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THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Professional Re-entry for Foreign-trained Immigrants

A Grounded Theory Study

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Existing literature has focused on unemployment and underemployment experienced by foreign-trained immigrant professionals. None of the studies explains why, in spite of the various barriers, some immigrants manage to re-establish themselves as professionals in Canada.

This grounded theory study explores the unique experience of immigrant professionals who have successfully found employment in their intended fields of practice in Canada. The study draws upon in-depth interviews of six immigrant professionals from various immigrant cohorts, countries of origin, profession, and gender.

Five categories emerged from the data, namely pre-migration preparation, dealing with individual challenges, dealing with structural challenges, social networking and contextual factors. These categories establish a theoretical foundation for a model of professional re-entry for foreign-trained immigrants. Also included in the study are the comparison of the findings with the existing literature, the implications of the study for social work education and practice, and an assessment of the research process and the proposed model.

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To Human Resilience

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Setting the Context

While working as a community development worker in an immigrant-serving agency in Calgary, I had opportunities to talk to several foreign-trained immigrant professionals. I noticed that many of these immigrant professionals were working in the construction, manufacturing and service sectors. I also noticed that a small number of them managed to find employment related to their training.

My review of the existing literature confirms the bleak reality of unemployment or underemployment that many immigrant professionals are experiencing in the Canadian labor market. Foreign-trained immigrant professionals, especially those who came from countries other than the United States and United Kingdom, are often not able to secure employment pertaining to their professional training (Calleja & Alnwick, 2000; DePass, 1989; Mata, 1999; McDade, 1988). Various studies show that immigrant professionals have low rates of success, ranging from 5 percent to 24 percent, in finding suitable employment in their professional fields (Basran & Zong, 1999; Calleja & Alnwick, 2000; Fernando & Prasad, 1986). Such low rates of economic integration are attributed to a lack of recognition of foreign credentials, unfair requirements in the professional accreditation process and discriminatory practices in the Canadian labor market (Abella, 1984; Basran and Zong, 1999; Boyd, 1985; Boyd, 1992; Calleja & Alnwick, 2000; DePass, 1989; deSilva, 1992; Elliott, 1990; Government of Alberta, 1992; Henry & Ginzberg, 1993; Kauffman, 1991; Mata, 1999; McDade, 1988; McDade & Wright, 1992;

Pendukar & Pendukar, 1996; Reitz & Sklar, 1997; Seward & McDade, 1988; Seward & Tremblay, 1989).

However, none of the existing studies explain why some immigrant professionals manage to find suitable employment in their fields, in spite of the various barriers they encounter in their quest to re-establish themselves as professionals in Canada.

## **1.2 Study Objectives**

This research aims to understand the unique experience of immigrant professionals who have successfully secured employment in their intended fields of practice in Canada. For the purpose of this study, “immigrant professionals” refers to those who have completed their post-secondary academic training outside of Canada.

As demonstrated later in the chapter on methodology, the research questions have evolved throughout the course of the study due to the role of data as the driving force for qualitative inquiry (Morse, 1991). An initial interest in explaining the positive employment adaptation of immigrant professionals in the Canadian labor market, however, helped establish the three goals for the research project. First, the study will identify and describe the barriers immigrant professionals encounter in their efforts to re-establish as professionals in Canada. Second, the study will document the strategies employed by immigrant professionals to overcome their challenges. Third, the study will analyze possible processes that may help establish a theoretical foundation in understanding positive employment adaptation among immigrant professionals in Canada.

### **1.3 Rationale for the Study**

The study has both practical and theoretical significance. In terms of its practical implications, the study will provide human service practitioners with a thorough understanding of the challenges immigrant professionals experience in their efforts to re-establish practice of their professions in Canada, as well as the strategies they use to overcome those challenges. Knowledge of the latter will guide human service professionals to develop programs that effectively prepare immigrant professionals to address their unique needs and challenges in the Canadian labor market.

Theoretically, the study will contribute to the growing knowledge base of Social Work. Traditionally, human capital theory and labor market segmentation models are widely used to explain the adaptation of immigrants in the Canadian labor market. At one end of the spectrum, the labor market segmentation model attributes professional dislocation or underutilization of immigrant professionals to the stratification of the labor market on the basis of class, gender, race and ethnicity (Rosenbaum et al., 1990). At the other end of the spectrum, human capital theory contends that immigrant professionals with higher investments in education, training and work experience will be allocated the most rewarding occupations (Sorensen, 1995). As demonstrated in-depth in Chapter Two, neither model accounts for the wide variation in the range of experiences, within a group of immigrant professionals. For example, the labor market segmentation model fails to provide a satisfactory answer to the question of why some immigrant professionals, in spite of their marginalized statuses with respect to class, race, gender and ethnicity, manage to move from the secondary to primary labor markets. The human capital theory, on the other hand, cannot explain why immigrant professionals who have

abundant training, education and work experience, do not achieve professional statuses in Canada. Such gaps in the dominant theories present a unique opportunity to develop in this study a complementary model that accounts for dynamic patterns of employment adaptation among immigrant professionals in the Canadian labor market.

#### **1.4 An Overview of the Thesis**

This thesis sets out to articulate the experience of immigrant professionals in finding suitable employment in their fields in Canada. Since there is a lack of research in this area, the qualitative research approach is deemed to be an appropriate mode of inquiry both to capture common patterns of successful employment adaptation among immigrant professionals, and to account for their unique individual experiences. Furthermore, the study adopts grounded theory methodology to systematically construct potential concepts and theories as they emerge from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The study draws upon in-depth interviews with six immigrant professionals of various immigrant cohorts, countries of origin, professions, gender and age groups. In addition to the joint operation of data collection, coding and analysis, the research process involves the making of comparisons, and asking of questions in order to conceptualize, categorize and establish relationships among theoretical concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Such comprehensive research analysis, with the assistance of the computer program ATLAS/ ti, results in the emergence of five major categories and 13 sub-categories, which in turn form a basis for a model to explain successful adaptation of immigrant professionals in the Canadian labor market.

The next four chapters present various aspects of the research project. Chapter Two, an extensive review of existing literature, provides a sound rationale for undertaking the research. Chapter Three details the research design in terms of the selection of a qualitative inquiry paradigm and grounded theory research method, research procedures, as well as considerations for a transparent and trustworthy research process. Chapter Four presents the emerged categories and sub-categories, with detailed descriptions of their unique properties and dimensions. Finally, Chapter Five proposes a model to explain successful adaptation of immigrant professionals in the Canadian labor market, compares the findings with the existing literature, and discusses the implications of the study for social work practice, education and future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

An extensive review of existing literature was conducted to provide a sound rationale for undertaking the research. To set the context, the literature review first examines the evolution of Canadian immigration policy, with emphasis on its economic goals and the roles of immigrant workers in the Canadian labour market. The review further provides a contemporary picture of immigrant professionals in Canada in terms of demographic characteristics, employment experience, and subsequent psychological, economic and social impacts resulting from such employment experience. The literature review then turns its attention to current theories widely applied in understanding employment experience of immigrants, and demonstrates a need for a new model that explains the successful patterns of employment adaptation in the Canadian labour market.

It is noted that existing research studies have overlooked the experience of foreign-trained immigrant professionals who have successfully found work in their intended fields of practice in Canada. More often, research efforts attempt to understand factors contributing to occupational dislocation or underemployment of immigrant professionals (Abella, 1984; Basran and Zong, 1999; Boyd, 1985; Boyd, 1992; Calleja & Alnwick, 2000; DePass, 1989; DeSilva, 1992; Elliott, 1990; Government of Alberta, 1992; Henry & Ginzberg, 1993; Kauffman, 1991; Mata, 1999; McDade, 1988; McDade & Wright, 1992; Pendukar & Pendukar, 1996; Reitz & Sklar, 1997; Seward & McDade, 1988; Seward & Tremblay, 1989). This body of literature, however, plays an important role in demonstrating the gaps to be discovered in the study of employment experience of

immigrant professionals in Canada, and thus providing a rationale for launching grounded theory research. It also cultivates an appreciation for this study by providing insights into the degrees of difficulty that foreign-trained immigrant professionals have to face in their efforts to re-enter their professions.

## **2.1 The Evolution of Canadian Immigration Policy**

Canada's immigration policy has been shaped by a combination of ideological considerations, political expediency, international obligations and economic requirements (Elliott & Fleras, 1992). Green and Green (1999) identify flexibility as one of the key characteristics of Canadian immigration policy. Whereas the more enduring aspects of policy tend to be broadly defined in acts of Parliament, the flexible aspects relating to admission of immigrants are dealt with in the regulations, in the form of "Orders-in-Council", by the Cabinet. The latter do not need to be brought before the House of Commons for debate, and hence are not subject to public scrutiny.

Since Confederation, immigration has served to attain demographic goals, stimulate economic growth, enrich the multicultural fabric of Canada, facilitate family unification, and fulfill Canada's humanitarian commitments to refugees. Within the scope of this study, however, the focus is on the evolution of Canadian immigration policy in relation to economic goals manifested in the recruitment of immigrant workers. To distinguish the changes throughout the history of immigration that have affected the inflows of immigrants in general, and immigrant professionals in particular, the

legislation, regulations and immigration patterns are presented in a series of three sub-periods, namely 1869-1952, 1953-1975, and 1976- Present.

### **2.1.1 Early Trends, 1869-1952**

According to Avery (1995), immigration recruitment in the three decades after Confederation was not very successful due to the general perception of the superior “American way of life” among emigrants from Western Europe and Great Britain (p. 10). However, economic prosperity, following the election of Laurier’s Liberal government in 1896, catalyzed a marked expansion of immigration into Canada. Between 1896 and 1914, Canada experienced unprecedented economic growth: railway mileage doubled, mining production tripled, and wheat and lumber production increased tenfold. As a result, Canada attracted an increasing number of immigrants and achieved a dramatic population growth of 34 percent in the decade 1901-11 (Avery, 1995).

In 1910, the government introduced the Immigration Act that included a basic approach focusing on a prospective immigrant’s country of origin (Green & Green, 1999). With the prohibition of “immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada” outlined in section 38, paragraph “c” of the Immigration Act of 1910, the search for immigrant workers was to be concentrated in Great Britain, the United States and Northwestern Europe. In 1923, with the passage of Order-in-Council PC 183, the list of preferred countries was formally defined. Among preferred countries were Great Britain, the United States, the Irish Free State, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (Green & Green, 1999). In the same year, immigrants

from China were singled out for exclusion by the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 (Wanner, 1998).

In the 1920s, large inflows of immigrants were targeted very specifically to meet demand for labour in the western agricultural sector. By the end of the decade, almost 70 percent of all immigrants landing in Canada stated that their intended destination was the west and the majority of these stated that their intended occupation was farming (Green, 1994). A notable element of policy that came into formal operation during this decade was the concept of short run absorptive capacity (Green & Green, 1999). According to this concept, the ideal rate of absorption depends on the ability of the economy to provide employment for new immigrants at the prevailing nominal wage (Timlin, 1960). Hence, in periods of rising unemployment the absorptive capacity for new immigrants declines and the government takes steps to limit the number of arrivals.

In response to the extreme economic conditions during the Depression, immigration was virtually shut down in the 1930s through to the end of World War II (WWII). The passage of Order-in-Council PC 695 on March 21, 1931 prohibited immigrants of all classes and occupations landing in Canada- with the exceptions of farmers with capital, British and American immigrants with sufficient means to maintain themselves until employment could be found, spouses or unmarried children under 18 years of age of legal and financially secure Canadian residents (Green & Green, 1999). The Order, however, did not apply to individuals of an Asian race, which meant no one of this group was to be admitted even if they had relatives in Canada (Green, 1976).

Following WWII, rapid economic development in Canada, combined with difficult political and economic circumstances in Europe, pushed immigration levels back to numbers not seen since the turn of the century (Wanner, 1998). By 1951, Canada accepted 194,391 immigrants, compared to 7,576 immigrants in 1942 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2000). Immigration was targeted to stimulate population growth, as well as to bring in unskilled labour for the growing forestry and mining sectors (Green & Green, 1999). Though immigration policy shifted dramatically to extend the admissible classes to cover prospective immigrants from anywhere in Europe, including, for the first time, immigrants from southern Europe, restrictions on Asian immigration remained in place (Green & Green, 1999; Hawkins, 1972). The revision of the existing Immigration Act in 1952 gave the Minister and his officers the “all-embracing power to refuse admission on grounds of nationality, geographical area of origin, peculiar customs, habits and modes of life, unsuitability with regard to the climate, probable inability to become more readily assimilated and other similar reasons” (Hawkins, 1991, p. 38). Avery (1995) is critical of the new Act, noting that it reflected “the narrow and conservative approach” to immigration, and “reinforced Canada’s Eurocentric immigration policy” (p. 172-173).

In summary, the 1896-1952 period was characterized by the recruitment of mostly unskilled workers to develop western provinces in farming, railway and other resource industries. Also, immigration debate revolved around the importance of racial and cultural characteristics as the criteria for entry into Canada.

### 2.1.2 Pressing Need for Skilled Workers, 1953-1975

According to Green and Green (1999), the government sought to steer the economy away from a resource base toward a modern manufacturing structure in the late 1950s. There were growing concerns over the level of structural employment as the Canadian economy became more dependent on technology and less committed to primary sectors. At the same time, Canada was experiencing a serious “brain drain” as large numbers of Canadian-born professionals sought jobs in the United States (Avery, 1995). Between 1950-1960, over 10 percent of those heading south were professionals, with graduate nurses, mechanical and aeronautical engineers, architects, physicians and surgeons leading the way. Indeed, during this decade Canadian professionals represented about 27 percent of the total immigration of foreign-born professionals to the United States (Avery, 1995). Li (1992) estimates that Canada lost 60, 230 people in professional, technical, managerial and entrepreneurial occupations to the United States between 1954 and 1967. Consequently, Canada needed skilled workers, particularly those with post-secondary training. Foreign-trained immigrant professionals were seen as assets to the Canadian economy, since they came already fully trained, and frequently, with considerable work experience behind them (Avery, 1995).

In spite of the intent to increase the ratio of skilled immigrants into Canada, the government had difficulty attracting immigrant professionals, particularly those from the United States, United Kingdom and Europe due to parallel economic growth and labour shortages in those regions (Basran & Zong, 1998). At the same time, the Government of Canada experienced pressure for social change from the international community as well

as from its citizens. Internationally, there were non-alignment movements among non-White countries to work against exclusionary immigration policies in the western world. At home, the growing liberalism in the 1960s supported advocates of de-colonization (Basran & Zong, 1998). Such pressures called for a new approach to selection that would shift away from the country of origin of the prospective immigrant to the individual.

In 1962, the government passed Order-in- Council PC 86, which revoked previous regulations, particularly those giving special status to British, French and American citizens, or those setting limits on immigrants from Asian countries (Green & Green, 1999). Instead, new regulations put emphasis on education, training, skills and other special qualifications (Frideres, 1992). The point system was officially introduced in 1967 as Order-in Council PC 1616 to guide the selection of immigrants based on education, specific vocational preparation, occupational demand, age, arranged employment, language, personal suitability, relatives and destination. In 1974, in response to the critique that immigrants could build up sufficient points based on years of schooling, age and language ability even though their specific skills might be in excess supply at the time, the government imposed a 10 unit penalty in points assessment if the applicant did not have previously arranged employment (Green & Green, 1999). Appendix A presents the point system and the passing marks for various occupational categories over time.

The adoption of the point system dramatically shifted the balance of immigration according to country of origin. Until 1970, more than half the immigrants coming to

Canada were from Europe. By 1980, however, the proportion of immigrants from Asia, Latin America and Africa combined reached 65 percent, compared to the modest 8 percent in 1961 (Beaujot, 1991). According to Li (1992), between 1954 and 1967, about 80 percent of the 164, 738 immigrants in professional and technical occupations were recruited from the United States, Britain and other parts of Europe. From 1968 to 1986, the number of immigrants in professional and technical fields from these regions made up only 60 percent of the total of 253, 599 professional and skilled immigrants. In contrast, immigrants from Asia accounted for 7 percent of the total of professional and skilled immigrants admitted between 1954 and 1967, increasing to 21 percent for 1968-86.

The introduction of the point system had a substantial impact on the average educational attainment of immigrants to Canada. The proportion of immigrants among the 1966-71 cohorts with a university education was three times that of native-born Canadians (Beaujot et al., 1988). The inflow of professional and technical labour into Canada varied between 22 and 28 percent of total immigrant workers between 1961 and 1967, then jumped to about 33 percent annually between 1968 and 1972, and since 1973 fluctuated between one-fourth to one-third of total immigrant workers (Bolaria, 1987).

In spite of its intent to eliminate the blatant exclusionary practices in Canadian immigration, the point system has attracted criticism. Borjas (1993) observes that the effect of the point system has been to make it more likely that persons originating in “high education” countries will qualify, instead of highly educated persons from other countries being selected. Canadian immigration procedures therefore are seen as

“arbitrary and discriminatory when applied to immigrants from Third World countries”  
(Avery, 1995, p. 14).

Taylor (1991), approaching the analysis from the racism theory perspective, argues that the point system is flawed for three reasons. First, the removal of explicit racism has left plenty of room for implicit racism, often embedded in immigration officials’ discretionary powers. Immigration officials are often encouraged to select only the most Europeanized of non-Europeans. Second, the point system ensures that immigrants flowing from non-European countries of origin would constitute a “brain drain.” Third, the removal of explicit racism from the regulations permits an increase in “social class” distinction in landing that only favors the rich, entrepreneurs, professionals and highly skilled, highly trained labour when demand is high in Canada.

A report by the Government of Alberta (1992) also points out that the point system used for assessing immigration applications has created much confusion and misunderstanding among immigrants. Its emphasis on education, training and experience often gives immigrants a false assumption that they will have no difficulties in finding work in Canada. As we shall see later, this is often not the case.

In summary, it is evident that in the post war years Canada began to develop a “New Economy”. Whereas before WWII, the resource base of the Canadian economy required immigrants with little educational background and formal skill training, the state’s adoption of Keynesian policies and increasing reliance on technology created a need for educated and formally trained workers. In addition, Canada faced significant loss of professional talent to the United States, as well as growing resentment against

racially exclusionary immigration policy both within Canada and among non-White countries in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Such political, economic and social pressures had forced the government of Canada to confront its point of conjuncture where in order to expand its inflow of skilled immigrants and to improve its human rights record, it had to eliminate exclusionary immigration practices. With the introduction of the point system, Canada encouraged more skilled workers from non-traditional source countries. That is not to say, however, that the new system would guarantee skilled workers easy access to professions in Canada, especially since more and more of them were visible minorities.

### **2.1.3 Contemporary Immigration Policy, 1976-Present**

The 1976-77 Immigration Act, along with the 1978 Immigration Regulations, helped define not only Canada's contemporary immigration policy, but also its planning and management, the priorities in admission, the basis for exclusion and deportation, the system of control and enforcement, and the criteria for refugee status (Avery, 1995). The Act specified three classes of immigrants who would be admitted to Canada: family class, refugees and independent immigrants (Hawkins, 1991). Family class immigrants are those individuals who are sponsored by eligible family members already residing in Canada. Refugees are those who, by reason of well-founded fears of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, cannot return to their countries. Refugees may be sponsored by government, eligible citizens, permanent residents, or local legally incorporated organizations. The third category, independent immigrants, includes those persons applying to immigrate on

their own initiative. Whereas family class immigrants and refugees must meet certain requirements of good health and character, independent immigrants are subjected to the point system that assesses them according to their practical training, relatives in Canada, experience, education and capacity, age, knowledge of official languages and personal suitability.

According to Green and Green (1999), immigration inflows in the late 1970s and early 1980s were adjusted according to business cycles of the economy. Immigration fell between 1974 and 1978, rose from 1978 to 1980 and then fell from 1980-1986. In 1986, in response to concern about declining fertility rates and the recommendation of an increase in the economic component expressed in the special reports to Parliament by the Minister of Employment and Immigration, the government removed the prerequisite of arranged employment for independent applicants and introduced the investor class. These were applicants who gained admission by investing a specified amount in Canadian enterprises. Consequently, the level of immigrants jumped from 83, 402 in 1985 to 99, 219 in 1986 and then to 152, 089 in 1987 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2000).

The 1990s marked an abandonment of the concept of “absorptive capacity” in Canadian immigration policy. To demonstrate this point, Green and Green (1999) examined the numbers of landed immigrants from 1947 to 1995 with respect to annual unemployment rates. They found that the levels of immigration were consistent with the annual rates of unemployment prior to 1990. Since then, Canada has continued to bring

in large inflows of immigrants, even in the face of poor domestic labour market conditions.

The 1990s also witnessed many socioeconomic trends supporting the crucial demand for highly trained immigrants in Canadian contemporary society. First, Canada continued to have a low birth rate and an aging population, which created a high dependency ratio and low population growth (Li, 1996). Second, as a result of globalization as well as changes in the US immigration law after the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), highly trained Canadians continued to emigrate to the US and other countries for higher financial rewards (*The Economist*, 1999). The annual emigration of Canadian professionals to the United States from 1991 to 1999 ranged from 16, 000 to 35, 000 (Zhao et al., 2000). Finally, the Canadian educational system could not adapt immediately to the changing needs of information technology and related industries in the new era of globalization, trade alliances and technological expansion (Basran & Zong, 1998). Consequently, many sectors, including information technology, medicine and computer science experienced periodic shortages of trained professionals.

Since 1995, the Liberal government has introduced and implemented a new policy framework outlined in the document, *Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A strategy for Immigration and Citizenship*. Among the key elements of the framework are the target immigration level at 1 percent of the population level, the separation of refugee management into a new system with separate resources and goals from the rest of the immigrant inflow, and a commitment to achieving approximate equality of the family class and assessed inflows

(Citizenship and Immigration, 1994). With respect to the point system, Green and Green (1999) point out some key changes in the new plan (see Appendix A). First, no points would be assessed for demand in narrowly defined occupations, and no points would be awarded based on the skill levels of such occupations. Instead, a list of skilled occupations is created and divided into four categories: professional, skilled administrators, technical occupations and trades. Applicants in all categories would be assessed under the same criteria, but would have to pass different critical levels to gain admittance. This is an attempt to make sure that technicians and skilled workers would not be put at a disadvantage by the lower level of education needed for their occupations relative to professionals. Second, a list of occupations in which applicants need arranged employment to enter is created. Third, the new system would put more emphasis on education (from 16 to 20 percent of total possible points) and proficiency in the official languages (from 15 to 20 percent of total possible points). Finally, personal suitability, which is assessed by immigration officials, has also shifted to emphasize flexibility in adjusting to the labour market changes by adding factors such as job search skills, resiliency, and positive attitudes toward personal growth, development, learning and change.

The changes in the point system have illustrated an important trend in the recruitment of independent immigrants. Canada is seeking immigrants with general skills rather than ones tailored to specific current skill shortages. Such a sentiment is central to the 1998 document, *Building on a Strong Foundation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: New Directions for Immigration and Refugee Policy and Legislation*. In this report,

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (1998) acknowledges the current selection system as “a product of an era when governments aimed to match immigrant skills with specific Canadian labour market shortages” (p. 27). The department then envisions that the new selection system for independent immigrant applicants would emphasize “flexible and transferable skills rather than the introduction of rigid pass/fail criteria” (p. 27).

Iredale (1999) suggests that the new trend is a response to “both the reality of the global and local environments, and the fact that many immigrants experience difficulties in gaining access to their occupations even though they have been accepted on the basis of those skills and qualifications” (p. 98). With regard to the latter, existing studies have supported that the problems associated with limited access to professions among immigrant professionals are related to a complex interplay between individual and structural barriers (Basran & Zong, 1999; Government of Alberta, 1992; Mata, 1999; McDade, 1988; for details see discussion under **Factors Affecting Access To Professions**). Consequently, the new plan for Canadian immigration, while attempting to improve the quality of immigrants coming to Canada, fails to concretely address how the government plans to effectively assist new immigrants, particularly those with foreign education and training, to gain access to their professions. The new plan also does not specify how the government plans to eliminate structural barriers in the Canadian labour market that have prevented many immigrants from re-entering their professions.

In summary, immigration continues to be instrumental in addressing such socioeconomic challenges as low fertility rate, “brain drain” to the United States and increasing demand for skilled labour in various industries. Contemporary Canadian

immigration policy has generally embraced the vision that immigration creates long-term economic growth. The current policy also sets a new direction in that it will put more emphasis on the recruitment of highly trained immigrants with flexible and transferable skills.

## **2.2 Immigrant Professionals in Canada**

### **2.2.1 Demographics**

Citizenship and Immigration (2000) documents detailed characteristics of skilled immigrants in its recent statistics. Of 147,281 immigrants coming to Canada in 1999, 41 percent were university degree holders. The breakdown for immigrants with bachelor, master and doctorate degrees was 30, 9 and 2 percent respectively. Zhao et al. (2000) point out that adjusting for age, recent immigrants are close to 2 times as likely as native-born Canadians to have university degrees. They then further elaborate that recent immigrants are even more likely to hold advanced university degrees, between 2 and 3 times as likely as the Canadian born to have masters degrees, and about 4 times as likely to have doctorate degrees.

With the exclusion of racial barriers in Canadian immigration policy, immigrants coming to Canada have become more culturally diverse. In fact, immigrants from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and South and Central America accounted for 76 percent of total immigration in 1999. In the same year, only 21 percent came from Europe and the United Kingdom, and 3 percent from the United States. Consequently, among the source countries of immigration to Canada, China, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Korea and Iran

were the top six, followed by the United States, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and then the United Kingdom and Russia (Citizenship and Immigration, 2000).

