres, 1996, p. 460).

This survey shows that Canadian immigration has changed its racist focus dramatically to include demographic, cultural, social, family, immigrant adaptation, trade, tourism, and international understanding goals. At the same time that it upholds these goals and the need for health, safety, security and good order without discrimination, the economy remains an important justification for immigration. To further this end, priority is given to immigrants who fill labor shortages defined by employers and those who qualify in the business or entrepreneurial class.

Although contradictory to the goals of immigration adaptation in the immigration policy, many highly skilled immigrants are underemployed or unemployed because their foreign qualifications are not recognized. The "lived system of meaning and values" (Williams, 1977, p.110, cited in Basok, 1997) in Canada reflects the adversarial, racist, ethnocentric, profit-oriented attitudes of past immigration policies more than cultural, social, family, immigrant adaptation, trade, tourism and international understanding goals of the present policy. It also

influences the interactions of many individuals in Canada's social and cultural settings.

### **1.8. Hegemony**

The ambivalence of a nation that is committed to multiculturalism on the one hand and condones the non-recognition of foreign credentials on the other reflects a contradiction between the core values in Canadian society.

On the one hand, egalitarian values emphasize collective rights, special treatment, if necessary, equality of outcomes, and fair play. By way of contrast, individualistic values endorse personal freedom, equal treatment and universalism, self-interest, equality of opportunity, and open competition based on the principle of the marketplace (Elliott and Fleras, 1992, p. 62).

A lack of awareness of the conflict of these core values perpetuates political and economic interests. Antonio Gramsci, argues that the State takes systematic account of popular interests and demands, shifts position and makes compromises on secondary issues to maintain support and alliances in an inherently unstable and fragile system of political relations, without sacrificing essential interests. The support it gains is organized for the attainment of national goals, which serves the fundamental long-run interests of the dominant group (Jessop, 1982, p. 148).

Many Canadians are comfortable with the way it is. They support their struggles as legitimate. In their social and work lives, they unconsciously remind each other of the necessity for their struggle. Similarly, immigrants are usually comfortable with their lot when the conditions in Canada are compared with those in their homeland. They, too, support their struggles in Canada as legitimate. Nevertheless, they are compelled to resist the devaluation of their credentials in order to contribute to the growth of Canada's work force and economy. Herein lies one of the benefits of cultural diversity: a study of their accreditation barriers requires a comparison to those that native-born support as the way-it-is.

How do foreign newcomers who have costly degrees, valuable experience and successful practices in their homelands cope when their credentials are devalued in Canada? In this thesis, fourteen highly skilled newcomers in Calgary and Red Deer, Alberta explain what their accreditation and job search experiences in Canada were like. The qualitative research methodology follows in Chapter Two.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1. Introduction

Based on a review of the literature in Chapter One, the conclusions underlying this research have been categorized into six sections:

- a. The contradiction of immigration requirements and the non-recognition of foreign credentials in the Canadian job market,
- b. Common barriers to recognition of foreign credentials,
- c. The significance of the values of the host society to successful immigrant integration,
- d. Personal impacts of non-recognition of credentials,
- e. Shortcomings of credential agencies, and
- f. Limitations of human rights legislation.

#### 2.2. Conclusions Arising from the Review of the Literature

2.2.a. The contradiction of immigration requirements and the recognition of foreign credentials in the Canadian job market.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada requires immigrants with high levels of social capital to enhance the positive beneficial effects of immigration on the economy and to secure a place for them in Canada. It is common, however, for foreign education and work experience to be devalued upon arrival in Canada.

2.2.b. Common barriers to recognition of foreign credentials include:

2.2.b.i. Newcomers lack a network of family, friends or professional colleagues to provide a list of places which offer credential services, counseling pertinent to their fields or translation of documents.

2.2.b.ii. Some professional organizations do not have objective evaluating boards and may inappropriately increase required levels of education or qualifications to enhance the income, status and employment opportunities of current members.

2.2.b.iii. Confusion and feelings of dispiritedness result when newcomers interact with several administrative structures, registration committees, boards of examiners, appeal committees and educational committees of professional organizations.

2.2.b.iv. Sometimes complete and usable information on deficiencies or how they may be corrected is not available from professional organizations.

2.2.b.v. Sometimes applicants cannot understand fully how their qualifications have been evaluated by professional organizations.

2.2.b.vi. Some registration examinations are arbitrarily assigned and unfairly screen out qualified applicants.

2.2.b.vii. Sometimes books and core content information are not available to participants to adequately prepare for examinations.

2.2.b.viii. Sometimes TOEFL examination scores are arbitrarily

set, rigidly applied and demand a level of proficiency that is unrelated to the language requirements of the workplace.

2.2.b.ix. Sometimes English classes are not available that prepare newcomers to communicate in the work place or to pursue studies to upgrade their foreign qualifications.

2.2.b.x. Sometimes institutions are unavailable which offer courses for specific deficiencies.

2.2.b.xi. Immigrants have the same opportunities for income support programs as all Canadians, but many of them do not know it.

2.2.b.xii. The lack of financial resources inhibits immigrants from proceeding through the various stages of the accreditation process.

2.2.b.xiii. Newcomers get caught in a "catch 22" situation with regard to Canadian experience. They cannot join a professional organization without Canadian work experience; they cannot get a job without a membership in their professional organization.

2.2.b.xiv. Sometimes accepting low level jobs to acquire Canadian experience locks newcomers into low status positions.

2.2.b.xv. Often newcomers must obtain jobs quickly to replenish dwindling resources and to earn a living. Time spent in underemployed occupations infringes on time needed to study for qualifying examinations or searching for a job commensurate with their ability.

2.2.c. The significance of the host society values to successful immigrant integration.

2.2.c.i. A positive reception from the host society is a significant factor in the successful integration of newcomers.

2.2.c.ii. Direct discrimination, for example, an unwillingness to tolerate non-Canadian accents, has a significant negative effect on the immigrants' well being.

2.2.c.iii. Indirect discrimination, for example selection procedures that favor graduates from certain countries over others, excludes highly skilled newcomers.

2.2.c.iv. Direct and indirect institutional discrimination reflects the values of the dominant society. These population group values are evident in Canadian immigration policies.

2.2.c.v. Population level values, such as, loyalty to Canadian institutions are embedded in the lived experiences of Canadians where they work and socialize.

2.2.c.vi. All individuals are not necessarily programmed to act in ignorant or prejudicial ways. However, they are influenced by the dominant social and cultural values of the society.

2.2.d. Highly skilled immigrants notice negative and positive effects of the non-recognition of their foreign credentials.

2.2.d.i. Immigrants are limited to low skill, low pay and work opportunities with little chance of occupational or monetary advancement.

2.2.d.ii. Unemployment and underemployment are considerable risk factors for stress and depression.

2.2.d.iii. Low paying and low skill jobs isolate and alienate highly skilled newcomers from professional colleagues and environments.

2.2.d.iv. Economic impact is less of an issue to newcomers than their loss in professional status. Low self worth, exclusion or isolation, a sense of failure, inferiority and powerlessness are common sentiments for underemployed or unemployed immigrant professionals.

2.2.d.v. In time, newcomers come to believe they are as well off as other Canadians.

2.2.e. Shortcomings of credential agencies

2.2.e.i. Sometimes the services of credential agencies are fragmented because not enough information about overseas institutions is available. For example, only 10% of new immigrants to Alberta had their foreign credentials evaluated in 1989.

### 2.2.f. Limitations of human rights legislation

2.2.f.i. The expectation that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Individual Rights Protection Act and the Alberta Human Rights Commission to defend the rights of immigrants to receive fair evaluation for their credentials is limited because very few claims are made.

2.1.f.ii. Highly skilled newcomers are not likely to act collectively to overcome obstacles to accreditation. Often the futility of previous efforts and the influence of the values of their former country lead them to pursue their goals individually.

### **2.3. Limitations of Scope of Study**

The primary goal of this study is to discover the meaning of the accreditation events for the participants to better understand the persistence of the problem of the non-recognition of foreign qualifications. This account provides rich, thick description that promotes understanding of the obstacles that newcomers faced as they attempted to have their foreign credentials recognized. The conclusions drawn from the data acquired from such a small group (14) must be considered tentative.

The use of life reviews may be narrow, idiosyncratic or ethnocentric. However, these stories together do reveal assumptions about Canadian society. Often references to the larger community, national and international events given in relationship to others do articulate a shared reality. It is also possible to make

tentative generalizations about Canadian society by using the multiplicity of incidents of thick description.

Although there is always a tendency to make oneself look good in interviews, there is also a need to look at things as honestly as possible to make sense of experiences over a lifetime. As for deliberate omissions, this is as likely to happen with official documents such as government press releases or personal documents such as letters. By accumulating information from different sources and comparing them, an approximate understanding of what happened or is happening is arrived at with some certainty (Yow, V.R., 1994, p.21-22).

My interest in producing these stories began as an attempt to help in the struggles of many newcomers to get the acknowledgement for their academic and work experience qualifications for which I have the utmost respect and admiration. Along the way, the obstacles of accreditation in education, business and government institutions were shared with respect to problems identified by the Alberta Task Force (1992). As a white, middle class teacher in Alberta, who has interacted increasingly with social and cultural institutions, I was able to relate well to the obstacles that many of these 14 foreign professionals faced. I also fully understood the enabling experiences that some have discussed with me. Nevertheless, the circumstances of the interviewer designed question and answer tape-recorded format impinged on the flow of conversation to some extent. Sometimes I directed conversation toward answers to questions instead of the greater understanding of the narrator. I became aware of this personal

mannerism early in the interviews when the somewhat stilted quality of the second tape-recorded interview was compared to the more dynamic initial meeting. I changed my approach to take account of this difficulty.

I interviewed peoples from eight different cultures of this study; the participants readily trusted me. It was not essential that I know completely all the habitual ways of relating or know the culture well. I was successful in communicating the purpose with which everyone was agreed. I was always conscious of my relationship to the culture and used whatever strengths of the situation or relationship that there were to achieve understanding. Linda Shopes reasons that with regards to the issue of the insider versus the outsider "neither is especially better; both have attributes that can both serve the purpose of the inquiry and work against it" (cited in Yow, V.R., 1994, p. 153)

#### **2.4. Qualitative Research**

Oral history is a documentary where "evidence originates in the act of oral face-to-face communication" (McMahan, E. and Rogers, L, 1989). It is the creation of a constructed historical narrative based on an individual's or a group's recollection of lived experience. However, oral history is [also]...subjective. Its subjectivity is at once inescapable and crucial to an understanding of the meanings of the past and present. The in-depth interview offers the benefit of seeing in its full complexity the world of another.

Open-ended conversations permitted an insight into the non-recognition of foreign credentials from the point of view of newcomers. They were also the most adequate and efficient way to obtain the type of information required to contend with the complexities of this broad problem. Hypotheses and concepts emerged from the data and were systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research.

The design involved a progressive building up from facts, through substantive to grounded formal theory (Glaser, B. and Strauss, A., 1967) and an inquiry approach which permitted a variety of qualitative research techniques (Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y., 1994; McMahan, E. and Rogers, L., 1994; Yow, V.R., 1994). The first part of the method was preparation which includes: defining the goals and objectives, conducting background research, locating resources such as books and special collections, selecting the equipment, developing interview questions, strategies of establishing rapport such as initial contact and pre-interview. The second part of the method was the interview process which included: selecting the setting, organization of the data, including, labeling and preserving, review and preparation for follow-up interviews and the final wrap-up. Interview methods for the study of personal experience was simultaneously focused in four directions: inward and outward, backward and forward. By inward they meant the internal conditions of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions and so on. By outward they meant existential conditions, that is the environment. By backward and forward they

were referring to temporality, past, present, and future (Clandinin, J.D. and Connelly, M.F., 1994). Yow, V.R. (1994) elaborated that to experience an experience is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way.

The hypothesis of this project proposed that the immigrants would have diverse interpretations of their job search experiences. Although diverse variations of events and interpretations may have occurred, oral history reveals less about events than about their meaning (Portelli, A. 1991). The narratives of the immigrants speak for themselves. But, the meaning of their lived experiences also relates the possibilities for real social and economic change in the structure of Canadian society.

## **2.5. Analytic Elements**

The discussion of the hypotheses above suggested preconceived elements: underemployed or unemployed highly qualified immigrants and the research, oral history. However, in the final analysis, qualitative analytic elements emerged from the research design being used. When an emergent analytical form is suggested, Huberman, M.A. and Miles, M.B. (1994) discussed three possibilities:

a. The design of the qualitative studies, e.g. oral history, can in a real sense be seen as analytic. Choices of conceptual framework, of research questions, of samples, of instrumentation all involve anticipatory data reduction.

b. Qualitative studies in such an oral/narrative history tend to have a peculiar life cycle, one that spreads collection and analysis throughout the study, but calls for different modes of inquiry at different moments.

c. Most of the procedures in qualitative studies call for the use of analytic induction, i.e., the regularities to be found in the physical and social world. In this research study, the three analytic approaches were utilized as appropriate.

## 2.6. Research Participants

NEWCOMER STATUS	ORIGIN	AGE	GENDER	HOME COUNTRY OCCUPATION	PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE	CANADIAN OCCUPATION	ARRIVAL
1 Ind*	Poland	46	M	Engineer	3 years	Shift Operator	1982
2 Ind	Poland	38	F	Nurse	2 years	Realtor	1982
3 Ind	China	32	F	TCM*** doctor	7 years	Unemployed	1997
4 Ind	Poland	37	F	Social Worker	3 years	Volunteer Coordinator	1990
5 Ref*	Bosnia	40	M	Administrator	15 years	Teacher Aide	1994
6 Ref	Bosnia	30	F	Civil Engineer	1 year	Draftsperson	1995
7 Ind	Romania	36	M	Petroleum Engineer	7 years	Petroleum Engineer	1994
8 Ref	Iraq	41	M	Lawyer	2 years	Student	1993
9 Fam*	China	-	F	Med Lab** Technician	10 years	Daycare Work	1991
10 Ind	Pakistan	40	M	Electrical Engineer	11 years	Unemployed	1996
11 Ind	Korea	39	M	Radio/TV Director	14 years	Student	1997
12 Ref	Bosnia	38	F	Doctor	3 years	Personal Care Asst.	1995
13 Ind	Pakistan	31	M	Bank Manager	8 years	Book keeper	1996
14 Ind	China	37	F	Thermal Engineer	10 years	Student	1997

Table One \* Independent Class, Refugee Class and Family Class

\*\* Medical Laboratory Technologist

\*\*\* Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor

Fourteen highly qualified immigrants responded to 34 questions about their job search experience in Canada. They were selected from a list that grew from immigrant service organizations, co-workers, and friends in response to my request for willing highly skilled immigrants who had been or were underemployed or unemployed. Individuals at Calgary Catholic Immigration Service (CCIS), Calgary Immigrant Aid Service (CIAS) and the Calgary Mennonite Center for Newcomers (CMCN) suggested names of highly skilled individuals who were under or unemployed. The Central Alberta Regional Effort (CARE) facilitated interviews with three newcomers who were highly qualified. A co-worker with a degree in civil engineering agreed to participate in an interview. A friend and his wife who worked in a school where I worked refused to respond to questions in an oral interview because it would "open old wounds". However, they arranged an interview with another couple who made their adjustment to Canada by changing their professions.