Immigrants tend to be younger than non-migrant populations (Zhao et al., 2000). Recent immigrants are about 1.25 times as likely as the Canadian-born population to be in the prime working ages of 25 to 44 years. Among immigrants with post secondary education or trade certification coming to Canada in 1999, 63 percent were in the age group of 25 to 44. As for gender, the male-female ratio was approximately 3 to 1 (Citizenship and Immigration, 2000).

In terms of official language proficiency, 49 percent of immigrants who arrived Canada in 1999 possessed English language ability. About 5 percent could communicate in French, and 4 percent could communicate in both French and English. The percentages, however, were much higher among immigrants with postsecondary education or trade certification. On their arrival, almost 75 percent could communicate in English, 5 percent in French, and 10 percent in both French and English. Only 10 percent of skilled immigrants did not speak either English or French (Citizenship and Immigration, 2000). It is worthwhile noting, though, that the figures were based on self-assessments.

### **2.2.2 Socioeconomic Realities Faced By Immigrant Professionals**

Despite their language ability and high qualifications, many foreign-trained immigrant professionals have experienced unemployment or underemployment in Canada. Abella (1984) calls such discrepancy “a waste of human and intellectual

resources” (p. 49). Calleja and Alnwick (2000) further note that “the problem [is] so widespread, it has become cliché” (p. 34).

Currently, there are no existing national figures for the rate of re-entry into professions among immigrant professionals. However, several regional studies have indicated low rates of employment success among newly arrived immigrant professionals. A survey conducted in Ontario, the destination of choice of more than half the immigrants who come to Canada each year, revealed that only 24 percent of foreign-trained professionals found jobs in their exact professions, and that their unemployment rate was more than three times the province average (Calleja & Alnwick, 2000). Another study by Fernando and Prasad (1986) indicated that over 61 percent of the immigrant professionals had professional jobs prior to coming to Canada, and yet only 5 percent were working as professionals in Canada.

A recent study by Basran and Zong (1999) also found that while 88 percent of the 404 surveyed foreign-trained professionals had worked as professionals in their countries of origin, only 19 percent were working as professionals in Canada. Even within such a modest number of foreign-trained immigrants working as professionals in Canada, 73 percent experienced downward mobility, 22 percent held the same type of job, and only 5 percent experienced upward mobility.

Several studies have further demonstrated earnings differentials between immigrants and the native-born. Using data from the 1973 Canadian Mobility study, Boyd (1985) found that Canadian-born graduates benefited more from their education than their foreign-born counterparts. In other words, each additional year of education

completed would add a greater increase in occupational status attainment for Canadian-born than for immigrant graduates. Boyd further noticed that the impact of the differential effect of education increased with the attained level of education.

Another study by Chiswick and Miller (1988), examining data from the 1971 and 1981 censuses, also confirmed that schooling and experience acquired in the country of origin was of less value for immigrant professionals in the Canadian labour market. In terms of earnings, the study observed that the average newly arrived immigrant had an income about one-quarter lower than a comparable native-born worker, and that it would take immigrants 22 years of residence to reach equality with the native-born in terms of their earnings.

Based on the 1986 and 1996 censuses, Badets and Howatson-Leo (1999) examined the labour market experiences of recent immigrants who had been in Canada for 5 years or less. Their findings proved that the conventional perception of education as the key to advancement in North America did not apply to immigrants. Although the immigrants in those cohorts were highly educated, their employment rates were low. In 1986, 81 percent of recent immigrant men in the prime working 25 to 44 age group were employed. Ten years later, only 71 percent were working. Although during this period the employment rate of Canadian-born men also declined, it did so only slightly from 87 percent to 84 percent. Among female immigrants, the employment level in the same age group fell to 51 percent in 1996 from an already low 58 percent a decade before. Meanwhile, the employment rate of Canadian-born women continued its upward climb,

from 65 percent in 1986 to 73 percent in 1996. The national unemployment rates in the two years were almost identical: 9.6 percent in 1986 and 9.7 percent in 1996.

Badets and Howatson-Leo further found that in 1996, only 73 percent of recent male immigrants with university degrees had jobs, compared to 92 percent of their Canadian born counterparts. In fact, the employment level of those male immigrants with university degrees was only 4 percent higher than those with only high school education. In the same year, the difference was even more pronounced for immigrant women. The employment rate of recent immigrant women with a university degree was just 58 percent, compared to 86 percent of those born in Canada.

Badets and Howatson-Leo also observed that the immigrant experience was much similar to that faced by Canadian youth. Though both groups were better educated than in the past, they were disproportionately affected during the recession and continued to face growing unemployment problems. Among those who had jobs in 1996, a disproportional number worked in the typically lower paid sales and services fields: 44 percent of youths and 31 percent of the recent immigrants, versus 23 percent of the Canadian-born population aged 25 to 44 years. Nearly one-quarter of recent immigrants with university degrees worked in sale and service occupations, making them about twice as likely to work at these jobs as their Canadian counterparts.

Such bleak socioeconomic realities demonstrate the gap between the intent of Canadian immigration policy and the actual utilization of foreign-trained human capital in the Canadian labour market. Though the intent of the point system is to draw on the strength of highly skilled immigrants to enrich the Canadian economy, Canadian

regulatory bodies and employers often undermine and therefore underutilize foreign qualifications.

### **2.2.3 Factors Affecting Access to Professions**

What has created the bleak socioeconomic realities discussed in the last section?

Existing literature has elaborated on both individual and societal barriers preventing immigrant professionals from practicing their professions in Canada. Among the well-documented barriers are lack of recognition of foreign credentials, unjust requirements for accreditation, limited access to appropriate information and training, language proficiency, and discrimination based on race, ethnicity and gender.

It is noted here that the problem of immigrant professionals' access to professions in Canada is complex, involving the interplay of various individual and societal challenges. As Basran and Zong (1999) point out, it is sometimes difficult to separate individual barriers from structural barriers. For example, a lack of Canadian experience is an individual attribute, but it is also related to the practice of discrediting foreign work experience among employers and regulatory bodies. Another example is that though the lack of official language ability is a personal attribute, it is also related to availability of appropriate training provided by Canadian institutions.

By far, the most quoted barrier to obtaining professional employment is the non-accreditation of foreign credentials. In general, admission to a profession in Canada requires (a) completion of some general post-secondary education, (b) professional training and/or a professional degree, (c) work experience during or after professional training, and (4) successful completion of certification examinations specified by the

provincial licensing body (McDade, 1988). As for foreign-trained professionals, they have to go through the professional accreditation process, which is a systemic examination of pre-migration qualifications (Mata, 1999). In addition to their demonstration of language proficiency, immigrant professionals must demonstrate the extent of their formal education, commonly referred to as academic equivalency. They must seek credit for relevant work experience in their countries of origin. They also have to achieve recognition of qualification in their professions, often through certification examinations. Currently, qualifications of foreign-trained professionals are assessed differently across Canada, depending on provincial educational systems and employment regulations (McDade, 1988).

The accreditation process often involves four major institutional players, namely provincial governments, post-secondary education institutions, professional self-regulating bodies and employers (Mata, 1999). Provincial governments legislate and fund post-secondary institutions, as well as establish close linkages with occupational and professional associations. Post-secondary educational institutions design and deliver programming services in order to grant formal certificates of academic achievement. Professional or licensing bodies have the power to certify or license persons as competent to practice their professions. Employers, despite not being accrediting bodies in themselves, play the primary role of providing the accreditation applicant with Canadian work experience, which is a basic pre-requisite for membership in a professional association (Mata, 1999).

On the surface, it seems reasonable that immigrant professionals must go through the accreditation process to establish their Canadian equivalencies. Nevertheless, complex and often uncoordinated interactions among institutions as well as unfair evaluative procedures employed by regulatory bodies have created barriers that are detrimental to immigrant professionals' right to practice their professions in Canada. To start with, there is currently no national body responsible for the recognition of foreign degrees, professional accreditation and licensing (Mata, 1999). This is due to the operation of federal and provincial jurisdictions. Immigration falls under federal jurisdiction. Yet, once immigrants arrive in Canada, they become the responsibility of whichever province they settle in. Consequently, immigrant professionals are subject to educational and occupational standards that vary by province and by occupational characteristics of the labour market (Mata, 1999). Inconsistent practices among provinces not only call into question fairness but also restrict immigrant professionals' mobility in Canada.

Furthermore, Canadian professional associations, who are the sole "accreditors" within the Canadian system, often lack the necessary information on both the education systems abroad and work experience equivalencies (Mata, 1999). As a result, immigrant professionals experience what economists have called "statistical" discrimination against professional credentials (Kaufman, 1991; McDade & Wright, 1992). In other words, uncertainties in estimating with precision the professional merits of foreign-trained professionals are correlated with possible unfavorable accreditation outcomes.

In addition to “statistical” discrimination problems, professional associations, comprised solely of members of the profession, have more or less free rein. Although these self-regulated professional associations are mandated by legislation to protect the public from malpractice, it is up to each association to interpret that mandate (Calleja & Alnwick, 2000). Criteria for accreditation, therefore, vary from occupation to occupation and province to province. Calleja and Alnwick (2000) succinctly describe the situation as “a big hodgepodge” (p. 38). To worsen the situation for foreign-trained professionals, professional associations often move away from their mandate and make accreditation-related decisions based on their views on the prevailing conditions of supply and demand within their professional labour market (Mata, 1999). Instead of ensuring parity, professional associations aim to protect the interests of their current memberships. They further make it difficult for immigrant professionals to obtain memberships by imposing “prohibitively expensive” costs for completing professional examinations and licensing requirements (Abella, 1984, p. 49).

McDade (1988) examines the evaluative procedures used by professions to assess competence of immigrant professionals. The author observes that such procedures are often subjective. Instead of objectively evaluating educational backgrounds by means of comprehensive examinations, regulatory bodies often determine Canadian equivalency of foreign-trained qualifications on a case-by-case basis. The process may involve examinations of documents, interviews with candidates and enquiries directed to the school overseas. The use of such subjective measures allows for the possibility of evaluation based on stereotypical notions of foreign-trained credentials. Licensing bodies

may refuse to grant equivalencies to candidates who are accredited outside their jurisdiction. They also have the prerogative of restricting the granting of equivalencies to candidates accredited by known schools. Consequently, professionals trained in the United States and the United Kingdom may receive differential treatment throughout the stages of the accreditation process. Others, particularly those from non-English speaking countries, are simply required to repeat the educational requirements of their professions at a school within the province, although they may be able to pass certification examinations immediately.

Similar analyses of the procedures of prior learning assessment by DePass (1989) and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship (1989) also conclude that established procedures do not always allow adequate or thorough assessments of foreign credentials due to inadequate knowledge of overseas educational systems, and that it is often the case that improper assessment results in a complete rejection of prior learning. Like McDade's study, the reports also indicate the existence of bias against those immigrants who have secured their vocational experience from non-English speaking or Third World countries. DePass (1989) confirms that there exists a hierarchy of educational institutions and educational credentials in which North American and British credentials are considered superior and those from Third World countries inferior, regardless of the actual quality of education from any given individual institution. The author then further points out that the use of dated and inaccurate data "does not acknowledge the dynamic nature of educational changes in those [Third World] countries" (p. 19).

One of the requirements for professional certification that has proven detrimental to chances of immigrant professionals practicing their professions is Canadian work experience. Abella (1984) cites Canadian experience as an impossible qualification for newly arrived immigrants. Mata (1999) characterizes the requirement of Canadian experience as a “vicious circle” (p. 6). Employers will not hire immigrant professionals who have not attained membership in appropriate professional associations. However, foreign-trained professionals cannot secure their professional membership statuses unless they find employment to acquire necessary Canadian work experience.

Thus far, most of the research studies have relied on formal reviews of evaluative procedures employed by professional associations to identify institutional barriers in recognition of foreign qualifications. Some research efforts, however, draw on immigrant professionals’ own perceptions of the accreditation process as well as their employment experiences. Fernando and Prasad (1986) interviewed 80 immigrant professionals living in Vancouver and Kelowna. They found that 87 percent of the sample interviewed were unemployed or under-employed. Among those professionals seeking employment, 71 percent reported that they had encountered barriers to full recognition of their credentials. The professionals also cited language barriers, lack of Canadian experience and adverse economic conditions as barriers to professions.

A report by the Alberta Task Force on the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications confirms that foreign-trained professionals often receive arbitrary and unfair evaluation of foreign qualifications as well as get trapped in the “catch 22” prerequisite of Canadian experience (Government of Alberta, 1992). The report further documents the barriers

immigrant professionals have often encountered, relating to access to accreditation information, access to re-training and upgrading and official languages. In terms of access to information, the report indicates that immigrant professionals struggle to understand the complex accreditation process due to a lack of proper information and their unfamiliarity with Canadian institutions, customs, norms and the English language. Many immigrant professionals reported that they received poor information on accreditation procedures from immigration officers prior to coming to Canada.

The Task Force report further addresses immigrant professionals' access to re-training or upgrading. Quite often, immigrants with foreign qualifications must take additional training to meet Canadian standards. While many immigrant professionals are willing to meet all the requirements necessary to work in Alberta, they do not have the financial support to complete the requirements. They also face educational systems that are designed as three or four year programs, with little or no flexibility to accommodate midstream access.

With respect to language issues, the Task Force report emphasizes the importance of language proficiency in successful integration of immigrant professionals into the workforce. The probability of being unemployed is at least eight times higher among individuals who have no knowledge of English as compared to those with English language skills. The report also points out that current services focus mainly on English for survival purposes. Individuals with foreign qualifications have difficulty obtaining training in English that will enable them to practice in their chosen professions which require technical language competency. As for language testing, the Task Force report

contends that present requirements of professional associations are often rigidly established and applied in an arbitrary manner bearing little relationship to the requirements of the profession. For example, with regard to the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), 600 is set as the pass rate for agricultural engineering and computer science, while 550 is required for medicine and law.

Many aspects of the report by the Alberta Task Force on the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications are supported and further elaborated by other authors. With respect to access to information, Mata (1999) contends that immigration officers overseas, many of whom are locals facing enormous backlogs and a shortage of resources, often do not have the necessary knowledge in identifying occupational designation or specific certification requirements for the various trades and professions. A recent survey of foreign-trained professionals in Ontario also indicates that only 20 percent of respondents were briefed on occupational requirements before they immigrated to Canada (Callaja & Alnwick, 2000).

As for language competency, findings from a recent study by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (1998) suggest “an unshakeable and long lasting relationship between language proficiency in either English or French and income and employment prospects” (p. 3). Skilled workers who came to Canada fluent in English or French are the least likely to be unemployed throughout their working careers. In addition, individuals who have the strongest levels of language proficiency not only start off earning more than those with poor or no language proficiency, but also continue to earn higher incomes. The income gap remains and can be observed for people who have been

in the labour market for a year or two or who have been working for 15 years. It is important here to keep in mind that most immigrant professionals who come to Canada under the independent category are awarded the full points for strong fluency in the official languages, even though such assessments are subject to informal discretion of immigration officers.

Basran and Zong (1999) further explore the issue of devaluation of foreign credentials as perceived by visible minority immigrant professionals. In their survey of 404 foreign-trained minority professionals, Basran and Zong discovered that most immigrant professionals considered non-recognition or devaluation of their foreign credentials as the most important factor contributing to their inability to find work in their professional occupations and their consequent downward mobility. In fact, 79 percent reported that they experienced difficulties in having their foreign credentials recognized in Canada. About 50 percent felt that their foreign education was either not fairly recognized or fairly compared to Canadian standards by the provincial government agencies, professional organizations and educational institutions.

In terms of work experience, Basran and Zong found that over 90 percent of immigrant professionals had professional work experience in their countries of origin before immigrating to Canada. Among them, 47 percent had 4 to 9 years of professional work experience, and 35 percent had 10 years or more. Unfortunately, the professionals reported that their foreign work experience was not readily credited in Canada. About 55 percent of respondents felt that their foreign work experience was not fairly recognized by provincial government agencies, professional organizations, and educational

institutions. A comparable 59 percent did not believe that their foreign work experience was compared to Canadian standards fairly. Consequently, 79 percent of respondents reported that they experienced difficulty in obtaining professional work experience. Another 13 percent reported that they had not worked since their arrival in Canada. With respect to job suitability, 60 percent felt they were overqualified for their current occupations.

Basran and Zong further found that immigrant professionals experienced difficulties in accessing services and training. About 78 percent of the respondents believed that the federal and provincial government had not done enough in assisting them. An equivalent percentage felt that the government should provide special services, such as job training and English training, to help foreign-trained immigrant professionals to meet Canadian standards of qualification or certification equivalence.

In addition to the non-accreditation of foreign qualifications, several reports and studies have highlighted discrimination on the basis of race and/ or ethnicity, accent and gender as barriers to professions. DePass (1989) and McDade (1988) contend that though visible minorities generally have higher level of education, they often work in occupations not commensurate with their education and experience. In its report *Equality Now*, the Government of Canada (1984) also acknowledges that racial minorities are not participating fully in Canadian society. Visible minorities are disproportionately absent from higher status occupations, have little or no influence in significant decision-making, and are “socially invisible” (p. 1).

The injustice that visible minorities experience in employment is empirically supported by several authors. Basran and Zong (1998) surveyed 404 visible minority immigrant professionals. They found that 65 percent of the respondents perceived discrimination in the accreditation process on the basis of their skin color. Another study by Reitz and Sklar (1997) investigated socioeconomic disadvantages faced by visible minorities in the Canadian labour market. Using regression analysis, the study examined occupational status and earnings effect of ethnic attachment of 1792 immigrant men and women from seven ethnic and racial minorities in Toronto. The study found that racial minority immigrants paid a cost for their minority status in reduced occupational status and earnings. The study further elaborated that whereas immigrants from European origins faced economic disadvantages on a culture-contingent basis, all racial minorities suffered economically regardless of specific culture, identity, behaviors or network affiliations. The study concluded that “racial disadvantage does not appear to be directly related to ethnic or cultural retention among racial minorities, leaving the implication that discrimination occurs simply on the basis of skin color alone” (p. 269).

Using the 1991 census data, Pendukar and Pendukar (1996) reported that even when controlling for occupation, industry, education, potential experience, official language knowledge and household type, visible minorities earned significantly less than native-born White workers in Canada. Among both men and women, White immigrants experienced small earning penalties, but visible minority immigrants suffered large earning differentials. Pendukar and Pendukar (1996) further discovered substantial variation in the earnings penalties experienced by the different ethnic groups comprising

Whites and visible minorities. For White immigrant men, those from northern and central Europe, with an exception of Greek immigrants who faced an earning gap of 17 percent, did not appear to face any substantial earnings penalty. The same was true of immigrants with more than one White ethnic origin. Visible minority immigrant men, on the other hand, universally faced earnings penalties. With the exception of the Chinese ethnic group that faced an earnings gap of a mere 1 percent, visible minority immigrant groups faced earnings gaps of over 14 percent. Immigrant men from some ethnic groups, such as Latin American and Filipino, earned about 20% less than Canadian-born men. Among immigrant women, only those White immigrants from Spanish single origin faced a significant 16 percent penalty. Visible minority women, on the other hand, experienced statistically significant earnings differentials ranging from 10 to 15 percent.

DeSilva (1992) further elaborates on economic variation among immigrants, by examining earnings differentials among immigrant groups. Based on the analysis of the 1986 census data, the author found that immigrants from the Caribbean and East Asia who had their education and work experience in Canada earned respectively about 27 and 21 percent less than other group of immigrants. In addition, immigrants from Asia, South and Central America, the Caribbean and other Africa (excluding South Africa), given equivalent human capital and other demographic factors, earned significantly less than immigrants from Western and Northern Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

Henry and Ginzberg (1993) demonstrate the pervasiveness of racial discrimination in employment in their innovative quasi-experimental research. Using

actors as potential job applicants, they explored the differences in employment experience between White and Black applicants of similar experience and qualification. They found that job offers to Whites outweighed offers to Blacks by a ratio of 3 to 1. The study also adds an important qualitative dimension. Black applicants experienced not only discrimination in the sense of receiving fewer job offers than Whites, but also a considerable amount of negative and abusive treatment while job hunting, ranging from blatant dismissal to being treated with hostility, to lower wage offers.

Henry and Ginzberg further discovered that prejudice against accent might be responsible for differentials in occupational attainment between immigrant workers and the native-born. In a separate telephone experiment, Henry and Ginzberg investigated how job applicants with accents fared, compared to those with no discernable accent. They found that, controlling such factors as gender, age, education, years of job experience and usage of Standard English grammar and sentence structures, there were some forms of discrimination present in 52 percent of all jobs called. They also found that chances of having success in job search varied among people with accents. To secure 10 potential job interviews, a person with no discernable accent had to make about 11 or 12 calls, compared to 13 calls made by European immigrants. People with other accents, often members of racial minority groups, worked harder and longer. They had to make 18 calls to get 10 potential job interviews.

The findings of Henry and Ginzberg's study are congruent with the prevalent perception of discriminatory practices on the basis of accent among immigrants. Reitz and Sklar (1997) surveyed 1792 surveyed immigrant men and women from seven ethnic

and racial minorities in Toronto. They found that 60 percent of the respondents contended that discrimination was worse when members of minority groups spoke English with an identifiable accent.

DePass (1988) adds a qualitative dimension to the issue. The author reported that a black Caribbean research participant felt that his employer assumed that the English spoken by Caribbeans needed upgrading, whereas no such assumption was made of his White colleagues with Australian or Cockney accents.

Elliott (1990) further discusses dynamics surrounding language and accent competencies. The author maintains that the deciding factor for the appropriateness of language and accent competencies is whether or not language and accent interfere with comprehensibility to the extent that they preclude job competence. Elliott asserts that it is justifiable for an employer to require individuals with little competence in English or French to take further language training. However, if a job candidate demonstrates language competence while speaking with a non-Canadian accent and is discriminated against on this basis, he or she has experienced a non-justifiable barrier to employment.

Finally, turning attention to gender issues, many studies have elaborated on barriers experienced by immigrant professional women in the Canadian labor market. Seward and Tremblay (1989) argue that immigrant women, especially those from non-traditional source countries, are at a disadvantage in the workforce. Unlike their male counterparts who are more likely to come to Canada as principal applicants and therefore entitled to training and assistance, immigrant women are more likely to come to Canada as dependents or assisted relatives. Consequently, immigrant women may not have the

same access as their male relatives to English as a Second Language classes or other training programs to facilitate their integration into the Canadian labour market.

Boyd (1985) shows that gender acts as an axis of occupation stratification. Her examination of the 1973 census data concluded that immigrant women in the Canadian workforce had lower occupational status than foreign-born males and Canadian-born workers of both sexes. Boyd attributed the disadvantage of immigrant women to their membership in “two negative status groups: female and foreign-born” (p. 441). Boyd further noticed that the double negative factor had less impact on the occupational attainments of women born in the United States and United Kingdom.

In a separate study using the 1986 census data, Boyd (1992) once again discovered that gender was an important factor, with women having lower earnings than their male counterparts. Boyd also demonstrated the complex interplay between gender, minority status and birthplace. Once adjustments were made for the socioeconomic differences between groups defined by gender, visible minority status, and birthplace, a pattern of below average earnings became readily apparent for the foreign-born, and especially for persons who were members of visible minority groups and/or women. Boyd predicted that if all groups had the same socio-economic profile, being foreign-born, a member of a visible minority group, or female would be associated with lower earnings.

Seward and McDade (1988) reviewed the labour force experiences of immigrant women in general. Their report showed that Black women from the Caribbean and Southeast Asian females had higher labour force participation rates than did Canadian-

born females. However, these racial minority immigrant women were again shown to have lower than average incomes than their Canadian counterparts.

In their comparative studies of Canadian-born and immigrant women who were 30 years old at the time of the 1981 census with respect to their education and occupation, Trovato and Grindstaff (1986) noticed that while 29.0 percent of immigrant women had some university education, compared to 17.1 percent of their Canadian-born counterparts, only 23.8 percent of those immigrant women held professional jobs, as compared to 32.2 percent of the native-born. Another study by Lee (1999) using the 1991 census data to examine earnings differentials among foreign and native-born women also confirmed that immigrant women did not benefit from their education and work experience compared to their native-born counterparts.

#### **2.2.4 Impacts of Devaluation of Foreign Credentials**

Immigrant professionals who wish to practice their profession in Canada often face insurmountable individual and societal barriers. Consequently, many immigrant professionals find themselves unemployed or underutilized in the Canadian labour market. Such downward occupational mobility has severely affected immigrant professionals individually as well as Canadian society as a whole.

According to the Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees (1989), underemployment is a potential risk factor for emotional disorder. Immigrant professionals who are not contributing to Canadian society at their fullest potential are at risk for low self-esteem, depression, alcoholism, family breakdown and suicide. Meanwhile, Canada is also penalized as a result of its

underutilization of foreign-trained professionals. People who could and should become important resources for Canada must, too often, turn to public assistance. They also resort to the health care system, because their marginal status damages their physical and emotional health.

A study by Maraj (1996) sheds some light on the qualitative psychosocial impact of occupational dislocation amongst immigrant professionals. The study reported that the underemployed immigrant professionals often experienced isolation, disempowerment, low self-esteem and depression. The non-accreditation of foreign qualifications also takes its toll on interpersonal relationships. Many immigrant professionals expressed feeling of guilt toward family members for failing to provide economic security for their loved ones. They also experienced a sense of personal disappointment, failure and frustration. Furthermore, underemployed immigrant professionals felt that their perceptions of Canada had changed due to their experience. They felt misled and disillusioned with the country. Some expressed an inability to continue to trust or respect Canada.

Mata (1999) contends that the problem of non-accreditation of immigrant professionals has direct impact on productivity levels as well as on societal cohesion. At the productivity level, Canada risks losing its competitive edge in the global market due to its inefficient use of foreign-trained human resource. Canadian professional regulatory bodies, notorious for their emphasis on professional protectionism rather than on training competencies and public safety, fail to recognize that the current global trend is toward freer movement of professional services. Also, non-utilization or poor

utilization of foreign-trained human resources results in annual revenue loss as well as in income support given to unemployed professionals. Though there is currently no information on monetary losses due to the non-accreditation of immigrant professionals, Mata draws attention to a study by Stasiulis (1990) that estimates losses to the national economy of Australia (a country which is very similar to Canada in several demographic, socioeconomic, cultural and immigrant composition characteristics) to be somewhere between \$100 and 350 millions in US dollars.

In terms of social cohesion, Mata points out that barriers preventing immigrant professionals from equitable access to professions cause tensions in race relations. When a large number of individuals from particular ethnic or racial backgrounds are blocked in their entry into the trades or professions there is an accumulated societal effect of higher levels of inter-group tensions, individual and collective alienation as well as generalized perception of “institutional” discrimination. Many communities express their frustrations through letters and petitions addressed to provincial or federal institutions, complaints made to national and provincial human rights commission or hunger strikes.

### **2.3 Existing Theories**

Currently, human capital theory and labour market segmentation are widely used to understand the experience of immigrant professionals in the Canadian labour force. The first approach, human capital theory, contends that those immigrant professionals with higher investments in education, training and work experience will be allocated the most rewarding occupations (Sorensen, 1995). On the surface, human capital theory

seems to explain why immigrant professionals succeed in finding work in their intended fields of practice. After all, they possess training, education and work experience that are all crucial determinants of labour market success. However, the validity of this theory is called into question in the context of existing research proving that immigrant professionals, in spite of their high qualifications compared to their native-born counterparts, do not benefit from the human capital accruing from their foreign training (Basran and Zong, 1999; Boyd, 1985; McDade, 1988; Trovato and Grindstaff, 1986).

A more sociological alternative to human capital theory is the labour market segmentation theory. This approach contends that labour markets are stratified into highly impermeable primary and secondary labour markets. Whereas the primary sector offers workers high wages, good working conditions, job security, and chances of advancement, the secondary sector does not reward workers' skills, which in turn results in low wages or unsatisfactory jobs (Rosenbaum et al., 1990). The theory also specifies that the working population is stratified on the basis of class, gender, race or ethnicity (Lowe, 1993). Sorensen (1995) further points out that within the segmentation framework, the concept of "exclusionary closure" developed by Parkin (1979) can be used to explain why immigrant professionals experience downward mobility and are confined in the secondary labour market. Mechanisms of social closure can include any entrenched barriers that prevent access to equitable job markets on the basis of ascribed characteristics. The current trend is that immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Pacific, South and Central America make up almost 80 percent of the annual total

immigration, and over 50 percent of this total women (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2000). Bearing in mind these percentages, it follows that many immigrant professionals suffer from exclusionary closure mechanisms, such as the non-recognition of foreign credentials (Boyd, 1985; deSilva, 1992; Fernando & Prasad, 1986; McDade, 1988), racial or ethnic discrimination (Basran & Zong, 1999; Henry & Ginzberg, 1993), and gender inequity (Boyd, 1985; Lee, 1999). The labour market segmentation theory, therefore, explains quite well the realities of occupational dislocation and underemployment that many immigrant professionals are experiencing in the Canadian labour market. The theory, however, fails to explain why some immigrant professionals, in spite of their “undesirable” ascribed characteristics, manage to practice in the primary labour market.

#### **2.4 Summary**

Economic interests, manifested in the recruitment of immigrant workers, have long been embedded in Canadian immigration policy. In an age of globalization and the knowledge-based economy, Canada hopes to sharpen its competitive edge through its selection of immigrants with considerable education and work experience. This underlying intent however is not thoroughly translated into reality, as immigrant professionals with considerable human capital often find themselves underutilized in the Canadian labour market.

Existing research has established that the roads to professional re-entry are paved with insurmountable individual and societal challenges. Many immigrant professionals

fail to gain access to their professions, and end up taking professional and occupational roles not commensurate with their qualifications. Such under-utilization of foreign-trained human capital has created tremendous social, economic and psychological costs both for immigrant professionals personally and for Canadian society as a whole.

Though current research thoroughly explains the reasons so many immigrant professionals cannot work in their intended fields of practice in Canada, it has overlooked the experience of immigrant professionals who have managed to practice their professions in Canada. A grounded theory is therefore called on to describe processes or mechanisms employed by immigrant professionals in order to overcome well-documented individual and societal barriers.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The design of this study involves selection of an appropriate inquiry paradigm and research method, as well as careful consideration of a transparent research process. This chapter begins with a discussion of the rationale for using a qualitative design and more specifically the grounded theory method. It then proceeds with locating the researcher's perspective, presenting ethical considerations, describing the joint processes of data collection and analysis, and outlining measures to ensure trustworthiness.

#### **3.1 Qualitative Research Paradigm**

Qualitative research is concerned with how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The essence of this type of research lies in a clear commitment to the naturalistic tradition that put emphases upon the process of discovery, sensitivity to holistic and ecological issues, adaptation and function, and qualitative description and generalization (Grinnell, 1993). Qualitative research aims to explore and describe relatively unknown areas, to develop theory as well as to study process (Morse, 1991a; Patton, 1990).

In light of the preceding synopsis, the qualitative paradigm was found to be best suited to studying the experiences of successful immigrant professionals. As demonstrated in the literature review, existing research generally focused upon factors contributing to occupational dislocation and underemployment among immigrant professionals. Consequently, the experience of immigrant professionals who found work

in their intended fields of practice remained an unexplored area. Such a lack of information made it logically impossible for any kind of factor-analysis or hypothesis-testing studies. Instead, the use of a qualitative approach seemed more appropriate to facilitate understanding of the experience of this overlooked population through rich descriptions and explanations.

Furthermore, this research set out to discover patterns of successful integration into the Canadian labor market as perceived by immigrant professionals. The qualitative inquiry facilitated such discoveries by providing detailed descriptions, accounting for unique experience among different people, capturing participants' perceptions, and communicating the fluid and dynamic nature associated with process (Patton, 1990). At the same time, it established the social context within which the experience of immigrant professionals had occurred. Also, the descriptive mode of qualitative inquiry assisted in dismantling the tendency to look at the immigrant population as a homogeneous group of people without looking critically at the individual and the uniqueness of his or her experience. Through intensive interviewing, the qualitative research attempted to capture the research participants' points of view, examine the constraints of their everyday lives, and document how they give meaning to their experiences.

### **3.2 Grounded Theory**

#### **3.2.1 Locating Research Strategy**

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) advocate that the qualitative strategy used in a study should be largely determined by the purpose of the study, the nature of the research questions, and the skills and resources available to the researcher. They further elaborate

that those researchers who confine themselves methodologically to a single strategy prior to formulating the research questions risk restricting the types of questions they may ask, the types of results they can obtain, and ultimately the strength of the research.

As a researcher, I did not start the research project with a pre-conceived methodological preference. Rather, I examined the research question with respect to a wide range of qualitative approaches, keeping in mind the questions of “what information will answer most appropriately specific research questions, and which strategies are most effective for obtaining it” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 30).

Furthermore, my initial research question was “how do foreign-trained immigrant professionals overcome barriers in order to gain employment in their intended fields of practice in Canada?” The nature of the research question suggested three important points. First, it was concerned with the lived experience of immigrant professionals who successfully found work in their professions in Canada. Second, it implied a process that immigrant professionals would have to go through to overcome barriers and consequently find employment in their fields. Finally, given that predominant theories failed to explain successful adaptation of immigrant professionals in the Canadian labor market, the research question implied an explanatory purpose. The nature of the research question was therefore congruent with the discovery mode and explanatory orientation of grounded theory.

### **3.2.2 An Overview of Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory is an inductive research methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The goal of grounded theory is to generate theoretical constructs that explain the action in the

social context under study (Stern, 1980). Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

The grounded theory research model was originally developed in the 1960s by the two sociologists, Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss. Strauss came from the University of Chicago, which possessed a strong tradition of qualitative research. Barney Glaser, on the other hand, came from a quantitative research tradition at Columbia University. Grounded theory was born at the height of resentment toward the overwhelming emphasis in the academic community on “grand” theories. As Glaser & Strauss (1967) put it, their efforts to introduce grounded theory as a research methodology attempted to “release energies for theorizing that [were] frozen by the undue emphasis on verification” (p. viii).

Grounded theory methodology emerged from the symbolic interaction perspective and tradition of social psychology and sociology (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). The interactionist perspective- first introduced by Mead (1964), and later on refined and extended by Blumer (1969)- features the three basic premises: (1) the meanings that things (such as persons, institution, objects, situations and combinations of such) have for people will determine what actions will occur toward those things, (2) this meaning is derived from social interactions, and (3) an interpretive process is used to direct and modify the meanings as the situation is dealt with by a person (Blumer, 1969).

Echoing the influence of the symbolic interactionist approach, Glaser and Strauss state their assumptions about the nature of theory, the relationship of theory to reality & truth, the research process and human interactions (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin,

1990). First, the researcher needs to get out into the field in order to understand what is going on with a particular phenomenon. Second, theory must be intimately linked to data, and thus grounded in reality. Third, the nature of experience in the field for the research participants and the researcher is continually evolving. Theory is, therefore, tentative and modifiable in response to such changes. Fourth, people have active roles in shaping the meaning of events in the world they live in through the processes of symbolic interaction. Finally, the researcher needs to be descriptive in order to capture changes, processes, and the variability and complexity of life.

Strauss and Corbin (1994) discuss the similarities and differences of grounded theory to other qualitative research frameworks. Sources of data are the same in grounded theory as in other qualitative research models. Data are collected by means of field observations, interviews and documents of all kinds. Advocates of the grounded theory methodology assume, as do many other researchers, that some form of social science is possible and desirable. Further, grounded theory, along with other qualitative models such as hermeneutics and phenomenology, has redefined the usual scientific canons for the purposes of studying human behavior. The common focus is on interpretive work, that is mandated to include the perspectives and voices of the people who are being studied by the researcher.

Strauss and Corbin further point out that grounded theory is different from other qualitative approaches in four ways. First, the primary purpose of grounded theory is to discover theory from systematically collected and analyzed data. Second, the research procedure in grounded theory involves the use of constant comparison throughout the research process. Joint collection, coding, and analysis of data are the underlying

operation. Third, unlike other qualitative research models that rely upon follow-up quantitative research to verify resulting hypotheses, grounded theory strives toward verification of resulting hypotheses throughout the course of a research project. Ongoing collection and analysis of data allows the researcher to generate multiple hypotheses and verify them through further comparisons of data. Finally, an exhaustive literature review is not done in order to avoid preconception, and thus allow theory to emerge directly from the data and remain “grounded” in the data.

Robrecht (1995) notes that grounded theory has evolved over the years, particularly evident in a new collaboration between Strauss and Corbin (1990) in *Basics of Qualitative Research* that outlines procedures and techniques for grounded theory. Glaser (1992) disputes the changes in the procedures, declaring that Strauss and Corbin are no longer doing grounded theory. Annells (1996) offers an explanation of such a rift, using the ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1994). According to Annells, the ontological question is concerned with the form and nature of reality and what can be known about reality. Classic grounded theory leans toward critical realism that views the social and natural worlds as being different realities, yet probabilistically apprehensible, albeit imperfectly. Glaser (1992) reinforces the critical realist view as he advocates searching for “true meaning” (p. 55), and looking “for what is, not what might be” (p. 67). Strauss and Corbin (1990), however, embrace the ontological view of relativism that lays emphasis on perspective and therefore views reality as multiple mental constructions. They claim that “a reality cannot actually be known, but is always interpreted” (p. 22), that knowledge per se is linked closely with time and place, and that truth is enacted.

In terms of epistemology, there has been a departure in answers to questions relating to the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the would-be knower and what can be known. Classic grounded theory suggests that the method is independent of the researcher and has a separate existence (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Such a view is congruent with the post-positivist or objectivist epistemological view of the nature of the knower and what can be known. Recent presentations of the method, however, move toward subjectivist and transactional epistemology that identifies the researcher as being actively involved with the method and not separate from the method (Strauss, 1987), or being a crucially significant interactant in the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

As a result of evolutions in ontology and epistemology, methodological procedures in grounded theory have also changed. In its classic mode, grounded theory emphasizes the value of emic viewpoints to generate a theory, the supposed accumulation of knowledge, and the acceptance of verification research as indicated in the post-positivist methodological view. Glaser (1992) contends that the systemic generation of grounded theory “should be seen in sequential relation” to verification research with the ultimate aim of both being the “building up of scientific facts” (p. 30), and that a verification study would be necessary to verify the generated grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1994), however, support the notion that doing grounded theory deals with verification as well as discovery. Their assumption is that verification is possible throughout the course of a research project, not only through follow-up quantitative research. Strauss and Corbin (1990) also claim that “doing analysis is, in fact, making interpretation” (p. 59). They further contend that interpretations are based on “multiple

perspective[s]” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 280), which, being embedded in the historical moment, are always only provisional. Their view clearly reflects the dialectical constructivist analysis of how the inquirer should go about acquiring knowledge.

Rennie (1998) contends that in spite of disputes over grounded theory procedures among Glaser, Strauss and Corbin, their rift is not total. The author points out that Glaser, Strauss and Corbin still concur on the three key methodological devices, namely constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling and theoretical memoing. First, grounded theorists are required to use constant comparative analysis to compare each incident to other data for similarities and differences, then code and group them as categories with higher orders of abstraction (Rennie, 1998). Second, they need to use theoretical sampling to select research participants on the basis of concepts that have proven theoretical relevance to the evolving theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Third, they are also required to keep theoretical notes or memos to keep track of all the categories, properties, hypotheses and generative questions that evolve from the analytical process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Specific applications of these methodological devices in this study will be discussed in detail in the sections on data collection and data analysis.

### **3.3 The Researcher's Perspective**

In light of the evolving procedures in grounded theory due to divergent ontological, epistemological and methodological views, Annells (1996) encourages prospective researchers to consider the philosophical and paradigmatic aspects prior to selecting grounded theory method for a research project. Janesick (1994) further contends that research is ideologically driven, and that there are no value-free or bias-free

designs. Charmaz (1990) reinforces this sentiment through her observation that researchers never enter any project *tabula rasa*, but rather with the general perspectives of their discipline; with their own research interests and biographies; and with certain philosophical, theoretical, substantive, and methodological orientations. Yet, qualitative investigators often do not acknowledge how their own backgrounds affect the emergent construction of reality (Sword, 1999). In order to make the research process transparent and thus demonstrate accountability, researchers must acknowledge that their values will influence the inquiry, and make them explicit in order to account for all personal values (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, I adopted a constructivist approach to grounded theory. I assumed the relativism of multiple social realities, recognized the mutual creation of knowledge by the researcher and the researched, and aimed toward a naturalistic set of methodological procedures as well as interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994). As a researcher, I did not strive to establish objective facts about the social world since such objective knowledge was impossible. Rather, I explained how the research participants understood, or made sense of, their lived experience. Also, any theory I arrived at would inevitably be my own interpretation of the research participants' understanding and not simply a reflection of them (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

My selection of a constructivist approach to grounded theory was guided by the person-in-environment perspective of Social Work, which would consider the interactions between individuals, systems and the environment as critical (Council on Social Work Education, 1983; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 1993). Therefore, as a Social Work

researcher, I needed to pay attention to social and interpersonal contexts in interpreting the research participants' lived experience. Such orientation was congruent with the concept of conditional matrix introduced by Strauss and Corbin (1990) to examine the impacts of international politics, governmental regulations, cultures, values, philosophies, economics, history, and international problems and issues like the environment on one's experience.

The researcher's acknowledgement of the impact of his or her biography on the research process is as crucial as the explicit statement of the methodological orientation. Sword (1999) points out that reflection on the influence of self not only creates personal awareness of how the research is shaped by one's own biography but also provides a context within which audiences can more fully understand the researcher's interpretation of text data. Pidgeon et al. (1991) assert that since the qualitative researcher, as a "research tool", does not take a hidden, passive or impersonal role in the process of enquiry, his or her individual personal qualities are actively involved in the discovery of theory. Locke, Spirduso and Silverman (1993) further contend that "the entire biography of the investigator- values, habits of perception, intellectual presumptions, and personal dispositions- becomes potentially relevant to gathering, analyzing and understanding the data" (p. 110).

Throughout this research, I continually reflected upon my background and its potential impact on the study. I was aware that my interests in the research area did not happen by chance, but rather stemmed from my own personal experience as a first generation visible minority immigrant. In fact, my background influenced me to the

extent that my professional practice in Social Work gravitated toward immigrant and cultural diversity issues.

Ongoing self-reflection further helped me recognize the impact of my personal attributes on the research process. In this study, the research participants did not simply rate themselves as in quantitative research approach. Rather, they were interacting with a visible minority researcher who came from a different culture, and had a distinguishing accent, suggesting his immigrant background. I noticed that my personal attributes helped facilitate the research process as well as subjected me to vulnerability. As a member of the immigrant community, I enjoyed easy access to the intensive networks involving the immigrant population and immigrant serving agencies. This aspect was particularly useful for the recruitment of suitable research candidates. Obviously, the close-knit nature of the immigrant community called my attention to ethical issues, which will be discussed in the next section.

My immigrant background further helped establish trust with the research participants. During our meetings, the research participants confided that they found comfort in sharing their experience with someone who might have been through similar situations. I also found my personal background and professional experience in working with immigrants a source of theoretical sensitivity. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) put it, knowledge from professional and personal experience, even if implicit, is taken into the research situation and helps the researcher to understand events and actions seen and heard, and to be sensitive to how the research participants understand and give meaning to their lived experience.

Besides the benefits I enjoyed in the research process due to my immigrant background, I was also keenly aware that my biography subjected me to vulnerability. Some research participants might assume my understanding of their issues as a result of my immigrant background, and therefore might not fully elaborate on their experience. For example, when I asked the difficulties that a research participant experienced when he first arrived in Canada, the individual responded: "Well, I have to deal with all the resettlement issues. Being an immigrant yourself, you know what's it like." To avoid such assumptions, I emphasized the importance of understanding the research participants' unique experience in full details at the beginning. I also tactfully asked follow up questions for further details when the research participants made assumptions about my understanding during the interviews.

In discussing the roles of personal and professional experience in theoretical sensitivity, Strauss and Corbin (1990) caution that those experiences can block the researcher from seeing things that have become routine or "obvious", or the researcher may assume that everyone else's experience has been similar to his or her experience. As a researcher, I pulled red flags when I found myself thinking, "This sounds familiar!" I also reviewed the transcripts, took notes of what I might have assumed, and subsequently asked for clarification in the follow-up interviews.

In terms of cultural identity, I come from a Vietnamese Canadian cultural background. All of the research participants, on the other hand, came from a wide range of other cultures. They, therefore, might react to my cultural background differently, depending on their own experience with cultural exchange as well as their perception of the Vietnamese Canadian culture. To facilitate understanding and appreciation of

cultural diversity, I spent time during the first meetings to learn about the research participants' cultures as well as to share with them my own cultural nuances. I also prepared myself to be culturally competent by consulting friends, colleagues, the research participants themselves, and existing literature on cultural competency (Atkinson, 1992; Barnes, 1996; Donnelly, 2000; Green & Watkins, 1998; Harrison et al., 1996; Hurh & Kim, 1981; Lie & Este, 1999; Ponterotto, et al., 1995; Steeves, 1992).

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

Patton (1990) observes that qualitative inquiry is more intrusive and involves greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches for three reasons: (1) qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal; (2) naturalistic inquiry takes the researcher into the real world where people live and work; and (3) in-depth interviewing opens up what is inside people. It is, therefore, important to anticipate and deal with the ethical dimensions of research. Schinke and Gilchrist (1993) advocate that ethical consideration of the effects of the research process on clients, agencies, the social work profession, and society as a whole must be taken into account at all times.

Prior to commencing any research activity, I familiarized myself with the ethical guidelines for social work research outlined by the Canadian Association of Social Work (CASW). In my research proposal and submission of ethical considerations to the Social Work Ethics Review Committee, I carefully examined various ethical aspects including risk assessment, arrangement for service referrals, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, research methodology and procedures.

As part of the process of informed consent, I explained to potential participants, both verbally and in consent forms, the purposes of the study, research procedures, methodology, possible risks and benefits, the duration of the study as well as their rights to informed consent and confidentiality (see Appendix B). Throughout the study, I offered the research participants opportunities to ask questions about the meaning of the phenomenon under study, the procedures, risks, benefits, alternatives and consequences. I also put emphasis on the individual's right to refuse to participate in the research at any moment, not just when signing the written informed consent form (Milton, 2000).

To ensure the research participants' rights to confidentiality and privacy, all personal data were secured and concealed (Christian, 2000). Specifically, I used fictitious names to identify participants and limited access to data on a need-to-know basis. I then took further steps to manage sensitive data. Throughout the study, I stored tapes, notes and transcripts in a locked filing cabinet in my office at the University of Calgary. For the purposes of word processing and data analysis, I saved data on the hard drive of my office computer, which required a personal password for access. Upon the completion of my thesis, I will transfer all data on the computer to floppy disks, which will be destroyed along with relevant tapes, transcripts and notes.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The aim of the data gathering stage is to produce as rich a description as possible of the phenomena being studied. However efficient the subsequent analysis, thin data will result in thin outcomes, which are unlikely to reflect the substantive issues involved (Pidgeon et al., 1991). In grounded theory, the researcher uses the strategy of theoretical

sampling to jointly collect, code and analyze the data, and then decide what data to collect next and where to find them in order to develop the theory as it emerges (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The process of data collection is therefore controlled and continually guided by the emerging theory. The process of data collection in this study involves the selection of research participants, development of research questions and use of in-depth interviews as a means of gathering data.

### **3.5.1 Selection Of Research Participants**

Sampling in qualitative inquiry is guided not by the need to generalize about people, but rather by the need to select research participants and data likely to generate robust, rich, and deep levels of understanding (Thompson, 1999). The purpose is, therefore, not to establish a random or representative sample drawn from a population, but rather to identify specific groups of people who either possess characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being studied (Mays & Pope, 1996). Furthermore, sampling in grounded theory proceeds in terms of concepts, their properties, dimensions, and variations (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Qualitative researchers generally agree that sampling in qualitative inquiry continues until theoretical saturation of each category is reached (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

To achieve those principles for sampling, I purposefully selected information rich cases for study in depth (Patton, 1990). Since the research focused on successful patterns of adaptation among immigrant professionals in the Canadian labour market, potential research participants had to meet the two global criteria. First, they must have completed professional training at post-secondary institutions in other countries, excluding the United States and Great Britain. My decision not to include potential participants from

the United States and Great Britain was based on the findings that credentials obtained from these two countries are readily recognized in Canada (see DePass, 1989; McDale, 1988). Second, the research participants must have successfully secured employment pertaining to their professional training and expertise in Canada. In addition to experience and knowledge relevant to the study, I chose informants who would have the ability to reflect, be articulate, have the time to be interviewed, and be willing to participate in the study (Morse, 1991b). Potential research participants were recruited through my personal and professional networks as well as through the snowball effect.

After completion of theoretical sampling, I interviewed a total of six research participants. This sample size was not pre-determined, but rather an outcome of theoretical sampling. In fact, the aim of theoretical sampling was to refine ideas, not to increase the sample size (Charmaz, 2000). My decision to cease further theoretical sampling was based solely on theoretical saturation of categories, which was in turn directly related to the quality of data, the amount of useful information obtained from each participant, the number of interviews per participant, and the use of shadowed data or research participants' reports on others' experience (Morse, 2000).

Since the research aimed at capturing the common patterns of successful adaptation in the Canadian labour market among immigrant professionals with diverse backgrounds, I used the maximum variation sampling strategy to deliberately select a heterogeneous sample and observe commonalities in their experiences (Patton, 1990). The heterogeneous characteristics among research participants were reflected in a wide range in terms of age, country of origin, profession, length of time in Canada, and

business sectors. Appendix C presents the selected socio-demographic characteristics of the research participants.

In response to the evolving nature of sampling in grounded theory due to the joint process of data collection and analysis, I further employed the procedures suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990) to direct my sampling intents and strategies consistent with the logic and aim of the three basic types of coding procedures, namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding (see **Data Analysis** for further explanation). During open coding, I aimed to uncover as many potentially relevant categories as possible along with their properties and dimensions. My sampling was thus open to those persons, places or situations that would provide me with the greatest opportunity to gather the most relevant data about the phenomenon under study. In axial coding, since the focus of my analysis was to find as many differences as possible at the dimensional level in data, my sampling aimed to uncover and validate variations within categories as well as relationships between categories. Finally, during selective coding, my sampling became directed and deliberate in order to verify the relationships between categories as well as to fill in poorly developed categories.