When I received a number of phone numbers from personnel at two immigrant service agencies in Calgary, I called those highly skilled unemployed or underemployed newcomers, told them who I was, and that the purpose of my study was to find out about their accreditation experience in Canada. If they were willing to participate, I arranged to meet them in their home or at a location and at a time that was convenient for both of us.

At our first meeting, I showed them the list of questions and tried to determine if there were any problems in understanding the text. I then arranged

for another meeting to tape record the interview. All but three interviews took place in the homes of the participants. Each interview took approximately two hours. Each question was answered and elaborated upon, if it was applicable to the participant's situation. Sometimes clarification was necessary on the part of the interviewer and the narrator. Observations about body language and clarifications throughout the interviews permitted a full understanding of the context and meaning of the questions and responses.

When a teaching colleague recommended the director of a refugee center as a possible resource for under or unemployed highly skilled immigrant participants, a preliminary meeting to establish rapport was unnecessary for one person. It was established by my connection to my friend. The Canadian accreditation stories of fourteen newcomers who have strong backgrounds in education and work experience were tape-recorded.

Although many more underemployed or unemployed highly skilled immigrants were willing to tell their accreditation stories, limitations of time and finances compelled me to limit the sampling to 14. I returned to each participant a second time or spoke to them on the telephone so they could elaborate further on the question of language training or provide information that was unclear or omitted at the first interview. Everyone received a copy of his/her transcript to which they were asked to comment about errors or misunderstandings.

## 2.7. Data Collection

Thirty-four questions provided the focus for an in depth open-ended conversational style tape-recorded interview. The first six questions permitted an exploration of why the newcomers came to Canada, the quality and quantity of credentials and experience they brought with them, when and why they began their job search, what their work is now and if it uses their job skills. Questions were also designed to investigate how the narrators experienced the problems identified by the Task Force on the Non-Recognition of Foreign Credentials and other circumstances. Finally, questions about name change, homesickness and job search differences provided insight into the coping strategies of highly skilled foreign professionals. Responses to these questions comprised the data with which I compared the findings from the review of the literature and data that emerged from other sources, such as, newspaper clippings and magazine articles, for example.

The interviews were transcribed. Italics indicated emphasis and dashes showed a break-off in speech. Noticeable pauses of less than 3 seconds were identified by [p] and pauses of more than 3 seconds by [P]. Quotation marks showed that a speaker was reporting someone else's (or his/her own) speech. Indentation of subsequent lines signified that the speech was continuous. This method of transcription was closest to that developed by Riessman, C.K. (1990).

## **2.8. Analysis of Data**

The answers from each of the narrators to each of the questions were grouped together. In each question, the data were analyzed by searching for patterns and constantly comparing the data. Graphs illustrated the most salient categories that emerged from responses to each question. Often using quotations from the transcripts, the narrators' voices explain how their qualifications were recognized. Additional pertinent findings that did not fit into the categories were conceptualized into positive and negative effects with interactions with professional, educational, business and government institutions. This method verified the evidence at hand with the implicit assurance that plenty more evidence exists in the accreditation stories of other underemployed or unemployed immigrants.

## **2.9. Relationship to Acculturation Framework**

Acculturation is employed to refer to the general processes and outcomes of intercultural contact (Berry, 1997, p.7). In the process of acculturation, it is assumed that in many plural societies, both dominant and non-dominant cultural groups resist becoming part of the mainstream. This resistance results in the continuing cultural diversity of so many contemporary societies. This framework indicates the key variables that should be attended to when carrying out studies of psychological acculturation, for example, the impacts of the barriers to recognition of foreign qualifications on highly skilled immigrants.

On the left in Figure One, migrant groups usually experience physical, biological, economic, social and cultural changes, as a result of living with two sets of cultural influences –situational variables from the society of origin and the society of settlement. Urbanization is an example of a physical change. New dietary intake and exposure to new diseases are examples of biological changes. The focus of this thesis is economic changes, the result of the non-recognition of foreign credentials.

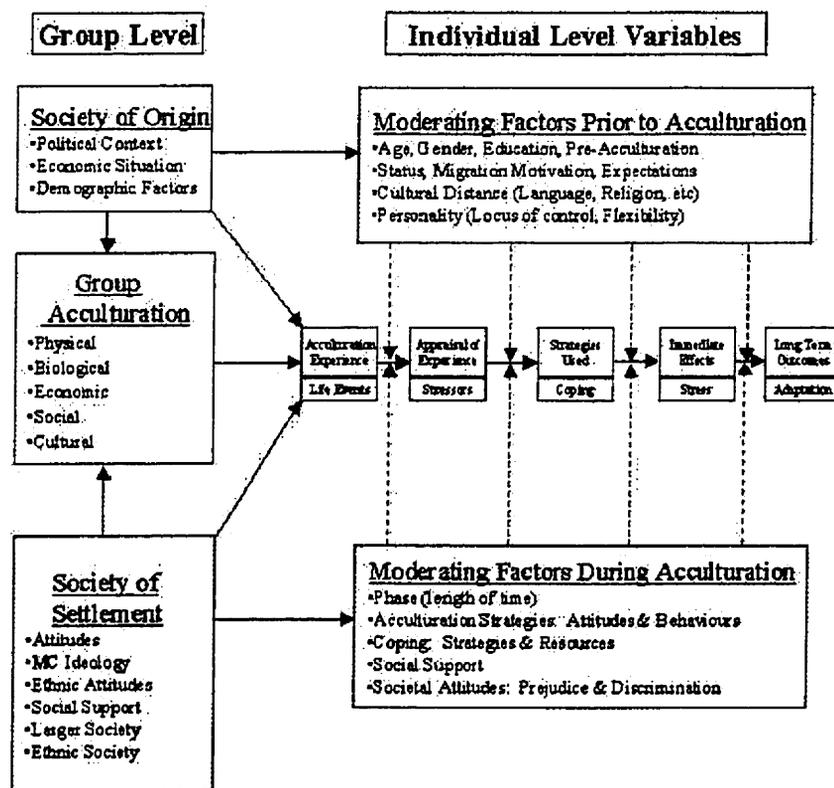


Figure One A Framework for Acculturation Research (Berry, J.W. 1997)

Person factors in the upper and lower levels on the right in Figure One provide the broad structure in which acculturation takes place. Individual acculturation is clearly a process that takes place over time. Questions in the interviews explored the individual moderating factors prior to acculturation of migration motivation, status loss and perception of relative deprivation. Moderating factors during acculturation, for example, the success of coping strategies with accreditation events were also explored. An analysis of the responses follows.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **PERSON FACTORS**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This thesis focuses on economic adaptation, the degree to which work is obtained, is satisfying and is effective in the new culture. Berry (1997) recognized individual variables that arose prior to acculturation and those that came into effect during acculturation that influenced the course of adaptation (person factors). He identified the need for an elaboration of the aspects of migration motivation, status loss, and perception of relative deprivation relative to economic adaptation (Berry, 1997, p.21). These aspects and age, as it is related to readiness to work, are addressed in this chapter. Some information about how the variables of gender, personality, education, pre-acculturation and cultural distance affect the course of accreditation and employment also emerged.

#### **3.2. Person Factors Prior to Acculturation**

Migrating individuals begin the process of adaptation with personal demographic and social characteristics. These individual variables influence the way acculturation will proceed. They may be moderating (influencing the relationship between the main events) or mediating (intervening directly between the main events) factors which relate to the way acculturation will proceed (p. 21).

### 3.2.a. Migration Motivation

#### REASONS FOR IMMIGRATING TO CANADA

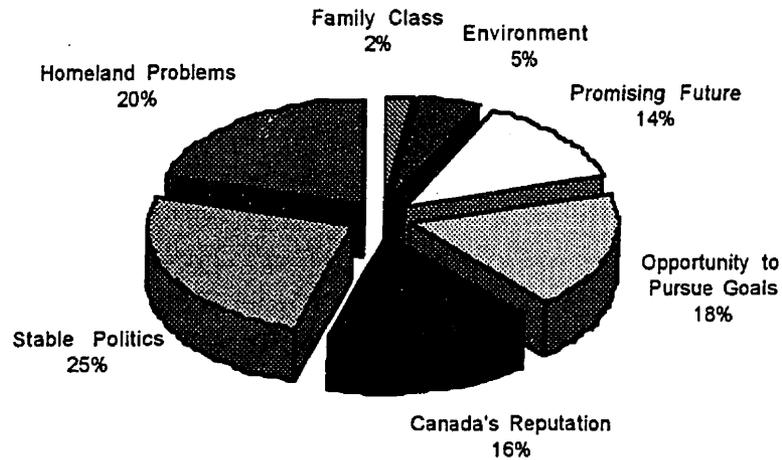


Chart One

Reactive factors, which push an individual from his homeland, are considered to be constraining or exclusionary; proactive factors that pull or attract an individual to Canada, for example, are considered facilitating or enabling (Richmond, 1993, cited in Berry, 19979, p. 22). To the question, "Why did you come to Canada?", the fourteen newcomers responded with a single or several motivations. Their 44 reasons fell into several categories, which are represented in Chart One.

Two percent of the responses (1) mentioned "family" (R, p. 1) as a reason for migration. "The rugged beauty of the land itself" (Calgary Herald, A6, May 6,

1998) was one of Canada's most powerful symbols and accounted for 5% of the reasons that newcomers chose to immigrate to this nation. "Beautiful country" (C, p. 3) and "scenery" (SML, p. 4) were attractive to two newcomers.

Concern for the future was a reason for immigrating for 14% of the items. Two mentioned that there was "no real future for ... young people" (B & W, p. 5). Another stated that she and her husband thought in Canada there "would be a better way of finding our future" (E, p. 2). Still another's first concern was for the "future of [his] kids (Ma, p. 3). Finally, "better future" (Ri, p. 1) and "a better future for the next generation" (Y, p. 3) were expressed as reasons by former engineers.

Another attraction that Canada held for 18% of these newcomers was the opportunity to pursue personal goals such as adequate housing, career advancement and the chance to renew their lives that was denied them in their homeland. For example, two mentioned that "housing was a real problem" (B & W, p. 5) in their homeland. A former social worker stated that she and her husband were "so discouraged as a young people by not having [a] chance to have [a] home" (E, p. 3). To have "better careers" (Ri, p. 1), "to renew and renovate... life" (SML, p. 4) and "to get some exposure to ... living in this country" (T, p. 3) drew three others. "A better life" was also mentioned (B & W, p. 5; Y, p. 3).

Immigrants knew before they came that Canadians were tolerant,

compassionate, "generous" (SML, p. 4) and open-minded. This notable reputation was learned through "documentaries" (E, p. 3) on television, "books" (SML, p. 4) and personal association with Canadians. A former bank manager mentioned " [there was a] great impression of people living here [sic]" (T, p. 3). The evaluation of Canada by the United Nations as the "number one country" (Ri, p. 1) was persuasive to one man and his family. In planning to emigrate, an engineer thought, "Canada was the only one" (Ma, p. 3). Sixteen percent of the reasons for choosing Canada indicated that the reputation of Canada was a significant factor in attracting them. It was "a good country" (C, p. 3).

"Stable" (SML, p. 4) government policies were specified in 25% of the responses. Three believed that the points gained in the immigration process permitted them to participate in the Canadian work force (C, p. 3; Ri, p. 1; Ma, p. 3). "Freedom" (C, p. 3; Y, p. 3, SML, p. 4) and "democracy" (C, p. 3) were other reasons. "Better education, better medical facilities" (Ri, p. 1, SML, p. 4) were listed by still another. A former broadcasting director considered that Canada's cultural diversity would enrich his children's education (SML, p. 4).

Those who escaped danger and jeopardy in their homeland chose this country as a refuge. "War" (F, p. 2; L, p. 3; M, p. 5; S, p. 2) was the reason that four professional immigrants are in Canada. The "transition period" (Ma, p. 4), "problems" (SML, p. 4) and inadequate housing pushed five of the newcomers from their homelands.

### 3.2.b. Status Loss

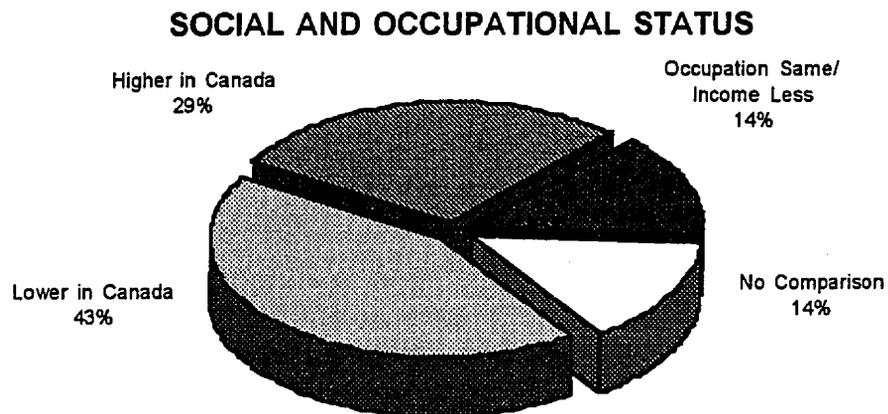


Chart Two

Frequently immigrants' departure status is higher than their entry status. That is, credentials (educational and work experience) are frequently devalued upon arrival (Cumming, Lee & Oreopoulos, 1989, cited in Berry, 1997). Aycan & Berry (1996) declare that a common experience for migrants is a combination of status loss and limited status mobility.

The work done in Canada by these 14 professional immigrants was dramatically different from the work they did in their homelands. The impacts of the loss of status were explored in the responses to the question, "When you

think of your country, what comes to mind in terms of your social status or your occupational status?" Their responses are categorized in Chart Two.