### **3.5.2 The Research Questions**

Grounded theorists begin with general research questions rather than tightly framed pre-conceived hypotheses. If, perchance, those research questions are irrelevant in the field, then they develop new, suitable ones or find another field (Charmaz, 1990). The underlying principle here is that hypotheses and ultimately an emerging theory must be “grounded” in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Morse (1999b) emphasizes the role of data in qualitative research:

Considering the nature of data and adjusting research methods, the research question, and the study purpose places data in a dominant position, one that drives the study (p. 291).

Indeed, data re-shaped the research question as this study proceeded. My initial research question was “how do foreign-trained immigrant professionals overcome barriers in order to gain employment in their intended fields of practice in Canada?” The research question specifically sought to explore the dynamics that involved (1) barriers that immigrant professionals encountered in their efforts to re-establish themselves in their professions in Canada, and (2) subsequent strategies that immigrant professionals employed to overcome those barriers. However, as I collected and analyzed the data, it became very clear that the original research question was at best limiting. In addition to the dynamics involving the barriers to professions and strategies to overcome those barriers, the research participants discussed other factors contributing to their success in the Canadian labour market, including pre-migration preparation, networking, as well as other contingencies such as personal attributes, employers’ attitudes, economic climate, reasons for migration, and nature of profession. Consequently, the research question gradually transformed into “what is the process of professional re-entry for foreign-trained immigrant professionals?”

### **3.5.3 In-Depth Interview**

Since multiple meanings are expressed through language (Baxter & Eyles, 1999), I selected the face-to-face, in-depth interview as the primary means of data collection. Semi-structured by a list of general topics, the interview was designed to explore how immigrant professionals managed to find work in their intended fields of practice, given the bleak reality of unemployment and under-employment among immigrant

professionals in Canada. My interviews were guided by the principles of constant comparison and ongoing formulation and verification of hypotheses about relationships among categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In other words, as a researcher, I continually compared and identified theoretical concepts and relationships, and collected additional data as directed by accumulating data to further verify hypotheses. Consequently, my interview questions were formulated and modified accordingly to further advance theoretical building. Appendix D shows the evolution of interview questions throughout the course of the study.

Prior to the initial meetings with the research participants, I took several steps to prepare for the interviews. I sharpened my interviewing skills through intensive reading of interviewing techniques in qualitative research (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Mishler, 1986; Patton, 1990). I reflected on the research topic and decided on my role, dress and level of formality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Since all of the research participants came from cultural backgrounds that were different from mine, I utilized my network of cultural informants and researched in literature to acquire and enhance my sensitivity to culturally constructed language patterns and differences in norms and values (Atkinson, 1992; Barnes, 1996; Donnelly, 2000; Hurh & Kim, 1981; Patton, 1990; Steeves, 1992). I further paid attention to and developed concrete plans to avoid potential pitfalls in data collection, including equipment failures, environmental hazards such as noise, transcription errors, ethical dilemmas, “going native” (Easton et al., 2000; Mays & Pope, 1995). I also prepared the research participants by providing them with pertinent information about the study, ensuring anonymity, explaining what

would and would not be done with the data obtained in the interviews, and confirming the time and place of the interviews (Erlandson et al., 1993).

To establish and strengthen my rapport with the research participants, I devoted our first face-to-face meetings to building relationships. I accommodated the research participants' preferences over our meeting times and locations. Since the meetings took place in the research participants' home environment, I dressed casually. I spent time learning about the research participants as well as sharing with them my background. I accepted their invitations to tour their houses, communicated my appreciation for their decoration or cultural artworks, interacted with their children, tasted their traditional food, and exchanged information on cultural practices. I also took the time to go over the material relating to informed consent, and to collect demographic information (see Appendices B and E).

At mutually agreed times and locations, I met a second time five research participants in their homes, and one at his workplace for the in-depth interviews. Each interview lasted approximately two and a half hours, and was recorded with the use of an audiocassette recorder. During the interviews, I asked the research participants clear, singular, and open-ended questions to elicit experience, background, opinions or values, feelings, knowledge and sensory data (Patton, 1990). Following the flow of their narratives, I probed and asked follow-up questions. Drawing on incoming data, I formulated hypotheses and asked for verification. Furthermore, I took notes during the interview to capture non-verbal expressions as well as to keep track of key phrases or major points made by the research participants, and of my reactions and emerging ideas. I communicated verbally and non-verbally my support and recognition of their responses.

I used paraphrasing and summary techniques to ensure the accuracy of my understanding of the research participants' experience. Since the processes of data collection and analysis were interrelated, each interview formed a basis for the progressive theoretical building process. I, therefore, paid attention to the formulation and verification of emerging theoretical concepts and "tentative" findings in addition to exploring the uniqueness of the research participant's experience.

With approval from the research participants, I arranged the third face-to-face meeting with three research participants and conducted telephone interviews with the other three individuals. The length of time of the follow-up meetings or telephone conversations ranged from 30 to 45 minutes. Through these contacts, I clarified my understanding of their experiences, verified theoretical concepts and emerging findings, and collected further information to ensure theoretical saturation. The research participants also had the opportunity to change or modify their original responses.

After each interview, I checked the appropriately labeled audiocassette to ensure that it was functioning properly. I spent time reflecting on the interview and documenting where the interview occurred, who was present, observations about how the research participant reacted to the interview, observations about my own role in the interview, and other information that would help establish a context for interpreting and making sense out of the interview (Patton, 1990). This process of immediate review allowed me to identify areas of ambiguity or vagueness, and thus prompted follow-up elaborations. I also transcribed the interviews within 24 hours, paying careful attention to ensure a word-for-word verbatim account, tones, pauses and emphases.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Unlike other qualitative methods in which researchers often collect much of their data prior to beginning systemic analysis, the analysis in grounded theory begins as soon as the first bit of data is collected (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The process of data analysis requires direct interaction between the researcher and the data, takes place over time, moves through phases, and results in a “grounded theory” (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). It also involves the making of comparisons and the asking of questions in order to conceptualize, categorize and establish relationships among theoretical concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through the use of the computer program ATLAS/ti, I engaged in the three phases of data analysis, namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

#### **3.6.1 Use of ATLAS/ ti**

ATLAS/ti is a computer software program for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical and audio data. It offers tools to manage, extract, compare, explore and re-assemble meaningful pieces from large amounts of data in a creative, flexible, yet systemic way (Muhr, 1997).

Parallel to the analytic process in grounded theory, research procedures using ATLAS/ti involve textual, conceptual and organizational level work (Muhr, 1997). The textual level includes activities like segmentation of data files, coding of text and the writing of memos. The conceptual level focuses on model building activities such as linking codes to form semantic networks that transform text-based workspace into a graphical “playground” for constructing theoretical concepts and theories based on

relationships. The organizational level offers the necessary “infrastructure” for the other two.

I used several key procedures to facilitate a grounded theory analysis of the data. These procedures included: (1) coding the transcript line by line, (2) writing contextual, methodological, analytical and personal response memos for auditing and cross-referencing purposes, (3) grouping concepts into categories, (4) establishing both textual and graphic relationships between and among concepts and categories, (5) cross-referencing between transcripts, (6) retrieving data for verification and comparison purposes, and (7) integrating categories into a well-developed theory.

The strength of ATLAS/ti lies in its tremendous capacity to handle the complexity of theory development, visual presentation, logical organization and humor (i.e.: hammer button for venting frustration!). However, ATLAS/ti is only as useful as the user’s knowledge of the research method. In this study, my prior efforts to learn about grounded theory allowed me to grasp the logic behind the structure of the program, to “get around” with its diverse analysis procedures, and to use available tools to advance my process of theoretical building.

### **3.6.2 Open Coding**

Open coding involved the interpretive process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I proceeded with careful examination of the data using line-by-line analysis. This strategy was instrumental in open coding as it prompted me to study the data, to dispel earlier preconceived assumptions about the data, and to begin viewing the data analytically (Charmaz, 1990). The line by line analysis process also allowed me to think about what

meanings I should make of the data, to ask questions of it, and to pinpoint gaps and leads in it to focus on during subsequent data collection (Charmaz, 2000). While breaking the data into specific incidents or meaning units, I simultaneously identified and labeled those pieces of data by asking myself, “what is happening here?” or “what does it represent?” (Charmaz, 1983; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I used both conceptually derived codes and in-vivo codes to label those incidents (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These two types of codes were complementary as they respectively conveyed a theoretical grasp and descriptive summaries of the research participants’ accounts (Green, 1998).

To avoid the confusion of having too many names that describe similar phenomena, I used the constant comparison technique to compare incident with incident as I proceeded with the analytic procedure. I assigned a code name to a given incident in the data, then compared each subsequent incident with the first incident and assigned to it either the same or a different code, depending on whether the characteristics were the same or different (Coleman & Unrau, 1996; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

I further used the technique of constant comparison to group conceptually similar events, actions or interactions together to form categories or sub-categories. I compared data from different people in terms of their views, situations, actions, accounts and experiences. I also compared data from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time, as well as data with category, and a category with other categories (Charmaz, 2000). Throughout the process of coding and categorizing, I was conscious not to fit data into pre-determined codes and categories, but rather to let the codes and categories emerge directly from the data (Kendall, 1999).

### 3.6.3 Axial Coding

Axial coding involved the discovery of relationships among sub-categories and categories, the testing of those relationships against data, as well as further development of categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Using constant comparison and diagramming techniques, I systematically examined connections between the categories and subcategories. I first proposed hypotheses about their relationships, which could denote causal conditions, context, action or interaction strategies, contingencies, covariance and consequences (Charmaz, 2000; Chetniz and Swanson, 1986; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I then critically looked for evidence in the data to support my statements of provisionally established relationships among categories and subcategories. I was ready to discard or revise hypotheses that did not hold up when verified against the actual data.

While trying to establish connections between categories and subcategories, I continued to search for their properties in the data to fill out any gaps. Through careful examination, I collapsed categories and subcategories into those of higher levels of abstraction. At the same time, I stayed open to the emergence of new categories from the data. I also began to explore variations in the phenomena by comparing each category and its properties for different patterns reflected in the data (Chetniz & Swanson, 1986).

Five central categories emerged during axial coding. These included pre-migration preparation, dealing with individual challenges, dealing with structural challenges, networking and context. There were also 13 subcategories connected to the five central categories. Appendix F illustrates the relationships between categories and subcategories.

### 3.6.4 Selective Coding

During selective coding, I engaged in the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that needed further refinement and development (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To identify the core category, which would represent the central phenomenon of the study, I returned to the basic technique of questioning, asking “what category do all other categories seem to be leading up to or pointing to?”, “what is the main analytic idea presented in this research?”, or “what do all the actions/ interactions seem to be about?” (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I also sorted and sifted through all the memos, talked over the data with others, reviewed the field notes, and tried out different story lines in order to find one that seemed to be consistent and best explained what was happening in all cases under study (Chetniz & Swanson, 1986).

Through these procedures, I identified “professional re-entry” as the core category. I then recorded the “story line” based on this core category, systematically relating it to other categories that emerged from the data in axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I further used diagrams to provide an overview of the theory, showing categories and how they link together (appendix G).

Since the emerged theory had rough edges that needed refining, I again used the trimming technique to subsume or collapse subcategories into those of higher levels of abstraction (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). I also identified and obtained additional data to fill in the gaps in those subcategories and categories to ensure their conceptual density or theoretical saturation, which was in turn responsible for the explanatory power of the emerged theory.

### **3.7 Trustworthiness**

In addressing the issue of building trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry, Patton (1990) contends that the qualitative researcher has an obligation to be methodical in reporting sufficient details of data collection and the processes of data analysis to permit others to judge the quality of the resulting product. Echoing similar sentiments, Erlandson et al. (1993) state that:

If intellectual inquiry is to have an impact on human knowledge, either by adding to an overall body of knowledge or by solving a particular problem, it must guarantee some measure of credibility about what it has inquired, must communicate in a manner that will enable application by its intended audience, and must enable its audience to check on findings and the inquiry process by which the findings were obtained (p.28).

By consciously establishing trustworthiness, the qualitative researcher indeed demonstrates accountability for his or her interpretation of the research participants' realities. Using the four criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, the following section describes various techniques employed to substantiate trustworthiness for the study.

#### **3.7.1 Credibility**

Since naturalistic inquiry does not make the assumption of a single objective reality, the concept of credibility is more pertinent to the compatibility of the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the research participants with those that are attributed to them (Erlandson et al., 1993). In other words, credibility looks at the extent to which the findings represent the individual truth of each of the research participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Attention, therefore is directed to gaining a comprehensive interpretation of the constructed realities that will be affirmed by the people in the context.

Throughout the study, I used a series of strategies to accomplish credibility, including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks and bracketing. Using the technique of prolonged engagement, I invested sufficient time to understand the culture, to overcome the distortions that are due to my biases or impact on the context, and to build trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I typically initiated ongoing telephone contacts with the potential research participants to get to know them as well as to introduce the project and myself. I then devoted the first face-to-face meeting with each research participant to building a trusting relationship. Quite often, I met the research participants in their own environment such as their home or workplace. I accepted their invitations to tour their houses or workplaces, appreciating their decorations or cultural artworks, interacting with their children, tasting their home made food, and exchanging cultural practices. By the time I met the research participants again for the audio taped interviews, they seemed to be relaxed and ready to share with me their experiences. Also, as an active member in the immigrant professional community, I had already established a relationship with two of the six research participants. Our professional acquaintance allowed me to build trust and learn about their cultural nuances prior to the study.

Fontana and Frey (2000) acknowledge that a close rapport with the research participants helps the researcher see the situation from the research participant's viewpoint, and therefore opens the door to more informed research. They, however, caution that such a relationship may create problems as the researcher may become a spokesperson for the group studied, losing his or her distance and objectivity, or may "go native" and become a member of the group, and thus forgo his or her academic role. To

avoid such pitfalls of prolonged engagement and at the same time enhance the credibility of the study as a whole, I employed the technique of peer debriefing to step out of the context being studied to review and seek feedback on my perceptions, insights, and analyses from other informed professionals (Erlandson et al, 1993). Specifically, I regularly met with my supervisor and other fellow postgraduate students to seek feedback on ethical matters and methodological issues as well as my interpretation of the data. I also took part in the colloquia organized by the Faculty of Social Work, through which I shared with other students my ongoing research process, answered their questions, and in the process reflected on my analyses. I found peer debriefing beneficial as the questions and feedback from other professionals helped me refine and redirect the inquiry process.

In addition to prolonged engagement and peer debriefing, I used the technique of persistent observation to identify those events and relationships that were most relevant for solving a particular problem or resolving a particular issue (Erlandson et al., 1993). Since the process of doing grounded theory involves constant formulation and verification of hypotheses, I used persistent observation to first tentatively ascertain and then explore in detail those factors in the data that appeared most salient in explaining successful patterns of adaptation of immigrant professionals in the Canadian labor market.

Several authors call for the use of triangulation, which enhances credibility by collecting and interpreting information about different events and relationships from different points of view. Denzin (1978) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) encourage the use of multiple sources of data, methods, investigators and theories. Janesick (1994) further

adds interdisciplinary triangulation to broaden understanding of methods and substance. For this study, I used two forms of triangulation, namely data triangulation and investigator triangulation. I gathered information from a variety of sources such as interviews, observation and documents. I further validated collected data in the subsequent interviews. In terms of investigator triangulation, I submitted a sample of my coding and categorization to my supervisor, who reviewed and determined whether my coding and categorization were “grounded” in the data. I also asked a fellow thesis student who was also doing a grounded theory study to code a sample of my interview, and then compare it with my own coding.

Since qualitative inquiry attempts to understand the realities that have individually and collectively been constructed by the research participants, it is essential for the researcher to use the technique of “member checks”, which engages the research participants in the verification of both collected data and interpretation (Erlandson et al., 1993). For each participant, I scheduled a follow-up meeting during which I restated my understanding and interpretation of his or her experience as well as clarified and collected further data. I found the technique of “member checks” particularly crucial as my study involved people with diverse cultural backgrounds and linguistic nuances.

Finally, to ensure that emerging knowledge was as faithful to the phenomenon as possible, regardless of my idiosyncrasies, I used the “bracketing” technique to minimize the influence of my assumptions on the data collection process as well as on my understanding and construction of the data (Crotty, 1996). Following the process of bracketing suggested by Ahern (1999), I took seven steps throughout the study to guard against the effects of my experience and point of view on the study. First, I identified

specific interests that, as a researcher, I might have taken for granted in undertaking this research. I wrote down my assumptions associated with my gender, race, socioeconomic status, and the political milieu of my research. Second, I clarified my personal values and acknowledged areas in which I knew I would be subjective. These were issues to which I would need to keep referring back when analyzing the data to develop a critical perspective for self-evaluation. Third, I described possible areas of potential role conflict, such as types of people or situations which might cause me to feel anxious, annoyed, or at ease. I made mental notes to recognize my anxiety, annoyance, or enjoyment during data collection and analysis. Fourth, I recognized feelings that could indicate a lack of neutrality, including those feelings of avoidance, guilt, disengagement or aloofness. Fifth, I often stood back and asked myself if I were “going native”. I consulted with my colleagues before assuming that I had reached saturation in my data analysis. Sixth, I examined my writing, making sure that I did not quote more from one research participant than another in my writing. Seventh, when I detected the influence of my biases in data collection or analysis, I would acknowledge this outcome and be ready to re-interview the research participants or re-analyze the transcript.

### **3.7.2 Transferability**

Transferability is concerned with the extent to which the researcher has provided adequate descriptive data to enable others to apply or transfer the findings to other contexts and respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, it is the fit of the topic or the comparability of the problem, not the demographic variables that are of concern (Morse, 1999a). Therefore, the qualitative researcher makes no attempt to select isolated variables that are equivalent across contexts, but rather strives to describe in

great detail the interrelationships and intricacies of the context being studied (Erlandson et al., 1993).

To address the issue of transferability, I used two strategies, namely thick description and purposive sampling. Using thick description, I strove to present solid descriptive data so that others reading the results could understand and draw their own interpretation (Patton, 1990). Throughout the study, including the writing phase, I paid attention to detail, context, emotions, voices, process, the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another, the significance of an experience, as well as to the intentions and meanings that organized the experience (Denzin, 1989, 1994). I also analytically explored, compared, and contrasted diverse perspectives and sources of information in the corpus of field data (Muecke, 1994).

In addition to thick description, I used the purposive sampling technique to achieve the widest possible range of information that could be obtained from and about that context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This technique was congruent with the important principle of theoretical sampling in grounded theory, which governed the sampling procedures on the basis of emerging insights about what was relevant to the study, and therefore purposively sought both the typical and divergent data these insights suggested (Erlandson et al., 1993).

### **3.7.3 Dependability**

An inquiry must provide its audience with evidence that if it were replicated with the same or similar research participants in the same context, its finding would be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In naturalistic inquiry, however, there are observed instabilities due to reality shifts or changes in the informants, the setting or the researcher

(Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability, therefore, focuses on the extent to which the researcher demonstrates consistency and trackability required by explainable changes (Guba, 1981; William et al., 1998). To account for dependability, the researcher must provide an “audit trail” that provides documentation and a running account of the process of the inquiry (Erlandson et al. 1993).

In this study, I used the four types of documentation suggested by Rodgers and Cowles (1993), namely contextual documentation, methodological documentation, analytical documentation and personal response documentation, to establish a thorough “audit trail”. In keeping documentation, I recorded compulsively to capture newly generated ideas and avoid self-censorship. I wrote descriptive and detailed notes. I also synchronized notes with other interviewing data.

In contextual documentation, I included descriptions of the research setting, nonverbal behaviors of participants, notes concerning distractions, interruptions, activities of other persons in the research setting, and other events that might be significant to the study (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). These notes would then serve as contextual data or accompanying field notes to understand the interview responses during data analysis. They would also help establish the thick description in the reporting of the research. The following memo demonstrates the use of contextual documentation:

November 20, 1999. *Contextual Note # 2*

I met Baljinder in her bright and well-decorated basement suite. Since her husband was at work, Baljinder had to look after her three year old son, Eric. I spent some time playing with Eric while Baljinder was preparing East Indian tea. As we sat down at the kitchen table for aromatic tea, Baljinder asked Eric to go to the living room, and watch his favorite video “Bambi”. Twenty minutes into our conversation, Eric started crying, saying that he had enough with watching video and wanted to play. Baljinder excused herself and carried Eric upstairs. A few seconds later,

she came back and explained that her “neighbors” would play with her son. I told her that I would not mind coming back another time if she had to look after Eric. Baljinder told me her “neighbors” adored her son and often looked after her son when she had things to do.

When I examined this contextual note for the purposes of data analysis and preparation for the follow up interview, I found the occurrence directing my attention to two questions. First, how did Baljinder’s responsibility to her son affect her efforts to gain re-entry into her profession in Canada? Second, what kinds of support did she receive from her “neighbors”? This contextual documentation clearly provided me with important insights into the research participant’s reality.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that qualitative research typically involves a design that is emergent. To keep track of the decisions and rationale necessary to substantiate rigor in regard to actual procedures in the study (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993), I used methodological documentation. The following example illustrates my methodological decisions regarding the use of literature review at different stages of the study:

May 17, 2000. *Methodological Note # 5*  
LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the methodological issues that I need to resolve is the use of literature review. Glaser (1992) asserts that the researcher should not review literature before coming into the field to avoid preconception. He further elaborates that the researcher should only review the literature in the field when the theory seems sufficiently grounded and developed. Strauss and Corbin (1990), on the other hand, contend that the researcher will come to the research situation with some background in the technical literature, and it is therefore important to acknowledge and use that. However, they caution that there is no need to review all of the literature before hand because effective analysis will allow emergence of new innovative categories, and that the researcher should not be so steeped in the literature as to be constrained and even stifled in terms of creative efforts by his or her knowledge of it.

Though Glaser's objectivist/ positivistic stand on the use of literature could have created an ideal situation for the study, I find it impossible to achieve. Rather, I identify with Strauss and Corbin's constructivist viewpoint in that even if I, as a researcher, did not conduct any literature review prior to this particular study, I still would have come to the research with some familiarity with the topic. After all, I have been focusing on immigrant and cultural diversity issues throughout my university education and professional experience. My objective is therefore to focus on ways I can use literature so that it will help me with the study and yet not hinder my effort to search for innovative findings. With this in mind, I agree with Chetniz and Swanson (1986) that the question is not if the literature is reviewed or not, but how and for what purposes the review is done, and that the purposes of literature review should change over the course of the study.

Thus far, I have reviewed the literature relating to employment experience of immigrant workers in the Canadian labour market to identify the scope, range, intent and types of research that have been done. This process helps me identify the "gap" to be discovered. I also anticipate that while the data collection and analysis go on, literature will be a source of data that helps verify and elaborate categories, structural conditions, and other related subjects.

A self-reminder here is that I have to "ground" or verify data from literature with the data collected from the research participants. I also need to reflect and track potential influence of existing literature in my journal.

In addition to the contextual and methodological documentation, I used analytic documentation to provide a record of my thought processes in sorting and categorizing data, and in conceptualizing patterns that had emerged during analysis (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). To ensure a rigorous analysis, I carefully recorded all analysis sessions and their outcomes, each analytic or theoretical insight, and every speculation, regardless of how trivial or even completely unrelated it might seem to be at the time. The use of analytic documentation is demonstrated in the following memo:

June 15, 2000 Analytic memo # 25

#### ADDRESSING DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES

In examining all codes relating to how the immigrant professionals address discriminatory practices, the four strategies seem to emerge. They are: acceptance, diversion, adaptation, and confrontation.

- a. Acceptance: This strategy is supported by these incidences: acceptance of discrimination, comparing discrimination [i.e.: it's bad, but not that bad compared to what I experienced in my home country], coming to terms, fatalistic outlook
- b. Diversion: This strategy is grounded in these incidences: moving on, focusing on positive experience, focusing on other work, seeking for accepting people, developing alternative professional plan.
- c. Adaptation: This strategy is evident in these incidences: compromising, demonstrating professional competency, establishing professional relevancy/ transferability, establishing trust, showing extra work effort, networking (see networking), self-marketing, preparing for re-accreditation.
- d. Confrontation: This strategy is suggested by these incidences: confronting discriminatory practices, deal with it, educating, reclaiming academic tradition, and forming social allies.

I also notice the following factors/ conditions that seem to influence the strategies employed by the immigrant professionals to address discriminatory practices. Such factors/conditions include: energy level, patience, gender awareness, consciousness, empowerment, determination, availability of employment choices, and motivation.

Need to further compare with other analytic notes, including note # 5, #9, #14, #21, #30.

Finally, I used personal response documentation to reflect on both the procedures by which data were generated and analyzed, and my self-awareness (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). In my personal response notes, I "came clean" about my conceptualization of the study, my background and knowledge base relative to the study area, the philosophical approach to understanding the phenomenon of interest, and the psychological and emotional responses to the research participants, the data and the analysis procedures. Many of these aspects were incorporated throughout the discussion of the research framework and methodological procedures in this chapter. The following excerpt illustrates my use of personal response documentation:

March 11, 2000

...I couldn't help but feel frustration when Nixie made the general statement that recent immigrants complain too much. It took me a moment to process what she was saying. As an immigrant and as a

professional working with immigrants, I felt the statement unjustified. However, as a researcher whose sole purpose was to *learn* about Nixie's constructed reality, this statement presented an opportunity to discover her thought/opinion. While acknowledging my feelings, I realized it was more important to "bracket" emotion and opinion, and to learn about the research participant's perspective. I asked Nixie what prompted her to have that observation. Nixie elaborated that when she came to Canada in the early 70s, she had limited access to social services that were available to new immigrants. I felt a sense of relief as I realized that I had successfully guarded against my bias and the interview continued to focus on Nixie's experience...