Four newcomers (29%) stated that their social status was higher in Canada. One former social worker stated her standard here "would be like a doctor" (E, p. 3) in her homeland. A former civil engineer declared that professionals in her country live from "the first of the month to the end, somehow" (L, p. 4). Two others came to Canada in 1982 because they had "nothing left to lose" (B & W, p. 6). Today, all four have a single dwelling house, one or two vehicles, and holidays.

Although two men (14%) had similar work, they did not enjoy the same benefits as they did in their homelands. They yearned for the celebrations they had and a different style of thinking and of living they shared with family and close friends. An engineer left his own petroleum business, his own home and furnishings to start from scratch here.

Two others (14%) were reluctant to compare their former social and occupational status. The circumstances of their departure during war and their immediate personal and emotional needs overshadowed concerns about occupational and social status. A former lawyer longed for the heirloom furnishings he and his extended family shared. The other talked about the nice middle class and the special treatment extended to those in her profession, medicine.

Six out of fourteen newcomers (43%) believed that their social and occupational status was higher in their homelands. C, a former Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) doctor, worked in a very good and big provincial hospital. When she thought of China, she exclaimed, "Yeah, China! They gave me a lot of thing[s] (C, p.4). Because her husband was a university professor, the unit where he worked gave a house to him and his family. The rent was very low, about 20 or 30 Chinese RMB (about \$4 Canadian) per month.

When R, a former medical laboratory technologist, thought of her country, the first things that came to mind were "the friends, the classmates" R, p. 2). In China, her expertise provided doctors with a correct report "to help them decide what kind [of] disease the patients [had]" (from notes). She enjoyed the collegiality of the staff of the hospital where she worked.

Ri "worked for [his] family, for [his] wife and for [his] kids" (Ri, p. 2). He had a big home and never worried about a job. For more than 10 years he was a professional engineer. He had numerous letters of reference and credentials to show for his past achievements.

SML enjoyed respect as a broadcasting program director in his homeland. His standard was at a high level. That is, he was comfortable economically; he was interested and competent at his job.

T worked in a bank in middle management, a well-respected profession in his country. He was very happy with [his] status in [his] country. He had his own car, a good home and a "luxurious life" (T, p. 3).

Y was a thermal engineer. She designed a water treatment plant that was still in operation. She also supervised others, gave instructions and checked results in a laboratory.

Responses to the question about social and occupational status in their homelands yielded other themes. A former TCM doctor remarked positively that the desire to work hard, to build the country was the same in her homeland and in Canada. A former engineer expected to work hard. "It [was] no problem" (Ri, p. 2). A former doctor reflected on her stay in Canada as a challenge that she had met despite her lack of confidence. Finally, a thermal engineer felt that she needed "time to let the Canadian people... recognize all [of her] good qualities" (Y, p. 4).

At the other end of the balance, two others were willing to work at low paying jobs temporarily until they found more suitable positions. However, little money restricted a TCM doctor from traveling or buying what she wanted. No job offers after six months resigned a former electrical engineer to his low status. A former bank manager stressed the importance of having money to buy the expensive, but good quality necessities available in Canada.

### 3.2.c. Perception of Relative Deprivation

#### PRESENT USE OF WORK SKILLS

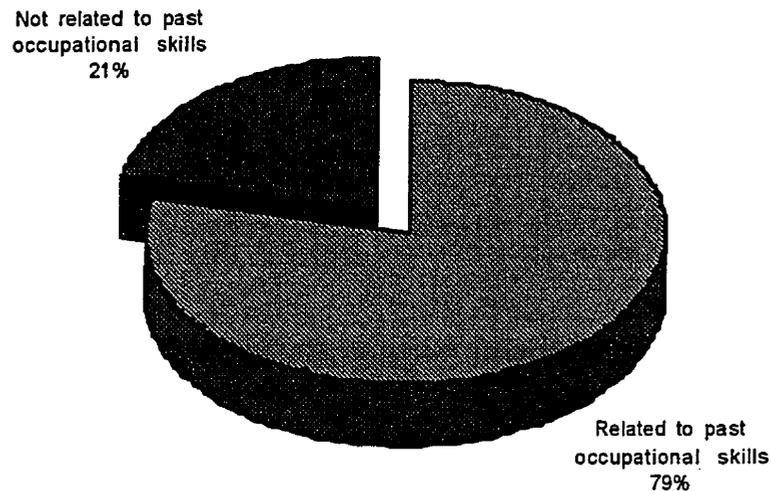


Chart Three

Aycan & Berry (1996) found that alienation is likely when there is a discrepancy between the desired state that the society values as the norm (having a decent job), and the achieved state (unemployment or underemployment). The longer the duration of underemployment or unemployment, the more likely immigrants experienced acculturative stress and negative self-concept. Nevertheless, "despite the inability to regain departure status, gradual improvement in Canada led immigrants to perceive themselves as competent and successful, and to describe their conditions as just as privileged as others in society" (p. 248). Basok (1997) noted that those working

at levels below what might be expected held hope for a better future for their children. Knowing that they lived in a safer country with better standards of living made their employment situation easier to accept, but few resigned themselves to it.

To determine how newcomers perceived the use of their work skills in Canada, I asked, "Does your job give you a chance to use your job skills?" Twenty-one percent of the newcomers were not able to relate what they were doing in Canada with their work in their homelands. Seventy-nine percent of the newcomers interviewed believed that their present work was related to their skills and experience. Chart Three shows how these newcomers viewed the use of their skills in Canada.

Positive connections between past and present occupations existed for ten newcomers. For example, two believed that both jobs involved working with people (W from B & W, R). Another two stated that some skills were used but not the designing (B from B & W) or managerial skills (T). Previous and past jobs were both helping professions for a former nurse. This was a similarity that a former social worker also noticed (E). A former civil engineer that was not working in her field was positive that temporary work improved her job skills and English (L). One Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor thanked her boss for giving her the chance to use her skill (C). Another doctor was "close with medical staff [and] the nurses" (S, p. 3). Finally, a school administrator working

as a teacher's aide and an engineer working in petroleum engineering affirmed that their work used the skills that they acquired in their previous jobs (F; Ma).

However, other themes emerged from the responses to this question as individuals elaborated on their responses. B stated that his "designing skills (B & W, p. 9) were not used in his present work. T admitted that bank reconciliation was only " a part of [his] former job (T, p. 4). S always "checked the file... checked with [the] nurse or doctor.... Or [saw] results of tests" so that she would know "know what she [could] expect from [her patients]" (S, p. 4). However, she is not permitted to answer medical questions because she is not qualified.

Four were not able to compare past work skills to their present work because they were not working. One was a student at AVC. He stated, "No, [it is not related]. Just normal studying [sic]" (M, p. 3). Another was an ESL student. He stated that "as a student, he can not find [a job] (SML, p. 7). Still, another student of ESL stated that [she had not] a chance" (Y, p. 6). Finally, another declared, " If I don't have ... work, how can I get the chance [to compare skills]?" (Ri, p. 4).

### 3.2.d. Age

The 1996 Census reported that immigrant earners were generally older. Their median age was about 42 years, compared with 36 for the Canadian-born population. There were proportionally fewer immigrant earners in the young age

groups where employment income was lower, and more in older age groups which tended to have higher earnings. In addition, higher proportions of immigrant earners had completed university than native-born (Statistics Canada release, May 12, 1998).

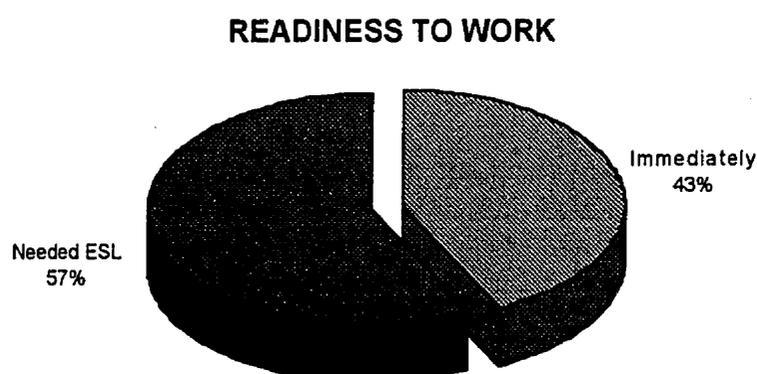


Chart Four

At the time of the interviews (September to November, 1997), fourteen highly skilled newcomers, seven men and seven women who had been or were underemployed or unemployed were between the ages of 30 and 46. To the questions, "What did you do from the time you arrived until the time you began to look for employment?, How long after you arrived did you look for a job?, Why so soon? and Why so late?", six (43%) of the newcomers indicated that they actively

searched for jobs soon after they arrived in Canada. Eight others (57%) who did not speak English well enough were not ready. This information is illustrated in Chart Four.

Of those who were not ready to work because they needed ESL (8), two also had very small children. A former nurse had a baby two months after she arrived in Canada. She obtained her first job 10 months later. Then, she "went back to school for two years and... took [a] real estate course" (B & W, p. 8). The other, a former social worker, was reluctant to leave her child in daycare because "it was so difficult for her to adjust because she [the daughter] knew only ... Polish, and when she went there, it was just English" (E, p. 5). When she began to get depressed, she "started with a cleaner person. ... Later [she worked as a waitress part time on weekends... Then [she started looking at something ... that... kind of [met her] expectations" (E, p. 6).

When a former school administrator arrived in Canada with his family, the English he knew consisted of one word, "pizza" (from notes). As a refugee, he enrolled in English as a Second Language classes in Canada. After five months, he volunteered, then started another program. He would have begun to look for work earlier, "but when you have no tools, [English] how can you do [anything]?" (F, p. 5).

A former civil engineer had just finished university and just wanted to relax a little bit after arrival. She was advised that ESL training would help her get a

job. Since then, she has worked, upgraded and achieved high grades. A former lawyer, a refugee, also took ESL classes for one year. During that time he sent resumés and applications to many companies. He “did not get any chance to work in Canada” (M, p. 5). A former broadcasting producer and director worried about his job, about what he would do. He would like to work soon because he needed money. However, he would like “to delay to get a job because of [his] English... It was a conflict” (SML, p. 2). When S, a former doctor, came to Canada, she didn’t speak English at all. In the Labor Market Training Program, she obtained two work placements. One was satisfactory; the other “frustrating... It was too slow. [She] couldn’t prove. [She] couldn’t express [her]self. It was very, very hard for [her]” (S, p. 3). A thermal engineer attended ESL because she did not feel that her “English was good enough for talk[ing]... at the job” (Y, p. 5).

Additional information emerged from these responses. A former doctor appreciated “everything [that the] Canadian government did for [her]. [However, she] felt very, very uncomfortable during that year because they paid [her] bills...[She] just wanted to be independent” (S, p. 4). However, she wanted to be confident in her ability to speak English before she attempted a job. A former social worker began to think, “Maybe, [she] could try” a similar social work program to the one she completed in her homeland (E, p. 4).

Of those who were ready to enter the work force as soon as they arrived in Canada (6), one former engineer got a government subsidized job 7 months after he arrived. A former Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) doctor found a part time job by telephoning every clinic in Calgary as soon as she arrived. She anticipated competition from other Chinese Medicine doctors and did not want to waste time. Time was important for a petroleum engineer (Ma) who got his first job in less than a week delivering furniture. He did his computer job search in his spare time at the Immigration Society (CCIS), as well as learning to make a resumé. Then he sent the resumé out and waited. He stated, "You know how it is. Wait for an answer that will never come" (Ma, p. 5).

A former medical laboratory technician (MLT) started working at her sister's restaurant one month after her arrival because she did not have a visa to work. Since then she has attended ESL classes and additional job training. She never searched for a job as an MLT because she was advised that with the cutbacks in Alberta Health, there would be limited job opportunities. She planned to change her career to something that related to chemistry after finishing high school English and attending SAIT.

A former electrical engineer that came to Calgary because there were so many job opportunities in his field started his job search the very next day. He bought a paper, filled out applications, and made telephone calls. Some of this effort resulted in interviews, but not for engineering jobs. "The priority was to

look for work, to find a job because we have so many expenditures. Such as housing, food, schooling, for the kids [sic]. If you don't have money, what can you do?" (Ri, p.3). He has had no job offers since he arrived in Calgary in September 1997.

After his arrival in Calgary, a former bank manager went to the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society where his job search produced two or three job interviews. He began doing bank reconciliation within two months of his arrival in Calgary.

Finally, the extreme difficulty of settlement was a theme that emerged in one engineer's response:

"It was kind of hard... You don't know anything. You don't know anybody... You have nobody to ask questions... Kids [have] to adjust, to [a] schedule... They are small... One year and eight months... And you know how it is here without a car. It's crazy... We didn't have any furniture... slept on the floor [sic] (Ma, p. 5).

### 3.2.e. Gender

Although females may be more at risk for problems than males in the acculturation process (Beiser, et al., 1988; Carballo, 1994, cited in Berry, p.22), no question in the interview explored this difference. As such, this study can not verify this aspect of the framework. However, the female immigrants in this

study, like their male counterparts, sought similar work to what they experienced in their homeland. Thus, it is likely that these professional women had the support of their families. The new roles they sought in Canada did not bring them into conflict with their heritage culture. Furthermore, the balance of seven highly skilled women and seven highly skilled men in this study is not reflected in the April 14, 1998, Statistics Canada release entitled "Education, mobility and migration". This report showed that 36% of recent immigrant men were university graduates, compared with 31% of women.

#### 3.2.f. Personality

Consistent findings that show that individual personality factors affect the course of acculturation are rare. It is not the personality traits, i.e., locus of control, introversion, extroversion, or self-efficacy that matters but its 'fit' with society (Berry, 1997). Personality traits emerge from the responses of these narrators, although no questions were designed to relate personality and a fit with Canadian society.

#### 3.2.g. Education and Pre-acculturation

Berry (1997) considered that education was a personal resource in itself. That is, problem analysis and problem solving skills instilled by formal education, as well as income, occupational status and support networks were all protective

factors for better adaptation. When migration motivation was explored (earlier in this thesis), it was evident that education attuned the newcomers to features of Canadian society, such as the multiculturalism policy and the immigration policy that welcomed highly skilled foreign workers. Knowledge of Canadian languages, history, norms and values, filtered through Canada's internationally renowned reputation, for example, lifted expectations to unrealistic levels and led to greater stress.

#### 3.2.h. Cultural Distance

The general and consistent finding is that the greater the cultural distance (how dissimilar the two cultures are in language, religion, etc.), the less positive is the adaptation (Berry, 1997). The rich description in response to the question about homesickness, (later in this thesis) tends to support the finding that the greater the cultural distance, the less positive the adaptation may be.

Adjustment to a lack of a deeper understanding on Canadian television, for example, was a very difficult transition for a thermal power engineer.

### **3.3. Person Factors During Acculturation**

Each day individuals must deal with to what extent cultural identity is important (culture maintenance) and to what extent they should become involved in other groups (contact and participation). Their attitudes and behaviors, their

acculturation strategies, depend upon the form of acculturation adopted by the dominant society. In Canada, an integration strategy may be pursued because certain psychological pre-conditions exist in its multicultural society. These pre-conditions are: the widespread acceptance of the value to a society of cultural diversity; relatively low levels of prejudice; positive mutual attitudes among cultural groups; and a sense of attachment to, or identification with the larger society by all groups (Berry & Kalin, in press, cited in Berry, 1997, p. 11).

Preferences may depend on a coherent strategy. Or on whether in private spheres, such as the home, more cultural maintenance is sought. Also, less intergroup contact may be sought in private spheres than in the more public ones. However, if the preference does not match the broader national context, individuals may well be constrained and at risk for stress.

In acculturation research, some psychological changes are easy such as name change. This is an example of a behavioral shift, a matter of learning a new behavioral repertoire that is appropriate for the new cultural context. This also requires some culture shedding to occur (the unlearning of aspects of one's repertoire that are no longer appropriate that may be accompanied by some moderate culture conflict (where incompatible behaviors create difficulties for the individual)).

Serious conflicts and acculturative stress have negative and positive effects. With homesickness, when individuals cannot easily change their

repertoire, problem appraisal and coping strategies may moderate or mediate the difficulty contributing toward an eventual solution. When major difficulties are experienced, such as job search culture shock, the cultural context exceeds the individuals's capacity to cope, leading to psychopathology, such as clinical depression and anxiety (Berry, 1997). Responses to questions about name change, homesickness and job search culture shock revealed how these 14 newcomers dealt with issues of varying difficulty related to their accreditation and job search.

### 3.3.a. Name Change

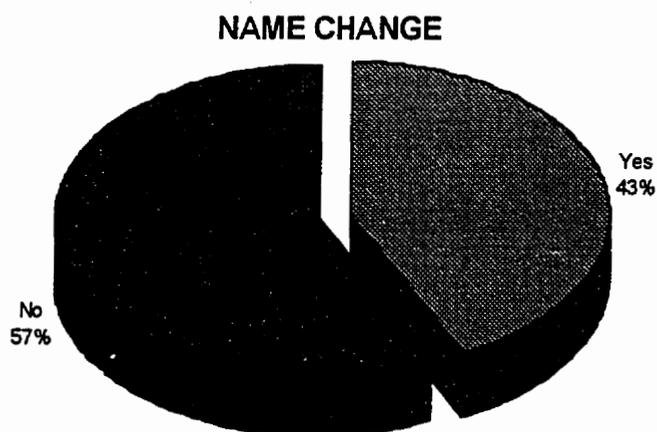


Chart Five

Eight who did not change their names were confident that their names would not be a barrier in multicultural Canada; one former social worker expected Canadians to try and learn her name. For others (5), their heritage and family were strongly connected to their names. Two had friends who changed their names to avoid possible discrimination, but they would not do so unless the employer offered them a job on that basis alone. For two others, the 'W' at the beginning of one name was pronounced like an English 'v'; the c in the other's name was pronounced 'ch'. A former civil engineer changed her name when she married. Finally, a former broadcasting producer director considered changing his name to make others "feel comfortable... The name is not concerned with my self-respect... It is [a] very awkward thing " (SML, p. 15).

### 3.3.b. Homesickness

Kam Singh, a businessman from Toronto said, "Life is incomparably better here from a material standpoint, but not so from the stand point of human empathy and spiritual aliveness" (Special Committee, 1984, p.11). The narrators revealed how they coped with this acculturative event in discussing whether they agreed or disagreed with the former spokesman.

Of those who could neither agree, nor disagree, four explained that Canada was different (30%). A former broadcasting producer director expected the "human mental situation" to be different in Canada because change is slow.

In developing country, few people had time for others. A former TCM doctor worried about low salaries and little job security. A former doctor was sick when she thought of the history, architecture and the concerts of her homeland. A former engineer stated that a deeper understanding was missing among Canadians. She felt a longing when she watched humorous TV shows and they were not funny; when she read and could not 'get into' the text; when others talked and it was just talking. Her solution was to invite friends to celebrate holidays together and sing. Then, she felt less lonely.

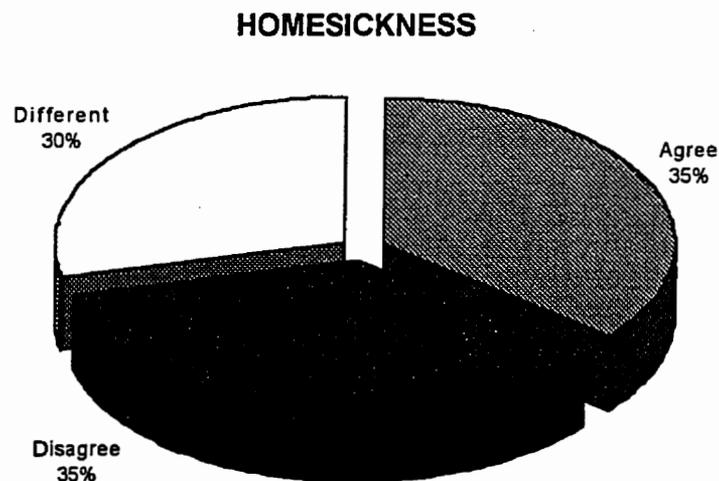


Chart Six

Those who disagreed with Kam Singh easily adjusted to their friendly city (five or 35%). A former social worker acknowledged her good fortune in meeting

people who helped her, gave her good advice and were 'there' for her and her family (E).

Of those who agreed with Kam Singh (five, or 35%), one former bank manager missed all the neighbors who helped, gave attention and listened in his homeland. Here, nobody did anything for others, everyone was busy with his, or her own life. He added that the high material standards were unattainable if there were no earnings. An engineer stated that help was available, but only after a lot of hassle.

### 3.3.c. Job Search Culture Shock

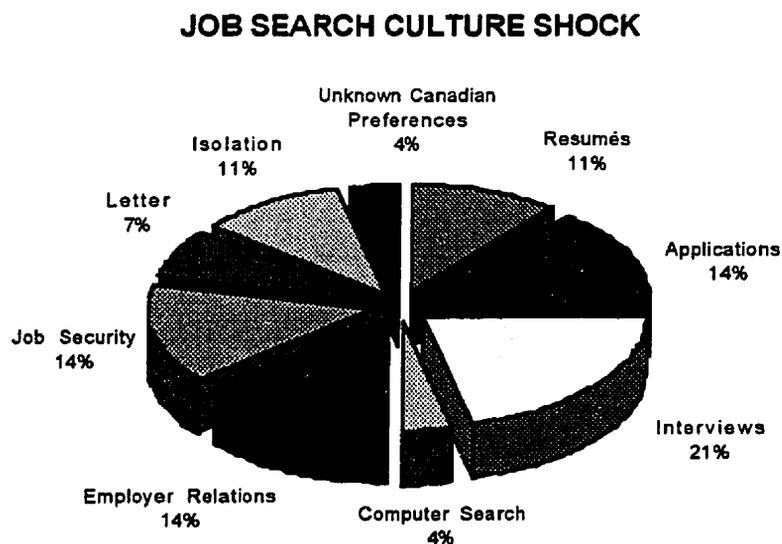


Chart Seven

To learn about how these fourteen newcomers experienced this culture shock, the following questions were asked: "Did you experience culture shock? If so, can you relate it to your search for jobs?" The newcomers mentioned 31 items that contributed to their job search culture shock. The categories are illustrated in Chart Seven.

Of the 31 items, four positively affected the newcomers. A former social worker learned to promote her abilities in the application, resumé, and/or the interview process (E). A former medical laboratory technologist learned to access job opportunities on a computer by trial and error (R). Another two items relating to employer relations were positive. A former bank manager appreciated the openness of his employer and the working atmosphere at the same time that productive work was expected (T). A former doctor recognized that if you do not know how to do something, Canadians will train you, which was different than in her homeland (S).

Twenty-seven out of 31 of the items negatively effected economic adaptation. Nine newcomers mentioned that looking for a job was easier in their homelands. The governments provided jobs to university graduates who sent a simple letter to the organization of their choice and requested an available position. Two others added that these jobs were usually for life. Three had never written a resumé, filled out an application, or experienced an interview. An engineer finally understood all the implications of a Canadian job search after two

years. "Looking for a job is a job" (S, p. 11) was how a former doctor described the job search in Canada.

A lack of networks was one of several themes that emerged from the responses about job search culture shock. Pursuing personal interests other than professional careers, such as a barber was blocked by expensive licenses for two newcomers. One newcomer found that employers are more concerned with fine points than giving newcomers a chance. For example, one prospective employer called an American computer company three times in one day to verify details on a resumé before offering a job. For others, their previous employers used a range of lists (a list of qualified workers in each profession) or stated forthrightly if there was a chance. Finally, a lack of networks and uncertainty about how to 'fit' in Canada were mentioned as aspects of job search culture shock.

#### 3.3.d. Time and Resources

Aycan and Berry (1996) noted that with time, most newcomers come to believe that they are as well off as other Canadians. This positive outcome was evident in the experience of two newcomers who had immigrated in 1982. They had changed their careers. With regards to resources, the relative wealth of the 14 newcomers did not seem to make a difference to their accreditation or job search experiences.

### 3.4. Summary

In Chapter Three, the effectiveness of person factors that existed prior to acculturation was explored in questions about migration motivation, social and occupational status, perception of relative deprivation and readiness to work as it is related to age. With regards to migration motivation, immigrants share many of the same reasons for migrating to Canada that resident Canadians hold as very important elements of their Canadian standard of living. That is, Canadians appreciate the beauty of the land, the bright economic future and the opportunity to pursue personal goals. They count on the benefits of the stable political climate. They also take pride in Canada's international reputation for multiculturalism. When these characteristics are compared to those countries where war or unstable governments exists, life in Canada is of a high standard. Positive and negative effects that emerged from questions relating to social and occupational status, perception of relative deprivation and readiness to work emerged as follows:

#### 3.4.a. Positive Effects of Person Factors Prior to Acculturation

3.4.a.i. The work ethic, the pioneer spirit, determination, self-efficacy and optimism surfaced in the responses to a question about social and occupational status.

3.4.a.ii. For 4 out of 14 newcomers, their social and

occupational status was higher in Canada.

3.4.a.iii. Ten out of 14 newcomers utilized their former work skills in their present work.

3.4.a.iv. Two out of 14 newcomers who did not search for work immediately were confident to attempt upgrading despite their struggle with English.

3.4.a.v. Of those who were competent in English, Canadian employers and families offered jobs to newcomers who searched for work immediately after arrival.

3.4.b. Negative Effects of Person Factors Prior to Acculturation

3.4.b.i. Although two worked in their professional environment so that their occupational status would be similar, the former support of friends and family was lacking. An engineer noticed that his status was lower because he had to start over. That is, he had to repurchase all his material goods.

3.4.b.ii. Two out of 14 newcomers did not make a comparison of their social status in Canada with what they knew in their homelands. They remained affected by the escape from their homelands.

3.4.b.iii. Six out of 10 missed status benefits such as:

aa. inexpensive housing,

- bb. collegiality in the workplace,
- cc. self-respect associated with supporting one's family,
- dd. interesting, responsible work,
- ee. respect, and
- ff. a high, even luxurious standard of living.

3.4.b.iv. One of the six who felt their status was lower in Canada stated that little money from low paying jobs prevented her from buying what she needed.

3.4.b.v. Necessities in Canada are expensive, but of good quality reported a former bank manager whose status was lower in Canada.

3.4.b.vi. No job offers resigned a former engineer to his low status (unemployed).

3.4.b.vii. Eight out of the 14 newcomers required ESL training before beginning the accreditation or job search process in Canada.

3.4.b.viii. The adjustment of young children concerned two of the eight who needed ESL.

Gender, personality, education and pre-acculturation did not emerge as affecting the accreditation of these newcomers. Effects that emerged from the responses to homesickness tend to support the findings that the greater the cultural distance, the less positive the adaptation.

### 3.4.c. Positive Effects of Person Factors during Acculturation

The effectiveness of person factors to moderate or mediate life events during acculturation, was explored in questions about the difficulty of name change, if necessary, homesickness and job search culture shock. Positive and negative effects emerged as follows:

3.4.c.i. Name change was an easy shift, if necessary, for 13 out of 14 newcomers.

3.4.c.ii. Two of the four newcomers who had little difficulty with homesickness indicated that individuals in Canada were instrumental in their overall adaptation.

3.4.c.iii. One of the four newcomers who stated that Canada was different in their response to the question about homesickness mentioned that support from her ethnic community was helpful.

3.4.c.iv. Four out of 14 newcomers who experienced job search culture shock learned new skills, developed new relationships and benefited from new job opportunities in Canada during their accreditation and job search.

### 3.4.d. Negative Effects of Person Factors during Acculturation

3.4.d.i. Coping strategies had limited success for four

newcomers who considered that Canada was different in talking about homesickness.

3.4.d.ii. Exclusion in Canada, limited finances and the difficulty of getting help that neutralized the effectiveness of coping strategies also emerged from the responses of two newcomers who agreed at least in part with the statement by Kam Singh.

3.4.d.iii. Thirteen of 31 items indicated that the application, resumé, interview process was a culture shock. One engineer stated that it took him two years to understand the job search differences.

3.4.d.iv. Some of the items (14%) indicated that in their homelands their jobs were for life, that is, their jobs were secure.

3.4.d.v. Some of the items (seven percent) indicated that jobs were obtained by writing a letter requesting an available position.

3.4.d.vi. Eleven percent of the items indicated that a lack of networks hindered the accreditation and job search process.

3.4.d.vii. Of the 14% of items related to employer relations, three newcomers mentioned that employers verify every detail on a resumé, do not use a range of lists or state if an applicant has a chance.