#### **3.7.4 Confirmability**

In qualitative research, the researcher does not attempt to ensure that observations are free from contamination by the researcher, but rather to trust in the "confirmability" of the data themselves (Erlandson et al., 1993). In other words, the researcher demonstrates that data can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To achieve confirmability, the researcher needs to provide an audit trail (Erlandson et al, 1993; Krefting, 1991). Throughout this study, I used the same contextual, methodological, analytic and personal response documentation as discussed above to ascertain confirmability for the study.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter detailed the methodology employed in conducting the study. First, it established the rationale for selecting the qualitative research paradigm to study the process of professional re-entry among immigrant professionals. In locating grounded theory methodology as the appropriate strategy of inquiry, the chapter provided an overview of grounded theory in terms of its origin, assumptions, evolution and

procedures, and its similarities and differences to other qualitative research frameworks. The chapter then proceeded with the description of the researcher's perspective, detailing his worldviews, assumptions, methodological orientation and ongoing strategies to deal with personal biases. It further outlined ethical considerations undertaken to protect the research participants. The chapter also detailed the joint process of data collection and analysis for the study in terms of the selection of the research participants, research questions, interviewing process, use of ATLAS/ ti as an analysis tool, open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The chapter concluded with measures to ensure trustworthiness in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

The next chapter presents the five categories emerging from the joint process of data collection and analysis. It highlights both common and unique experiences among the six research participants in their efforts to find suitable employment in their fields in Canada.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

Through the joint process of data collection and analysis, five categories emerged from the qualitative data. These five primary categories represent a consolidation of thirteen subcategories, each demonstrating unique properties and dimensions. Using direct quotations and examples from the interview transcripts, this chapter describes in detail emerging themes and sub-themes. It also attempts to capture the common patterns observed among the respondents as well as to highlight their distinctively individual experience.

#### **4.1 Pre-migration Preparation**

Regardless of their levels of awareness and actual preparation, the six respondents indicated the importance of pre-migration preparation. The term “pre-migration preparation”, used in this study refers both to the immigrant professionals’ awareness of challenges in Canada and their subsequent actions to deal with those challenges *prior to* coming to Canada. In fact, those who described themselves as having been well-prepared found pre-migration preparation was instrumental in facilitating professional re-entry in Canada. On the other hand, those who did not have a thorough understanding of the challenges of living in Canada acknowledged that as a consequence they worked harder to establish themselves in the new environment.

#### 4.1.1 Pre-migration Awareness

Through their access to the Internet, publications and knowledgeable friends and relatives, the six respondents became aware of the potential difficulties relating to their resettlement in Canada. Their awareness encompassed three dimensions, namely social, capacity-related and economic challenges.

In the social arena, the respondents were aware of dynamics involving social interaction between immigrants and their host communities. Ricardo and Milan indicated that they were expecting to experience discrimination based on their skin color:

I am the person of color; I'm a black person. And I know it could be detrimental to be black. It could become negative to my side. [Ricardo]

The other thing is the color of my skin. It happens everywhere! [Milan]

Josephine, Han and Ricardo were acutely aware of their lack of social networks in Canada. They were concerned with both social isolation and access to employment information:

We knew that going to a new place is like starting a new life. We said, OK we are going alone, without family; we have to do so many things there alone; we won't be with our family there, our parents, and friends. It would be hard. [Josephine]

Socially we had a very wide network of friends and acquaintances and associates in the Philippines. We knew that, to live here we had to start from the scratch. [Han]

Having worked in the corporate world, I also knew that being new, the fact that you are new in a place is itself an impediment. It's an obstacle in terms of you don't know people, you don't have classmates, you don't have professional colleagues, you don't have families working in the place that would help you. So I knew that could be a problem...if I were in Nigeria, on the street that would be equivalent to Wall Street if you were in New York, if I entered five buildings there I'd know people in about four. That's a lot of support in terms of looking for information, looking for referral and so on. [Ricardo]

In the capacity-related arena, the respondents understood the importance of language competency. Josephine, Milan and Nixie indicated that their English skills were limited at the time they decided to migrate to Canada. They realized that though their professional expertise would be easily transferable into the Canadian context, they would not be able to gain employment in their fields without English fluency. Milan's words characterize their concerns:

Most of us have training in our professional fields. We have professional skills. The more difficult thing is the language, the communication skill...I knew the main problem would be English. [Milan]

Josephine, Milan and Nixie further communicated their understanding of the dynamics associating with language acquisition. They were aware of the close relationship between language fluency and cultural adaptation. They expressed their anxiety in learning English as adults, as well as their limitations as speakers of English-as-a-second-language:

I was just worried about the language. And a person like me, at my age, it's hard to adapt to a new language, adapt a new culture. So I think, the language, if you want to speak very well English, I think you must know the culture. The Canadian culture, I didn't know very well. So the English would be a challenge. [Milan]

I knew that it would be difficult to learn English as an adult...and to speak the language the way Canadian people can. [Nixie]

Though Baljinder, Han and Ricardo considered themselves fluent in English, they were worried that Canadians would not readily welcome their distinctive accents:

The accent I knew could be a problem. Nigerian accent and the Canadian accent are not exactly the same. The way I speak now was not exactly the way I spoke the day I arrived here. So that one I knew it's gonna be a problem I gotta work on it. [Ricardo]

Of course, people would immediately know that you weren't born in Canada because of your accent, right? I was worried that people wouldn't like my accent. [Han]

In addition to language barriers, three respondents were conscious of technological advancement in the developed world. Ricardo, Milan and Nixie were aware that they might have to upgrade their knowledge and skills in order to utilize advanced technology in Canada:

The state of technology is current here, up to the minute. That's not the situation in Nigeria. So I knew it's gonna be a temporary problems for me. I have to learn, it has to be a learning curve to go through to update myself. [Ricardo]

One thing is technology in the field of medicine, we did not have a lot of technological equipments. We only had basic things. [Nixie]

In the economic arena, Josephine, Milan, Ricardo, Baljinder and Han foresaw that opportunities in the job market would depend on the state of the economy, demands for specific professions and recognition of foreign qualifications. They also realized that their lack of Canadian experience might also pose challenges in their efforts to get back to their professions. Their concerns were expressed in the following quotes:

I knew it would depend on what kinds of profession you are in. I knew it would take time if the state of the economy in my field was not in high demand. [Milan]

I knew Canadian experience would be a problem. I might not be familiar with specific requirements in the industry, such as safety programs or knowledge of the system. Also the industry might be driven by Canadian legislation, which I was not familiar with. [Ricardo]

Well, there was a lot of anxiety. We knew that our work might or might not be recognized or as relevant; our skills or knowledge might or might not be transferable to something distinctly Canadian. [Han]

Along with their knowledge that they might have difficulties accessing the Canadian job market at the beginning, Baljinder and Josephine realized they would need to be financially prepared. They articulated such needs:

We knew we should have money to live for at least 6 months without jobs... Because it would not be easy to find a job. [Baljinder]

Without friends and relatives helping us, I knew it would be difficult to live in Canada without saving. [Josephine]

All six respondents were also aware that they would have to meet standards set by professional associations in order to practice their professions in Canada. They, however, uniformly rated their awareness as “general” or “not complete”. For example, Josephine knew that as an engineer, she would need to ask for certification from the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers. She, however, did not know that she had to register as a member with the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and Geophysicists of Alberta (APEGGA), which in turn had specific requirements for professional accreditation in Alberta. Similarly, Nixie knew that in order to practice medicine in Canada, her Romanian medical qualifications would need to be evaluated by a Canadian regulatory body. She, nevertheless, did not know the comprehensive requirements established by the medical association to regulate physicians in Canada.

#### **4.1.2 Pre-migration Actions**

With their awareness of social, capacity-related and economic challenges, the six respondents employed various strategies to prepare themselves for resettlement and professional re-entry in Canada. The respondents, with support from their friends, relatives and colleagues, started establishing their social networks in Canada. Han and

Nixie contacted their relatives living in Calgary. Josephine, Baljinder and Milan maintained communication with their friends who were working in North America (Further strategies and functions of social networks will be discussed under the category **Networking**.)

Among the six respondents, Han was particularly proactive in preparing his family and himself for their new lives in Canada. Han visited Calgary prior to his formal decision to migrate to Canada. He found his pre-migration visit particularly useful as he established some social contacts and familiarized himself with the Canadian ways of life. In his words,

Yeah, we prepared. One was to find out more. That's why we visited in 1994. When we came, we made sure we talked with friends. We went to Toronto where some of our friends are. We talked to them. Their own ideas of what Calgary somehow helped in terms of leading us to contacts and people who could give us better orientation about Calgary. We came to find out how other people were faring. [Han]

In the capacity arena, two of the three respondents who could not fluently communicate in English attempted to acquire and improve their language skills. Both Josephine and Han took English classes in the evening. Their ability to master the language, however, was restricted by their work schedules as well as their lack of opportunities for practicing English. The third respondent, Nixie, did not have access to any English training due to her fear of authority and her chaotic life prior to her decision to escape her home country as a refugee. Nixie explained:

Even though I knew it would be good for me to learn English, I couldn't take any classes. I was afraid that the authority got suspicious about me trying to learn English. They might ask me why I wanted to learn that language...Also, everything happened quickly so I didn't really have time to prepare for anything. [Nixie]

Among the three respondents with good command of English, Baljinder took an additional initiative to acquire Canada's second official language. Baljinder recounted:

There was another friend who came to Canada, we heard that French was another language, so we thought we should learn French. So I took a three-month course of French. I can't say I know too much of it- but I know a little bit. I made an effort, you know. [Baljinder]

With the exception of Nixie who came to Canada as a refugee, the other respondents applied as independent immigrants. They were not eligible for any financial assistance. In fact, the Canadian immigration policy required prospective applicants to be financially independent for at least six months after their arrival in Canada. Josephine, Milan and Baljinder prepared themselves financially by saving portions of their wages, collecting their savings and selling their valuables. Han notably arranged international employment that would allow him to carry his work into Canada. He elaborated:

I had regular contracts with the United Nations, the Development Program, just before I left the Philippines. I asked to carry over some parts of that; so that when I got to Calgary, I would be able to do contracted research for the first 6 to 8 months. [Han]

The six respondents further indicated that they prepared themselves "mentally" to face uncertainties in Canada. Though they expected difficulties in the short term future, the respondents believed that their abilities, self-confidence and determination would ultimately help them overcome those challenges. The following examples characterize their readiness:

I prepared in my mind. In my mind, I kept telling everyday that OK you are going to make it. It will be difficult but it will be better to be there. Beside we have good professional expertise. We should be ok. [Baljinder]

We told ourselves that it would be difficult not to have friends and family, and it would take time to find jobs. But we knew that it will be better for our future, you know. We kind of toughened ourselves up mentally. [Josephine]

I told myself that if I could live like this in my country, I could survive in Canada. I always felt confident in my ability. [Nixie]

## **4.2 Dealing with Post-Migration Individual Challenges**

Upon their arrival in Canada, the six respondents experienced a wide range of individual challenges. These included diminished socio-psychological well-being, shortcomings in their professional expertise and financial needs. The respondents demonstrated various strategies to overcome those challenges in order to re-establish themselves in their professions.

### **4.2.1 Socio-psychological Challenges**

In dealing with socio-psychological challenges, the respondents confronted disrupted home life, lack of social support and cultural adjustment to conflicting values and practices. In terms of disrupted home life, three respondents experienced emotional distress due to family separation. Nixie left her children behind in Romania. She described the agony of waiting to be reunited with her children:

I left my children behind. It took 5 years until I got my children over here. It posed hardship for me. It was difficult for me because I missed them and I was thinking about bringing them here, giving them the opportunities to live the way they want to live. [Nixie]

Facing bleak job prospects, Baljinder and her ailing husband decided to send their only child temporarily to their parents in India. They themselves also went to two different

cities to increase their chance of finding work. Baljinder expressed the emotional turmoil she experienced resulting from family separation:

You feel the tie was breaking...It completes things when husband and wife stay together. That's the completeness. Otherwise, you always keep wandering about the other person, especially when my husband was not in the best of health at the time. I was worried about his health. [Baljinder]

He was only one and a half years old. You know, when your kid is that young, you feel really bad, you want to live with him. I was crying. Weekend was nothing but cry, cry, cry. [Baljinder]

Similarly, Milan also decided to send his son to his parents in China. He recounted his experience:

We sent our son back to China so he could learn Chinese and we have more time to find work. It was a difficult time. My wife went back to China and took my son back with her 6 months later. [Milan]

The six respondents further experienced social isolation due to their limited social networks. They attributed their social isolation to their “newness” to the country. Among the six respondents, only Nixie and Han had their relatives in Calgary. Nevertheless, both of these individuals indicated that the limited social circles to which they had access did not satisfy their social needs. The respondents found that their lack of social contact with other professionals in their field particularly hindered their ability to pursue suitable employment in their profession. Han’s words characterize such struggles:

We had a lot of friends and acquaintances at home. Suddenly, we were all by ourselves. It was tough. Most of our friends are in the East, we didn't have any friends aside our family here in Calgary. When you don't know colleagues here, you don't have the networks to introduce you to jobs. [Han]

In addition to disrupted family life and limited social networks, several respondents confronted cultural values and practices, which conflicted with those in their

country of origin with respect to education, job search, and professional practice.

Nixie elaborated on the conflicting cultural views she experienced to do with education, prestige and assignment of employment:

You see, back home, you are told that if you have a university degree, you are somebody higher. A doctor, you don't have to prove your ability... You are assigned to a job. I think that is not the same thing here. I think in that way- we are - this is a more democratic society. They look at what you can do- not what you are or who you are. The fact that we have the university degree did not put us any high place. [Nixie]

Reflecting on his experience in finding work in the Philippines and Canada, Han

compared the differences in how companies would recruit their prospective employees, as well as how job applicants would market themselves:

It is quite different. Here, you have to be very good in marketing yourself, right? Because employers don't go out of their ways to find out more about you. What they get from the resume and cover letter is what they base their decisions on. They don't have the luxury of time to go out their ways and find out if it's real or it's something that person missed. In the Philippines, it is more like head hunting. It is more proactive. If you need a community development person in your organization, you find out who's doing good community development, and if they're available for employment or not. [Han]

Initially, I had difficulties in marketing myself... It's a cultural question. Because, in the Philippines, it's not socially acceptable to brag about yourself. But in your resume and your cover letter here, you have to brag about how good you are. So, that's a big difference. In the Philippines, you have to be subtle about how good you are. And almost it's social expectation that you don't do that.... But here, you have to be the best marketer for yourself. [Han]

Josephine and Ricardo pointed out that their professional education and training had been influenced by their original cultural context. They found their thinking and approaches to professional practices markedly different from that of their Canadian-trained counterparts. In their words,

My profession, human resource, is driven by... accepted business practice in each country. For example, recruitment here, the way it's done here is slightly different from the way we do it in Nigeria. We would do more headhunting than here. [Ricardo]

I would approach certain practices differently...I don't think this is better or worse...I was just not part of the teaching here in Canada. So my approach to everything at the beginning was different. I find that even my ways of thinking were different.[Josephine]

The respondents employed several strategies to overcome those socio-psychological challenges relating to disrupted home-life, lack of social support, and cultural adjustment to conflicting values and practices. In coping with their psychological turmoil associated with disrupted home life, Nixie, Baljinder and Milan “acknowledged” their feelings stemming from their difficult decisions to temporarily part from their loved ones. They articulated their “pain”, “guilt” and “constant worries” for their loved ones. The respondents, however, “rationalized” their judgments, focusing on the positive aspects of their emotionally difficult decisions:

I felt bad leaving my children. But, I told myself well, you can stay and starve together or you go and bring your children to a better place once you are there. [Nixie]

It was good for my son and it was good for us. He could stay with his grandparents to learn Chinese because it will be difficult for him to learn the language later on. It was good for us that we could have more time to find work.[Milan]

I told you that I cried and worried all the times sending my kid to our parents in India and leaving my husband. But we felt it was the best thing. It was a temporary thing. We needed time for ourselves to clearly plan for our future and to find work. You can't do that when you have too many responsibilities...And it was not like we sent our kid to strangers. We knew our parents would take good care of him. [Baljinder]

The respondents also “looked into the future” to cope with their temporary family separation. Nixie and Baljinder conveyed their hope for better future for themselves and their children:

I made the sacrifice because I knew it would pay off. My future is eventually my children’s future...If I can get back to my profession and have a stable life in Canada, then my children will have the same thing. [Nixie]

It was a temporary thing. I knew, in the future it would be much better once I can work in my profession again. I mean in the long run I can provide my son a good future. [Baljinder]

To overcome isolation because of the lack of social support, the respondents invested time and energy to establish meaningful social networks. A detailed discussion of the strategies and functions of social networking will be discussed under the category **Networking**.

In addressing culture-related challenges, the respondents “reflected” on their cultural values and practices. Han, Nixie, Josephine and Ricardo identified the “tension points” as well as potential “transferable” aspects of their practices. The strategy of reflecting is illuminated in Han’s words:

It's reflecting on our experience, sometimes it's a missing piece. Because you need a certain level of reflecting and – how do they call it- evaluating it, before you can say that it's something important in the new cultural context. [Han]

The respondents further sought information to “learn” about Canadian society and its work culture. They talked to Canadians, watched mainstream media, and accessed training services that focused on job finding in the Canadian context:

I did everything to get familiarized with the new cultural background. I talked to people, watched TV and films to learn how Canadian people find jobs. I

think it is very very important for knowing a new society, a new environment- very important. [Josephine]

I applied the way I knew how to apply, preparing my CV and not really highlighting the best, putting it straightforward... So I did it wrong, in the Calgary way or Canadian way in that sense. I talked to the employment counselor at XXX... So he gave me pointers on how to market myself- you know, (laugh) shorter resume, more confident sounding letter, and not being too shy about bragging, I think. It was a big difference. It takes a shift, my shift, I guess. And meeting a lot of Filipinos, they are still doing that in a way. Even those who have been here for quite a long time now, they still have a hard time, you know, marketing themselves in the Canadian way. [Han]

With their new knowledge about the Canadian work culture, the respondents used two concurrent strategies, “compromising” and “adapting”, to acquire new cultural practices.

Josephine and Ricardo articulated these two strategies:

You are in Canada. There are things that don't fit in my culture... But if I want to get a job and do well, I need to compromise, I need to adapt to how they work. I need to. [Josephine].

Something have to be given up to adapt to the mainstream culture, or mainstream expectations. [Ricardo]

#### 4.2.2 Capacity Challenges

The six respondents named language barriers as their sole capacity challenge. They struggled with either their lack of English or foreign accents. The respondents used a wide range of terms to describe their English abilities upon their arrival in Canada. Nixie rated her English as “poorly”. Both Milan and Josephine used “so so” to describe their English. Ricardo, Han and Baljinder considered their English skills to be “fluent” or at “the advanced level”. These three respondents, however, found their distinctive foreign accents hindered their ability to communicate in English.

The lack of language proficiency resulted in negative consequences for the respondents. Milan could not “pass” the telephone interviews in order to proceed to face-to-face interviews. Nixie could not obtain her equivalency test for foreign-trained physicians in her first year. Ricardo reported that his self-confidence was negatively “affected” when people could not understand his Nigerian accent.

In addition to the language barriers, two respondents felt that they needed to “upgrade” their training to ensure their professional proficiency. Nixie explained:

Coming from Romania in the 70s, I felt inferior. Romania was underdeveloped. It clearly had much inferior preparation in medicine. I had a lot of catching up to do. [Nixie]

Ricardo also acknowledged that since he was trained as a business administrator in Nigeria, he was not familiar with business practices guided by Canadian legislation. In his words,

Human resource is also driven by legislation...For example, in terms of compensation and benefit sides of the business, it's different in every country because many of them are regulated by law. Things regarding taxation, pension, and tax deduction, and stuff like that, are regulated by the government. I had to learn those. [Ricardo]

Both Nixie and Ricardo also indicated that they would need to “update” their ability to use innovative technologies in their professions:

One thing is technology in the field of medicine, we did not have. Basically, I was embarrassed how behind, how retarded the school I came from compared to this system...We just had basic things.[Nixie]

I told you before, um... that the state of technology is current here, up to the minute. That was not the situation in Nigeria. We were behind...I had to update myself.[Ricardo]

Some respondents, on the other hand, felt that they could function well in their professions in Canada. Milan, Han, Baljinder and Josephine felt their professional skills and experience were “comparable, if not better than” those of their Canadian counterparts. Such confidence is reflected in the following examples:

I didn't worry about my knowledge because I had good educational background. Also, all over the world, technology is the same in the oil refinery field. China is also developed in refinery technology. In this side, technology is no problem. [Milan]

In community development, people know how rich the Philippines' experience in community development...[Han]

I studied for my Masters in Library and Information Science. I had, um, so many years of work experience in my field. I did everything, coordinating and managing all technical documentation, bridging to other libraries and helping engineers with technical documentations....I mean, um, I'm highly skilled in my field. [Baljinder]

The respondents used various strategies to overcome their capacity-related challenges. They used both “formal examination” and informal “self-reflection” to critically “evaluate” their language proficiency as well as their professional skills and knowledge. The following excerpts demonstrate those strategies:

I took this basic professional equivalency test. I didn't understand the questions, plus my knowledge- critically thinking about it, I had to lift myself. My basic medical knowledge was at the level that the Eastern European countries started things since late the Second World War. [Nixie]

I self-assessed myself...the main task for me should be to learn English. I realized If you can't speak English very well, you cannot find a good job in your field. [Milan]

Once the respondents identified the skill areas to be acquired or improved, they “accessed” available resources to “deal with” their challenges. In their efforts to achieve language competency, Nixie, Milan and Josephine utilized language training programs

offered by the immigrant serving agencies to learn English. Ricardo and Baljinder took formal training courses in order to improve their accents. All six respondents reported that they actively sought opportunities to “practice” English the “Canadian way”. Ricardo’s words typify the respondents’ efforts to achieve English competency:

I put myself into situations that I could practice my English...The more I dealt with native speakers, I learnt to tone down my accent, and um, adapted to the local accent. [Ricardo]

The respondents acknowledged that though they could improve their accents, they would not be able to “get rid” of their accents. As adults, they lacked the learning capacity to acquire unaccented English. Nixie, Baljinder, Han and Ricardo demonstrated the strategies of self-acceptance and positive rationalization they used to deal with this “unchangeable” attribute. These strategies are illuminated in the following quotations:

I would never lose my accent because I didn’t learn English as a child. And anyhow, Canada is such a tapestry of accents, and colors, and smells, and tastes, and customs, and beliefs. So what, I am just a part of the tapestry. Doesn’t bother me anymore. [Nixie]

At some point, um I realized that my accent would make me stand out...in a sense that people would know that I came from somewhere else. But, um, it would not prevent people from understanding what I was saying. I took pride in my ability to speak different languages. I started feeling very comfortable with my my communication skills. [Baljinder]

Ricardo and Nixie, who found their professional competency inadequate to practice in Canada, took proactive steps to “uplift” their knowledge. They either self-studied or registered with formal Canadian educational institutions to upgrade their skills. In their words,

I knew I was not ready. I knew that back home, there was not too much progress, so we didn’t have proper medical textbook. I had to really uplift my knowledge to their level here...So I studied very hard, you can imagine

this...um I went through about thirteen thousand pages of medical literature, with dictionary in one hand and textbook in the other hand. [Nixie]

I took a couple of courses here to offset what I didn't have. Um, I took courses in business to learn about practices here...I took some computer classes, I knew I needed that. [Ricardo]

#### 4.2.3 Financial Challenges

The respondents experienced financial constraints for various reasons. First, the process of professional re-entry required time. With the exception of Nixie who decided to devote 5 years to complete her specialty training, the other five immigrant professionals spent 6 to 18 months to prepare for their professional re-entry and to look for work in their fields. Second, not only did the respondents have to look after themselves, they had financial responsibilities to their families. Among the six respondents, four were married; five had financial obligations to their children who were under 18 years of age; and four considered themselves the sole providers for their families. Third, five respondents came to Canada as independent immigrants.

Consequently, they were not entitled to any financial assistance from the government.