3.4.d.viii. Four percent of the items indicated that newcomers were uncertain how to 'fit' in the Canadian work force when Canadians do not distinguish between people on the basis of a job.

This 'one shot' study did not permit an investigation of the outcome of adaptation. However, two of the 14 newcomers made a positive adaptation to Canada since their immigration in 1982. They changed their careers. The relative wealth of these newcomers did not make a difference to their accreditation or job search experiences.

In Chapter Four, the influence of situational factors from the society of origin and the society of settlement (Canada) on accreditation experiences is explored. The positive and negative effects of the interactions of the 14 highly skilled newcomers with education, professional, government and business institutions reveal the relative importance of the situational factors which arise in the society of origin and those that arise in the society of settlement.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **SITUATIONAL FACTORS**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

According to Berry (1997), individual acculturation is influenced by population level factors in the society of origin and in the society of settlement. In this chapter, situational factors in the Canadian society emerge to have positive and negative effects on the economic adaptation of highly skilled newcomers. The society of origin is less important.

#### **4.2. Society of Origin**

According to Berry (1997), an examination of the political, economic and demographic characteristics of the society of origin is necessary to understand where the individual is coming from and to determine his/her cultural distance (p.16). Greater cultural distance implies the need for greater culture shedding and new culture learning. Perhaps larger differences trigger negative intergroup attitudes, and induce greater culture conflict leading to poorer adaptation. In addition, Richmond (1993) suggests that migrants can be ranged on a continuum between reactive and proactive. The former are motivated by 'push' factors that are constraining or exclusionary, and generally negative in character, while the latter are motivated by 'pull' factors that are facilitating or enabling, and generally

positive in character. That is, the degree of voluntariness may have an effect on the eventual outcome of acculturation.

However, Kim (1988) found immigrants with high "push" motivations and those with high "pull" motivations had almost the same number of adaptation problems. They were both at risk for greater stress if excessively high expectations about their life in the new culture were not met, (cited in Berry, 1997, p. 13). Similarly, for Goldlust, J. and Richmond, A. (1974), ethnic variables proved to be unimportant, explaining only one percent of the variance of occupational status mobility between the former country and Canada (p.210). And Piché, V., Renaud, J., and Gingras, L. (1996) concluded that the impact of national origin in the process of access to a first job is minimal (p.20).

This investigation did not examine ethnic variables. The 14 underemployed or unemployed participants originated from seven different countries. Before immigrating to Canada, they obtained post secondary education and experience in engineering, nursing, social work, education, law, medical laboratory technology, television broadcasting and directing, and banking. Forty-three percent (6 out of 14) entered the work force almost immediately after arrival in Canada. Two of those who could not speak English well enough attempted to work before they were ready. This evidence provides balance to the Richmond (1993) suggestion and supports the findings of Goldlust, J. and Richmond, A. (1974) and Piché, V., Renaud, J., and Gingras, L. (1996).

### **4.3. The Society of Settlement**

Berry (1997) maintains that population level variables seem to be important to the process of acculturation in many studies, across many societies. National immigration and acculturation policies, ideologies and attitudes in the dominant and ethnic society are factors. He maintains that 'their relative contributions will likely vary according to the specific acculturative context being considered. That is, they may be examples of a set of universal factors, ones that operate everywhere, but whose specific influence will vary in relation to features of the particular cultures in contact" (Berry, 1997, p. 26).

A positive multicultural ideology and a corresponding integration strategy provide a positive settlement context in Canada. However, there are variations in the relative acceptance of specific cultural, racial, and religious groups such as the Koreans in Canada (Berry, 1997). This ambivalence is common in the larger Canadian society where there is widespread support for immigration and multiculturalism, but only if the principle of equality is maintained. Support from ethnocultural communities like the Chinese community in Calgary is also significant, especially as they continue to evolve.

In Chapter Four, 14 highly skilled immigrants respond to questions relative to the barriers identified by the Alberta Task Force (1992). The positive and negative effects of interactions with education, business, professional, government and non-government institutions during the accreditation process reveal the meanings of those lived experiences in Canadian society.

#### **4.4. Access to Information about Foreign Accreditation**

From the report of the Task Force (1992), a lack of information about the complex language and the evaluation procedures prevented newcomers from understanding the regulatory system of their professional organizations. They were unprepared for the difficulties that could arise in the process of obtaining registration. Some of them could not understand the requirements. Many did not know how long registration might take. Information about where to obtain Alberta equivalency, the standards and methods used in evaluation, whether educational deficiencies were provided and institutions where these deficiencies could be corrected were also lacking. Immigrants did not know if their professional work experience would be recognized. Neither did they know about the Canadian experience requirement, language training, language testing or access to income support.

##### **4.4.a. Understanding Professional Organizations**

Fourteen percent understood the system with the help of others. Fifty percent of the respondents indicated that they were able to understand the regulatory system of their professional organizations when they were asked the question, "When you began your job search, were you able to understand and make your way through the regulatory system?" Thirty-six percent did not know about the regulatory system of their professions.

### ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND REGULATORY SYSTEM

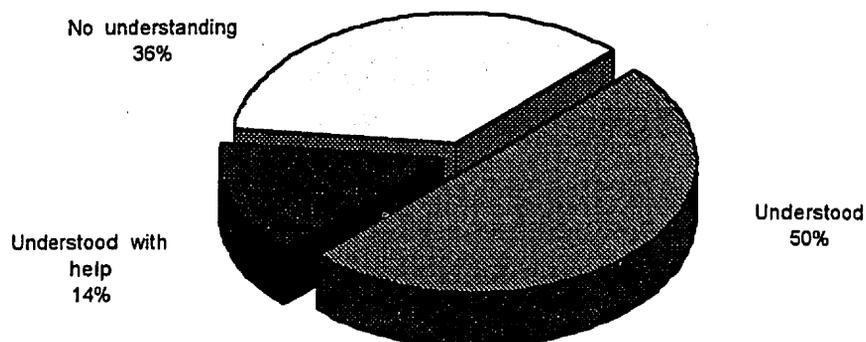


Chart Eight

Of the 50% who understood the regulatory system (B, W, C, F, Ma, Ri, S, T), determination and self-efficacy emerged to have positive effects in the interactions of three newcomers with their professional organizations. A former social worker was more concerned with working than with registration in her field. Both a TCM doctor and an engineer were able to work in their fields without incurring evaluation costs and wasting time.

Negative effects were mentioned by a former engineer who “had an idea” about how to register in his professional organization (B from B & W, p. 9). A former doctor was uncertain about the special field of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Alberta (C). Although she was ambitious, a former doctor was

reluctant to return to school full time. No other themes emerged from this group in response to this question.

Two newcomers (14%) (L; F) found the complex process overwhelming. They understood nothing at first although they used their dictionaries extensively. The help of friends and family was indispensable.

Of the 36% who were not able to make their way through the regulatory system (E, M, R, SML, Y), a former thermal engineer was disturbed to learn that when it came to information about her professional organization, she had to "take care of herself" (Y, p. 6). Furthermore, an individual in an immigrant serving organization laughed when her husband asked about information on how to adjust. No information was available on what type of skilled people is needed in Canada. No other themes emerged from the responses to this question.

#### 4.4.b. Difficulties with the Regulatory System

Of those who understood the regulatory system of their professional organization (64%), only 14% (two) experienced difficulties in understanding the language of the regulatory bodies. One noticed "something could be this way, but not always" (F, p. 6). A former engineer admitted that it would have been "definitely harder" without the help of her husband (L, p. 6).

Other themes emerged from conversation with those who understood the regulatory system (64%). On the one hand, a TCM doctor was optimistic about her ability to deal with difficulties that she anticipated (C). An engineer stated

that “it was very clear: experience... apply... some exams” (Ma, p.6). On the other hand, a former engineer noticed that Alberta Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists (APEGGA) recommended that he apply for work; however, employers required his membership in his professional organization (Ri). Finally, a former bank manager learned that his certification required “two years of working experience, in [a] managerial position... four national examinations, [at] four levels” (T, p. 8). No other themes emerged from the responses to this question.

Of those who did not understand the regulatory system of their professional organization (E, M, R, SML, Y), a social worker was anxious about the lack of a Canadian diploma, her accent and that she might be “required to know more English” (E, p. 10). A broadcasting director and producer focused the difficulty on his lack of English. That is, because he was not confident in his English speaking ability, it was his fault that he could not gather information. Finally, a former engineer resigned herself to finding information on her own (Y).

#### 4.4.c. Understanding the Requirements

Fifty percent understood the requirements for registration in their professional organization, two (14%) needed the help of others and five (36%) had no experience with their professional organization.

Of the 50% who understood the requirements, a former bank manager wondered whether his organization would insist that he obtain foreign papers that

verify previous examination results. No other themes emerged from this group in their responses to the question; "Did you understand fully the requirements for registration in your profession or trade?"

Of the two who understood the requirements with help, a former school administrator remembered that he "Did not sleep sometimes thinking about that" (F, p. 6). This condition lasted about six months. A former civil engineer took computer upgrading to facilitate her entry into the Alberta work force. No other themes emerged from the responses of this group.

Of those who had no experience with their professional organization, one reported that she "Did not even know where to get [these] regulations" (Y, p. 8). A lack of access to information was the only theme to emerge from the responses to this group.

#### 4.4.d. Waiting Period for Registration

Those who understood the requirements of their professional organizations (nine) reported that the length of time they must wait depended on the:

- i. length of time away from practice (W from B & W)
- ii. the Canadian experience requirement (Ma)
- iii. the registration examination (B from B & W)
- iv. the response from the professional organization (Ri)
- v. the number of credits received for courses taken overseas (T).

A doctor guessed that it would take three years (S). In the field of engineering, there were three estimates: six months, one year, four years.

One TCM doctor had not been able to find out how long registration would take (C). A former electrical engineer was requested not to inquire about the status of his registration until three months had passed. A former doctor stated, "To go all over again...is ridiculous". Nevertheless, she respected the strict requirements. She understood, "That is the way... Canadians protect [the patient population]. We are working with people...not paper" (S, p. 5).

#### 4.5. Evaluation of Education Obtained Abroad

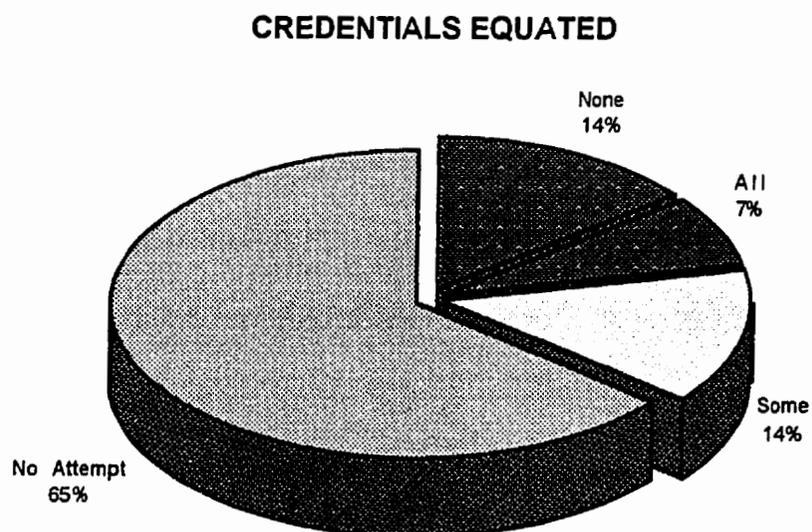


Chart Nine

The Alberta Task Force (1992) reported that access to credential agencies, information about academic deficiencies, institutions where the deficiencies could be corrected and employers who were not able to recruit with foreign credentials were problems that newcomers experienced.

One newcomer's credentials were equated to Alberta standards (seven percent). Credit for some foreign course work proved to be very helpful to two of the newcomers (14%). Fourteen percent (two) received no notice of equivalency or deficiency in response to their documents and fees. Sixty-five percent of the newcomers did not have their credentials evaluated. The evaluation of these newcomers' foreign credentials is illustrated in Chart Nine.

One former school administrator received full recognition for course work from his homeland (seven percent). He attributed this recognition to the time and effort of his Canadian friend who helped him find the information he needed. He (F) was very satisfied with the standards of evaluation and the methods used. Individuals in Alberta Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association were "very professional" (F, p.6). They followed procedures and guidelines in Bridging the Gap (1992), a manual. They were knowledgeable about the program of studies at his foreign university. He successfully passed an hour long English oral exam before a board of four people who asked questions, such as, "What would you improve about the educational system [in Alberta]?" (F, p. 9). No negative effects emerged from his responses to the questions about evaluation,

equivalency, his academic deficiencies, the standards, and his understanding of how his qualifications were evaluated.

Partial credit for foreign course work in Alberta educational institutions was obtained without foreign verification for two newcomers (14%). A former nurse was provided with information about her deficiencies regarding high school upgrading and how they could be corrected, even though she was unable to obtain course work verification from her homeland. She explained, "It was impossible to get... People [in her homeland]... were not willing to help [or] to cooperate" (B & W, p. 11).

A former social worker remembered that the documents had to be translated; then the individuals at the college were able to give her credit for some of her foreign education. Two intensive interviews were "really helpful... to understand... how much knowledge [she] might have already and what [she] still needed to do". She was really happy that she was progressing. She was "afraid that [she] would have to write letters to the... authorities... to prove the things [she] had". She attributed her success to the "understanding... [and] open-minded" people who evaluated her (E. p. 12). She did not mind learning about the deficiencies because the explanation made sense to her. She "understood that that's the way to go" (E, p. 11). Furthermore, it was important for her to understand how the social work approach in a communist system is different from the Alberta approach. No negative effects emerged from her response to

the questions about evaluation, equivalency, deficiencies, standards, or her understanding of how her qualifications were evaluated.

Two engineers received no response to the submission of their documents and a fee. Their evaluations were a requirement of the embassy "for immigration purposes" (Ri, p. 5). Neither was provided with a list of educational deficiencies and how they could be corrected. One former engineer questioned how his education permitted him to begin a Master's program at the University of Calgary, yet it was insufficient for a job.

Sixty-five percent (nine persons did not attempt to have their credentials evaluated. A former thermal engineer (like the engineer in the previous category) wondered how the strength of her credentials admitted her into a Master's program at the University of Calgary but would not permit her to get a job (Y). A former mechanical engineer did not pursue accreditation because he knew that he had to get a job and "that's where it stopped" (B & W, p. 11). Another was critical about the evaluation for TCM. For one thing, the former doctor explained, "they have no university" (C, p. 11). A former civil engineer gathered information from a friend that evaluation at that time would be futile (L). A former lawyer knew that they made translations at Calgary Immigrant Aid (M). A medical laboratory technologist was uncertain as to how to have her foreign course work verified. The expense of the evaluations was a concern for a former bank manger who knew of "2 or 3 organizations which do evaluations" (T, p. 6). No other themes emerged from questions about the evaluation of credentials.

#### 4.6. Employer Response to Foreign Qualifications

##### EMPLOYER RESPONSE TO QUALIFICATIONS

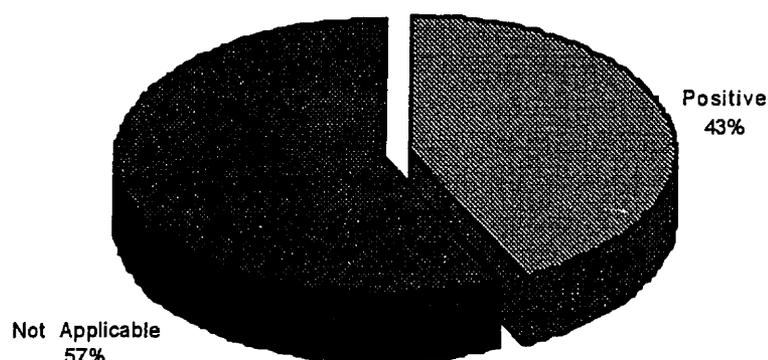


Chart Ten

Forty-three percent (six) of the newcomers received a positive response from employers. Many newcomers (57%) (eight) did not show their credentials to a Canadian employer or waited until they had Canadian certification. This information is illustrated in Chart Ten.

Of the 43% (six) who approached a Canadian employer with their foreign credentials, a TCM doctor received part time work thanks to the doctor in charge who recognized her education and her experience from her resumé. An engineer (Ma) was given a chance because his employers recognized his school. A former nurse (W from B & W) worked as a receptionist in a medical institution.

A former engineer's mechanical engineering degree helped him get credit for experience for papers in a trade (steam technology) (B from B & W). A former doctor (S) obtained work in a clinic and in a library.

At first, a former bank manager received no response to his applications. When he called to ask, they just said, "Sorry." They [did not] know what the standard of education was in [his] country" (T, p. 5.). Eventually, he obtained a job doing bank reconciliation.

Of the 57% who did not show their credentials to an employer (8), two waited until after they received Canadian certification. One former social worker thought she was lucky to get a job as a volunteer coordinator "because for many people, it takes much longer" (E, p. 12). A former school administrator had a "nice relationship" (F, p. 8) with his employer. He was hired as a teacher's aide. Three newcomers in this group did not receive any response to applications and resumés. No other themes emerged from the responses to this question.

#### **4.7. Professional Work Experience**

The Alberta Task Force (1992) reported that many foreign-trained individuals respect that there may be differences in technology. However, they are critical of the number of ways that foreign professionals are screened out.

Four newcomers worked in working environments similar to their former positions (C, F, Ma, T), but did not have their foreign work experience recognized. A former bank manager was certain that experience began after

registration (T, p. 7). An engineer remarked that he was hired at below entry-level wages. He stated that "everybody will hire an immigrant for less money than a Canadian. It is a way to make more [profit]" (Ma, p. 10).

Ten others (B, W, E, L, M, R, Ri, SML, S, Y) either had not found work in their professions, were studying ESL, or upgrading. A former electrical engineer was convinced that he had more experience than required by APEGGA. A former civil engineer received no replies from employers although she "applied at lots of places" (L, p. 8). A former broadcasting director was determined to improve his English before he attempted to register in his professional organization (SML). None of the newcomers had their professional training or their work experience fully recognized.

#### **4.8. Canadian Work Experience Requirement**

The Alberta Task Force (1992) reported, "many foreign-trained individuals and their representative organizations suspect that Canadian experience requirements may be a deliberate mechanism established to keep foreign-trained people out of the professions and trades in Alberta" (p.120).

Twenty-nine percent mentioned that they were not disqualified from registering in their professional organization because of a lack of Canadian experience. Forty-two percent had no knowledge or no experience with registration in their fields. Four others (29%) indicated they were barred from

registering in their professional organizations because they did not have Canadian experience. This information is illustrated in Chart Eleven.

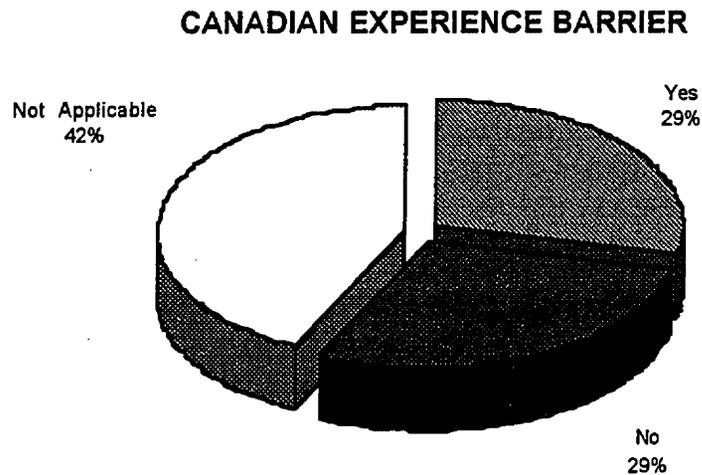


Chart Eleven

Of those who reported that lack of Canadian experience would not disqualify them from registering in their organizations (4 or 29%), one found a mentor who was able to explain conditions in Canada to compensate for a lack of Canadian experience (C). A former school administrator (F) could work as a teacher, much like a university graduate. After two years' Canadian experience, he will receive a permanent professional certificate. L, a former civil engineer, also understood that she could work at an entry-level position until she has worked two years, like all newly graduated engineers in Alberta. A former

electrical engineer was convinced that the country where experience is gained is not a problem (Ri).

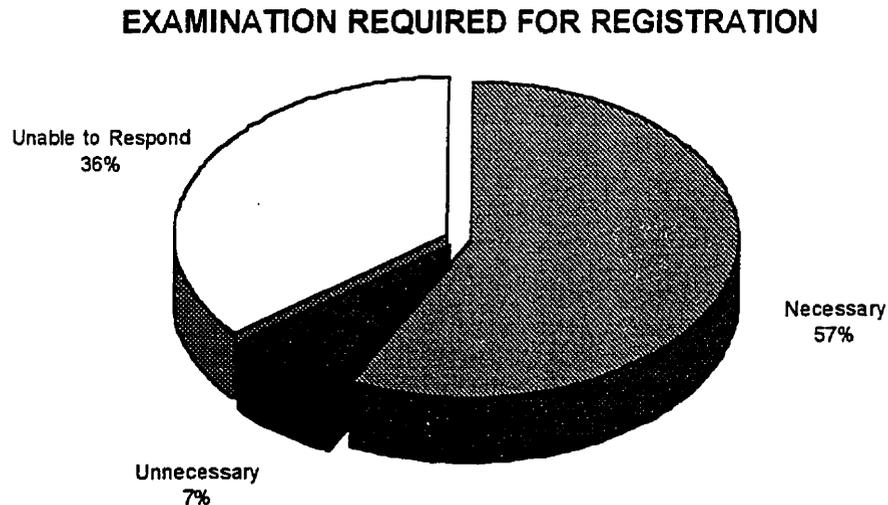
Of those that reported that Canadian experience was a barrier (4), a former mechanical engineer stated that with a foreign degree, "it was even more difficult to get an... entry level job (B from B & W, p. 13). Another engineer declared that he would not be able to register until he had four years of Canadian experience (Ma). Another former thermal engineer was not persuaded that recognition of foreign credentials was worth the effort. "Most companies still first [sic] ask for North American work experience" (Y, p. 15). She is resigned to someday finding a job as an assistant engineer. No other themes emerged from this group. Of those who did not know or had not registered in their professional organizations (six), only concern for inadequate English language skills emerged.

#### **4.9. Registration Examinations**

Some of the participants in the study done by Maraj (1996) were unable to prepare themselves adequately for qualifying examinations in their profession because books and core content information were not available. Likewise, in this study, one TCM doctor at the time of the interview had not received a study book for the acupuncture examination, nor was she able to find out the date of the examination (C).

The responses to the question, "Were you obliged to take an examination to assess whether you should be admitted to your profession or trade in

Alberta?" are categorized in Chart Twelve. No examination was required for registration in the professional organization of 7% of the newcomers (F). Fifty-seven percent of the newcomers knew that registration in their professional association entailed an examination. Thirty-six percent either did not know of the requirements of their professional association or were waiting for confirmation of the requirements. No one wrote a professional registration examination.



**Chart Twelve**

A former school administrator did not have to write an examination to become registered with Alberta Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) (7%). Of the 57% who knew that examinations were part of registration, a former mechanical engineer knew that it was not necessary to take a test to work

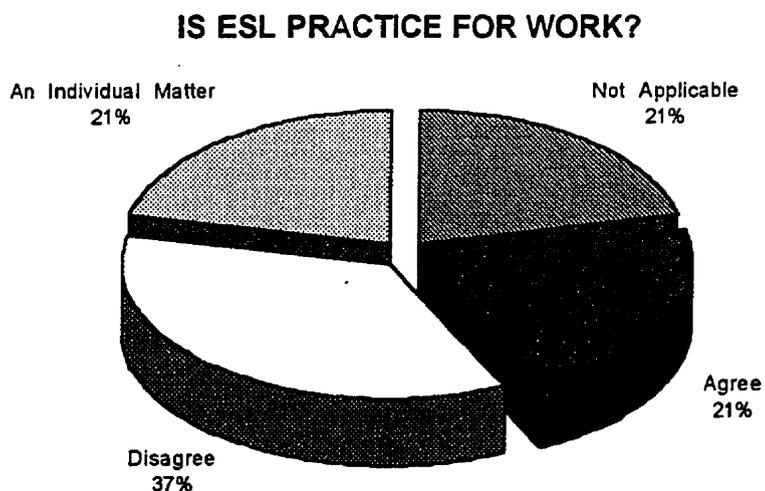
as an engineer. He also wondered “if that sort of [sic] really tough exam is necessary” (B from B & W, p. 14). A former civil engineer agreed with professional examinations because in her homeland “technology was totally different” (L, p. 9). An engineer declared that he would have to write “at least three examinations” (Ma, p. 8). He agreed that if it is not known “exactly what you do... they are right to ask [us to write examinations]”. However, when all the “paper” is provided, “Canada is losing because it’s so complicated to get recognized” (Ma, p. 8). A former electrical engineer was ready to do “one [or] two papers”, but it was better to go back to university if they asked him to redo “all the technical papers” (Ri, p. 7). A bank manager had to buy study booklets and examinations at “four levels”. A nurse affirmed that examinations are necessary “to know what kind of job, what kind of... information” a worker has (W from B & W). A former doctor understood the importance of “ an exam... to show how good... and how much knowledge [a worker has] (S, p. 5).

Of those who had no experience with the registration examination of their professional organization (36%), one TCM doctor agreed that it was right to write an examination but wondered if the examiners had “much experience” with Traditional Chinese Medicine (C, p. 13).

#### **4.10. Language Training**

Individuals reported to the Alberta Task Force (1992) that English as a Second Language did not prepare them for work in their professions. Thirty-

seven percent of the newcomers interviewed indicated that English as a Second Language training did not prepare them for work in their professions. Twenty-one percent indicated that English language training is useful for learning about work place expectations, interviews and culture. Another twenty-one percent stated that ESL training is an individual matter; it depended on the motivation and learning style of the student. Finally, 21% did not need to take ESL; this question did not apply to them (B from B & W; Ri; T). This information is illustrated on Chart Thirteen.



**Chart Thirteen**

Of the 5 who did not believe that ESL prepared them for the workplace, a TCM doctor said, "it does not prepare you for your profession's... normal and

basic skill" (C, p. 3). An engineer did not believe that two months was enough. A lawyer declared that "they teach [a] little bit [of] grammar, not long conversation [sic]... "It is not good [enough] for [work as a] clerk" (M, p. 4). "ESL is just language, you know. ... Just the English, vocabulary, conversation, grammar and the writing" declared a medical laboratory technologist (R, p. 2). Finally, a broadcasting director stated that "ESL is not enough to get a job, like [a] professional job [sic]" (SML, p. 3). He added that many good students were often rushed through 30 weeks of training in 10 or 20 weeks to save government money although the students admitted that they did not feel ready.

Of the 21% who agreed that ESL was practice for work (W from B & W, L, Y), one stated that "the interview, what to wear, how to talk, [and]... possible questions prepared [her class] for everything" (L, p. 3). Another stated that "ESL was important... Maybe after... [she could] get a job in [her] field" (Y, p. 2). No other themes emerged from their responses.

Three others (S; E; L) who needed ESL responded that language learning was a personal endeavor. A former doctor stated that ESL training "is very individual... Some people are very confident... spend more time... ask more questions" (S, p. 15). A former social worker said she "could read and practice... more at home... if [she] wanted to learn as much as they were giving [in her class]" (E, p. 2).

Of the 20% who had no need to study ESL, one former bank manager knew from his wife's experience that "ESL was a little bit more than [survival]" (T, p. 12). No other themes emerged from this group.

#### 4.11. Language Testing

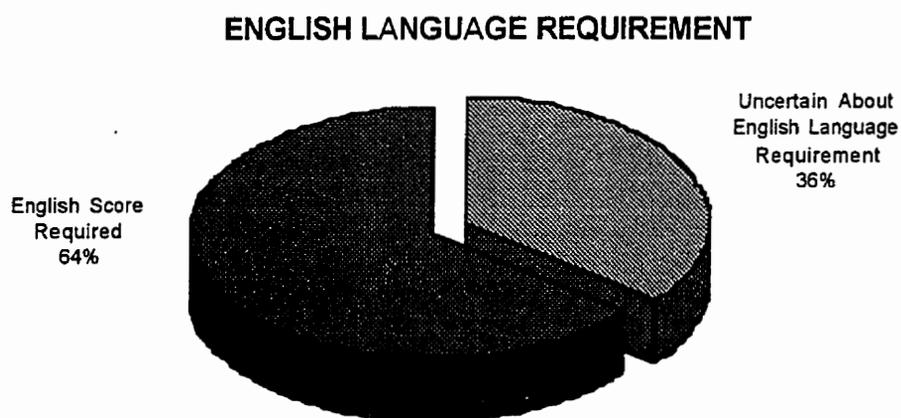


Chart Fourteen

Of the 36% of newcomers who were uncertain about the English score requirement for their organization (C, M, R, E), one TCM doctor wondered if the competency examination which was in English and completed in English might be considered sufficient (C). Three others in this group had no information about their professional organizations. Sixty-four percent of the newcomers knew that

their professional organizations required English language tests. This information is illustrated in Chart Fourteen.