The respondents described their financial hardship:

We knew that we had to be prepared to do anything to start a living right away. We didn't know it was going to be that bad. But it turned out to be that bad. When we came to Canada, we landed in Vancouver. For three months, nothing was happening. We had the kid to take care of. You know, when there's family commitment, you have certain demands. That was another expenditure. We didn't know how to get the cheap apartment. We had to get telephone, and at that time we were homesick so the phone bill was high. And of course, the grocery... [Baljinder]

I knew that I needed to take some courses. But at the same, I had to live. I mean- um, I didn't have anyone here to help me. And I was not qualified for government assistance. [Ricardo]

I had to send money home to support my kid and parents. You know, it was difficult...We didn't have um...enough money. [Milan]

In addressing their financial challenges, the respondents used their savings that they had brought from their home countries. Since the respondents came from economically struggling places, they found the conversion of home country currency into Canadian money “expensive”:

For the first three months, we spent our saving. (Laughing) That was how long we could support ourselves with the money we brought from China. [Milan]

We got something like 2000 dollars. We could live for 3 or 4 months. All the expenses, they were all in Indian money converted to Canadian money. By the end of the 4 months, we spent all the money. [Baljinder]

Ricardo, Josephine, Nixie and Milan accepted temporary manual labor or service jobs to meet their financial needs. Though those jobs were not related their professions, they gave the respondents flexibility in terms of time to prepare for their professional re-entry or to look for suitable employment in their fields. The respondents explained:

So I had to accept all kinds of jobs. I worked in the factory, that I chose in such a way that it does not, that I still have time to look for work in my field. So I chose the factory where you worked for 4 days on and 4 days off. The other 4 days off gave me time to keep looking. So I did that, it did not relate to what I did, but I started making money. [Ricardo]

I applied for the job as a sale person at the Gaps. I was, how do you say, on call. It was during the Christmas season so I worked quite a bit. It was not related to my profession, um ...but at least I could take care of things...[Josephine]

I worked as a cleaner and doing some kitchen work at night for 5 months. I went to school during daytime to study English [Milan]

I took the job as a nursing assistant in a nursing home. I was working in 6 days- afternoon and evening shifts- and then get back to study for my exams. [Nixie]

Han, on the other hand, continued to work on the contract that he secured with an international organization prior to leaving his home country. He elaborated:

I had a regular contract with the United Nations, UNDP- UN Development Program, just before I left the Philippines, which I also carried over some part of that. So I was doing mainly contracted research for the first 6 to 8 months, even the project was not Calgary-based. It's an international research, paid in American dollars which helped. That thing lasted for half a year. [Han]

### **4.3 Dealing with Post-Migration Structural Challenges**

Canadian institutions such as professional regulatory bodies and employers constitute structural barriers for professional immigrants. In addition to their individual challenges, the six respondents had to deal with the lengthy process of professional accreditation as well as discriminatory practices.

#### **4.3.1 Professional Accreditation**

Depending on their profession, the respondents needed to meet various requirements for professional accreditation. According to Nixie, foreign-trained medical doctors who wish to practice in Canada would have to pass the Examination for Foreign Medical Graduates, set by the Medical Council of Canada. They would then have to complete a two year period of internship for general practitioners, or a five year period of residency for those who decided to go further with their specialty training. They would further have to pass the licensing examination for general practitioners, or both the specialty and licensing examinations for specialists before they could qualify to practice in Canada.

Josephine and Milan described the accreditation process determined by the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and Geophysicists of Alberta (APEGGA). Foreign-trained engineers would first have to have their academic qualifications evaluated by the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE). Depending on whether their programs were accredited by the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board, they would have to write three to nine confirmatory exams. Next, foreign-trained engineers would have to have at least two years of engineering experience, preferably in Canada. They would be required to provide references from former employers to confirm their experience. Finally, the engineers would also have to write the professional practice examination and achieve a score of 600 on the Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Ricardo pointed out that foreign-trained business administrators who wished to practice in the Human Resource field in Canada would have to be accredited by the nationally recognized Human Resource Profession Association. They would need a sponsor who had already been certified by the association. They would have to meet the educational and experience requirements. Due to the direct relationship between Human Resources and legislation relating to taxation, pension and employment standards, foreign-trained graduates might also have to take additional courses to meet the Canadian requirements.

Both Han and Baljinder indicated a lack of formal procedures for professional accreditation in Social Work and Library and Information Science. However, they needed to meet requirements set by individual employers. Han also asserted that in order

to be formally recognized as a social worker in Alberta, foreign-trained graduates would have to obtain evidence of equivalency from established educational institutions.

The respondents varied in agreeing or disagreeing with the requirements for accreditation set by the regulatory bodies. Milan, Nixie and Josephine agreed that the confirmatory examinations were necessary in order to determine professional competency. Their agreement is demonstrated in the following examples:

I think the test is necessary. We have to know, um, to meet the standards to show our understanding of the process of how the engineers do....I agree with that. [Milan]

I had no problem with the equivalency test...It was not a question of fairness. Um, I had to demonstrate that I was capable of doing things in my profession. [Nixie]

Several respondents, however, disagreed with various practice requirements. Milan, Josephine and Ricardo found that professional regulatory bodies generally preferred Canadian experience to foreign experience. Consequently, foreign-trained immigrant professionals got trapped into a vicious circle, which was eloquently described by Josephine:

It's hard. It's hard because it's like a circle. Because if you don't have Canadian experience, you can not apply to APEGG membership. But the company, most of the companies, they don't give you the opportunities to start working in your fields because you don't have APEGG membership. So which one was first? [Josephine]

Milan and Ricardo felt that preference for recommendations of immigrant professionals from Canadian employers or Canadian-trained professionals was "unfair". They explained:

The difficulty is you have to have 3 engineers recommending you. I mean, you are, um, new to the country, you don't know many professionals. It takes

time to know someone well. So, if someone, they don't know you very well- they cannot recommend you. [Milan]

People don't hire you because you don't have Canadian experience... And then, without Canadian experience you can't get Canadian preference. [Ricardo]

Han, Josephine and Milan expressed their concerns over ethnocentric assessments of equivalency. The respondents asserted that Canadian institutions, quite often did not understand how the academic systems in different countries worked, and assumed foreign qualifications to be “inferior”. Such concerns are illuminated in Han's words:

Social Work in the Philippines, it is a fully developed. Community Development and Social Work in the Philippines is a fully developed college, not just a faculty...It's more rigorous than the undergrad curriculum at XXX...But then, if you have a BA in Social Work, you will have only 2 years of university credit here... It's a – I don't know where that comes from, whether they feel confident that contents and process in the Philippines not as superior as the ones they had at XXX. But that's where the assumption is. [Han]

The respondents demonstrated several common strategies to deal with those structural challenges. They first inquired about the requirements for professional accreditation. They “initiated contacts” with professional associations, Canadian-trained or foreign-trained immigrant professionals, and immigrant serving agencies to gain “access to information” relevant to professional re-entry in Canada. These excerpts typify how the respondents learned about practice requirements in their professions:

I went to this center at the hospital where foreign graduates could go to get information, job opportunities...and have a look at the options for them to come into the system. [Nixie]

I talked to my friends and contacted directly APEGG. They told me the requirements to work as an engineer in Alberta. [Milan]

Based on their knowledge about the requirements for practicing their professions in Canada, the respondents “assessed” their professional skills and knowledge in the Canadian context. They identified “transferable” areas as well as “new practices”. These strategies are illuminated in the following excerpts:

I critically evaluated myself...um, am I up to working here in my field? I had to be honest with myself to see where I can do well in Canada and where I need to learn, so that I can meet the standards here...so that I can prepare myself to meet the association’s requirements. [Ricardo]

I reflected on my experience...I mean, from talking to people working here, that there are things that would be similar to how we did engineering work in Columbia...and there are things, like skills that I have to learn to be able to pass the exams. [Josephine]

In addition to self-assessments, Nixie, Josephine, Milan and Ricardo utilized services offered by their professional associations or postsecondary educational institutions to identify specific “gaps” in their professional capacity. This involved formal assessments of foreign academic qualifications and work experience. Ricardo’s account provides an example of the assessment process of foreign qualifications:

I submitted all of my credentials and proofs of my professional experience to the Human Resource Association. They looked at my education and experience in Nigeria. They interviewed to check the information. They then told me that later I would need to take a few courses to bring my knowledge up to the Canadian standard. [Ricardo]

The respondents proceeded to their “preparation” for professional accreditation. Milan, Josephine, Ricardo and Nixie “studied” on their own for the examinations. They took courses to “uplift” their knowledge. Han, Milan and Ricardo seized volunteering opportunities or entry jobs that were related to their professions in order to gain “Canadian experience”. In their words,

I took a couple of courses in the university, just to make sure that I understand my profession in the Canadian context. And I start buying the book and study to take the test. [Milan]

Then I thought I'd better take my medical textbooks and tuned myself to prepare for the examination to be able to start accepted and enter any hospitals...I did a lot of reading on my own. I went through about thirteen thousand pages of medical literature...I also went to some seminars.[Nixie]

I volunteered in a number of places that were similar to my experience in the Philippines, and I thought it would be great to gain Canadian experience. So I volunteered at XXX. I got involved with the barter community, which was community economic development. I volunteered with a group called XXX and we helped put together a program, which was a weekly international café, share one world. I was doing research and writing about ...different countries. [Han]

Finally, Nixie, Josephine, Milan and Ricardo wrote qualifying examinations set by their professional associations to obtain formal certification. They made several attempts in order to achieve a positive outcome. Failed attempts were often followed by further self-reflection and preparation for the next attempt:

My first attempt to pass the certification exam was in 1971- that was 6 months after I came to Canada. I just didn't pass the first test....So I went back and studied more...One year and six months later, in 1972 in June or July, I tried again. This time I passed. [Nixie]

I tried to write the test here last year. But I didn't pass it. But it was good that I kind of knew...how to prepare for the next time. [Milan]

It was noted that among the immigrant professionals in regulated professions, only Nixie completed the accreditation process. In fact, she further completed her specialty training to become a pathologist. At the time of interview Josephine, Ricardo and Milan were still in their process of preparing for accreditation or attempting to write certification examinations.

### 4.3.2 Discrimination

The six respondents reported that they experienced discrimination primarily due to their skin color and immigrant status, and to lesser extent their age and gender. They found such discriminatory practices detrimental to their access to job or training opportunities. The discrimination hindered their efforts to re-enter their professions in Canada.

Five of the six respondents were people of color. These visible minority immigrant professionals uniformly felt that many employers discriminated against them on the basis of their skin color. The only white immigrant, Nixie, also reported that her visible minority colleagues often expressed their frustration at being subjected to racial discrimination. The following excerpts exemplify their experience:

The fact is that the color of your skin is still an issue. Some of the companies that refused to endorse my services. Some of them, I felt that my background as a person of color was part of the reason. One particular example that really frustrated me, because my take on it, I didn't get that contract because I am a person of color. It was in the area that I think if there were somebody who should get that contract it would be me. Because this was related to training to a company, which was having problems doing business in Nigeria,...I am a Nigerian, providing services in that area. Still, this company wouldn't give me that. They ended up giving the contract to another white Canadian. This guy didn't even know where Nigeria was. [Ricardo]

One of these companies, the guy they eventually hired was a white immigrant. Both of us were attending the same course in the university. First of all he had the bachelor degree, I had the masters- if you were looking at education. Second, I think I had more experience than he did. Third, both of us were new to Calgary. Actually, I think I moved to Calgary before him. But he got the job. And the only thing was that he is white and I am not. [Milan]

They told me- oh, we need people with 6 years experience. Come on, excuse me I have 9 years of experience. And that lady she was talking to me, she wanted to avoid me- because when I called her up, she tried to avoid me. And she said, I'm sorry we can't do it this for you. I am trying to talk to her but she

wouldn't listen to me... I finally heard that they took a white person in that position, although I had more experience and more. I mean...I am sure, I know my job. It was just that they did that on purpose. And it was very clear. [Baljinder]

The six respondents uniformly indicated that they were subjected to discriminatory practices because of their immigrant status. Employers would often "detect" their "newness" to Canadian society through their distinctive accents or social behavior. They would further "dismiss" foreign credentials or work experience. Such discriminatory practices are demonstrated in the following accounts:

I was white...(laugh). But I had an accent. When I finished my internship, I applied for specialty training in Pediatrics. I finished with pretty high marks-but. I couldn't get into the specialization because I was an immigrant. I went to the head of Pediatrics, and told "I just got this exam, and I passed it. I wanted to be trained in the specialty of Pediatrics". I was rejected because there were too many Canadians applying for residency in Pediatrics. And naturally they favored Canadian graduates. [Nixie]

Some of them, my accent was clear over the phone. They might determine this guy is new, we don't know where he comes from. So I wouldn't get the interviews. Even when I met them, they looked at me. When I opened my mouth, they would know that I was an immigrant, right? I felt like hitting the walls sometimes. [Han]

They assumed that my education in Nigeria wasn't good. It happened all the time. OK, based on my experience of faxing resumes to employers, my chance was half to people studying here. Generally my chance was 50% less. [Ricardo]

Among the three female respondents, Nixie reported that she was subjected to discrimination due to her gender. She also noted that the incident involved an employer from the United States. Nixie recounted her experience:

It was in the early 70s. My husband wanted to get started his private consultant business in the States....There were different cities we could go. There were XXX, XXX or XXX. So I applied for jobs at different universities in those cities. If I got a job in the United States, we would

relocate there. There was one place- XXX University – where I was categorically not told, but answered in writing after the meeting that, I remember till this day, because they said the policy of our institution is not to hire a female resident. [Nixie]

Also, one respondent indicated that he was subjected to discrimination due to his age. Ricardo explained:

Sometimes, I didn't get a position because of my age. Some people thought that I was too young for the management level that I was aspiring to. My biggest challenge was to have people believe that I could do what I said I have done...Most people who are at the level that I am aspiring for may be 10 or even 20 years older than I am. So, they didn't understand how you could be wanting to do this now, how could I have done at this level, which was different from where I came from. [Ricardo]

The six respondents noticed that they were more likely to encounter “subtle” kinds of discriminatory practices by employers. Such practices often left the respondents “feeling discriminated against” or being “unsure”. The following excerpt characterizes the subtle nature of employers’ discriminatory practices experienced the immigrant professionals:

It was subtle, very subtle discrimination...Well, I give you an example. When I applied for the research position at XXX, I had the opportunity to talk over the phone with a couple of people who were involved in that process. The first person I talked to was quite interested in having me on board. She was quite interested because of my previous experience in social research, especially in incorporating my strength in terms of social research design. She felt they needed more of that. But she had to talk over with someone else. That someone else I talked over the phone with was quite dismissive. It was the way he questioned how important my previous experience was, how Canada has different expectations for research. He said it's more rigorous, more scientific. My feeling was that he was trying to find the way to dismiss me rather than really being cheerful about what I could bring in. That didn't fly. It was quite subtle. It wasn't really out and out. [Han]

The respondents attributed employers’ discriminatory practices to their lack of willingness to engage with the immigrant communities. Consequently, employers did

not have informed knowledge about foreign qualifications, and subsequently did not trust or appreciate human capital brought into Canada by immigrants. Baljinder, Milan and Ricardo articulated this perception:

A lot of those have something to do with a lack of engagement. Sometimes I feel it like in Calgary we live in parallel universe. There are a lot of efforts on the parts of immigrants to integrate, but not so much the mainstream society. Sometimes I feel we are tolerated but not accepted. There is a lack of really deep recognition or appreciation. [Baljinder]

I think it was the issue of trust. We need them. But it is hard to show them when they don't really care. I don't think employers trust immigrant professionals. [Milan]

They didn't feel comfortable with me doing the job. I think it was trust. I think they didn't trust. It is frustrated because people don't trust me enough, not just knowing, but trust me enough, to give me the positions. [Ricardo]

Discriminatory practices by employers resulted in negative effects on the immigrant professionals. In addition to the cost of having limited access to job or training opportunities, the immigrant professionals experienced psychosocial hardship. The six respondents consistently expressed their feelings of "desperation" and "hitting the wall". Due to the subtle nature of discriminatory practices, they also struggled with self-doubts about their own perceptions. Those effects are reflected in the following comments:

I felt desperate when they favored the Canadian trained graduates, when they denied me the specialty training in Pediatrics. [Nixie]

I tried everything I know to have a better chance to work in a good job. I tried to improve myself, to meet the requirements. I'd done all of those. But it was still hard to find something good. So that feeling of hitting the wall and knowing that you can't move this wall- I went through that. [Ricardo]

Facing prevalent discriminatory practices in the Canadian labor market, the immigrant professionals developed various strategies to cope with, respond to or manage their circumstances in order to “move on” with their efforts to re-enter their professions in Canada. Their strategies were characterized as acceptance, diversion, adaptation and confrontation. The immigrant professionals did not necessarily utilize only one set of strategies, but rather diverse coping mechanisms depending on their energy level, patience, awareness, level of empowerment and home country experience.

In terms of acceptance of discrimination, some respondents viewed discriminatory practices as “facts of life”. Nixie and Baljinder developed rationale to legitimize discrimination as well as the “second hand citizen status” of immigrants in Canada:

I just accepted this limitation. I don't think it is unfair because in any country, don't you feel that the priorities should be given to the citizens of their country. It would be very nice if they gave 10 percent chance to the immigrants. This is how I feel and I am an immigrant. [Nixie]

If I were considered not eligible to be equal to the locals, so let that be. I came here. They didn't ask me to come. I came here to have a better life. I didn't come here to have equal rights. I came here to a better life. So I got a better life. [Baljinder]

Nixie further compared discriminatory practices in Canada to those in her home country.

By pointing out the lesser degree of discrimination in Canada, Nixie felt that her experience in Canada was “endurable”. She elaborated:

For 37 years, I lived in Romania, being treated as a second hand citizen because of my Hungarian background. I know discrimination from my own native land. While in this country I face much less discrimination... [Nixie]

Furthermore, Baljinder, Nixie and Milan focused on the universality of prejudice.

They also viewed discrimination in fatalistic terms. These coping mechanisms are reflected in the following example:

It happens everywhere! I just took it as this is the fact of life- life is not fair. In life we cannot expect everything to be...That's OK. I'm just here for work. [Milan]

Some respondents demonstrated coping strategies that would divert themselves from discriminatory incidents. Ricardo and Nixie focused on earlier positive experiences when they had felt accepted and appreciated. In their words,

I told myself, OK, he is one of those guys who are not accepting. So like, I looked at the places I've been, where I have very positive experience, where I was very supported and welcomed. Like at XXX, where it was a positive experience. So those examples made me feel that I would end up in the supporting environment. So that helped me deal with it. [Ricardo]

I always looked at the full part of the bottle, not the empty part. I would look more at the positive experience I had with other people. [Nixie]

Han and Josephine diverted themselves from being discouraged by discriminatory practices by maintaining their hope for more accepting environments in their future job search. They felt optimistic that their "bad experience" was not the end of their chance to find suitable employment in their fields. They articulated their hope:

It did happen that I was discriminated. But in my mind, I hoped that it wouldn't happen again. I mean, I would not be able to try and take risks if I could not hope that there are accepting people. [Han]

I hoped that not everything would be like this. I felt that way. With patience- it hasn't worked now, but it will. [Josephine]

Ricardo and Baljinder further indicated that they constantly affirmed themselves and took pride in their professional capacity. They also had faith that not all employers would

discriminate against them. Instead of “feeling bad” about their circumstances, they maintained their optimism by reminding themselves of the “goodness” of people. In their words,

I tried to be positive and optimistic. I don't believe that everybody is a racist. I don't believe that you can't make it. If you are confident and you have good skills, there are no reasons why you cannot. [Baljinder]

I have the belief system that there are more good people than bad people. There are more accepting people than non-accepting people. My belief system is to keep looking for those people who are accepting. So that helps me out. This guy didn't- so it's Ok, he is one of those guys who are not accepting. [Ricardo]

The respondents further demonstrated adaptive strategies to deal with discriminatory practices. They set out to learn about job search strategies and hiring practices in Canada. Through their social networks as well as their access to employment training programs offered by the immigrant serving agencies, the immigrant professionals learned how to effectively “sell” themselves. They adopted Canadian mannerisms, dress, patterns of communication, and within their abilities, the “Canadian” accent. Those tactics are characterized in the following examples:

At XXX, they teach me how to write the resume the Canadian way, how to conduct myself in the interviews, to use special words to get through the Canadian employers. [Josephine]

I learned the accepted ways of using the tools and techniques of looking for job- like the way I write the resume. I learned interviewing techniques, stuff like behavioral interview. And also, I tried to find other immigrants working in my field, to learn from them the Canadian ways they learned before. [Milan]

I talked to the people I know. They showed me the Canadian ways to look and act in looking for jobs...I tried to loosen up my Nigerian accent. [Ricardo]

Some respondents further indicated that they pushed themselves to “work harder” for recognition. Since many discriminatory practices occurred due to negative assumptions or little understanding of immigrant professionals’ professional competency, Han and Ricardo “showed” perspective employers “evidence” of their work:

I was really determined to go beyond barriers, to try to work around, to show them evidence of what I can do in community development. [Han]

I showed them the evidence of the accomplishment and results I have already achieved. The background tells them I can understand what this job is about, showing them what I have actually accomplished. This seems to work in my favor, because it makes them look at me as a professional and believe that, maybe this guy was, if he had done this, he may be able to do it again. [Ricardo]

Another adaptive strategy employed by the immigrant professionals was to obtain some additional education in the Canadian system. Nixie, Ricardo and Milan took various courses or professional training in the established educational institutions in order to “get around” barriers posed by lack of trust and understanding of foreign education among employers. They believed that their Canadian “upgrading” would increase their chance to get back to their professions since employers felt “more comfortable” hiring someone with familiar educational standards. The respondents explained:

I repeated some courses in Canada. I didn’t have to do it because I knew them before. But it was good that I could show them what I know so they could trust me. [Nixie]

The fact that I took a couple of courses here in chemical engineering...helped me to convince them that I knew the Canadian standards. [Han]

It's good to take some kind of education here in Canada- even if it's something I've done before. I tried to get the Canadian certificate, having that as a sideline. It's kind of making the employers comfortable. [Ricardo]

Finally, two of the immigrant professionals used confrontational strategies in dealing with discrimination. Han and Ricardo indicated that they “challenged” discriminatory practices on several occasions. They attempted to “educate” the “ignorant” employers on valuing diversity and foreign qualifications. They also reclaimed the values of foreign education and experience that employers often undermined. Ricardo and Han recounted:

Oh, I confronted them. I told them what they were doing was discriminatory. I told them that I could have done something good for the company, knowing that I had already had experience working in Nigeria. [Ricardo]

I challenged him...I challenged him. I said that you know, I see this kind of approach opening new doors, not only in the Philippines, but also in other places, that you know (laugh ) we had the longer academic tradition that you are. I told him it took longer to finish our vigorous training in community development in the Philippines, and we are well known for that. [Han]

#### **4.4. Networking**

My social networks helped me to settle, adjust and find employment.  
[Josephine]

It's not what you know, but that whom you know is very important in finding work. [Baljinder]

The above statements characterize the critical role of social networks in facilitating integration of immigrant professionals into Canadian society. In fact, all of the six respondents unanimously agreed that their social networks helped them a great deal in their resettlement adjustment, particularly in getting back to their professions in Canada. The interviews with these immigrant professionals revealed both strategies for development of social networks and subsequent functions of those social networks.

#### 4.4.1 Networking Strategies

In preparation for their new lives in Canada, the respondents established social networks long before they came to Canada. Five respondents contacted their relatives and friends living in North America. Nixie maintained correspondence with her brother, a radiologist in Calgary, prior to her escape from the communist regime in Romania as well as upon her arrival in the refugee camp in Italy. Han regularly talked to his family members living in Calgary. Milan and Baljinder exchanged email messages with their friends and former colleagues who were working in Canada or the United States. Josephine maintained telephone contact with a Canadian couple she had met in Columbia. The closeness of their relationships with friends and family members living in North America is typified in the following excerpt:

We talked to our relatives living in Calgary all the time. The Filipino family is quite blended. Family means not the nuclear family, but ways beyond that. So, we were very close. They wanted us to be close to them. [Han]

In addition to their “contacts” with close friends and relatives living in North America, some respondents became “acquainted” with Canadians working overseas. Their acquaintances were rather intentional as the respondents befriended those who could provide useful information about the resettlement process in Canada. Han cultivated relationships with Canadian workers in the field of community development. Milan “built relationships” with Canadians teaching English in the Chinese universities. Baljinder, Milan and Josephine befriended people working at the Canadian embassy. The following excerpt demonstrated such purposefulness in the relationships between the respondents and Canadians working overseas:

In my country there are many universities. I took some English courses in the university with teachers from Canada or America. In my free time, I met them after classes to learn more about living in Canada. They gave me good information about Canadian customs, about finding work in Canada, about what to expect with our lives in the first year. [Milan]

Upon their arrival in Canada, the respondents continued to have close relationships with friends and relatives. Nixie stayed with her brother as she attempted to meet the requirements for professional accreditation. Han lived “within 30 minute driving limit” of his relatives. Milan and Baljinder continued to exchange email with friends living in other cities in North America. Josephine stayed with her Canadian friends for the first two weeks.

While maintaining close relationships with their existing friends and relatives, the respondents cultivated new relationships with other immigrant professionals as well as “mainstream” Canadians. The respondents demonstrated various strategies to expand their social networks. Han volunteered with various social service agencies through which he got connected with people with shared interests in community development and social justice. Nixie developed friendships with two immigrant professionals who were also studying to meet the requirements for professional accreditation. Milan participated in a self-help group organized by an immigrant serving agency, through which he was introduced to other immigrant professionals. Josephine, Baljinder and Ricardo, on the other hand, took part in social activities in their ethno-cultural communities. Their participation led to numerous contacts with other immigrant professionals. Ricardo also joined the Human Resource Association in Calgary, where he met other professionals in his field.