Two of the 64% wrote TOEFL; their scores were over 500 and 527 (W from B & W; T). Four (B, W, Ma, L) believed that English was the final determinant to registration in their professional organization. A former doctor mentioned with irritation that a TOEFL doesn't mean, "you know...the language". She was "terrified" about writing that examination (S, p. 9). In fact, she attributed part of her delay in accreditation to not feeling ready for an inevitable TOEFL examination.

One former mechanical engineer thought that he needed a TOEFL of over 600 (B from B & W); he knew that an interview was an alternative. Another former thermal engineer stated that it was 560 (Y, p. 12); still another, 560 or 565 (L, p. 10). An engineer did not take his TOEFL because he did not need it to work (Ma). A former electrical engineer added that a letter was another alternative to TOEFL (Ri).

A former nurse quoted "560", (W from B & W, p. 14), as the score she would need for registration in her profession. A former bank manager was confused why "in Montreal, at McGill University, they did not ask for TOEFL. Here in Alberta...at UofC, it has to be 550 or 560" (T, p. 8). A former school administrator was not required to take a TOEFL. A tape recording and a formal interview before a panel of four were the methods used to determine his English competency.

#### 4.12. Access to Income Support Program

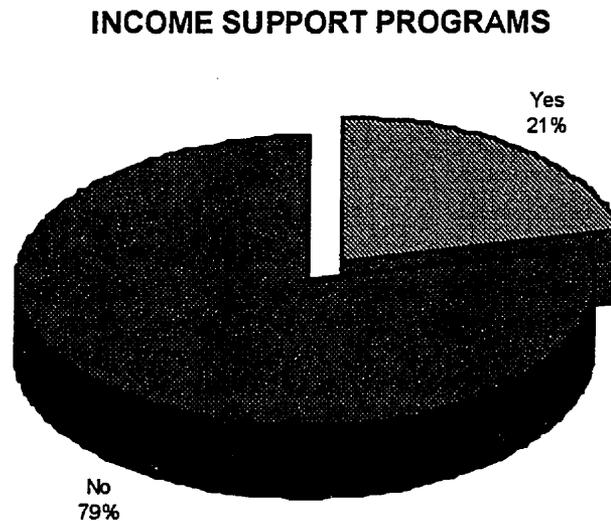


Chart Fifteen

Twenty-one percent (E, F, M) of the newcomers interviewed received funding from income support programs. Seventy-nine percent have been unable or have not tried to get any financial help. This information is illustrated in Chart Fifteen.

Of the 21%, a former social worker learned about grants and loans from the "government...., counselors at the college,...and different people" (E, p. 16). A former school administrator "used a bursary for [his] courses and planned to take a completely different program...in Computer Systems Technology" (F, p.

13) with the help of a \$6500 Canada Student Loan. A lawyer received a grant for 10 months while he did high school upgrading at AVC (M, p. 7).

Of the 79% who were unable or have not tried to obtain income support, an engineer stated that "[Employment and Immigration Canada] are not really willing to give people the money" (B & W, p. 15). A former TCM doctor stated that this support becomes available to immigrants after "one year [in] Canada" (C, p. 14). A former bank manager was unsuccessful in his attempt to get help to pay a tuition fee of \$2800 because he had not been in Canada for one year. He said, "it is frustrating...to [waste]...one year, at least" (T, p. 9). A former thermal engineer noticed that in British Columbia funds for study were available immediately to their friends. She also noticed that financial information was misleading. She explained, "Someone gave us this kind of information. Someone gave us that kind of information" (Y, p. 13). A broadcasting director concurred. He "heard about [income support]... It depends on who speaks the information. Someone said [that it is] like this. Someone said [that it is like that]" (SML, p. 11). An engineer was denied a counselor when he went to the government building "to ask for money to live properly... [to get] training" (Ma, p. 9). The reason given for the refusal was his Independent Immigrant status.

Reluctance to accept loans emerged from the responses of four newcomers (F; Ri; S; L). A school administrator declined a student loan when he received word of the equalization of his foreign credentials. A former engineer also did not want to incur a loan since he was uncertain how to pay it back if he

had no job. A former doctor did not want to be in the position of paying back the government. Finally, a former civil engineer preferred to pay herself.

#### 4.13. Other Circumstances

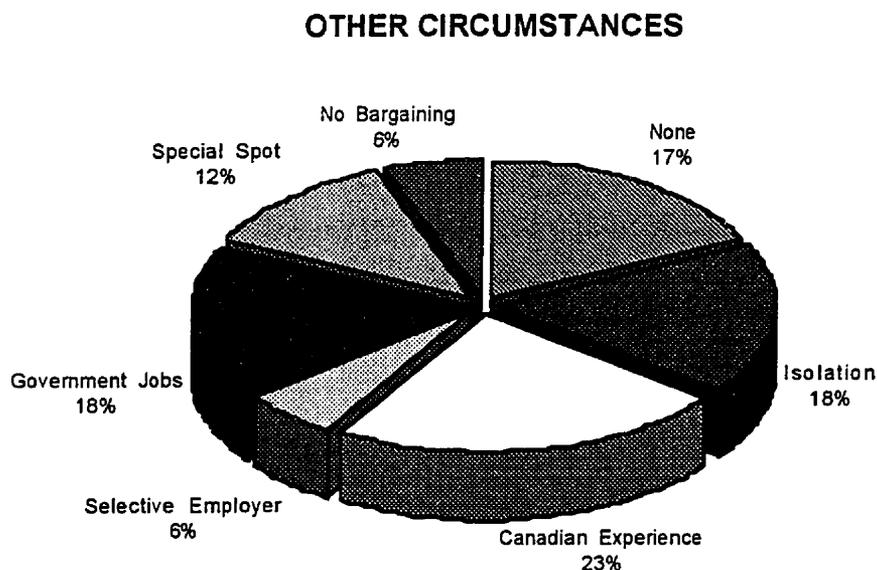


Chart Sixteen

To the question, "Were there any other circumstances that seemed to get in the way of your job search, 14 items were mentioned. The responses have been categorized in Chart Sixteen.

Seventeen percent of the items indicated that no other circumstances seemed to get in the way during the search for accreditation and employment. A former nurse stated that she and her husband, an engineer "were lucky in that

sense" (W from B & W, p. 18). A TCM doctor declared " if they [the employers] had no vacancy, they just told me, 'No'" (C, p. 18).

Isolation was mentioned as a difficulty in 18% of the responses. "Coming from a different country, nobody really knows you, ...language skills are not as good as people born here [sic]" (B from B &W, p.17), said one former engineer. A school administrator found that "someone, [a] volunteer...[who] will find a way... to find [out] information" was essential to his adaptation (F, p. 15). Also an engineer described how hard it was to penetrate the market.

You have to have friends to tell [you] about this opening or another one... What is in the paper is nothing. And who is going to tell you? Nobody (Ma, p. 11).

The Canadian experience requirement was mentioned in 23% of the responses. A TCM doctor asked, "How can I have work experience? You don't give me the chance to work" (C, p. 20). A former social worker remarked, "Some of [the employers] would say that [your credentials] would be enough. Others would say that [it] is not enough at all. You have to have some work experience here, real work experience" (E, p. 19). A doctor found that the Canadian experience requirement is "funny, ... a closed cycle. How [does one] get Canadian experience, if you don't have a job?" (S, p. 12). A former bank manager noticed that a "customer service representative or bank account executive ... [must have lived] in Canada for at least ten, twenty years [or] know many people in the business" (T, p. 11).

An engineer was critical of selective employers (6%). He stated, "If they need you badly, they will hire you. It doesn't matter what you know or if you speak [well]" (Ma, p. 11). The husband of a former thermal engineer husband noticed that employers do not negotiate (6%). "If I say how much I want and it is higher than they want to pay me, they will [not] answer. Not like in the States [sic]... It is hard to get information from the government, from the company about the money. It's a waste to look in the paper for information" (Y, p. 19).

Eighteen percent of the items indicated that the government should have more control of the jobs (Ri, p. 10). A former engineer suggested that government-guided employment of immigrants would mean greater connections for international competition (Ri). A former lawyer suggested that if students had jobs at graduation, they would work harder (M).

Where to fit in Canada was a concern for two others (12%). A former broadcasting producer director stated, "I can't find [that] special spot... because Canadians [do not] distinguish people because of their job" (SML, p. 17).

#### **4.14. Summary**

In the responses to questions relative to the barriers identified by the Alberta Task Force (1992), the 14 newcomers experienced positive and negative interactions with Canadian institutions. The impact of these interactions had further positive and negative personal effects. In this summary, interactions with

professional organizations, educational, government and business institutions are summarized first.

#### 4.14.a. Positive Effects from Professional Organizations

4.14.a.i. Professional, knowledgeable individuals in the Alberta Teachers' Association and Alberta Education positively affected the full accreditation of a former school administrator.

#### 4.14.b. Negative Effects from Professional Organizations

4.14.b.i. Available information about registration, full time study requirements recognition of foreign work experience and verification was missing.

4.14.b.ii. A complex process of registration was overwhelming for two whom needed the help of Canadians to understand the regulations of their professional organizations.

4.14.b.iii. Regulations varied from one individual to another.

4.14.b.iv. Recommendations of the professional organization (APEGGA) were not acceptable to the business (employer).

4.14.b.v. The Canadian work experience requirement was confusing.

4.14.b.vi. Numerous examinations were required for registration.

4.14.b.vii. Inquiries about the status of registration were delayed.

4.14.b.viii. The date of the examination and study booklet were not available.

4.14.b.ix. Professional organizations increased Canadian experience requirements.

4.14.b.x. Excessive difficulty of examinations prevented newcomers from attempting registration in their professional organization.

4.14.b.xi. Study booklets and examinations were expensive.

4.14.c. Positive Effects from Credential Institutions (Education)

4.14.c.i. Partial credit for former coursework was obtained in Alberta.

4.14.c.ii. Understanding, open-minded people verified foreign course work in an interview process.

4.14.d. Negative Effects from Credential Institutions (Education)

4.14.d.i. Educational requirements needed for an engineering job in Calgary are greater than those required for a Master's program at the University of Calgary.

4.14.d.ii. An evaluating body, which is not supported by the expertise of a university faculty, was criticized.

4.14.d.iii. Evaluations were expensive.

4.14.d.iv. A TOEFL score was required at the University of Calgary, but was not required at McGill University in Montreal.

4.14.e. Positive Effects from Business Institutions (Employers)

4.14.e.i. Recognition of skills and experience from resumé allowed a TCM doctor to work with a Canadian doctor part time.

4.14.e.ii. Recognition of school that was renowned for well-trained professionals permitted an engineer to gain entry level work.

4.14.e.iii. Recognition of previous training that permitted four newcomers a chance at related work.

4.14.e.iv. Mentors and beginner Canadian credentials in their field allowed three to work in their field without Canadian experience.

4.14.e.v. Employers are able to hire who they need regardless of professional registration or English language score.

4.14.f. Negative Effects from Business Institutions (Employers)

4.14.f.i. An employer did not respond to an application because he did not know the standard of education in the foreign country.

4.14.f.ii. Employers did not respond to applications and resumé.

4.14.f.iii. Foreign experience was not recognized.

4.14.f.iv. An engineer began at below entry-level wages.

4.14.f.v. Entry-level jobs were difficult to find for an engineer with a foreign degree.

4.14.f.vi. Companies required North American experience.

4.14.f.vii. Employers did not negotiate wages.

#### 4.14.g. Positive Effects from Government Institutions

4.14.g. Income support permitted newcomers to take academic upgrading, to study in other fields, and to subsidize living costs.

#### 4.14.h. Negative Effects from Government Institutions

4.14.h.i. No response to the submission of documents and fees at the time of immigration.

4.14.h.ii. In subsidized ESL programs, good students are sometimes rushed through the 30-week program to save money.

4.14.h.iii. Lack of official information led to misunderstandings. Three newcomers were obliged to wait one year to be eligible for income support. However, income support was available to newcomers in British Columbia immediately. A former engineer was suspicious of the motivations of the individuals in Employment and Immigration Canada.

#### 4.14.i. Positive Personal Effects from Accreditation Events

4.14.i.i. Two of the newcomers built strong relationships with Canadians when they helped to understand the accreditation process.

4.14.i.ii. Three of the newcomers used determination, self-efficacy and optimism as they worked their way through the regulatory system.

4.14.i.iii. One newcomer who received Alberta accreditation was satisfied with the professional, knowledgeable individuals in Alberta Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association.

4.14.i.iv. Two of the newcomers who received partial credit for their foreign education attributed this recognition to understanding, open-minded professionals.

4.14.i.v. Two whose past education had not been recognized took the opportunity to do technological upgrading and access evaluation agencies.

4.14.i.vi. One out of 14 found that a mentor compensated for a lack of Canadian experience. Two others acquired beginner Canadian credentials before they approached employers.

4.14.i.vii. One out of 14 did not have to write a registration examination for his professional registration.

4.14.i.viii. One out of 14 stated that it was not necessary to write an examination to work in the profession.

4.14.i.ix. Three out of the fourteen newcomers who needed ESL found that the classes fit their needs for the work force and culture.

4.14.i.x. Four out of 14 knew of alternatives to TOEFL.

4.14.i.xi. Three out of 14 newcomers were able to upgrade, save money, take additional English courses, begin study in a new area and subsidize living costs when they received income support.

4.14.i.xii. 'Luck' and frank employers who said if there was a job

available or not contributed to the uneventful accreditation experience of three out of 14 newcomers.

#### 4.14.j. Negative Personal Effects from Accreditation Events

4.14.j.i. Of those who understood their professional organization, five newcomers were unsure about restudy requirements, the number of examinations, the expense, and full time study. One newcomer in this group experienced constraint from sharing expertise.

4.14.j.ii. Two of those who obtained the help of Canadians were overwhelmed with the complex process. One noticed inconsistent regulations.

4.14.j.iii. Two of those who lacked information about their professional organization also experienced a lack of information about adjustment in Canada, skills needed in Canada. One was excluded from obtaining help to find information about professional organizations because of her Independent Immigrant status.

4.14.j.iv. One of those who experienced difficulties understanding the regulatory system noticed inconsistencies in the regulations.

4.14.j.v. One of two of the newcomers who indicated that they had no difficulties with making their way through the regulatory system noticed a discrepancy between the recommendation of the professional organization and the employer requirement. The other noticed that he would likely be required to do four national examinations.

4.14.j.vi. Two of the three newcomers who did not have information about their credentials experienced anxiety about credentials, an unconventional accent or a lack of confidence in English and guilt about an inability to gather information. Another resigned herself to finding information on her own.

4.14.j.vii. One of those who understood the requirements of his organization wondered what would be necessary to verify his credentials.

4.14.j.viii. Worry about meeting the requirements of the professional organization manifested itself in sleeplessness, rashes and recurring nightmares for three newcomers.

4.14.j.ix. Seven out of the newcomers who understood the requirements of their professional organization had varied expectations for the waiting period for registration in their organization. One of these was unable to find out how long registration would take; another experienced a delay in asking about the status of registration and a third anticipated excessive restudy to register in her profession, medicine.

4.14.j.x. Two engineers did not receive equivalencies or deficiencies when they submitted their documents and a fee.

4.14.j.xi. The priority of getting a job was greater for one engineer who did not have his credentials evaluated. Four other newcomers in this group were critical of evaluation, lacked information about verification of foreign credentials, for example. Two others were concerned about the expense and

how foreign education and work skills would permit entrance to the University of Calgary, but not employment in Calgary.

4.14.j.xii. Of the six who obtained employment from contact with Canadian employers, one received no response from his applications and resumés. He experienced indirect discrimination from an employer who did not know the standard of education in his country.

4.14.j.xiii. Four of the 14 newcomers worked in environments similar to their former foreign positions without pay commensurate with their skills and experience. One member of this group was certain that recognition of experience began after registration. Another in this group was hired at below entry-level wages.

4.14.j.xiv. One of those newcomers who had not found work in their field lacked English skills. Employers did not send replies to the applications and resumés of another newcomer in this group.

4.14.j.xv. Of the four who reported that Canadian experience was a barrier, one found that entry-level jobs were difficult to find with foreign credentials. Another is resigned to underemployment because most Canadian companies ask for North American experience.

4.14.j.xvi. One of the 6 who did not know or had not registered in their professional organizations felt that his lack of English was his barrier.

4.14.j.xvii. Four out of 14 newcomers who knew about registration examinations in their professions questioned the difficult examinations, numerous

levels of examinations, the complicated procedure for verifying foreign course work and the expense.

4.14.j.xviii. One of the 14 who did not know about the registration examination of their organization was waiting for information by post.

4.14.j.xix. One of the four out of 14 who did not think that ESL prepared newcomers for the workplace wondered about students who were rushed through subsidized ESL programs to save money.

4.14.j.xx. For one of the ten who knew the English language requirement for their professional organization, fear of not achieving the score hindered her from pursuing her accreditation. The score varied between 560 to 600 for five engineers in this group. A bank manager wondered why the UofC required a TOEFL score and McGill University in Montreal did not.

4.14.j.xxi. Three of the nine who did not receive income support were frustrated with wasting one year, two were misled by a lack of unofficial information and one was excluded due to Independent Immigrant status. One was suspicious of the motivations of individuals in Employment and Immigration Canada.

4.14.j.xxii. Eighteen percent of the items that indicated other circumstances that came in the way of accreditation or job search were related to isolation from networks that would help newcomers to penetrate the job market.

4.14.j.xxiii. Twenty-three percent of the former items indicated that

Canadian experience requirements were arbitrary, odd for newcomers, and excluded newcomers for 10 to 20 years. Two of the fourteen were unsure where they could 'fit' in Canada.

4.14.j.xxiv. One of the two newcomers who indicated that employers got in the way of their job search, mentioned that they can hire who they need regardless of professional registration or English skills. Another noticed that employers do not negotiate wages.

4.14.j.xxv. Eighteen percent indicated that lack of government control of employment limited international competition and student motivation.

4.14.j.xxvi. Twelve percent indicated that they were uncertain how to find that special spot in Canada because Canadians do not distinguish between people on the basis of their job.

Respect for the strict regulations set by the professional organizations resonated in the responses to the questions about accreditation and job search experiences. Reluctance to accept loans also emerged in response to the question about access to income support.

Political, economic and demographic factors in the society of origin had almost no influence on the accreditation process of these highly skilled newcomers. The difficulty of obtaining accreditation and appropriate work in Canada is compounded for highly skilled newcomers by several restrictions.

Without the help of professional colleagues, and other contacts, the chances of finding an entry-level job are limited. Isolation from networks and a lack of available information about accreditation hinders highly skilled newcomers. Inadequate English skills, the need for ESL training, and/or attaining the English language test scores for registration are also problems unique to immigrants. The Canadian experience requirement is confusing for newcomers whose foreign qualifications meet Canadian immigration criteria. Discrimination based on where education and experience is obtained and verification of those credentials are not problems that Canadians experience. Attention to these problems would assist the economic adaptation of highly skilled newcomers.

However, many of the positive and negative effects which emerged from the responses are similar to those which native born Canadians experience when they register in their professional associations or attempt to find a job commensurate with their education and work experience. Many resident Canadians do not recognize the hidden barriers that exist for them in Canadian society, nor do they often question contradictions when regulations vary from one individual to another within an institution. That is the way-it-is.

In Chapter Five an alternative framework for the economic adaptation of immigrants is advanced. Many resident Canadians would recognize similarities.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION: BASED ON FRAMEWORK

#### 5.1. An Alternative Economic Adaptation Framework

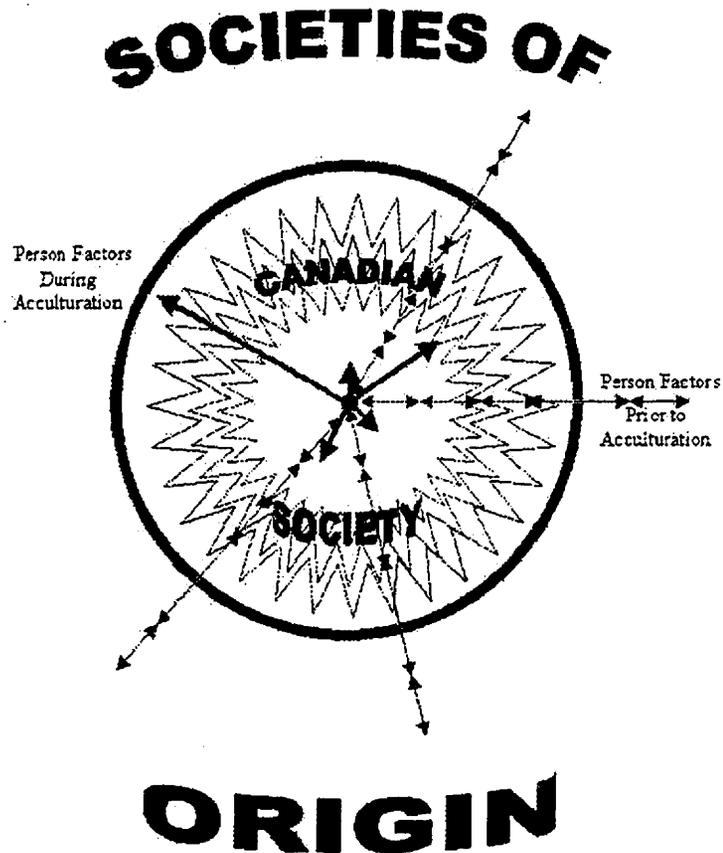


Figure Two An Alternative Framework for Economic Adaptation

A three dimensional alternative framework for economic adaptation is needed to reveal the power of the attitudes and behaviors of Canadian society on economic adaptation. The course of the economic adaptation of a highly skilled immigrant is likely to begin in isolation at the center of a malleable sphere with

the consistency of "Play Doh". This sphere is representative of the ambivalent multicultural and ethnic attitudes and the support of the Canadian society. Sometimes multicultural attitudes that welcome foreign skills and experience in the work place massage the newcomer. Other times the ethnic attitudes exert pressure.

Ethnic attitudes are not significant in this study. But the lack of information about accreditation and networks in Canada, their lack of English skills, need for ESL training and English scores, discrimination based on the country where education was obtained and verification of credentials and Canadian experience serves to exclude many foreign newcomers from satisfying and effective work.

The outer limit of the sphere has openings where effects from the society of origin maintain an influence upon the acculturating individual, but it does not emerge as significant in this study. In this representation, dotted lines represent person factors prior to acculturation such as income, status and education that connect to the society of origin. Solid arrows represent person factors during acculturation. Positive adaptation or hills point to the outer limits of the sphere. The failures of coping strategies appear as valleys. These hills and valleys move outward like waves, as immigrants find satisfying, effective work in Canadian society. With time, they come to perceive themselves as well off as other Canadians. Hidden, taken-for-granted and powerful forces in Canadian social and cultural institutions limit this sphere.

This thesis is hinged on substantial cross-cultural psychological evidence that documents the outcome of a culture-behavior relationship: individuals generally act in ways that correspond to cultural influences and expectations (Berry, Poortinga; Segall & Dasen, 1992, cited in Berry, 1997, p.6). Berry maintains that the framework for acculturation studies exemplifies a basic process of adaptation that appears to be common to all acculturating groups, i.e., immigrants, refugees and indigenous peoples. What varies is the course of adaptation, the level of difficulty and to some extent the eventual outcome.

According to this investigation, the influence of the society of origin has little effect on the course of the economic adaptation of these 14 highly skilled newcomers. However, the hidden, powerful influence of the attitudes and behaviors of Canadians where they live and work is revealed in the positive and negative effects of the accreditation experiences. Accepted Canadian practices such as not responding to resumés and applications, limits information for the prospective employee. These and other attitudes that are common in the Canadian work force delay the economic adaptation of newcomers. For them, isolation exacerbated by a lack of information serves to exclude them. Lack of English skills, discrimination based on the country where education was obtained, verification of those credentials, and the Canadian experience requirement further aggravates newcomers who are unused to competing for a job. These circumstances serve to exclude them from integration into the

Canadian work force, thus alienating them from satisfying, effective work, and resigning them to underemployment.

The positive effects of person factors prior to acculturation are less numerous than the negative effects. Migration motivation for many newcomers is affected by the reputation of Canada's immigration policy and multicultural policy. Most newcomers (10 out of 14) find satisfying, effective work in Canadian society. Many newcomers need ESL before they can begin to look for work. Gender, education, and pre-acculturation do not affect the accreditation of highly skilled newcomers. Responses to homesickness support the findings that the greater the cultural distance, the less positive the adaptation.

The positive effects of person factors during acculturation are less numerous than the negative effects. The support of individual Canadians and the support of the ethnic communities are both mentioned when newcomers dealt with homesickness. Coping strategies have limited success as newcomers attempt to meet the requirements of professional organizations to get a good job.

As a 'one shot' study, it is difficult to determine the outcome of the adaptation of these newcomers. However, in 16 years, 2 newcomers have made a positive adaptation by changing their careers. With respect to resources, regardless of their relative wealth, one person (out of 14) obtained credit for his foreign credentials. Two gained partial credit for their education without verification of their foreign credentials. One engineer found that his registration

in his professional organization was not needed to work. However, he began at below entry-level wages.

The stories of highly skilled immigrants are like urban legends in Canada. The *Calgary Herald* (Nov. 8, 1997, L3) relates the story of a Vietnamese doctor who has seven years of medical school in Vietnam and experience as a surgeon in Cambodia and Southern Vietnam. He regrets leaving the prestige and satisfaction that he gained from his work. For fear of ridicule, he hides his intellectual background from his co-workers who are employed as cleaners. This and other stories of taxi drivers and janitors who have sacrificed their lives so their children will benefit from education and employment in Canada are as much a part of the landscape as the Rocky Mountains.

Part of the reason Canadians and the leaders who represent them do not respond to the mounting evidence of the economic and personal costs of the devaluation of foreign credentials is that they accept their conditions as reasonable in Canadian society. Hadassah Ksienski, chief executive officer of the Calgary Immigrant Aid Society, also attributes part of the barriers to the Canadian society. "You have an aging, rigid host society that is reluctant to share power and reluctant to accommodate changes... There's a big gap and no meeting point" (*Calgary Herald*, Nov. 8, 1997, A2).

'Soft studies' like this one shed light on Canadian employment. In the

lived experiences of foreign professionals, the employment obstacles that limit native-born Canadians are revealed. That is, the requirements of professional organizations and the time required to register, for example, stymie many native-born Canadians, too. We accept this situation as the way it is. Newcomers, however, are devastated when they are excluded, alienated and resigned to underemployment. Something must be done. Disregard for the human capital of highly skilled immigrants risks the loss of "genuinely creative solutions to the problems that we as a species now face: solutions that give pride of place to sharing, reciprocity and mutual aid" (Zachariah, M., 1992).

Immigrant 'quality' measured by average endowment of human capital is declining (Metropolis Project, 1998). Are immigrant professionals leaving Canada to work elsewhere? What are needed are multi-variable regression models and other advanced quantitative econometric techniques to track the accreditation and employment of highly skilled newcomers who are permitted to enter Canada on that basis. This effort would demonstrate that Canadians value the education and work experience of professional newcomers. In light of their past and present personal sacrifices, it is the least we can do.

## APPENDIX A

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR BUSINESS IMMIGRANTS, ASSISTED  
RELATIVES AND OTHER INDEPENDENT IMMIGRANTS

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<u>Factor</u>	<u>Units of Assessment</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Education	16 maximum	
Specific Vocational Preparation	18 maximum	
Experience	8 maximum	0 units is an automatic refusal, except for persons with arranged employment or designated occupation
Occupation	10 maximum	0 is an automatic refusal, unless arranged employment, designated occupation or self-employed (N/A for entrepreneurs and investors)
Arranged employment or designated occupation	10 maximum	(N/A for business immigrants)
Demographic factor	8 maximum	established by the Minister
Age	10 maximum	10 units if 21 to 44; 2 units deducted for each year under 21 or over 44
Knowledge of English or French	15 maximum	
Personal Suitability	10 maximum	

Bonus for assisted Relatives	5
Bonus for self-employed immigrants	30

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Minimum selection units required per category

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Entrepreneur	25
Investor	25
Self-employed	70 (includes 30 bonus points)
Skilled worker	70
Assisted relative	70 (includes 5 bonus points for assisted relative)

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