#### 4.4.2 Functions of Social Networks

The respondents relied on their social networks for social, practical and employment-related support. In terms of social support, the respondents reported that they counted on their spouses, close friends and relatives to keep themselves “mentally grounded” while they were trying to find employment. Five respondents credited their spouses and family members as their primary social support. Han, Milan, Baljinder and Josephine described how their spouses were by their side “through ups and downs”, cheered them up when they were worried, or reminded them of their dreams for their families. Nixie and Han further felt “lucky” that they had their extended families living in Canada. Nixie used those terms such as “kind”, “generous”, and “understanding” to describe her brother. Han also enjoyed the comfort of having a large “extended family” in Calgary. Such support from spouses and other family members is captured in the following examples:

My husband was my best support. Sometimes, I felt bad, and he told me “don’t worry, we can do it”. [Josephine]

Our family helped us cope with our transitions. In the Filipino family, family extends beyond your immediate family. So we had family gatherings very often, you know, they were very supportive. They made us feel less homesick. [Han]

In addition to support from family members, five respondents talked about emotional support they received from their friends when they experienced difficulties during the beginning of their time in Canada. Baljinder, Ricardo and Milan counted on their friends from their ethnocultural communities for “advices”, “encouragement”,

“mutual support” and “understanding”. Ricardo elaborated on the uniqueness of having friends with similar ethnic background:

I have friends in the Nigerian community, which is a little bit different from having friends outside. These people are from the same background. Things that I have experienced, for other Canadians, it is difficult for them to conceptualize. But for other Nigerians, it's not. So they understand me more. [Ricardo]

Han and Nixie, on the other hand, enjoyed social support from friends with diverse cultural backgrounds. Instead of focusing on ethnic background, Han became acquainted with people who shared interests in social justice and community development. Through this network, he received “a lot of encouragement” and felt “a sense of community”. Nixie also became acquainted with other immigrant professionals who were also trying to get back into the medical profession. She described how she benefited from her friendship with people from different cultural backgrounds:

I became friends with two girls, one from Peru and the other one from India. We were good friends, positive things in life. We liked to cook ethnic food. Every month, we had this ethnic evening in somebody's house and we would cook you know food, Indian food, South American food, and Hungarian food. We exchanged experiences. It was an eye opening experience for me. I lived in small towns before I came to Canada. Until I came here that I learn to appreciate this diversity of tastes and smells and ideas. [Nixie]

Beside social support, the immigrant professionals counted on their social networks to meet their practical needs. Josephine, Baljinder, Nixie and Han reported that their close friends and relatives provided them with food, shelter, transportation and general orientation about the city. They acknowledged that such practical support was important as they could invest more time and energy to look for “meaningful” work in

their fields. The extent of practical assistance and its benefits is reflected in the following excerpts:

Our friends went to pick us up at the airport. We went and lived with them for 15 days. For us it was very good, very nice and very helpful- because they took us like family...They showed us the city. They showed the places we should go. They helped us to rent the house later on... They helped us buy the first things we need, to buy the grocery, to buy insurance. They helped to buy our car, too. [Josephine]

Maybe I was fortunate that I had this brother. I didn't have any problem to, you know, put bread on the table, to arrive home with warm boots. He bought me the textbooks. Because he took care of me, I could concentrate on trying to get back to my profession [Nixie]

The respondents further received from their established social networks employment-related support in terms of information, referral, training and employment opportunities. Notably, the immigrant professionals received information pertaining to professional re-entry in Canada long before their arrival in the host country. Through their exchange of emails, telephone conversations and letters with friends, relatives and former colleagues living in North America, Milan, Nixie and Han became aware of the “work culture”, job-finding strategies and the demand for their professions in Canada. Baljinder, Josephine, Han and Milan, through their relationships with Canadians working overseas, acquired information relating to the professional accreditation process and potential challenges in getting back to their professions.

Upon their arrival in Canada, the respondents relied on both their existing social networks (friends and relatives) and newly established relationships to acquire information about the accreditation processes, Canadian employers and job openings. Nixie, Milan and Ricardo reported that their close friends and relatives informed them of

the “steps” they needed to take in order to be professionally accredited in Canada.

Han and Baljinder learned from professionals working in their fields the potential “pitfalls” due to lack of trust and appreciation for foreign qualifications among Canadian employers. Josephine, Han, Ricardo, Milan and Baljinder acknowledged that their social networks provided them with useful job leads. These respondents uniformly observed that employers often did not advertise jobs in newspapers. Rather, they relied on their networks such as current employees and professional associations to recruit new employees. The respondents also indicated that their friends and acquaintances often “watched” the job market and let other people know they were looking work. Such dynamics are captured in the following excerpts:

I know that most of the companies they don't advertise in the newspaper when they need people. Because of that, the network is very important. The people that you know, they can help you. They spread the words around- you know, this person is looking for other things to do. In my case, because I got to know other immigrant engineers who were already working in the field. They told me job openings. [Josephine]

I met other people at the human resource association of Calgary. Some companies looking for human resource people do not advertise in the newspapers. They will tell the associations and their members. Through these people I got to know what's going on, where the openings are. [Ricardo]

Some respondents further utilized their social networks to gain access to professional training opportunities. Three respondents reported that they acquired Canadian experience as they were introduced to relevant volunteer and mentorship programs. Ricardo became acquainted with a human resource professional through his membership with the local professional association. His acquaintance took on the role of a mentor to give him “advices” and “prepare” him to work as a human resource professional in Canada. Nixie met a laboratory director during her summer work in a

local hospital. The director later offered her a position for residency training in Pathology. Han's contacts with social activists in Calgary also resulted in several volunteer opportunities in community development. His words illuminate the benefits associated with training opportunities:

It gave me an opportunity to find out what's happening in the field of Community Development in Calgary. So I got introduced to a number of people doing that, the city workers, non-profit groups, and also the groups doing social justice and advocacy. And using those experience or network, I found out more about opportunities in this field. I learned how people do community development in Canada. I also found that some of the experiences I had in the Philippines were relevant, were useful to community development here in Calgary. So it was very helpful. It gave me more- how do you call it- confidence that some of the skills and knowledge that I had that were useful in Calgary. [Han]

Finally, three respondents received job offers directly from their social networks. During her training in Pathology, Nixie spent time to "build trust" with the "people in the system". Upon the completion of her training, she was offered a permanent job in the department. Baljinder also built relationships with acquaintances in her ethnocultural community. One of her acquaintances offered her a job in his engineering firm. Ricardo "kept in touch" with the people he had met in the human resource community. One of his "contacts" eventually offered him contract work, which later on developed into a full time position. Ricardo explained:

Staying in touch with people I meet is one way that I have kept, and that has worked for me. For example, staying in touch with XXX a year after I attended the events at the association eventually led to the position at XXX. So that worked and led to a job. [Ricardo]

## **4.5 Context**

The last four categories focused on the strategies the immigrant professionals used in their quest to re-enter their professions in Canada. This category introduces the personal and societal factors that have shaped or influenced the respondents' courses of action. Such contextual factors include personal attributes, employers' attitudes, economic climate and variation among professions.

### **4.5.1 Personal Attributes**

The respondents shared several common attributes. First, all six respondents took pride in their professional competency. They possessed impressive track records in educational training and work experience in their home countries. Four respondents had completed their Masters degree, and two had their Bachelors. The six respondents also had from 6 to 20 years of work experience in their fields. The following excerpt characterizes the excellence of their qualifications:

I think here the engineering program takes only 4 years. But in Columbia, you have to study for 5 years. In the engineering field, it is harder to work outside in another country, outside in the mountains and that kind of things. It is harder to work in another country than here because you don't always have all the resources like you have here. In that way you really have to be even more effective....For me I have been doing civil engineering for 20 years. That's all I've been working on. [Josephine]

Second, the respondents demonstrated positive attitudes. Throughout their struggles, they maintained their hopeful outlook on life as well as a positive self-image. In encountering challenges, the respondents talked about "patience", "determination", "courage", "adaptability" and "strength". The following self-descriptions illustrate a

strong sense of optimism, self-confidence and resilience the respondents consistently communicated throughout their interviews:

I didn't think of life in negative ways. I am a born optimist. I did happen. I kind of, you know, had the determination. I know, I always look at the full part of the bottle, not the empty part...I had the guts. I follow this Hungarian philosophy that if they don't let you go through the front door, you will climb in by the window. [Nixie]

I believed in myself, in my ability, and then went after things. I think I am a very strong individual. You know, there are basically 2 different types of people; one who would triumph from the pressure and other who collapses under pressure. Fortunately, I was the person who got more strength from all of those difficulties and circumstances. They never pull me down. They just gave me more strength to get to the goals I had in my mind. [Milan]

Finally, the respondents showed personal commitment to their professions. The six immigrant professionals indicated that they did not see themselves doing other things outside their chosen careers. The following statements demonstrated an integration of career decisions and personal values and fulfillment:

It's not the issue of money. The issue here is my contribution to society. I feel I can contribute working in my profession. Working in my profession brings me personal happiness. That makes me feel fulfilled. [Ricardo]

My profession is my life. I tried to do other things. For me it would be very hard to move away from civil engineering. I don't feel like doing other kinds of things. It's my life. I have been building my career as an engineer for almost 20 years. I like my profession. [Josephine]

I look at it as my lifework, something that you commit to. And it has to be, for me, because I cannot just make a living. It has to fit my personal values and I think so far I have done that. [Han]

#### **4.5.2 Employers' Attitudes**

The respondents assessed their current employers' attitudes toward immigrant professionals as being "positive." Baljinder and Josephine noted that their employers

either shared a similar cultural background or had experience working with people in their cultural groups. Milan, Nixie, Ricardo and Han observed that there were people from various cultural backgrounds in their workplace. They also used such terms as “open”, “welcoming”, “supportive”, “learning”, “good atmosphere” and “appreciative” to describe their companies. Ricardo’s words highlight the importance of an employer’s understanding and appreciation of immigrant professionals:

Many employers don’t understand qualifications from other countries. That would make it difficult if they didn’t trust immigrant professionals. It helped a lot when the employers were supportive and understanding immigrants’ issues. It helped me when the employer would take chance and give me the opportunity to prove I could do the job. [Ricardo]

#### 4.5.3 Economic Climate

Nixie, Ricardo, Milan and Baljinder found that the economic climate set the parameters for professional re-entry. In their opinion, the growing economy forced employers to become “less selective” as they faced tough competition in recruiting qualified employees. Conversely, during the bust time, immigrant professionals had to “work harder” to convince employers to value their foreign qualifications. Josephine’s comment illuminates the importance of economic climate:

The state of the economy was important. When the economy was in a boom, it's easier. No matter where you come from, more people are looking for people. So if the Canadian economy wasn't good, I knew it's gonna be tougher for me, because there will be Canadians who have the same experience I have or even more. They also went to school here, have friends here, they know the system. [Josephine]

The respondents also agreed that the Canadian labor market had become less conducive to immigrant professionals finding suitable employment in their fields. They attributed lack of “trust” in foreign qualifications as well as “tougher” practice

requirements such as Canadian work experience, re-certification, and prerequisites for professional membership preventing immigrant professionals from finding suitable employment in their intended fields of practice. Nixie states her reflections and observations:

If I tried to do it again, I would have to do it with MUCH greater difficulty. I know quite a few physicians who tried and tried. Today it is even much more difficult than in my time. I have personal acquaintances, young people came from Romania, or Yugoslavia or Hungary in the last 5 to 7 years. And among 12 to 14 of them, I know only 1 person who succeeded. She passed the basic exams... but there was no institution across Canada- she applied I believe in every single city which had internship training program. She couldn't get one position in Canada. So she was forced to leave the country. She arrived in Chicago, and then after 2 years she started her basic practice. So in Canada, as a foreigner is extremely difficult to get through. [Nixie]

#### **4.5.4 Variation among Professions**

Finally, three respondents contended that there were variations in terms of recognition of foreign qualifications among professions. Milan observed that people with degrees in computer science or electrical engineering would have an easier time finding work in their fields than chemical engineers. He attributed this variation to the “explosions of demand” in those fields. Han and Nixie also noticed that traditionally hierarchical professions such as natural science, and the medical or dental professions had more rigid and formal processes of professional accreditation. Han further elaborated that social science, precisely due to its advocacy of inclusiveness, would be more willing to recognize foreign credentials. In his words,

I think it's different for each profession. For instance, if you are an engineer or if you are in the medical or dental profession, you have to go through a formal process to be recognized for your competence. But social science professions, I think, are more open to inclusion of other experiences, precisely because of the nature of the discipline. Engineering and natural science, the medical

professional are more hierarchically structured...Social science has a flatter, more horizontal structure. [Han]

Ricardo and Baljinder, however, disagreed. They contended that lack of recognition of foreign credentials was not “a question of profession.” Rather, they argued that “lack of trust” and “professional protectionism” were transparent “across professions”.

#### **4.6 Summary**

Drawing upon the common patterns among the interviews as well the uniqueness of individual experience, this chapter detailed the five emerging categories, namely pre-migration preparation, dealing with individual challenges, dealing with structural challenges, social networking and context. In describing the category of pre-migration preparation, the chapter focused on both the respondents’ awareness of social, capacity-related and economic challenges in professional re-entry in Canada, and their efforts to prepare themselves to meet those challenges *prior to* their migration. This chapter then proceeded with detailing individual and structural challenges, as well as subsequent strategies to deal with those challenges. It further outlined the strategies and functions of social networking in the facilitation of professional re-entry. The chapter concluded with the description of contextual factors such as personal attributes, employers’ attitudes toward foreign-trained immigrant professionals, economic climate and variation among professions, which might have shaped or influenced the respondents’ course of actions throughout their professional re-entry process.

The next chapter describes the core category that links these five categories and provides a basis for a proposed model of professional re-entry for foreign-trained

immigrant professionals. The chapter also discusses the findings of this study with respect to the existing literature, its relevance to social work practice, its strengths and limitations, and suggestions for future research.

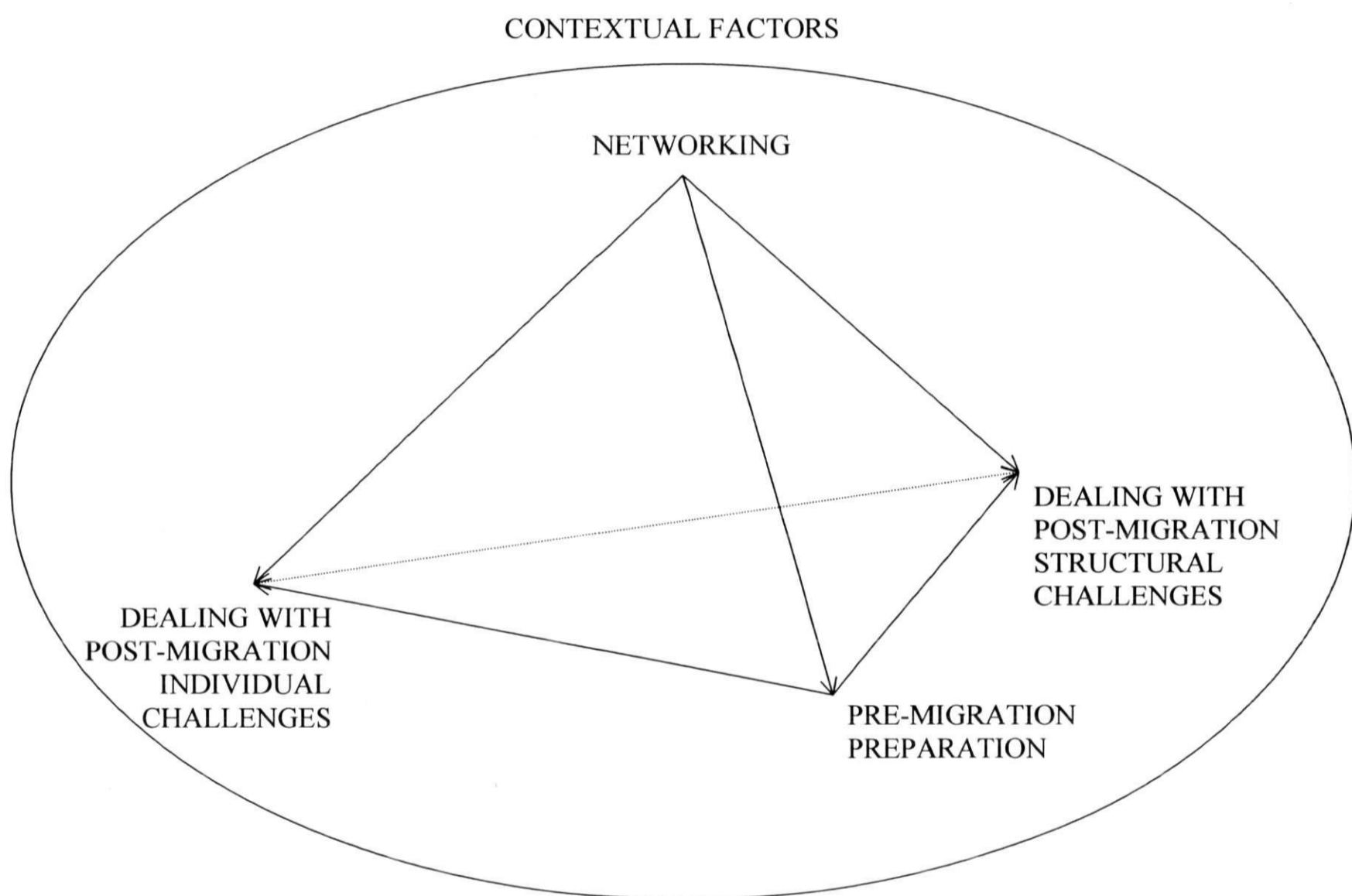
## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

Drawing upon the five categories presented in chapter four, this chapter will propose a model of professional re-entry for immigrant professionals. The chapter will include a comparison of the study findings with the existing literature to highlight congruencies and contrasts, as well as to identify gaps. It will then elaborate on the implications of the study findings in relation to social work practice, social work education and future research. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of the study with respect to the overall research process and the proposed theory.

#### **5.1 A Model of Professional Re-entry for Foreign-trained Immigrant Professionals**

In integrating emerging categories into a coherent theory, Corbin (1986) suggests grounded theory researchers ask the question, “what core category do all other categories seem to be pointing to?”. Professional re-entry is subsequently identified as the core category for this study as it accounts for variations in behaviors and logically links the five categories (Fagerhaugh, 1986). This core category, in turn, forms a basis for the model of professional re-entry for immigrant professionals (Figure 5.1).



**FIGURE 5.1**  
**A MODEL OF PROFESSIONAL RE-ENTRY FOR FOREIGN-TRAINED IMMIGRANTS**

As indicated in figure 5.1, the process of professional re-entry for immigrant professionals consists of five interrelating elements. First, the immigrant professionals demonstrated pre-migration preparation, which encompasses both their awareness and proactive strategies to meet social, capacity-related and financial challenges in Canada. Second, upon their arrival in Canada, the immigrant professionals addressed their individual challenges, including disrupted home life, lack of social support, cultural adjustment, language barriers, lack of professional competency and financial constraints. Third, the immigrant professionals dealt with existing structural challenges embedded in the Canadian labor market. Such challenges included discriminatory practices on the basis of color, immigrant status, age and gender, as well as the requirement for Canadian experience or ethnocentric assessments of professional equivalency. Fourth, the immigrant professionals consciously established social networks, which did not only provide them with social and practical support, but also with information, referral, training and employment opportunities. Fifth, contextual factors, including personal attributes, employers' attitudes, the economic climate and variation among professions, asserted influence on the immigrant professionals' overall efforts to re-establish themselves professionally in Canada.

The model of professional re-entry for immigrant professionals suggests a rather fluid and non-linear process. It also infers recurring relationships among the elements affecting professional re-entry. With respect to Pre-migration Preparation and Dealing with Individual Challenges, there are some strong linkages. Prior to coming to Canada, the immigrant professionals anticipated individual challenges in their quest for professional re-entry that were consistent with the reality of immigrant professionals in

Canada. Furthermore the intensity of pre-migration preparation seems to be related to post-migration efforts to address individual challenges. Those immigrant professionals who proactively took actions to prepare for their new lives in Canada prior to leaving their home countries are more likely to gain an edge of advantage in addressing their personal barriers upon their arrival. However, pre-migration preparation does not imply the absence of post-migration action to further address individual barriers. Many challenges, including the need for professional upgrading or building social support, are context-specific.

Pre-migration Preparation further links to Dealing with Structural Challenges. Those immigrant professionals who demonstrated pre-migration knowledge of structural challenges consistent with the reality of immigrant professionals in Canada gained an advantage in their quest for professional re-entry. Pre-migration strategies, including being “mentally prepared” and building social networks, contributed to the immigrant professionals’ overall strategies in dealing with structural challenges in the Canadian labor market.

There are some overlapping relationships between Dealing with Post-migration Individual Challenges and Dealing with Post-migration Structural Challenges. Quite often, the immigrant professionals simultaneously addressed both individual and structural challenges. Furthermore, some of the strategies employed to deal with both sets of challenges are similar. For instance, some immigrant professionals took additional training to upgrade their professional competency. This strategy can also be an adaptive function to deal with discriminatory practices. Some immigrant professionals decided to take additional training, in the belief that their Canadian education would

improve employers' perceptions of their credentials. Another strategy is the immigrant professionals' tendency to accept individual or structural challenges that they perceived as "unchangeable".

One element that demonstrates great relevance in comparison to all others is Networking. The dynamic functions of social networks weave through Pre-migration Preparation, Dealing with Post-migration Individual Challenges and Dealing with Post-migration Structural Challenges. During pre-migration, social networks provided the immigrant professionals with information support, which facilitates informed preparation for professional re-entry in Canada. In post-migration periods, social networks provided the immigrant professionals with social, practical and employment-related support in order to overcome their individual challenges. Furthermore, obtaining employment through social networks allowed the immigrant professionals to "get around" the prevalent structural barriers in the Canadian labor market.

Finally, context establishes the specific set of conditions within which the immigrant professionals take action to find suitable employment in their fields. Though contextual factors, such as employers' attitude, economic climate, variation among professions and personal attributes, were not aspects of the strategies utilized by the immigrant professionals to overcome their challenges, they asserted influence on the immigrant professionals' overall efforts to achieve professional status in Canada.

## **5.2 Comparing the Findings with Existing Literature**

The findings of this study partly support the human capital theory, which contends that those immigrant professionals with higher investments in education,

training and work experience will be allocated in the most rewarding occupations (Sorenson, 1995). All six respondents demonstrated their professional competency, with impressive records of educational training and work experience in their home countries. They further demonstrated tremendous effort to acquire or improve their language ability, and to upgrade their professional capacity in order to function well in their profession in Canada. In this sense, the study supports the position that immigrant professionals will gradually reach economic assimilation into the Canadian labor market as they gain experience, acquire skills and improve language knowledge (Basavarajappa & Verma, 1990; Chiswick & Miller, 1988; Ornstein & Sharma, 1983; Richmond & Zubrzycki, 1984; Samuel & Woloski, 1985).

The study findings, however, challenge the conventional connotation of achieved human capital characteristics, which narrowly focus on professional capacity such as education, training and work experience. Though these conventionally defined characteristics are necessary for immigrant professionals to meet the objective demands of professional skills, they fail to address the subjective demands exemplified in employers' preference for Canadian qualifications, ethnocentric assessment and discriminatory practices in the Canadian labor market. As indicated in this study, the abilities and strategies employed by the respondents to overcome structural barriers suggest a different kind of human capital that goes beyond educational investment or work experience.

The findings of this study also partly support the labor market segmentation theory, which contends that labor markets are stratified into highly impermeable primary and secondary labor markets, on the basis of class, gender, race or ethnicity (Lowe,

1993). Whereas the primary sector offers workers high wages, good working conditions, job security and advancement chances, the secondary sector does not reward workers' skills, which in turn results in low wages or unsatisfactory jobs (Rosenbaum et al., 1990). Sorensen (1995) points out that immigrants, facing mechanisms of social closure in their host countries, experience downward mobility and are confined to the secondary labor market.

This study highlights several barriers experienced by immigrant professionals in their quest for professional re-entry that support the labor market segmentation theory. Due to their immigrant status, the respondents were confronted with lengthy professional accreditation processes that included biased requirements for Canadian experience and ethnocentric assessments of foreign qualifications. They further experienced discrimination in the Canadian labor market due to their skin color, immigrant status, age and gender. These findings confirm various barriers to professional re-entry identified by previous research efforts. Such barriers involve subjective educational and occupational standards or evaluative procedures used by professions to assess professional competency of immigrants (Calleja & Alnwick, 2000, Mata, 1999; McDade, 1988), the requirement for Canadian work experience (Abella, 1984; Government of Alberta, 1992; Mata, 1999), bias against qualifications obtained in Third World countries (DePass, 1989; McDade, 1988) and discrimination on the basis of color or race (Basran & Zong, 1998; Boyd, 1985, 1992; Henry & Ginzberg, 1993; Reitz & Sklar, 1997), gender (Penduka & Pedukar, 1996; Seward & Tremblay, 1989), and accent (DePass, 1988; Elliott, 1990; Henry & Ginzberg, 1993; Reitz & Sklar, 1997).

The study findings, nevertheless, dismantle the assumption of passivity embedded in the labor market segmentation theory. Whereas the labor market segmentation theory emphasizes barriers that create impermeability between the primary and secondary labor markets, the study findings suggest action necessary for the immigrant to move from the secondary to primary labor sector. In other words, though the findings present evidence of barriers associated with class, gender, race or ethnicity in the labor market, they also highlight a capacity for resiliency manifested in the strategies and skills employed to overcome structural barriers.

Further examination of the study in relation to the existing literature highlights its points of departure from current research on the adaptation of immigrant professionals in Canada. First, the study findings emphasize the role of pre-migration preparation in facilitating professional re-entry among immigrants. Both generic literature on immigrants and the limited body of research on immigrant professionals have generally focused on post-migration adaptation (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Baker, 1989; Chiu, 1994; Frideres, 1989; Gervais-Timmer, 1994; Li, 1996; Lim, 1993; Samuel, 1988, 1994; Samuel & Woloski, 1985; Sayegh & Lasry, 1993; Thomas & Rappak, 1998). Only a limited number of studies examine the impact of pre-migration experience on psychosocial adaptation of immigrants in Canada (Beiser et al, 1995; George & Tsang, 2000; Montgomery, 1986, 1991). These studies, however, overlook immigrants' efforts to prepare themselves to meet challenges in Canada prior to their actual migration.

Second, the study findings take account of both individual and structural orientations in studying the socioeconomic adjustment of immigrant professionals in Canada. As pointed out by Basran and Li (1998), research studies have been divided into

two schools of thought; those that primarily focus on individual barriers experienced by immigrant professionals (Basavarajappa & Verma, 1985, Ornstein & Sharma, 1983), and those that place emphasis on structural barriers in the process of professional accreditation (Abella, 1984; Basran & Zong, 1998; Beach & Worswick, 1989; Boyd, 1985; Fernando & Prasad, 1986; Government of Alberta, 1992; McDade, 1988; Rajagopal, 1990; Ralston, 1988; Trovato & Grindstaff, 1986). The findings of this study, however, highlight both individual and structural barriers, as well as further documenting strategies employed by immigrant professionals to address those barriers.

Third, the study findings introduce the importance of social networks in the process of professional re-entry for immigrant professionals. Though current studies on social networks are primarily conducted in the United States and focus almost exclusively on unskilled and/or illegal immigrants from Latin American countries, they highlight the role of social networks in immigrant adaptation. Falcon (1995) points out that social networks help immigrants access housing, money and information. He further elaborates that social networks are critical in the settlement process of immigrants, providing not only information but also connection to employers and jobs. Aguilera (2000) contends that those immigrants who utilize social networks to find employment earn higher incomes, obtain positive income mobility, and hold longer lasting jobs. Similarly, Benson (1990) finds that positive networking facilitates rapid adaptation among immigrants to local labor markets and provides economic and cultural support in situations of unstable employment. An outdated Canadian study on job mobility of immigrant women of West Indian origin indicates that both friendships with Canadians, including employers, and contacts with other West Indians offer opportunities for these

women to leave domestic work and enter blue collar employment, the school system, or both (Turritin, 1976).

Popular literature on network theory further explains the importance of social networks in the labor market. According to Granovetter (1985), labor markets often depend on personal relations. People prefer to deal with individuals of known reputation, or, even better, with individuals they have dealt with before. Networks of personal relationships are therefore responsible for cultivating trust in employment transactions (Rosenbaum et al, 1990).

Finally, some contextual factors are discussed in the existing literature. Zhao et al. (2000) demonstrate variation of occupational demands among professions. In comparing the fit between intended and realized occupations among immigrant professionals, Zhao et al. (2000) find a higher percentage of recent immigrants reported working as computer scientists and lower percentages in engineering and natural sciences. The rationale for such a differential, the authors imply, is that professionals in computer science are more readily integrated into the Canadian labor market due to the higher occupational demand.

In terms of the employers' attitudes toward immigrants, the respondents' positive assessments of their employers' attitudes are quite unique when compared to the literature. It is generally documented that employers often exhibit pervasive prejudice and discrimination against immigrants (DePass, 1988; Elliott, 1990; Henry & Ginzberg, 1993; Reitz & Sklar, 1997; Seward & Tremblay, 1989). Two studies offer some insights about the dynamics involving Canadian attitudes toward immigrants. Schissle et al. (1989) contend that the rate of population growth, educational attainment, income and

mother tongue exert the strongest and most consistent effects on attitudes. Levett (1996) further elaborates that contact and familiarity with immigrants give rise to favorable attitudes toward them.

With respect to the effects of economic climate on employment attainment, Picot and Wannell (1993) find that economic conditions appeared to be correlated with the length of job search. Henry (1987) further notes that slowness of promotion and lay offs in a period of economic decline affect ethnic group members most dramatically as they are subjected to the “last hired/ first fired” principle.

### **5.3 Implications**

#### **5.3.1 Social Work Practice**

In the field of immigrant resettlement and integration services, the study provides social work practitioners with knowledge of the barriers that immigrant professionals are likely to encounter in their quest for suitable employment in Canada. The study further facilitates learning among practitioners about the strategies that immigrant professionals have used to successfully overcome these barriers. Such knowledge, when incorporated into practice, would guide effective program development or enhance existing services in helping other immigrant professionals expediently re-establish themselves professionally in the Canadian labor market.

Social work practice in the field of immigrant resettlement and integration has thus far laid great emphasis on service delivery to meet individual needs. As indicated in the study, however, immigrant professionals are more likely to encounter both individual and structural barriers. Therefore, effective resettlement and integration services for

immigrant professionals have to address both individual and structural challenges.

This, in turn, calls for a need to re-conceptualize integration, both in theory and practice, in order to include not only the notion of immigrants integrating into mainstream society, but also how mainstream institutions adapt to the new reality of immigration in Canada.

At the individual level, the study draws attention to three important areas in planning and implementing resettlement and integration services for immigrant professionals. First, immigrant professionals may need support in dealing with their sociopsychological adaptation, including lack of social support, disrupted home life, and cultural adjustment to conflicting work values and practices. Second, immigrant professionals may need support in language training, accent reduction, computer skills and professional upgrading. There needs to be collaboration with other professionals from various disciplines and established educational institutions to provide immigrant professionals with technical language training and professional upgrading services in order to prepare them to adequately function in the competitive labor market. Third, immigrant professionals may struggle with financial need as they are trying to find suitable employment in their fields. Practitioners need to be knowledgeable about financial assistance programs to help immigrant professionals access those sources of financial support.

The study further draws attention to structural barriers created by professional regulatory bodies and employers, including prevalent requirements for Canadian experience and ethnocentric assessment of equivalency. This suggests a need for structural social work practice to pressure various government jurisdictions as well as

professional associations and employers to develop clear guidelines and policy that fairly recognize foreign qualifications.

The study also presents opportunities for community development in working with immigrant professionals. The respondents indicated the importance of social networks in providing social, practical and employment-related support. Thus, there are two potential areas for community development in enhancing positive social networking. First, social work practitioners may work with the immigrant communities to organize self-help groups for professional immigrants. This community development strategy would create a medium for social support, information exchange and empowerment among immigrant professionals. Second, social work practitioners may work with the community at large to bring immigrant professionals and employers together. Such efforts capitalize on some established research that demonstrates Canadians' favorable attitudes toward immigrants resulting from their increasing contact and familiarity with immigrants (Levett, 1996), and the importance of trust embedded in the networks of personal relationships in employment transactions (Rosenbaum et al, 1990).

Finally, social work practice has traditionally focused primarily on post-migration resettlement services. This study, however, suggests the importance of pre-migration preparation in facilitating speedy and effective professional re-entry for immigrants. This point of convergence suggests an opportunity for international social work to expand its present focus on developmental work. International social work practice can, indeed, play an important role in assisting prospective migrants to prepare for their future in their countries of destination.

### **5.3.2 Social Work Education**

The study contributes to the growing knowledge base of social work education in the areas of immigrant adaptation and integration. The focus on immigrant professionals helps establish specific knowledge about a unique group of immigrants, and therefore to dismantle the tendency to view immigrants as a homogeneous group with similar needs. Drawing upon literature from various disciplines, the study is part of a progressive movement in social work education that embraces multidisciplinary perspectives on social issues.

With respect to doing research, the study moves away from the traditional emphasis on problem-based research. Though the traditional research orientation is, by all means, legitimate and allows valuable understanding of social problems, it does not facilitate learning about human resiliency. This study, particularly, allows social work students to understand both the problems that professional immigrants encounter in their efforts to find suitable employment, and their strategies to overcome those barriers.

Finally, social work education tends to make a clear distinction between micro and macro practices. This study, however, is a reminder of the necessity of understanding the interplay between individual challenges and structural barriers.

### **5.3.3 Further Research**

This study explores the process of professional re-entry for immigrant professionals. It, however, does not describe the employment experience of immigrant professionals in the Canadian labor market in terms of job security, job satisfaction, and differentials in earnings or promotion over time. Longitudinal studies can be used to study these long-term issues.

This study draws upon common patterns among immigrant professionals from various cohorts, professions, countries of origin and gender. Future research can be conducted to complement what this study has achieved. Among questions to be further examined include: What are the unique issues and barriers facing immigrant professionals in specific professions? Ethnic groups? Gender? Or cohorts?; What are some unique strategies employed by immigrant professionals in specific professions, cohorts, ethnic groups, or gender to address barriers?.

One of the effective research strategies utilized to evaluate the proposed model of professional re-entry for immigrant professionals is to compare the experience of those who find suitable employment in their fields and those who fail to practice their professions in Canada. Such comparative research would highlight differences in terms of barriers and strategies employed by immigrant professionals in their efforts to gain professional re-entry.

The study findings also present opportunities for further quantitative studies. New categories and concepts, as well as the proposed relationship amongst them potentially serve as variables for quantitative studies. A blend of quantitative and qualitative study is also recommended to further enhance in-depth understanding of professional re-entry for immigrant professionals.

## **5.4 Assessment of the Study**

### **5.4.1 Assessment of the Research Process**

In assessing the research process, it is important to examine the different stages of the study, including the selection of research paradigm and strategy, accountability of

self, data collection and analysis. In terms of methodological selection, the qualitative research paradigm and grounded theory strategy were chosen on the basis of the research question, not the researcher's methodological orientation. Such selection allowed openness, discovery and rich description of the unique employment experience of immigrant professionals in the Canadian labor market. Also, clearly evident from the study were sensitivity to holistic issues, descriptive details and data grounding.

The study was further enhanced by thorough methodological preparation. As a researcher, I spent adequate time to plan for a transparent and comprehensive process. Prior to any implementation of the study project, I extensively reviewed hundreds of articles and books relating to qualitative research and grounded theory. As described in chapter three, I explicitly accounted for my values and assumptions, as well as my strategies to ensure trustworthiness.

The joint process of data collection and analysis also enhanced the study. The procedure facilitated groundedness as well as sensitivity to process and nuances of individual experience. With respect to the data collection for this study, there are several pros and cons. The selection of respondents across arrival cohorts, professions, ethnicities, age groups and gender highlighted common patterns of employment experience among immigrant professionals. However, it might have not allowed the discovery of specificity in each group. Furthermore, the size of the sample was relatively small. It was, nevertheless, complemented by the quality of the data, the amount of useful information obtained from each respondent, as well as the number of interviews per respondent.

In term of researcher-respondent relationship, there was adequate time invested to establish relationships with the respondents and to learn about their cultural values and practices. The semi-structured nature of the interviews was conducive to exploration of the unique experience of each respondent, and at the same time kept the study focused. However, the use of English as a second language in the interviews, combined with potential pitfalls due to cultural differences between the researcher and the respondents, might have compromised in-depth understanding of cultural nuances embedded in communication ability. Also, the reliance on immigrant professionals who had found suitable employment in their fields as the main data source overlooked the values of triangulation that employers or immigrant professionals who could not practice their professions in Canada might have contributed to this study.

During data analysis, the use of computer-assisted analysis enhanced the management of data in terms of coding, sorting and integrating the data. It also allowed visual presentation in order to map connections between and among concepts and categories. To avoid the potential pitfall of reducing interpretive work to a set of procedures (Charmaz, 2000), I consciously used the computer software as a tool that was ultimately driven by my knowledge of grounded theory.

Finally, the processes of coding, categorizing and forming conceptual linkages were grounded in data. Wherever possible, in-vivo codes were used to stay true to the respondents' experiences. The study findings were also supported with rich data, and accounted for conceptual linkages, variation and contextual relevance.

#### **5.4.2 Assessment of the Proposed Model of Professional Re-Entry**

The proposed model of professional re-entry for immigrant professionals met the criteria of fit and work suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Throughout the process of theory development, the categories were readily applicable and indicated by the data. Concepts and conceptual linkages were derived from and supported with detailed quotations.

As demonstrated in the findings and figure 5.1, there was clear integration and interrelatedness of the categories and concepts which emerged from the study. The model of professional re-entry clearly explained the barriers and the strategies accordingly employed by immigrant professionals to overcome those barriers. It also accounted for variation and contextual factors that exerted influence on the overall efforts of the immigrant professionals to re-establish themselves professionally in Canada.

Various aspects of the model of professional re-entry further fit with what had been indicated by other research (May, 1986). As demonstrated in the comparison of the findings with the existing literature, many concepts and conceptual linkages were supported by previous studies. The categories and their relationships were clear and therefore would be easily subjected to further examination in future research.

Finally, the model for professional re-entry proved itself to be highly relevant and modifiable (Glaser, 1978). In allowing the core issues and processes to emerge directly from the data, the model stayed true to the reality of immigrant professionals in their quest for professional re-entry. Also, the model allows for potentially modifying the process in order to account for changing dynamics in barriers, strategies and contextual factors immigrant professionals might experience in the Canadian labor market.

### **5.5 Concluding Comments**

This study details the barriers and strategies that immigrant professionals use to overcome individual and structural challenges. By studying issues that are specifically important to immigrant professionals, the study proves that the notion of immigrants as a homogeneous group is no longer relevant in the ever-changing Canadian reality of immigration and diversity. In this sense, it advocates for specialized knowledge in understanding immigrant adaptation and integration.

Though this study highlights successful efforts of some immigrant professionals in finding suitable employment in their fields in Canada, it is important not to lose sight that their experiences are exceptions, rather than the norm. There are many professional immigrants who have not had the opportunity to realize their professional dreams in Canada. Such wastage of human potential calls for thorough examination of the issue that would go beyond the understanding of immigrant professionals' behaviors themselves. This would bring into the debate the role of Canadian institutions in integrating immigrants into Canadian society and in the process becoming themselves integrated into the reality of Canadian immigrants. The reality of underutilization of foreign qualifications also confronts Canada with the ethical question of establishing an immigration policy that clearly aims to attract well-educated immigrants, yet lacking a comprehensive plan or system of coordination to ensure proper evaluation of their credentials and utilization of their skills.

Finally, the study attempts to understand the experience of immigrant professionals from a strength-based perspective. It clearly demonstrates that researchers and practitioners can, indeed, learn from the successful stories of those they work with.

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## APPENDIX A

## THE POINTS SYSTEM OVER TIME

Factors	'67	'74	'78	'86	'93	'96	'99
Education	20	20	12	12	15	20	16
Experience	-	-	8	8	8	9	8
Specific Vocational Preparation	10	10	15	15	17	-	-
Occupational Demand	15	15	15	10	10	-	10
Labour Market Balance	-	-	-	-	-	10	-
Age	10	10	10	10	10	12	10
Arranged Employment Or Designated Occupation	10	10	10	10	10	4	10
Language	10	10	10	15	14	20	15
Personal Suitability	15	15	10	10	10	20	10*
Levels	-	-	-	10	6	-	-
Relative	5	5	5	-	-	5	5
Destination	5	5	5	-	-	-	-
Demographic Factor	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Education/ Training Factor	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Pass Mark	50	50	50	70	67	74	70

**Note**

The table shows maximum points possible in each category. Maximum points and Pass Mark have been rescaled in 1993 and 1996 to put the system in terms of points out of 100.

\* Personal suitability is considered as "additional points" that would be rewarded by the visa officer at interview. Applicants, however, are required to have at least 60 points on the other 9 factors (excluding personal suitability) to merit further considerations.

Sources: Green and Green (1999) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (1999).

## APPENDIX B

### CONSENT FORM

**Research Project Title:** “How do foreign-trained immigrant professionals overcome their barriers and gain employment in their intended fields of practice?”

**Investigator:** Hieu Van Ngo, BSW, (MSW Candidate)

**Sponsoring Agencies:** The University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work

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

1. **Purpose and Usefulness:** The purpose of this study is to examine the mechanisms foreign-trained immigrant professionals employ in order to overcome their barriers and gain employment pertinent to their professional training and expertise. The study has both theoretical and practical importance. The study will generate a theory that explains successful patterns of adaptation among immigrant professionals in the Canadian labour market. The study will also provide human service professionals with in-depth understanding of the experiences of immigrant professionals, which will be useful for developing effective programs to assist immigrant professionals to re-enter their professions in Canada.
2. **Your Participation:** We are asking you to participate in this study by sharing your experience in finding employment in your field. Specifically, you will be asked to meet the researcher at least one time for an in-depth interview. The interview will be conducted in English and will last approximately 2 hours. With your permission, the interview will be audiotaped. You might also be asked at some point after the meeting to give feedback on the accuracy of the data recorded or to provide additional data.
3. **Risk/Costs/Benefits:** This research does not pose risks to anyone participating in the study. The only cost to you is the time that it will take to meet the researcher. There will be no monetary compensation. However, there are some potential benefits resulting from your participation in the study. You will gain knowledge about the research process and contribute to the body of knowledge on adaptation of

immigrants in the Canadian labour market. Your experience will also help other immigrant professionals effectively prepare for the job market in Canada.

4. **Your Choice:** You are free to participate in the study. You can choose the location and time that you feel most comfortable. Should you find it difficult to continue the meeting, we would be glad to reschedule another meeting that would be most convenient for you.
5. **Confidentiality:** Your responses to the interview(s) will be kept strictly confidential. The audiotapes will be coded so that your name does not appear. The tapes will also be stored in a locked office at the University of Calgary campus. They will be destroyed at the completion of the research study. Identifying information will be deleted or disguised in any subsequent publication of the research findings.

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

If you have further questions concerning about matters related to this research, please contact me at (403)-220-8098. You may also contact my supervisor, Mr. David Este at (403) - 220 - 7309.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator/Witness (optional)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

- A copy of this form has been given to you for your records and reference.
- If you would like to have a copy of the findings of this research, please provide your mailing address:

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

## PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Pseudonym	Gender	Age Upon Arrival	Marital Status upon Arrival/ N# of Children	Country of Origin	Date of Arrival in Canada	Immigration Category
Baljinder	Female	29	Married/ 1	India	1997	Independent
Nixie	Female	37	Divorced/ 2	Romania	1970	Refugee/ Assisted Relative
Josephine	Female	41	Married/ 1	Columbia	1998	Independent
Han	Male	36	Married/ 2	Philippines	1996	Independent
Ricardo	Male	31	Single	Nigeria	1995	Independent
Milan	Male	34	Married/ 1	China	1998	Independent

**APPENDIX C**  
**PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS Continued**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>English Level upon Arrival (Self-Report)</b>	<b>Education/ Training</b>	<b>Level of Qualification</b>	<b>Home Country Experience (Years)</b>
Baljinder	Advanced	Library and Information Science	Masters	7
Nixie	Beginning	Medicine	MD	11
Josephine	Intermediate	Civil Engineering	Bachelor	20
Han	Advanced	Social Work	Bachelor	20
Ricardo	Advanced	Business Administration	Masters	6
Milan	Intermediate	Chemical Engineering	Masters	8.5

## APPENDIX D

### EVOLVING INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### A. Initial Interview Questions

1. What type of professional training did you complete in your country of origin? In what country did you have your degree(s)?
2. What kind of works did you do before coming to Canada?
3. How long did you work in the related fields before you came to Canada?
4. How did you come to Canada?
5. What kinds of work have you hold in Canada? How long?
6. What challenges or barriers did you encounter in getting back to your profession in Canada?
7. How did you overcome those challenges?
8. Please describe the steps that you went through in order to get back to your profession?

#### B. Further Questions as Directed by Incoming Data (over the Course of the Study)

##### *Part 1: Prior To Coming To Canada*

1. How did you come to Canada? How did your migration experience affect you in getting back to your profession?
2. Why did you choose to come to Canada? (i.e.: economic dimension, family dimension, political dimension, professional dimension)
3. How were you treated in home country? (i.e. political persecution, home life, professional)
4. How did you deal with them?
5. What challenges did you anticipate to encounter in Canada? In getting back to your profession?
6. How did you become aware of those challenges (who/ what/ how much)?
7. How did you prepare yourself to meet those anticipated challenges?
8. How did your pre-migration preparation (or lack of pre-migration preparation) affect you in Canada in general? In your effort to get back to your profession?

##### *Part 2: In Canada*

1. Describe the steps that you went through in order to get back to your profession?
2. What structural challenges or barriers did you encounter in getting back to your profession in Canada? How did you deal with those challenges or barriers?
3. What individual challenges did you encounter in getting back to your profession? How did you overcome those challenges?
4. What kind of supports did you get in Canada? How did you go about to get those supports?

5. How did you go about to develop your personal/ professional network? How did they help you?
6. What should professional immigrants do to prepare themselves in order to get back to their profession in Canada?
7. What changes should be made in relation to social policies or legislation?  
Immigrants' attitudes? Employers' attitudes? Social services?

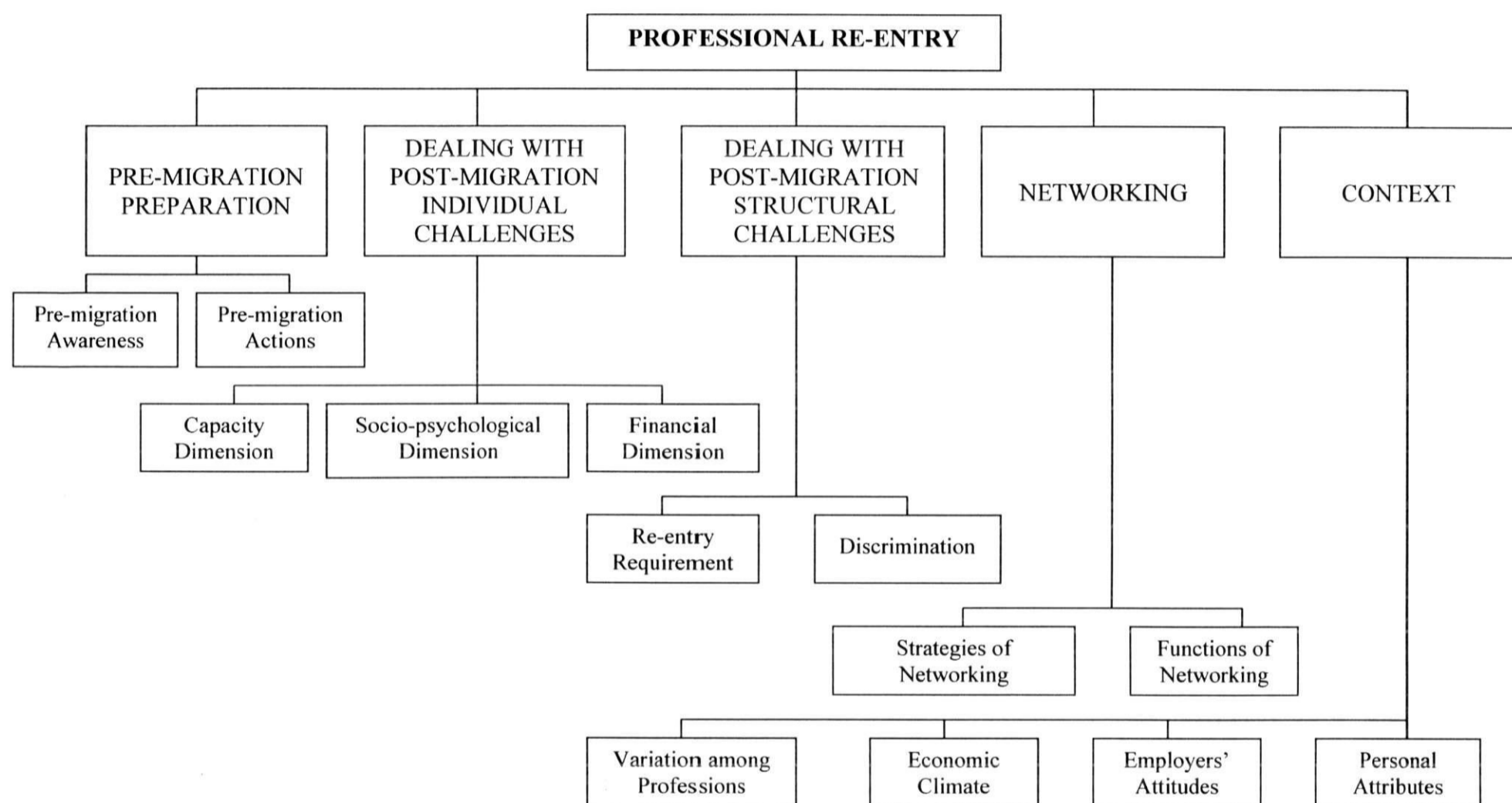
## APPENDIX E

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

**Note: The data is intended to provide some background information about you. Please feel free to discuss with the researcher any question that you do not wish to answer. All information will be kept strictly confidential.**

Please fill in the blank or circle relevant answer:

1. Name:
2. Gender:            Male            Female
3. Your age:
4. Marital Status:   Single            Married            Divorced  
Others: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Number of Children:  
Their ages:
6. Number of Years Living in Canada:
7. Country of Origin:
8. Immigration Status:
9. Are you a visible minority?        Yes            No
10. Other?



# APPENDIX F

## DIAGRAM OF THE CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES