ACCULTURATIVE STRESS AND COPING AMONG IMMIGRANT PROFESSIONAL WORKERS

By

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Department of Adult Education and Counselling Psychology
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Abstract

Empirical investigations of the prevalence and associated features of mental health issues in immigrant populations, have implicated acculturative stress as a potentially significant factor (Sam & Berry, 2010). Acculturative stress is associated with unemployment and underemployment among immigrant professional workers. The objective of the current investigation is to examine the prevalence and impact of acculturation, acculturative stress and coping in a sample of adult immigrant professionals. To provide a theoretical foundation for the study, the following conceptualizations were used: Berry’s (2006) four pronged definition of acculturation; The Stress and Coping Model; and the Social Cognitive Career Theory. Using a grounded theory, qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were used to examine the experiences of employment and acculturation among 20 professional immigrant workers in Canada. The findings of this study demonstrate that immigrant professional workers experience high levels of acculturative stress and utilize a number of coping strategies in relation to their employment trajectories.
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Chapter One

1 Introduction

The experience of professionally trained Canadian immigrants, as it relates to acculturation and employment outcomes, is explored in this study. Using qualitative research analysis, the lives of professional immigrant workers are examined in-depth to gain an understanding of the interaction between employment and acculturation and how this impacts socio-cultural and psychological adaption and styles of coping.

The lived experiences of professionally trained immigrants has been a growing interest in both Canadian and international psychological research over the past decade (Berger, 2004; Yakushko, 2005; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008; Berry, 2006; Prendes-Lintel, 2001). It is widely documented that immigrants face poorer employment outcomes than their non-immigrant counterparts with studies postulating that the process of immigration and eventual obtainment of employment, can contribute or exasperate both mental and physical health concerns (Asanin & Wilson, 2009).

Another area of significant research within the immigrant population examines the process of acculturation, and how individuals transition into their new culture will determine their adaption outcomes and perceived ethnic identity (Berry, 2006). Acculturation research has been conducted in numerous demographic populations, examining a multitude of variables (Berry, 2006; Sam & Berry, 2010; Arthur, 2004; Kosic, 2004; Yakhnich, 2008; Miranda & Matheny 2000). Although research has begun to look more closely at the process of acculturation, there have been limited studies examining professional immigrants and their unique interaction with cultural adjustment.
1.1 Background

The immigrant population within Canada is among the highest in the developed world at almost 20% (United Nations, 2008) and is continually growing with 6,186,950 foreign-born Canadians in 2006. The Canadian foreign born population represents one in five (19.8%) of the total population, the highest proportion of foreign born Canadians since 1931 (Statistics Canada, 2008). The Canadian government’s long term objective is to increase immigration levels so that entering immigrants represent approximately 1% of Canada’s population each year (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007), with an estimate that by the year 2025 immigrants will be the only source of population growth in Canada (Hiebert, 2006). Canada’s democratic governmental system, universal education and healthcare and commitment to social welfare appeal to immigrants who want to improve their quality of life (Asanin & Wilson, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2008). The Canadian policy of multiculturalism proposes groups and individuals have a right to maintain and develop their heritage cultures; as well as become fully engaged in a culturally plural larger society (Berry, 2006).

According to Hawthorne (2008), Canada has the highest number of professional immigrants in the world and despite this, most professional immigrants experience adversity in relation to their employment outcomes. There are a number of barriers which impede a person’s ability to prosper and grow in their new country. Previous studies conclude that professional immigrants in Canada experience higher levels of unemployment (Boyd & Schellenberg, 2007) and receive lower financial reimbursement (Reitz, 2005) than their Canadian born counterparts.

The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants in Canada (LSIC) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009) found that new immigrants were satisfied with living in Canada however, after four years within the country the largest difficulties immigrants faced were related to language
proficiency (26%) and finding adequate employment (46%). In a further study examining language barriers and employment among immigrants in Canada, it was found that the employment rate of professional immigrants increased with their acquisition of English or French (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009).

The LSIC survey also underscored significant difficulties in the labour market faced by new immigrants. Cited among the difficulties were a lack of Canadian work experience (50%), minimal contacts in the job market (37%), a lack of recognition of foreign experience (37%), a lack of recognition of foreign qualifications (35%) and language barriers (32%) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009).

According to Statistics Canada (2008), there has been a shift in the demographic characteristics of immigrants coming to Canada, with a growing number of new immigrants coming from non-European communities for the first time. This shift in the source of immigration to Canada was due in part to changes in Canadian immigration programs directly targeted to improve the lives of migrants and refugees. As a result of these changes, the proportion of the foreign-born population, who were born in Asia and the Middle East (40.8%), surpassed the proportion born in Europe (36.8%). Fourteen percent of recent immigrants came from the People's Republic of China, followed by India at (11.6%), the Philippines (7%) and Pakistan (5.2%) (Statistics Canada, 2008). This new population of immigrants represents a visible minority in Canada and as such, presents additional barriers related to employment. It has been hypothesized that Asian immigrants experience more stress related to immigration than European immigrants (Kaul, 2001) and are less likely to find employment at the same skill and financial level (Espiritu, 1999; Chen, Smith & Mustard, 2010).

The way in which immigrants relate to their own heritage culture, in reference to the dominant majority culture, is known as acculturation. Acculturation is defined by the behavioural
and attitudinal changes which take place when a person immigrants to a new country or culture (Berry, 1997). An acculturation framework is often used to describe the concept in terms of four acculturation strategies or orientations; assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization (Berry 1997). Assimilation is defined as the process in which the immigrant or minority groups take on the identity of the host country and the heritage culture becomes extinct or unrecognizable. Integration is the strategy in which the immigrant or immigrant groups become active in the majority community, however continue to maintain customs and beliefs inherent in their own culture. Berry defines Marginalization as the process by which new immigrants or immigrant groups neither identify with nor connect with their own culture or the culture of the larger society. Lastly, Separation occurs when immigrant minorities refuse to participate in the dominant culture and instead, preserve their own cultural identity (Berry, 1997).

How a person orientates to these four strategies of acculturation is said to determine their overall psychological and socio-cultural adaption (Sam and Berry, 2010; Phinney et al., 2001). Socio-cultural adaption is often measured by way of successful employment outcomes in immigrant populations (Dean & Wilson, 2010). The process of adaption is bi-dimensional and can occur through both positive and negative experiences. Environmental factors can alter the process of acculturation and as such, people adapt in different ways depending on their own life experiences (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Acculturative stress is a phenomenon, which occurs when a person experiences problematic reactions or perceptions related to the process of acculturation and can lead to the development of other mental health issues in immigrant populations (Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000; Perez et al., 2002). Acculturative stress is often cited as an antecedent to poor employment trajectories of immigrant professionals (de Castro, Gee and Takeuchi, 2008).
1.2 Study Rationale

The present study explores employment among professional immigrants, as it relates to the process of acculturation. The intent of this study is to gain an understanding of the relationship and association between acculturation and employment in the lives of immigrant professionals. Acculturation can be seen as an overriding paradigm with several interrelated sub concepts which will be explored in this study. Adaption and ethnic identity are often seen as synonymous with/or outcomes of the acculturation process. In order to understand the lives of immigrant professionals through an acculturation framework it is important to explore the socio-cultural and psychological adaption which ensues. The style of coping an individual pursues, is also relevant in the understanding of acculturation, adaption and acculturative stress.

Given the limited research focusing on acculturation and employment in professional immigrants in Canada, a qualitative approach is used in this study. Qualitative research allows for the discovery of emerging concepts related to phenomenon, which has yet to be understood (Glaser, 1992). In-depth interviews allowed participants of this study to openly connect with the researcher, thus sharing their unique stories of immigration and employment in Canada.

This exploration of the affective, behavioural and cognitive perspectives of acculturation among professional immigrants in Canada seeks to explore how professional immigrants acculturate and adapt to their employment and educational experiences in Canada. More specifically; 1) How do professional immigrants identity with the four acculturation strategies in reference to their employment trajectories? 2) Is there evidence of acculturative stress in professional immigrants in Canada? 3) What coping strategies do new professional immigrants employ in relation to their career and educational goals. 4) Do certain coping strategies lead to more positive or negative adaptive outcomes? 5) Do the employment experiences of professional immigrants play a role in their ethnic identity?
Chapter Two

2 Literature Review

The intent of this study is to examine the employment experiences of professionally trained immigrants as it relates to acculturation processes, socio-cultural and psychological adaption and acculturative stress. To begin, an exploration of immigration in Canada, specifically the trajectories of professionally trained immigrants will ensue; followed by an in-depth review of literature to date on acculturation, adaption and coping styles.

2.1 Immigration to Canada

The term “immigrant” is defined as a person who has moved themselves and often their families to a permanent resident in a country outside of their home country (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2007). Canada is well known on the world stage for its’ commitment to immigration and diversity with high scores of indices of actual diversity and immigration (Noels & Berry, 2006). In 1971, a policy of multiculturism was developed stating clearly that there are no official cultures within Canadian society (Statistics Canada, 2008). This makes Canada an attractive option for potential immigrants and in 2001; approximately 250,640 people immigrated to Canada with the largest population of immigrants coming from Asia (Statistics Canada, 2009).

The Canadian Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), which replaces the Immigration Act of 1976, was implemented in 2002 with the objective of ensuring that immigration positively improves the social wellbeing and economic welfare of Canada. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007). Immigration lends itself to the economic prosperity of a country, with most societies relying on professionally trained immigrants to fill in needed population gaps; such as declining birth rates and aging. Immigration also allows countries to remain competitive in the global economy (Boyd and Thomas, 2002; La Veist, 2005).
As of the 1990’s, the majority of new immigrants arriving in Canada are of non-European decent and represent members of a visible minority, with 58% of new immigrants coming from Asia (Statistics Canada, 2002). Most new immigrants settle in the major cities of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, which has increased the diversity and high visible minority populations in these urban centers (Grant & Sweetman 2004). In a study examining the employment success of professional immigrants in Canada, inclusion in a visible minority group was a significant predictor of job classification and level (Frank, 2009). Visible minorities are less likely to find a job based on their skills and experience, and if they do it will take longer. Being a visible minority in Canada is also a predictor of immigrant wages with visible minorities earning less and their non-visible minority counterparts (Frank, 2009).

2.1.1 Internationally-Trained Professionals

Fifty percent of immigrants coming to Canada are coming as “skilled workers” with at least one year of professional work experience and are entitled entry into Canada based on a “point system.” Those wishing to immigrant to Canada under the skilled workers program are graded based on six categories: education, knowledge of official languages, work experience (according to years), prearranged employment in Canada and adaptability (based on the ability for a person and their family to “adapt” to Canadian society) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007).

Once granted permission for immigration, it is not guaranteed that a skilled worker will be successful, or even a candidate for the Canadian labour market. New professional immigrants start their Canadian careers with significant disadvantages as compared to their Canadian counterparts and often never progress to the same levels of employment success (Hum &Simpson 2004; Reitz 2007). According to Statistics Canada (2008) professional immigrants in the year 2000 were even less successful in the labour market as compared to professional
immigrants in the 1980’s; with a proven reduction in yearly earnings. These findings are despite the fact that 29% of immigrants over the age 16 are university educated (Health Canada, 1999). This trend is most pronounced for visible minority immigrants whom are often subject to higher levels of discrimination (Swidinsky & Swidinsky, 2002).

Fifty-five percent of skilled immigrants in Ontario, who are able to find work, do so by securing positions outside of their education and work experience, often in a part-time capacity (Brouwer, 1999; Bauder, 2003; Reitz 2005). Temporary employment is often marketed as a way for new immigrants to gain “Canadian experience” and according to Statistics Canada, the most common problem cited by immigrants impeding their ability to find meaningful work is lack of Canadian work experience (Statistics Canada, 2005). Temporary employment is particularly significant among immigrant women, as they face poorer labour market trajectories than their male counterparts (Fuller & Vosko, 2008).

Although some studies indicate that immigrants are satisfied with their employment endeavors, there exists overwhelming research citing poor employment trajectories in the immigrant population (Chen, Smith & Mustard, 2010). Demonstrated in previous research are a number of key barriers, which contribute to under employment and lower financial rewards in professional immigrants workers. “Underemployment” refers to the conditions wherein a person is employed in a position, which under utilizes their skills, abilities and education (Freidland & Price 2003).

Asanin and Wilson (2009) identified three key barriers to poor employment status among immigrant professionals; lack of Canadian work experience, lack of recognition of foreign credentials and long periods of delay for provincial regulatory assessments. Aroian et al (1998) include, lack of competence in official languages and economic climate of the host country (e.g. economic recessions) as additional barriers to employment in the immigrant population.
Research findings indicate that high English proficiency is positively correlated with financial reimbursement and employment outcomes in Canada (Boyd, 2007; DeSilva, 1996), while low English proficiency results in negative labour market outcomes (Pendakur & Pendakur, 1998).

2.2 Acculturation

In order to understand the employment trajectories of immigrant professionals, we must first gain an understanding of the processes involved in the transition from the immigrants’ heritage culture to their host culture, and how adaption occurs. The concept of acculturation has been studied at length to describe cultural transition in a multitude of immigrant populations (Noels & Berry, 2006). There have been a number of acculturation frameworks proposed dating back to the 1930’s, wherein researchers identified three key components central to the process of acculturation; 1) two distinct cultural groups must exist, 2) each group must be in contact with one another over a period of time and 3) changes in cultural practices are interactional (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). The process of acculturation was later closely linked to the concept of assimilation in the 1950’s and then moved towards the concept of cultural pluralism in the late 1960’s (Park, 1950; Glazer and Moynihan, 1963).

John W. Berry has contributed significantly to acculturation research, and proposes a framework for understanding the concept at both the group and individual level. According to Berry (1997) the concept of acculturation can only be understood by examining the features of the original culture groups prior to immigration. At the individual level there are a number of psychological changes that occur during the process of acculturation. These changes can be behavioural changes; such as eating new foods, speaking a new language, or ways of dress and at the extreme end; can include more severe psychological changes, known as acculturative stress (Sam & Berry, 2010). Berry derived four strategies of acculturation based on the principles that all persons immigrating to a new country have both a desire to adhere to and maintain the
identity of their heritage culture, while at the same time a desire to participate and gain 
membership in their new culture. This bi-dimensional phenomenon can be as defined as: *cultural maintenance* and *intercultural contact* (Berry, 2005; Sam & Berry, 2010). While all individuals 
have a desire to both maintain their own culture and adopt the host country culture, Berry 
indicates that not all individuals do this in the same way (Berry, 1997; Berry, 2006).

Acculturation strategies focus specifically on the preference toward the host country and 
the immigrant’s minority heritage culture, including both attitudes and behaviours (Berry 2005; 
Berry 2006). The first of the four-acculturation strategies, *Assimilation*, is defined as the process 
in which the immigrant or minority groups take on the identity of the host country and in turn, 
the heritage culture becomes extinct or unrecognizable. *Integration* is the strategy in which the 
immigrant or immigrant groups become active in the majority community and at the same time 
continue to maintain customs and beliefs inherent in their own culture. Berry defines 
*Marginalization*, as the process by which new immigrants or immigrant groups neither identify 
nor connect with their own culture or the culture of the larger society. Lastly, *Separation* occurs 
when immigrant minorities refuse to participate in the dominant culture and instead attempt to 
preserve their own cultural identity (Berry, 1997).

Studies examining the acculturation strategies in youth identify *integration* as the most 
adaptive acculturation orientation, whereas *marginalization* is seen as the least adaptive (Phinney 
et al., 2001). Furthermore, a large body of research exists supporting the idea that immigrants 
who orientate towards *integration* experience the most psychological wellbeing and are the most 
likely to be well adapted in school, work and their community (Berry & Sabatier, 2009).

In keeping with Redfield et al.’s definition of acculturation; that both the immigrant and 
host country are a part of the acculturation process (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936), Berry 
defined four strategies that reflect the views of the host country or majority culture. *The Melting*
Pot, defines the strategy wherein the dominant groups seek minority immigrants to engage in Assimilation. Segregation is the term used when Separation is forced upon the immigrant group. If Marginalization is imposed upon the minority group, then Exclusion will ensue and lastly, Multiculturism happens when the society embraces diversity in all minority groups and encourages Integration (Berry, 2006).

2.2.1 Adaption

Closely tied to the process of acculturation, is the concept of adaption. According to acculturation researchers, adaption is the outcome of acculturation and is often described in terms of psychological and socio-cultural adaption (Sam & Berry, 2010). Throughout the research, adaption in reference to acculturation, has been defined based on a number of constructs; health, communication and cultural competence, identity, and stress (Ward & Chang, 1997). The adaption outcomes are seen as interconnected and dichotomous; both resulting in positive or negative psychological and socio-cultural experiences (Sam & Berry, 2010). As such, an immigrant may adapt to the process of acculturation in negative ways (experiencing acculturative stress) or in more positive ways (positive coping strategies) (Sam & Berry, 2010).

2.2.2 Psychological and Socio-cultural Adaption

Ward (2001) describes psychological adaption as a person’s overall wellbeing in relation to psychological and emotional factors. Psychological adaption in acculturation literature is defined on a continuum of wellbeing acculturative stress on the extreme end of the spectrum (Sam & Berry, 2010). There is contradictory evidence with respect to the psychological impact of acculturation on an individual (Beiser, 1990; Yakushko, Watson & Thompson, 2008); there is research which indicates that strong identity to one’s heritage culture will result in the perception of discrimination from the dominant culture, leading to acculturative stress (Phinney et al., 2001; Sam & Berry, 2010). Whereas, other studies indicate that social support from one’s heritage
culture may act as a buffer against mental health difficulties (Anderson, 1991).

Socio-cultural adaptation is described as an immigrant’s ability to obtain the required skills to live successfully in their new culture (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, 2001) and can include financial success, social competency or language proficiency (Sam & Berry, 2010). It has been hypothesized that individuals who identify with the integration strategy of acculturation, indentifying with both their host country and heritage culture, will be more likely to experience positive adaption (Liebkind, 2001; Sam, 2006).

Researchers are now starting to look at the relationship between discrimination and adaption and indicate that the perception or experience of discrimination is often a determinant of socio-cultural and psychological adaption (Berry et al. 2006). The degree of diversity in the host country will also affect the acculturation orientations of the immigrant (Berry et al., 2006). In a 13-country international study examining cultural diversity, researchers found that the greater the cultural diversity in a country, the more likely a non-dominant (immigrant) group will perceive discrimination. Surprisingly, greater diversity in a community also predicted lower psychological adaption (Berry et al., 2006).

A documented shortcoming to the four-acculturation strategies as proposed by Berry (1997), is the lack of acknowledgement of the interaction between the host country and the immigrant. Bourhis et al. (1997) developed a model to address this issue and the Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) was introduced with 5 acculturation orientations or strategies. Integrationism, involves integrating aspects of both the host culture and the immigrant’s own heritage culture. Assimilation, involves relinquishing control of the dominant culture. Exclusionism occurs when the host country denies the immigrant the opportunity to adopt the host culture and also express intolerance of the immigrant’s own cultural practices. Individualism is the process by which the immigrant and host country members identify as individuals,
superseding membership in the larger group (Bourhis & Dayan, 2004; Bourhis et al., 1997). In 2004, this framework was further developed to include Integrationism-transformation, in which the host country attempts to modify elements of their own culture to adapt to the immigrant culture (Montreuil, Bourhis & Vanbeselaere, 2004). Although worthy of recognition, this model has not been widely incorporated into acculturation research.

A substantial portion of acculturation investigations has focused on the psychological changes that happen within an individual during this process. Ward et al. (2001) acknowledged the ABC’s of acculturation to refer to the affective, behavioural and cognitive characteristics of acculturation (Ward, 2001; Ward, 2001; Sam & Berry, 2010). Examining acculturation from affective, behavioural and cognitive frameworks provide a thorough understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the construct in relation to professional immigrants.

2.3 Models of Stress and Coping

Affective perspectives of acculturation include the concept of acculturative stress and focus on the emotional characteristics of acculturation as well as life satisfaction and well-being (Sam & Berry, 2010). Using a stress and coping model in reference to acculturation it is proposed that the major life event of immigration can pose challenges to an individual and provoke stress reactions. A person’s coping resources and social supports will determine the adaption outcome of the individual.

2.3.1 Definition of Stress

The concept of stress, is broadly defined and can encompass the occurrence of any significant life event which may be perceived by a person as negative (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Ingram & Luxton, 2005), the progressive accumulation of smaller hassles (Dohrenwend & Shrout, 1985; Ingram & Luxton, 2005), and socio-economical factors; such as poverty or membership in an ethnic minority group (Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Ingram &
Luxton, 2005). Lazurus and Folkman developed the most influential theoretical model of psychological stress and coping (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The over arching definition of psychological stress, according to Lazurus and Folkman, includes both personality characteristics and individual environmental circumstances; these two dimensions exist in relation to one another (Smith & Kirby, 2011). The environmental stimuli, must be appraised by the individual to be negative in order for the experience to be defined as psychological stress. The element of appraisal is paramount to the stress and coping model (Lazurus and Folkman, 1984).

2.3.2 Acculturative Stress

The Acculturative Stress Model was developed by Berry, drawing on Lazarus and Folkman’s Model of Stress and Coping (Berry, 2006). According to Berry (2006), acculturative stress is a stress reaction in response to an individual’s problematic experiences or perceptions, related to the process of acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2010). Acculturative stress correlates with psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, alcohol abuse, and eating disorders (Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000; Hovey & Magana, 2002; Perez et al., 2002). Further to this, immigrants are more likely to develop mental health issues and are at a greater risk of suicide than their native born counterparts (Ali, 2002).

Acculturative stress becomes a risk factor for negative health outcomes and is seen as a critical precursor to dismissed psychological and socio-cultural adaption in immigrant populations (Ensel & Lin, 2000; Ying, 1996; Baron & Matsuyama, 1988; Hurh & Kim, 1990; Noh & Kaspar, 2003). Investigations indicate a relationship between age and acculturative stress with younger immigrants experiencing lower levels of acculturative stress (Berry, 1997).

There are a number of factors, which may contribute or be protective against an individual developing acculturative stress. Berry (2006) indentified age, gender and social
support as factors associated with acculturative stress; with increased stress among older, female immigrants, lacking social support (Berry 1997). According to Rodriguez et al. (2002), some individuals may experience stress related to the process of immigrating on both an intrapersonal and interpersonal level. As such, acculturative stress affects different immigrant groups in different ways; not all persons undergoing the process of acculturation will experience acculturative stress (Berry, 2006).

Pre-immigration reasons; such as an absence of choice, has been related to acculturative stress among immigrants (Berry, 1997; Gil, Warner & Vega, 2000). Furthermore, in a study examining pre-migration expectancies and acculturative stress, researchers found that those who were disappointed with post-migration experiences related to community safety and racism were more likely to experience acculturative stress (Ney, Schwartz & Reig – Ferrer, 2009).

There are numerous studies examining acculturative stress in relation to a number of immigrant groups. For example, acculturative stress has been cited as an important predictor of diminished psychological adaption in various Asian immigrant groups (Noh & Kaspar, 2003). Studies done on Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. indicate that acculturative stress can result from both linguistic and perceived cultural incompatibilities from both the immigrant and the host country (Ney, Schwartz & Reig – Ferrer, 2009). In another study examining acculturative stress and positive well-being among a Pakistani immigrant population in Canada, researchers indicated that participants perceiving a high level of acculturative stress scored lower on measures of positive well-being (Jibeen & Khalid, 2010).

2.3.3 Appraisal

Models of Stress and Coping conceptualize appraisal as the keystone of the stress response and composed of categories; Primary and Secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal is the perception of risk within a given encounter, while secondary appraisal is an evaluation of coping
resources available in the environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Primary adaption includes three possible outcomes based on a person’s interpretation of an event. A person can gauge a situation as being positive or assisting the person in enhancing or maintaining their own wellbeing. A person can gauge the situation as nontreating to their own goals and needs or a person can appraise a situation as stressful if their personal resources are at risk of becoming jeopardized (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Smith & Kirby, 2011).

It is the appraisal of a situation as stressful, which leads to a psychological stress response and subsequent utilization of coping behaviours. Secondary appraisal occurs when a person appraises their circumstances as stressful and includes three subtypes; Harm/Loss, threat and Challenge. Harm/Loss includes situations in which a person endures circumstances threatening to their resources and experience a setback or decomposition of their wellbeing. The Threat subtype is future orientated, and is indicative of a person perceiving the potential of harm or loss. With Challenge, the focus is on whether there is an opportunity for future growth in a given situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Smith & Kirby, 2011).

2.3.4 Styles of Coping

Coping is the third major construct in the stress and coping model theorized by Lazarus and Folkman, and has received the largest amount of attention in the research literature. Coping involves both the cognitive and behavioural efforts a person exerts to manage internal and external stressors. These efforts may be either effective or ineffective, and are not necessarily adaptive for the person (Smith & Kirby, 2011). An example of a coping behaviour, which may be both adaptive and maladaptive in different circumstances, is denial (Smith & Kirby, 2011). Lazarus and Folkman indicate that denial in some instances is maladaptive, as it prevents a person from effective problem solving. In a situation of extreme trauma, denial can be adaptive in allowing the person to preserve their wellbeing immediately following the stressor (Lazarus
and Folkman, 1984; Contrada & Baum, 2009). Positive forms of coping, such as task oriented coping or problem-focused coping can buffer against stress (Lee et al., 2011; Contrada & Baum, 2009). Coping is further conceptualized into two main subtypes of coping; Problem-Focused coping and Emotion focused coping (Folkman & Lazurus 1980, Lazurus and Folkman, 1984; Contrada & Baum, 2009).

Problem focused coping involves reacting to the situation by diffusing the stressful components of the situation. This can be done by engaging in problem solving behaviours or shifting cognitive expectations about a given situation (Lazurus and Folkman, 1984; Contrada & Baum, 2009), such as developing new behaviours to adapt to the changing environment or lowering expectations (Contrada & Baum, 2009).

Emotion focused coping primarily involves cognitive processes, wherein a person attempts to lower emotional distress by cognitively changing their evaluation of the situation (Lazurus and Folkman, 1984; Contrada & Baum, 2009). There are circumstances in which a person engages in cognitive strategies, heightening their emotional arousal, as a way of harnessing problem solving coping strategies (Smith & Kirby, 2011). Research to date has been saturated with additional coping models, which call into question the problem focused and emotion focused coping strategies conceptualized by Lazurus and Folkman. Further to this, research has now begun to focus on specific strategies that individuals engage in as a means to cope with less emphasis on the particular coping style (Smith & Kirby, 2011).

There are specific cognitive processes that a person can employ as a way to cope with stressful situation and there is evidence in acculturation research that immigrants use cognitive strategies as a way to cope with their experience. Cognitive strategies can include activities such as; cognitive re-framing, formulating a positive self-concept in relation to the host culture and using positive interpretations (Kosic & Triandafyllidou, 2003; Contrada & Baum, 2009).
It is not surprising that immigrants who possess well developed coping strategies or positive adaption orientations are more likely to avoid the negative impacts of acculturative stress (Berry, 2006). In reference to the acculturation orientations, those immigrants who acculturate successfully are more likely to adopt protective factors (Berry, 1997). There are a number of factors associated with successful acculturation in immigrant populations; social support (Hovey & King, 1996), ethnic identity (Phinney et al., 2001) and self-esteem (Sam & Berry, 2010).

The extent to which a person possesses social and psychological coping strategies is a predictor of an immigrant’s adaption and wellbeing in a new society (Jibeen and Khalid, 2010). Coping strategies have been conceptualized as cognitive and behavioral resources that individuals employ to reduce the effects of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In a study examining psychological wellbeing in a Canadian Pakistani immigrant population, researchers indicated that people using emotion-focused strategies experienced lower levels of psychological functioning, whereas people adopting problem-focused strategies had heightened psychological well-being (Jibeen & Khalid, 2010). In the same study, perceived social support was identified as a direct predictor of both positive and negative mental health outcomes; people reporting higher levels of social support had better psychological adjustment and those reporting less social support indicated higher levels of distress (Jibeen & Khalid, 2010).

2.3.6 Social Support

Social support is often associated with lower levels of stress and higher levels of life satisfaction and well-being (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008). Immigrants who are connected to family and friends in their new country, are more likely to experience lower
levels of stress related to acculturation (Hovey & Magana, 2002). Social support is proven to be positively related to work life adjustment and career development (Chen, 2006).

2.4 Cultural Learning approach

Behavioural changes that occur during acculturation can best be defined by using the Cultural Learning Approach (Sam & Berry, 2010), which assumes that immigrants undergoing a transition in culture may lack the skills needed to interact with the host country (Ward & Masgoret, 2006). In reference to acculturation, the cultural learning approach is more applied than theoretical and with an emphasis on learning the required social skills to fully function in their new society (Ward & Masgoret, 2006; Ward, 2001).

2.4.1 Language and Communication Proficiency

Ward and Masgoret (2006) assert that second language proficiency and cultural competence are the root of the cultural learning approach and are predictors of socio-cultural adaption. Language skills are required in day-to-day tasks, interpersonal relationships and are the cornerstone of successful employment trajectories (Chen, 2006; Oropeza & Fitzgibbon, 1991; Sam & Berry, 2010). According to Ward and Kennedy (1999) second language proficiency is associated with increased interactions with the host culture and an increase in positive adaption outcomes. Professional immigrants are confronted with a number of stressors when seeking employment in their new country and this additional psychological strain can impact their ability to communicate confidently and proficiently in a foreign language (Bemak, Chung, & Bomemann, 1996; Imberti, 2007).

2.4.2 Cognitive Perspectives

Cognitive perspectives of acculturation can best be described by examining how immigrants perceive and think about themselves as the minority group in relation to the host country or larger group. Cognitive aspects of acculturation are understood by examining the
ways in which immigrants form their ethnic identity in relation to themselves and the larger community (Sam & Berry, 2010) through understanding the Social Identity Theory proposed by (Tajfel & Turner 1986).

2.4.3 Ethnic Identity

Social Identity Theory is one of the most widely researched theories of identity and intergroup relationships. Social learning theorists assert that identification with one’s group is rooted in a fundamental belief that one’s group is superior; thus satisfying a person’s need for belongingness and self esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social Identity theory is criticized due to a lack of acknowledgement of the “out group” and accounting for changes over time (Phinney, Jacoby, and Silva, 2007).

Acculturation literature considers the concept of cultural identity in immigrant populations, however the relationship between acculturation and identity is unclear (Liebkind, 1996; Phinney, 2001). Phinney (1990) distinguishes acculturation from identity by defining ethnic identity as a part of acculturation which focuses on the subjective experience of being a part of a group or larger culture. Ethnic identity can be defined as a person’s sense of self as it relates to membership with a larger group (Phinney, 2001) and is composed of several elements such as; self-identification, values, belongingness and commitment and attitudes towards one’s heritage culture (Phinney, 2001). Ethnic identity in new immigrant is a continuous progression which is influenced by the age of immigration and length of time in the host country. Cultural identity in immigrants is understood to have two distinct dimensions: identity with one’s heritage culture (ethnic identity) and identity with the larger society or dominant group (national identity). These two dimensions of identity can vary from person to person with high or low ethnic or national identity (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Phinney (2001) proposes the use of Berry’s acculturation strategies as a way to understand
the various orientations of ethnic identity in immigrant groups. As such, an individual who retains a strong sense of their ethnic identity while at the same time adopting components of the host country culture is believed to have an *integrated* or bicultural identity. By contrast, a person who maintains their own ethnic identity and in turn rejects the cultural identity of the dominant group is said to have a *separated* identity. An *assimilated* identity would occur when a person rejects their own cultural identity to incorporate the identity of the larger culture. Lastly, a person who identifies with neither their own identity nor the identity of the larger group is said to have a *marginalized* identity structure (Berry, 1997; Phinney, 2001).

There have been numerous studies examining the ethnic identity of immigrants and how this impacts adaption. A number of studies assert that those who have a secure ethnic identity are less likely to experience the stress of discrimination and acculturative stress unless a person perceives a violation from the culture in which they identity (Phinney et al., 2001).

2.5 *Career Development Theory*

The process of acculturation, acculturative stress and reappraisal of employment expectations in professional immigrants can be further understood through career development theories. Career development is defined as the psychological, sociological educational, economic and chance elements that contribute to the concept of career over a person’s life span (Engels, 1994). Career development takes into consideration the environmental factors at play when a person evolves through their life and career such as, children, aging, disability etc. and can be seen as a convergence of both self and career (Sharf, 2006). Since 1909 when Frank Parson’s authored the publication, *Choosing a Vocation*, the notion of vocational choice based on individual reflection, availability of occupations and reasoning has been at the forefront of career development literature (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Initial career theory focused on concepts such as trait and factor variables and person-environment fit variables which led to our current
understanding of career theory; indicating that a person’s career is a developmental process with stages that person transitions through, over their life span (Patton & McMahon).

There is limited research examining the career development theories of professional immigrants. New immigrants represent a unique population, as they are often established in their pre-migration careers as a prerequisite for entry into Canada. Once in Canada however, they are often unable to work in their chosen profession and often find themselves re-exploring educational opportunities and reestablishing their career identity (Reitz, 2005). This stage is much like that of early adolescence, wherein youth are involved in exploring their career and educational opportunities as well as contemplating both their self-concept and vocational identity (Betz, 2006; Flum & Blustein, 2000; Super, 1990). There are a number of important career constructs where are particularly relevant during this stage of career development, namely; life-span theory, self-efficacy and vocational identity.

2.5.1 Life-Span Theory

Super (1990) proposes that career development is a process that happens throughout an individuals lifespan with the construct of self – concept functioning as the cornerstone of the process (Super, 1990). Super (1990) theorized that a person’s desire for occupational choice is a reflection of their yearning to exert their own sense of self-concept which is a product of their individual personality traits and social norms (Sharf, 2006). Super (1990) further proposes that an individual’s career is a combination of the differing roles they adopt throughout their lifetime, such as parent, student, retiree, etc. Throughout the lifespan individuals move through four distinct stages of career development; exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement.

2.5.2 Career Identity
Just as the immigrant adopts their own individual ethnic identity in conjunction with their self-concept, individuals develop a sense of career or vocational identity throughout their life in relation to vocational goals, aspiration and experiences (Diemer & Blustein, 2007; Super, 1990). Vocational identity and sense of self are thought to be so interconnected and impact a person’s overall psychological well-being and stability (Super, 1990). The importance of vocational and career identity is particularly important to consider when exploring the experience of professional immigrants as most immigrant professionals and not working in their chosen career.

Super (1990) further hypothesizes that the concepts of participation, commitment and value expectations are a part of the roles a person occupies throughout their life (Perrone, Webb & Blalock, 2005). Role congruence is known as the balance of the amount of participation in a particular life role and level of commitment and value expectation towards that role. Research indicates that the more congruence an individual experiences between participation and commitment, they will experience higher levels of life satisfaction (Perrone, Webb & Blalock, 2005). In studies examining role congruence in married couples, research indicated that incongruency between role commitment and role participation can be an indicator of psychological distress (Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999) and may negatively impact life satisfaction and overall well-being (Perrone, Webb & Blalock, 2005). New immigrant workers who experience incongruency between their role participation, role commitment and in relations to their employment endeavors may be at a higher risk of stress and lower levels of personal and career satisfaction (Super, 1990).

2.5.3 Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

SCCT indicates that career development is directly related to the both environmental and personal factors within an individuals’ life (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). SCCT plays emphasis on a person’s abilities, their past successes, self-efficacy and expectations in relation to
their educational and career decision making. The theory places particular importance on self-efficiency or an individual’s perception of their personal attributes and self-agency (Lent et al., 2000). Personal factors in the theory can include variables such as gender, race, ethnicity, and an ability level. Environmental factors are related to availability of opportunities and resources in the person’s life as well as contextual factors which may influence the career process, discrimination. SCCT has a high level of utility with diverse populations due to the emphasis on self efficacy and outcome expectations (Sharf, 2006; Yakushko et al., 2008).

2.5.4 Social Cognitive Model of Work and Life Satisfaction

Lent, Brown & Hackett (2002), propose a model to predict work life satisfaction and speculate that there is a relationship between a person’s satisfaction with their work and their overall satisfaction with life. At the core of the model of work life satisfaction is self-efficacy; the belief that one can perform in a manner which will result in the achievement of their goals. The model examines an individual’s expectations about work; what work an individual is willing to do and under what conditions will they do it. These variables, along with personality characteristics become the basis for predicting a person’s overall work life satisfaction (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002; Sharf, 2006).

It is well documented that individuals who experience stress in relation to their work become dissatisfied with their career. Often when stress is accompanied with job dissatisfaction and as the person becomes emotional exhausted and disconnected from their role, there is a tendency to leave work permanently. Research has found that increased job stress is negatively related to job satisfaction (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002).

Self-efficacy is as a personality characteristic important to both career theory and the model of stress and coping (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002; Lazurus & Folkman, 1986). A positive sense of personal efficacy or agency has been identified as a necessary component to life
satisfaction and positive well-being (Bandura, 1986). There is evidence to support that low levels of perceived self-efficacy negatively affect a person’s appraisal and perceived ability to cope with stressors. Low perceived self-efficacy is also problematic to appraisals and perceptions of effective coping with stress (Long, Kahn, & Schutz, 1992).

2.6 Limitations in the Research

There has been limited research examining employment in immigrant professionals as it relates to the acculturation orientations and psychological and socio-cultural adaption. In the research to date, acculturation strategies have been used to predict the well-being of immigrant populations in a number of domains, however not specifically in the context of employment with professional immigrant adults. Given the substantial research focusing on the poor employment trajectories of immigrants in Canada, it is surprising that these issues have not been explored using an acculturation framework. There is one study conducted by Nekby and Rodin (2010) examining the acculturation identity and employment outcomes among second and middle generation immigrant youth in Sweden. Immigrants in this study who identified with either assimilation or integration showed no significant differences in their employment outcomes. Immigrant’s who identified with separation or marginalization were more likely to have lower employment probabilities (Nekby & Rodin, 2010).

There are a number of limitations inherent in acculturation research. When studying immigrants and their relationship with their host country, there is a myriad of variables which account for individual and cultural differences. For instance there are 40 different ethnicities which constitute the group “Asian” (Sue & Sue, 2008) and each ethnicity within that group contrast individually and culturally. The host country in which the immigrant is migrating, also determines the process of acculturation and adaption (Sam and Berry, 2010).
Another shortcoming in the acculturation research is the lack of consistency in terms of defining and measuring the construct and there is a continued need to examine the concept of acculturation in community settings (Chun, Organista & Marin, 2003; Sam, 2006). Differing views on how to measure acculturation and adaption within an immigrant population and variance within the immigrant population itself further complicates the creditability of acculturation research (Sam and Berry, 2010).

2.7 The Present Study

The present study explores employment among professional immigrants, as it relates to the process of acculturation. The intent of this study is to gain an understanding of the relationship and association between acculturation and employment in the lives of immigrant professionals. Acculturation can be seen as an overriding paradigm with several interrelated sub concepts, which were be explored in this study. Adaption and ethnic identity are often seen as synonymous with/or outcomes of the acculturation process. In order to understand the lives of immigrant professionals through an acculturation framework it is important to explore the socio-cultural and psychological adaption which ensues. The style of coping an individual pursues, is also relevant in the understanding of acculturation, adaption and acculturative stress.
Chapter Three

3 Methodology

3.1 Methodology Rationale

The current study uses a qualitative research approach to understand the lived experiences of professional immigrants and their process through acculturation, acculturative stress and styles of coping. In depth interviews are used to explore the career transitions and adjustments of the participants and a grounded theory approach was used to analysis the data. Qualitative inquiry effectively investigates the unique perspectives of others, in their own words, and is best employed when an in-depth exploration is desired of a subject matter which has garnered limited consideration in the research (Glaser, 1992).

In a review of qualitative research in multicultural psychology, Ponterotto (2010) describes four advantages to a qualitative approach when researching culturally diverse groups. Firstly, by way of conducting in-depth inquiry into the lived experiences of diverse groups and individuals, participants gain a sense of understanding and connectedness which leads to change in both the researcher and the participant (Ponterotto & Grieger, 2008). Secondly, inherent in constructivist approaches, the power differential between researcher and participant is removed with both parties playing the role of co-investigator (Ponterotto, 2010). Thirdly, qualitative research methodology is seen as an effective vehicle for assisting participants in navigating complex social and political systems. And finally, qualitative research allows the participant to freely express values, beliefs and behaviours which may not have been captured in traditional quantitative approaches (Ponterotto, 2010).

Within qualitative inquiry there are three distinct paradigms informing scientific parameters that guide the research (Ponterotto, 2010). The first of the three paradigms, Postpositivist qualitative research is centered on traditional methodology with the use of
interviews and case studies to inform one principle reality. In the Postpositivist approach a researcher strives for an unbiased, objective stance to the research procedures and systematically attempts to analyze the data for one cohesive reality (Hill, Thompson & Williams, 1997).

The critical-ideological paradigm is rooted in political, economical and social inequality which is assumed to characterize the experience of individuals from diverse backgrounds (Ponterotto, 2010). This approach draws on the social justice values instilled in the researcher thus becoming a vehicle for empirical analysis. Research results are presented in the first person narrative with the voices of participants at the forefront, such as in participatory action research (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

The Constructivism-Interpretivism paradigm of qualitative research is rooted in socially constructed realities, with an emphasis on the researcher-participant relationship (Ponterotto, 2010). Constructivist approaches to qualitative research is the methodology of choice within cultural psychology due to high importance placed on the social and political location of the phenomenon under investigation (Ponterotto, 2010).

Despite the utility of qualitative research in psychological studies, many psychologists do not have an in depth understanding of the philosophical methodology inherent in qualitative research (Ponterotto, 2005; Rennie et al., 2002; Ponterotto, 2010). Qualitative research by nature promotes collaborative relationships between the participant and researcher promoting an empowered sense of cultural understanding of the participant. This style of methodology can serve as a vehicle for social justice and multicultural understanding (Toporek et al., 2006).

3.1.1 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory derived from a Constructivism-Interpretivism paradigm is and calls upon a discovery orientated inquiry (Fassinger, 2005). This theory was originally developed by two sociologists, Glasser and Straus (1967), who sought to understand the experiences of dying
terminally ill patients, and has become most well establish qualitative research methodology. In the late 1980’s, Glasser and Straus separated and developed their own individual grounded theory approaches. Grounded theory is conducted using face to face in-depth interviews lasting between one to three hours (Ponterotto, 2005). Interview questions are designed based on a balance of previous research findings and an openness to new emerging constructs which formulate through the researcher participant relationship (Fassinger, 2005). It is admissible for research protocols in Grounded Theory to change as new constructs emerge through the interviews and therefore not all interviews within a Grounded Theory approach are the same for every participant. Grounded Theory interviewing is completed when the researcher achieves theoretical saturation or when continual interviews with participants produce similar patterns of results (Ponterotto, 2010). In Grounded Theory the researcher plays a fundamental role in the formation of research questions, data collection and analysis which highlights the importance of acknowledging the unique frame of reference in which researchers approach their work (Charmaz, 2006).

For the purpose of this study, in depth exploration into the lived experiences of professional immigrants will facilitate an understanding of the interconnectedness between acculturation, adaption and coping resources. Research to date exploring professional immigrants has not looked at the interplay between employment and acculturation. Current research indicates that immigrant professionals do experience poor employment trajectories, such as fewer financial rewards, in positions below their level of skills and experience. How the employment endeavors of immigrant professionals impact their acculturation preferences and subsequent adaption and coping strategies has yet to be explored in the research.
3.2 Procedure

3.2.1 Recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited via advertisement posters in the Toronto Transit Commission (see Appendix A). Additionally, recruitment notifications were distributed in public settings (subway, shopping malls and community settings) and as such snowball sampling occurred. The notification detailed the purposes of the study, the selection criteria for participation and contact information.

Interested participants responded to recruitment advertisements by telephone and follow-up phone calls were conducted in order to provide consistent information about the study. A telephone script was used by researchers when determining participant inclusion in the study (Appendix B). Participants were cautioned regarding the sometimes distressing experience in-depth experiential interviews may garner and resources of counseling and support services were given to all eligible participants. Participant interview times were scheduled at the time of the initial screening conversation.

Interviews were approximately two hours in length and took place in private screening rooms located at OISE/UT. Participants were reimbursed for their travel expenses and received a $25.00 compensation for their participation in the study. Confidentiality was assured to all participants by the use of identification codes on all interview correspondence and by securing files in locked cabinet accessible only to research staff. The purpose of the study, limits of confidentiality and freedom to withdraw were presented to all participants by way of a consent form offered at the beginning of the study (Appendix C).
3.2.2 Instruments

Demographic information was collected at the commencement of the interview using a two page information sheet (Appendix D).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using the Grounded Theory methodology. Interviews were conducted using a standard set of open ended questions as a means to guide the interview process and encourage participants to reflect on their experiences (Appendix E). The interview protocol was composed of three conceptual areas of the employment trajectories of the participants; 1) work and life experience pre-migration, 2) overall perceptions of life post-migration and 3) ongoing vocational adjustment.

3.2.3 Research Participants

A goal of the research was to examine the employment trajectories of professional immigrants in Canada and how they acculturated, adapted and formulated their unique ethic identity during this process. As such, participants selected for inclusion in the study, must have experienced the process of immigration to Canada as a professional worker in their country of origin. Participants were selected from a pool of 100 participants in a study conducted by Dr. Charles Chen in 2006 exploring the employment experiences of new immigrants. From pool of study participants, 20 participants were selected and their data was used for the interview.

The goal of the research was to draw on the experiences of a diverse group of professional immigrants in Canada and as such, selection criteria were based on the following assumptions. Based on the research indicating gender differences among the employment trajectories of immigrants (Fuller and Vosko, 2008), an equal distribution of men and women were selected for the study. There has been recent recognition among psychologists to better understand the needs of the growing number of Asian immigrants, including within group variations and how this impacts clinical practice (Yoo, Goh, & Yoon, 2005). Based on the body
of literature which indicates that immigrants of a visible minority are more likely to experience difficulties with employment and the acculturation process, an equal distribution of immigrants representing a visible minority or not representing a visible minority were chosen. There is a large body of both acculturation and employment research which indicates substantial changes overtime as an immigrant acculturates to their new society (Berry, 2006) and participants were chosen from a varying length of time in Canada, as long as the person had immigrated as an adult. Participants were not chosen based on their field of study, and all met the criteria for professional worker as defined by the study.

All participants interviewed for Dr. Chen’s study resided in Toronto or the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and interviews were conducted at OISE/UT which is located in the downtown core, easily accessible by public transit.

Based on the selection criteria above, the targeted sample of the study met the following criteria: 1) were not born in Canada 2) had worked fulltime in their country of origin up until their immigration to Canada 3) were employed or seeking employment at the time of the interview and 4) who’s English proficiency allowed for an effective exchange of communication during the interview.

3.2.4 Data Analysis

The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Transcriptions were organized into the NVivo 8 database, a qualitative research and data analysis software. Once transcribed and inputted into NVivo 8, interview transcripts were read by researchers and detailed interview summaries were completed.

Given that there has been little research on the experiences of immigrant professionals in Canada as they relate to acculturation, adaption and coping there were limited assumptions made prior to the Grounded Theory analysis. In order to conduct Grounded Theory analysis, three
steps were considered, *open coding*, *axial coding* and *selective coding*. During the process of open coding, transcribed interviews were broken down into “meaning units” or categories, compared with other “meaning units” and then integrated into larger themes as more information was gathered from the interviews (Ponterotto, 2010).

*Axial coding* is the second phase of Grounded Theory and involves further developing the categories generated into broader emerging concepts. Like in *open coding*, each category and concept is constantly being compared against previous categories. As the researcher becomes more immersed into the data, discounting or strengthening categories, concepts begin to emerge and become higher order categories (Ponterotto, 2010). In the final stage of Grounded Theory, *selective coding*, the researcher begins to look at the relationships and interconnectedness between meaning units and attempt to formulate a hypothesis, which may account for the themes and concepts which emerged in the interviews. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).
Chapter Four

4 Results: Introduction to Research Participants

Research participants were questioned regarding their career work adjustment after immigrating to Canada through open-ended, semi-structured interviews. Each interview conducted provided an in-depth narrative into the employment and acculturation experiences of the participants. A brief introduction to each participant follows:

Participant 1

Participant 1 is a 59-year-old foreign trained medical physician who emigrated from Egypt. While in Egypt, Participant 1 worked as an obstetrician in a hospital and private clinic. At the time of the interview he was employed as a security guard for the period of four years. Participant 1 has a wife who is currently unemployed and two children who are undergoing university studies. Participant 1 indicated that in Egypt he had a very comfortable and satisfying life working as a physician. He indicated that his motivation to immigrate to Canada was based on providing his children with better opportunities for education. He had heard through organizations in Egypt that the process of emigrating from Egypt to Canada as a medical doctor is quite easy and accessible. He believes that his employment as a security guard is a sacrifice to his son who is completing his studies in Toronto.

Participant 1 attempted to find work in his area of training and was not successful in finding any employment within the medical profession. He indicated that the process of immigrating and job search was “psychologically difficult” and a disappointment to him and his family. He reported that settled on a position as a security guard and he has been pursuing that type of work for the period of four years. When queried about his vocational identity, Participant 1 indicated that “I’m on vacation, I take it like a vacation from my career.”
Participant 2

Participant 2 is a 33 year old male who emigrated from Iran in August 2005. Participant 2 was trained and employed as a Civil engineer and up until his immigration to Canada he worked within that capacity with a consulting company. At the time of the interview, Participant 2 had been working for eight months as a sales representative. Participant 2 was married prior to immigrating, however he separated from his wife after they experienced financial difficulties in Canada. He indicated that once arriving in Canada he was charged with domestic assault against his wife, which caused him a great deal of frustration and depression. This made it difficult for Participant 2 to job search and as a result, he experienced a loss in his self confidence. He indicated that he was denied financial support from his family and was isolated on his own loving in a “dormitory.”

Through a friend, Participant 2 first secured an entry level position at Subway restaurant. He was later encouraged through friends to attend job search workshops and secured a position at the Bay, as a Sales Representative. He indicated that each of these experiences increased his confidence and helped him with his feelings of frustration and depression. Participant 2 indicated that he had difficulty getting assistance with his mental health issues and he indicated that this holds him back in securing a position in his field. He reported that his goal was to deal with the family and legal issues while studying in his area as an engineer. Once his legal issues are resolved he is hoping to move forward with his employment endeavors.

Participant 3

Participant 3 is a 30 year old female who emigrated from China in 2002. She indicated that she earned a college diploma in China related to English Education and was employed as an educational consultant. Once coming to Canada she enrolled in studies at the University of Toronto and at the time of the interview had been employed for one month as a Financial
Participant 3 was working in China when she met her soon to be husband who was Canadian. In 2001 they were married and decided to immigrate to Canada to be closer to his family and to open up new opportunities. Once arriving in Canada she volunteered at a daycare near her home which led to a paid job. She then enrolled in an economic program at the University of Toronto and began a work-study program with her studies.

Participant 3 indicated that she currently feels content with her work/school life in Canada, however hopes to make further gains in terms of employment. She indicated that she accessed help and support from her family and also from her school and work place to assist her in the adjustment to her new country. She indicated that the support she has received has contributed to her sense of career identity.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is a 30 year old male who immigrated to Canada in 2006. Before coming to Canada he was employed as an HR Manager and has completed his bachelor of commerce and masters in Human resources in Serbia. Upon arriving in Canada, Participant 4 enrolled in an HR certification program at George Brown College and at the time of the interview was working as a research Analyst for the period of 6 months.

Participant 4 independently immigrated to Canada and his only family, his mother, continues to live in Belgrade, Serbia. He indicated that he was satisfied with his life in Serbia and enjoyed tremendous satisfaction in his role as an HR Manager. He was hoping the secure a similar position when coming to Canada and realized after that he may have to pursue employment in another area after he attended 50 unsuccessful interviews. Through a contact with a friend he decided to take a position as a financial analyst. He indicated that he is not satisfied within this position, however is intent on giving it a couple of years to determine if he can find a
Participant 5

Participant 5 is a 36 year old male who emigrated from the United States in 2006. Prior to immigrating to Canada, he completed his masters of education and was working as a teacher at a school. At the time of the interview had had been employed for the period of 6 months as a Centre Director. Participant 8 left the United States to work in the Philippines and China as a teacher and while in China met his Canadian wife. He indicated that his wife had worked for the Toronto District School board and had assisted him in navigating a teaching position within Canada. Participant 5 encountered difficulties securing a Canadian position because of his lack of a work permit and spent several months applying and being rejected from positions. He was successful at securing a position with a Learning Centre as a Director after six months of job searching.

Participant 5 indicated that there was a period where he had to reevaluate his goals and through that period he experienced bitterness and depression. He indicated that in his current position he feels satisfied with his employment and feels like he has a good work life balance, which he did not have prior to moving to Canada.

Participant 6

Participant 6 is a 44-year-old woman who emigrated from Germany in 2002. While in Germany she attended Law school and was self-employed as a Barrister and Solicitor in her country. When arriving in Canada she attended the Centennial College Law Clerk program and has been working as a law clerk for the period of for 1 year and 2 months.

Participant 6 met a Canadian doctor in Germany and they married and had three children together. At the time of immigration they assumed that her husband would not have difficulties becoming a registered doctor in Canada. Her husband attempted three times to become a
registered physician and each time he was unsuccessful with the exams and interview process. It was decided that he would move to Germany and practice medicine in order to support her and her children in Canada. Participant 6 indicated it was that time that she enrolled in the law program at Centennial College and at the time of the interview her husband continued to commute back and forth from Germany to Toronto.

Participant 6 secured a law clerk position through a connection while she was in the Centennial College program and indicated that she feels somewhat satisfied with this position. She reported that she feels held back or “like a dog on a short leases” in her position as a law clerk and indicated that she has had to accept this position. She indicated that she distracts herself with her children and that helps her cope with the overarching disappointment she feels about losing her career and her status as lawyer.

*Participant 7*

Participant 7 is a 37-year-old male from Romania who moved to Canada in 1996. At the time of the interview he had been living in Toronto for the period of eleven years. Prior to coming to Canada, Participant 7 completed a Masters of Engineering and worked in a “High tech” Company. While in Canada he has pursued studies with the Rotman School of Business at the University of Toronto in Masters of Business Administration. At the time of the interview, he indicated that he had been working for 3 years as a Professional Services Consultant.

Participant 7 immigrated to Canada with his wife due to economical and political reasons. At the time of immigrating he believed there would be better financial opportunities as an engineer in Canada and also the political climate at the Romania at the time was stressful. He indicated that he initially felt every excited about the move as it had been a lifelong dream of his to come to North America. He indicated that after some time, he began to experience loneliness and depression which was difficult to deal with.
Participant 7 had a relatively easy time finding employment in his field as a hardware and software technician and IT Consultant. He indicated that he was employed in seven or eight various positions and moved based on financial rewards. He reported that he is currently pursuing his MBA as a means to further his career in another direction; “I have to jump to another ship if I want to move further.” Participant 7 indicated that he is very satisfied with his career in Canada and feels a strong sense of vocational identity. He indicated that his work life as enabled him to feel satisfied with the rest of his life in Canada. At the end of the interview he stated, “I consider moving to Canada the best decision I have taken in my life so far.”

Participant 8

Participant 8 is a 31-year-old male from Peru who immigrated to Canada in 2004. He worked as an IT consultant after completing a Bachelors in Software engineering prior to coming to Canada. Once in Canada he completed business courses at Ryerson University and at the time of the interview he had been working as a Financial Analyst for a large corporation for the period of one year. When asked about his reasons for immigrating, Participant 8 indicated that he felt like he needed a change and wanted to explore another country. He indicated that he was concerned with the political and economic future of his country and through immigration to Canada would offer him increased stability in terms of his living conditions.

When asked about his satisfaction with his life prior to immigrating Participant 8 indicated “he hated it” and he could not pinpoint the source of his difficulties. Once arriving in Canada, his goal was to pursue his studies and find adequate living arrangements. He shifted from boarding house to boarding having difficulties with roommates and then finally settling on an apartment with a roommate where he stayed for two years. Participant 8 began his job search by searching for survival jobs, taking what ever came to him as a way to make money and secure Canadian experience. He was able to secure a fulltime position which allowed him to enroll in
Participant 9

Participant 9 is a 46 year old female who is originally from Romania and moved to Canada in 1997. In Romania she received a Bachelor of Science in engineering and worked in Romania as a mechanical–Chemical Engineer. At the time of the interview she had been working in Canada as a Special Needs Teacher Assistant for the period of seven years. Participant 9 immigrated with her husband, who was also a mechanical engineer and their young daughter.

Participant 9 made her decision to come to Canada based on wanting to improve her financial situation and feeling like she was not able to do that in Romania. Prior to coming to Canada, she had applied for a bank loan for a house in Romania and was rejected due to her age. Initially, when she arrived in Canada she studied English and assisted in her daughter’s kindergarten class because her daughter was having difficulty adjusting to her new school and surroundings. As she was assisting in her daughter’s school she was offered a part time job as a teacher’s assistance. She began this position and attempted to become certified as an elementary or high school teacher in Toronto. She attended a few interviews and indicated that she became quit depressed. She was diagnosed with fibromyalgia and made a decision to stay with her current position. At the time of the interview she had been employed as a permanent staff as a teacher’s assistance and still plans on pursuing her teacher’s college. She indicated that she feels a sense of vocational identity with her current position and is satisfied with her work life.

Participant 10

Participant 10 is a 45 year old woman who emigrated from Russia with her young daughter in 1998. She was originally from Azerbaijan. While in Russia, Participant 10 completed a Bachelor and masters degree in mathematics and worked as a high school math teacher. Upon
coming to Toronto, Participant 10 completed a program at George Brown College in Accounting. At the time of the interview, she indicated that she had been working for the period of 2 years as a babysitting and elderly care person.

Participant 10 indicated that she enjoyed her work and life prior to immigrating and was motivated to immigrate based on the political and economical conditions in her country. She indicated that there were times when she would be teaching at school and armed gunman would intrude causing significant stress. Once coming to Canada she secured social assistance and part time babysitting and elder care position to help her get back. Participant 10 had hoped to get her teaching certification and after studying English for few years and attempting to get into teacher’s college, she decided to try a different avenue. She pursued an accounting diplomat George Brown College and at the time of the interview had been looking for accounting work for the period of seven months. Participant 10 was discouraged and depressed about her situation. She lacked solid social supports and attributed this to her limited career success. She indicated that at this time she did not feel as though she had a sense of vocational identity, although indicated that she felt that was one of the most important parts of her life.

Participant 11

Participant 11 is a 42 year old male from Sudan who immigrated to Canada in 1993. In Sudan, Participant 11 was trained and employed as a pharmacist in a local hospital, He came to Canada and pursued training at the Toronto Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences and at the time of the interview he had been working for 10 years as a Pharmacy technician.

Participant 11 immigrated to Canada on the advice of his older sister who had immigrated 5 years prior and had been successful s securing employment as a pharmacist. He was also motivated to move from Sudan due to the political climate in the country at the time. Participant 11 indicated that when he first arrived in Canada he was not able to find work in the
pharmaceutical field and had to attend retraining. During the time he was retraining he did “survival jobs” such as factory and cleaning work. He indicated that during this time he was not satisfied or happy with his life. He was able to secure a “co-op” position at a Shopper’s Drug Mart for six months in order to gain Canadian experience which secured him a position as a pharmacy technician.

Although Participant 11 indicated that he feels he has compromised his career due to working as a pharmacy technician and not a pharmacist, he expressed satisfaction for his life and career in Canada. He indicated that he experienced significant struggles but he believes these struggles have taught him a lot about himself and life.

**Participant 12**

Participant 12 is a 32 year old female who arrived in Canada in 2000 from India. She completed a Bachelor degree in English and African studies in the United States and a past graduate diploma in social communicatory media while in India. While in Canada she further completed a post graduate diploma at Concordia University and is currently completing her masters of English at the University of Toronto. At the time of the interview she had been working for 3.5 years she has been working as Copywriter at an Advertising agency.

Participant 12 is currently living in Toronto with both her brothers while her parents remain in India. She indicated that prior to moving to Canada she spent her time focusing on her studies, writing and spending time with her friends. Participant 12 was encouraged by her parents to move with her brothers to Canada due to the political unrest in India. As a way to integrate into the Canadian job market, Participant 12 completed a post graduate diploma in communication studies. She indicated that initially it was difficult for her moving to Canada and she went through an initial period of depression related to a position in which she was mistreated by her employers and was working below her area of skill.
Participant 12 indicated that her current position in the Advertising agency gives her a lot of joy and satisfaction. This positive experience contributed to a greater sense of self confidence and vocational identity.

Participant 13

Participant 13 is a 33-year-old female who emigrated with her husband from Iran in 2006. Prior to immigration he completed a Bachelor of Science in chemistry and worked as a marketing Manager within a import/export firm. He indicated that for the past nine months he has been working as a Customer Service Sales Representative for the period of nine months. Participant 13 indicated that her motivation to come to Canada was based on dissatisfaction she was having with her life in Iran. She indicated that she was feeling unhappy in her career and with her living situation at her husband’s parent’s home. Upon arriving in Canada her and her husband lived with her aunt and after three months her husband moved back to Iran, due to uncertainty regarding their decision to immigrant. Participant 13 participated in English upgrading and applied for university to further pursue studies in chemistry. While on a waiting list to attend university, she began working as a sales representative.

Upon arriving in Canada, Participant 13 indicated that she did not feel confident in her skills or “to even talk to ordinary people”. She identified lack of confidence as one of the primary barriers impeding her ability to find employment. She indicated that as a way to engage with the community and to move her confidence she attended places such as resources centre, newcomer organizations etc. She indicated that before immigrating to Canada she had had a difficult life in Iran and a way to cope with her difficulties back home was to immigrate to a “another world.” She indicated that immigration was an alternative to suicide. She indicated that she experienced depression when she initially arrived in Canada and was taking antidepressant medication as a result. She indicated that the depression was related to not having her own space
or privacy, her lack of financial resources and her lack of employment opportunities. Despite these barriers, participant 13 indicated that she feels lucky to have found her current employment opportunity and indicated she is noticing improvements. She indicated that she feels her confidence and depression is what continues to hold her back.

**Participant 14**

Participant 14 is a 50-year-old female from Peru who immigrated to Canada in 2003. In Peru she completed a Bachelor of Science and was employed as an Industrial engineer within the bank and commercial industries. At the time of the interview, Participant 14 had been working for six months as a Consultant Technical Coordinator. Although Participant 14 had been trained as an industrial engineer, she worked as a computer programmer form 10 years prior to coming to Canada. She indicated that she found the job stressful and part of her motivation to come to Canada was to take advantages of the opportunities available to her in another country.

After two months of being in Canada Participant 14 secured a part time position as a cashier. She found the initial months in Canada very difficult. She indicated that she did not have information on what to expect when she immigrated and she indicated that the social supports she had in Canada helped her through the difficult time. Participant 14 was able to secure a high level position with Toyota and eventually moved in to the Technical Consultant position where she was employed at the time of the interview. She indicated that although the position was not exactly what she had dreamt of doing, she was satisfied with her accomplishments to date in Canada.

**Participant 15**

Participant 15 is 53-year-old man from the Congo who immigrated to Canada in 2002. While in the Africa he studied a Bachelor’s in Sociology and a Masters in population studies. He carried the role of National Exert. Congo Government, UN for Population Studies. At the time of
the interview he had been working for 7 months in the role of marketing and outreach coordinator. He is married with a wife and six children all of whom immigrating with hi to Canada. Prior to coming to Canada he enjoyed a fulfilling international career in which he worked in France, Jamaica and the Turks and Caicos. He indicated that one of the factors which contributed to his overall work satisfaction prior to coming to Canada was the significant interpersonal relationship which he had developed over the years.

During the first six months in Canada, Participant 15 indicated that he could not find employment, his finances were depleting and he became depressed and frustrated. He indicated that his primary reason for immigrating was to find employment and when this did not substantiate he found it difficult emotionally. He reported that he began to drink as a way to cope with his difficulties. He was able to secure an security guard position at the airport which allowed him opportunities to network and he eventually secured a position as a community researcher. Participant 15 has also been studying towards becoming a pastor and has slowly getting more and more responsibility in his church.

Participant 16

Participant 16 is a 40 year old male from Pakistan who immigrating to Canada in 2004. At the time of immigrating he was working as a medical doctor of internal medicine in a local hospital. At the time of the interview, Participant 16 was working for the period of 2.5 years as a college level Health care instructor. He was also volunteering part time as a clinician. Participant 16 was sponsored by his wife to come to Canada after she had moved to Canada with her family. Immigrated with wife, both parents and is younger brother whom he is currently living with in Toronto. Working as a doctor in Pakistan was satisfying to him, although he indicated that there was a lack of medical facilities which hindered his ability to treat his patients as well as a lack of financial reimbursement.
Participant 16 indicated that he decided to immigrate to Canada with his family because of a motivation to improve and learn more advanced medical procedures which were not available to him in Pakistan. Participant’s 16 initial plans were to become licensed and practice medicine in Canada. This did not happen for him right away and he indicated that was difficult for him. He indicated that coming from Pakistan it is not acceptable for a doctor to take a minimal job such as cleaning and when faced with a circumstance such as this it was very difficult. Participant 16 worked as a security guard for three months before being accepted for a position as a Health care Aid instructor. It was at the same time he began volunteering in a medical clinic with other physicians.

Participant 16 indicated that he feels somewhat content with his vocational life, however he is waiting on his residency status and the opportunity to pursue employment as a medical doctor. He also indicated that he feels discrimination is a barrier to him achieving his goals and barrier he has accepted as part of Canadian life.

Participant 17

Participant 17 is 36 years of age and emigrated from Kazakhstan in 2003. He is university educated with both a bachelor of science and a Masters in Business Administration and while living in Kazakhstan in worked as an Information systems manager. Prior to moving to Canada he immigrated with his sister to Dubai to take advantage of job opportunities available to him. While in Dubai he worked as an Information Systems Managers and decided to leave due to a lack of growth available to him in his profession. He studied English while in Dubai in preparation for his move. After immigrating to Canada he attended Ryerson University and certificate in accounting. For the past three years he has been working as a technical writer for a software development company in Toronto, Ontario. He made the decision to immigrate to Canada based on political and economic reasons. Upon arriving in Canada, participant 17 had
Participant 18

Participant 18 is a 44 year old female from Mexico who immigrated to Canada in 1997. While in Mexico she was employed as a Programmer Analyst for a Mexican Bank after receiving her Bachelors degree in Computer Science. At the time of the interview she completed English courses in Toronto through Seneca College and had been working for 10 years as a Programmer Analyst for Sears Canada.

Participant 18 indicated that she was unhappy in her life in Mexico City. She was not fully satisfied with her work as a Programmer Analyst and she was more and more concerned with her personal safety living in Mexico City. She indicated that she was traveling on sightseeing bus while in Mexico and witnesses gunmen entering the bus and randomly assaulting some of the other passengers. In her move to Canada she was seeking day to day security from crime and political unrest.

Within two months of coming to Canada, Participant 18 was able to find employment in her field. She indicated that she was not satisfied with the salary or the work environment, however stayed there for the period of 4 years when she applied for a another position in the same company. Once changing positions, she indicted that she experienced a greater sense of work life satisfaction and an increase in her confidence. She indicated that “It's not just that it has been difficult here, but I put stops on myself.”

Participant 19

Participant 19 is a 50-year-old male who emigrated from Hungary in 2000. While in
Hungary he obtained his Masters degree in Public Health and Epidemiology and worked in his profession as a medical epidemiologist. Since arriving in Canada he completed a program at Humber College and has been working as and office/production clerk for the period of two years. He enjoyed a long satisfying career in Public Health in both Hungary and Alaska, US before immigrating to Canada. He has two daughters with whom he immigrated with and who moved to Hungary and Ireland respectively to complete their studies. His wife continues to reside in Hungary and they have since divorced. Participant 19 made the decision to move to Canada as a personal challenge. He had been successful in his employment in Alaska and was interested in trying and new “adventure” and challenging his abilities. Participant 19’s primary goal was to build his career and establish himself comfortably in Canada. Participant 19 indicated that it is difficult being away from his family and this causes emotional difficulties for him. Despite not finding employment in the medical field after job searching for years, he remains confident in his abilities. He indicated that he plans to go home where he can resume his work in the medical profession and sees his current position as a temporary situation.

Participant 20

Participant 20 is a 52-year-old woman who immigrated to Canada in 2000 from the Philippines. Prior to coming to Canada she completed a Masters of Science in Microbiology and public health and was employed doing Quality assurance in at Coca Cola in Manila. After completing her education in the Philippines she completed a number of different positions in her chosen field. While working in the Philippines, Participant 20 descried a satisfying work experience and high quality of life. Since coming to Canada she completed a certificate in phlebotomy from a private college. Participant 20 is married with three children all of whom are still living in the Philippines.

Participant 20 made the decision to immigrant to Canada based on the political climate in
the Philippines during the late nineties. Once arriving in Canada she indicated that she felt very alone and could not find anyone to help her navigate her situation. She indicated that when she first arrived she had deep regrets about her decision and was uncertain if she would stay or move back to the Philippines. Participant 20 indicated that she had a difficult time working in the pharmaceutical industry and was wrongfully dismissed. She indicated that although she feels that Canada is known for being non discriminatory she feels that she was discriminating against. She indicated “this hard life for me, since I arrived in Canada”.
Chapter Five

5  Thematic Results

Grounded Theory was used to analysis the interview responses of the 20 participants. Prominent themes were identified based on the responses of participants’ experiences immigrating to Canada and their subsequent work life transitions. Themes were further analyzed into subcategories which provided a deeper conceptualization of key constructs. The following categories presented in detail below are the key themes which emerged from the respondents and deemed to be the most pertinent to the research questions.

5. 1 Immigration

5.1.1 Reasons for Immigration

Reasons for immigrating are particularly relevant when exploring acculturation, stress and coping in professional immigrants as it provides insight into the outcome expectancies of the participants. All participants expressed their reasons for immigrating with statements of hope and positivity. In reflecting on the period leading up to immigration, seven out of 20 participants recalled their reasons for immigrating as a “desire for a better life”:

Participant 04: “The main purpose was improvement of my career. To grow in my career, to learn new things, and to sell myself better in the future.”

Participant 07: “First of all, I grew up dreaming of going to America. And then the revolution came in 1989 in Eastern Europe and basically there was a big surge of hope and then afterwards, it flopped. So I figured that there is no sense in me staying there.”

Participant 11: “My sister moved here, and she’s 5 years older than me. And she’s a pharmacist, and she made it here. So, she told me the situation is good, and way better.”

For others, their reasons for immigrating were related to political discord within their home countries. These respondents indicated that they began to feel unsafe and uncomfortable in their
communities and were attracted to the prospect of new opportunities in a country which is grounded in democracy. Some of the respondents also indicated that their motivation to immigrate was to develop roots in another country in the event that the political discord became too difficult to manage.

Five of the 20 respondents indicated they immigrated due to political reasons:

**Participant 10**: “After, I understood the political situation in my country, I decided I needed to leave and go live somewhere else. I applied to Canada. Everything else was normal, except the economic and political situation was bad.”

**Participant 11**: “The second reason was the political situation; there was a military coup and they took over the regime, which was the end of democracy. They started harassing people and things like that.”

**Participant 12**: “Yes, it was triggered by the riots because of the feeling we were not safe in our own country. It was important to be able to have a ‘getaway’ plan. It was a very, very tense political situation.”

Financial prosperity was another common motivation cited by participants as reasons for immigrating to Canada. Many participants who immigrated for financial reasons indicated that they believed that they could be more financially successful in Canada as opposed to their home countries. Some participants indicated that they had heard stories of other individuals from their country immigrating to North America and having financial opportunities, such as buying a house, they were not a possibility in their current country. Many participants indicated that they had not considered that they would anticipate difficulties once they were settled in Canada.
Six of the 20 participants cited financial reasons as motivators for immigrating to Canada:

**Participant 09:** “We both wanted to work, to have very good jobs, and to have money and to do whatever we couldn’t do back home. Our biggest goal was to buy a house, and we did that after 6 years.”

**Participant 13:** “Studying and having a better life here. Because if you’re an engineer in Iran, your lifestyle is going to be, compared to here, you’re going to walk over the poverty line. You will be around the poverty line.”

A desire to pursue education and a desire for an overall change in their life were two other reasons cited for participants deciding to immigrate to Canada. All of the reasons cited by participants for immigrating, involved either educational or employment endeavors. All the participants had come to Canada through the Skilled Workers program and did so under the assumption they would find employment in their chosen profession. Amongst the participant responses emerged the theme that they did not have adequate information regarding immigration prior to leaving their home countries. Participants indicated that had they known the difficulties they would have pursuing employment in their chosen profession, they may have not have made the decision to move.

5.2 **Acculturation**

Acculturation is “the process of psychological and cultural change that takes place when two cultures meet.” (Sam & Berry, 2010, p. 472) and can be conceptualized as a component of cultural adjustment. Individuals acculturate by way of four strategies; *assimilation*, *marginalization*, *integration* and *separation*. Research indicates that individuals who adopt the *integration* strategy of acculturation are more likely to be better adapted to their environment.
Participants were queried regarding their overall cultural adjustment and explicit themes of the four acculturation strategies emerged in the research.

Eight of the 20 participants endorsed positive behavioural cultural adjustment, which may be indicative of the acculturation strategy of *integration*. The participants used positive orientated language such as “freedom” and “feeling good” and spoke about making efforts to participate in the host country culture, such as trying new foods or getting involved in the community. At the same time, these participants spoke about staying connected to aspects of their own culture, through relationships or cultural rituals.

**Participant 03:** “Freedom to be yourself and to explore whatever you want to do and the people will not judge you because here, you can be your own cultural self. My priority? Is to interact with people and get to know the place and the culture.”

**Participant 11:** “And different cultures too; sometimes people are afraid to deal with you, they don’t know about your background, they don’t know how to deal with you for anything. But also if you don’t want to make your life miserable, don’t say, discrimination and racial... No. Make sense”

**Participant 13:** “We were living in our parent’s building, we did not own any place of our own, we did not have a car, but we were doing well. We had our hobbies, parties and everything.”

Somewhat surprisingly in the interviews expressed a desire to *assimilate* which is indicative of rejecting their own host culture to gain acceptance by the dominant culture. It appeared from their responses that these participants perceived assimilation as a desired effect of the immigration process and may have actually been referring to the concept of *integration*. There were however, participants who clearly preferred to distance themselves form their own
culture and submerge themselves in Canadian society. Three of the 20 participants explicitly endorsed assimilation preferences:

**Participant 04:** “Coming here and being in your own society, totally separate from the others, is not something that will bring you success or happiness or emotional stability. I would like to assimilate into society.”

**Participant 10:** When people put their national privileges on top of somebody else, it’s better to stay in your home country, if you’re not ready to assimilate. I prefer assimilation; if you have already left your country, be prepared to assimilate.

**Participant 11:** “That I had to start all over again from point zero. I had to forget all about my past, and I had to start a new life in a new country that, it’s system is completely different. And I have to find somehow some way to adapt myself to this new life, this new culture, this new heritage, new things.”

Participant 12 and 14 expressed notions of the acculturation strategy *separation* expressing a proclivity towards their own cultural norms, while distancing from the norms of dominant culture. These participants spoke about a desire to separate from a place of “not fitting in” as opposed to negative attitudes towards the host country culture.

**Participant 14:** “Sometimes I feel like I’m not accepted, or sometimes I feel like I cannot fit in, because I am like this and they are like that. They like the cottage, I like the beach. They like hockey, I like soccer...I feel like I am on the moon, being a person from the earth...This is why I look for other Latin people.”

**Participant 12:** “I’m not Canadian born or Canadian raised. I don’t have the same- I don’t know, they all come from small town Ontario, and they all think the same way, and I don’t. I come from a big city, and I think differently and I’m more of a go-getter. I have different ideas about what I would like to do with the company that they would not
necessarily agree with because they have a different attitude."

The notion of “fitting in” came up several times throughout the interviews. The participants expressed a desire to fit into the Canadian culture and when they did not, they spoke about feelings of exclusion as a precursor to stress responses.

Participant 09 expressed an initial desire to separate from the dominant culture and then subsequently moved towards the strategy of integration as she became proficient with the English language:

**Participant 09**: Sometimes at the beginning, I would talk to my husband; we thought that other Canadians, us now, are putting us in a corner just because we don’t speak English, and that we came from Eastern Europe... And then we realized in time, actually it was us. We backed up because of the language, we didn’t express ourselves, and we didn’t show who we were. That’s why we were treated like that.”

5.3 Socio-cultural Adaption

Adaption is the outcome of acculturation and is often described in terms of psychological and socio-cultural adaption (Berry, 2010). Socio-cultural adaption is described as an immigrant’s ability to obtain the required skills to live successfully in their new culture, such as language proficiency, social competency and financial stability. Employment endeavors are often linked to socio-cultural adaption and successful employment is seen as positive socio-cultural adaption.

5.3.1 Language Proficiency

Five of the 20 participants expressed difficulties with English language proficiency and indicated that language was a barrier to their overall adaption in their work and personal life. Themes around language proficiency emerged throughout all the interviews and appeared to be a significant predictor of stress and coping behavior among the participants.

**Participant 09**: “I found it very difficult to not know the language. I was disabled because
I couldn’t explain myself; I couldn’t show anybody that I am not dumb. It was very painful. This was the worst experience.”

Participant 13: “It was scary, because I wasn’t confident at all. I still have lots of problems with my English, and sometimes I make mistakes when I feel insecure or I feel unconfident. Whenever I’m hungry, or it’s near my coffee time, I’ll make lots of mistakes in my English, that’s a real barrier for me.

For other participants who did not endorse language as a barrier to their employment endeavors, it was commonly discussed throughout the interviews. Many of the participants discussed insecurities around their particular dialect/accent and overall communication skills. Some participants indicated that they spent much of their time learning English and fine-tuning their pronunciation as a way to fit in to Canadian culture.

5.3.2 Social Competency

Another indicator of socio-cultural adaption is social competency; the ability to interact effectively within an individual’s personal, social and work life. Social competency seemed to go hand in hand with language proficiency and participants indicated that when they were more proficient in English or more confident in their ability to speak, they were more engaged within their community.

Seven of the 20 respondents indicated that they had difficulty adapting socially to their new country, including their place of employment.

Participant 07: “I think the most difficult part was missing the family support we had in Romania…and Romanians there were a lot of barriers in terms of age and mentality and in the occupational nice between us.”

Participant 11: “Eventually, you learn that these people have their own issues and you just mind your own business and try to make a living until you find your way. That’s one
of the difficulties, dealing with people I never dealt with, dealing with nationalities I have never dealt with. Different cultures, different languages, different people.”

Participant 12: “The social interaction is different in the workplace as well. At home, it was very laid back and there was more hanging around, which doesn’t happen here. It’s very much like “do your business”, it’s five o’clock, pack up and leave. There’s no, “Oh, let’s all go for beer after work.”

Participants of the study also discussed difficulties they experienced with familiarizing themselves with work related norms such as: common office behaviour, supervisor/supervisee communication and general workplace etiquette. Participants discussed that not knowing how to conduct themselves in the workplace contributed to their overall sense of social competency. Some participants indicated that they lacked knowledge of what behaviour is normal for the workplace in Canada and often commented that it was different from their country of origin.

5.3.3 Financial Stability

None of the 20 participants explicitly expressed satisfaction or success regarding their financial situation since immigrating to Canada. Several of the participants cited lack of financial stability as a source of stress and subsequent symptoms of anxiety and depression. For participants who immigrated based on a desire for increased financial success, their lack of financial prosperity was particularly distressing to them. Seven of the 20 respondents expressed that financial barriers and a lack of financial stability has negatively impacted their experience with acculturation and employment.

Participant 10: “My daughter told me, we were unlucky to born in the families we were born; if I was born as Paris Hilton...Because in my daughter’s opinion, Paris Hilton is lucky to be born in a rich family.”
Participant 11: “Financial security, because I want to pay for my exams, and I want to make a good living until I become a pharmacist. That’s my main goal; financial security. But the jobs available were so hard and the pay, I remember they paid us $6.80.”

Participant 13: “The first thing for me is financial situation; Just imagine if there are two jobs that I like, I like one of them better than the other, but the other one is paying me more, in this situation I have to go for the one that pays more, because I’m now in financial need.”

Participants who spoke about dissatisfaction with the financial situation spoke about common barriers cited in the research related to employment with immigrant professionals. Participants of the study consistently indicated that they were not able to secure jobs at their skill level and were paid at low levels, sometimes not more than minimum wage.

5.3.4 Discrimination

The perception or experience of discrimination is a determinant of how individuals acculturate and socio-culturally and psychologically adapt. Discrimination is commonly cited in the literature in relation to all immigrant populations and more so when examining the experiences of immigrants from a visible minority. Recent research findings link discrimination with poor employment trajectories for professional immigrants. Four of the 20 participants indicated that they experienced discrimination in their overall experience living in Canada. This is contrary to research which indicates that 58% of immigrants coming to Canada report the experience and/or the perception of discrimination.
Participant 10: “When I came to Canada, when I tried to register my daughter to school, when they saw Azerbaijan, she said, what is this country?, this country does not exist. This was close to shock. It was close to shock.”

Participant 12: “And I know, even at the company I work at now, they’re WONDERFUL people: very kind, very sweet. But I know there’s a ceiling past which I cannot cross because I’m not one of them. I’m the only person of colour in that entire office. And it’s not because they’re racist or anything like that, but there’s this provinciality to the way they think. And maybe because I have- maybe because they see in me that I want go further ahead…”

Five of the 20 respondents indicated that they experienced discrimination in direct relation to their job search, education or employment experiences.

Participant 11: “In my job field, I guess it’s something associated with the Canadian society, is, technician or assistant should be a woman. 90% of the pharmacy technicians now are women and men are the minority. So being a man of 30, and an immigrant, and African, and black, makes it difficult. They don’t show it to you, but you feel it when they tell you that the job is gone, we hired somebody.”

Themes of discrimination also emerged when participants spoke about their language proficiency and social and financial competencies.

5.4 Psychological Adaption

Ward et al. (2001) describes psychological adaption as an individuals overall emotional and psychological wellbeing. Positive psychological adaption is often linked to the acculturation strategy of integration whereas negative psychological adaption is linked to acculturative stress and mental health issues. Thirteen of the 20 respondents made reference to negative psychological impacts with respect to their overall immigration experience or to the process of
securing employment. Some of the respondents indicated difficult periods throughout the process which caused significant stress, while others reported more serious symptomology of mental health issues:

**Participant 02:** “The point is that I really, really want to work as an engineer; I love working as an engineer, and this is my passion...But right now, I don’t have this potential to work as an engineer, to prepare a resume, something like that, because I have a lot of problems right no., I can’t think about this. I always have nightmares and I can’t concentrate on what’s happened to me”

**Participant 09:** “Very hard, very hard. Sometimes I was lying on the floor and rolling and thinking, I want to go back.”

**Participant 13:** “My lack of confidence is kind of an emotional thing. So, maybe physical conditions such as headaches and things because I am really strong and I have weak body. I get sick a lot and I had depression. What would help me is that I really like to work...”

The participants were not queried specifically about their psychological adaption and their responses were unsolicited which points to the severity of their psychological distress. For some participants they indicated that they experienced difficulty adapting in the initial stages of immigration and then eventually became more comfortable to the transition.

### 5.4.1 Acculturative stress

Consistent in the research is extreme levels of stress experienced by professional immigrants. An accumulation of stressors experienced by new immigrants as a result of the immigration process known as acculturative stress and is often related to negative psychological adaption. Eight out of the 20 respondents indicated that they were experiencing high levels of stress in response to their work and personal lives after immigrating to Canada:
**Participant 07:** “I have lots of plans, I have a pretty big and detailed decision tree; maybe too detailed. But decision trees are usually my reaction to stress. So yes, I have quite a bit of stress, but this is just stress induced by the knowledge that no one is essential. So basically wherever you are, you can find yourself on the street and looking for work at any time.”

**Participant 08:** “And it was a very stressful job, I hated it. I mean, the salary was very good, but I didn’t have a life; I worked 7 days a week.”

**Participant 15:** “I felt that life was so cumbersome, it was difficult, and I was so stressed out that I started to drink, just to forget. I wasn’t drinking every day, but especially on weekends because I said, “Where am I?” I felt lost; I had fear that one day I would be on the street because we’re not able to even RENT an apartment.”

Although acculturative stress is a result of stressors inherent in the immigration process, most participants endorsed stress reactions as a result of their poor employment trajectories and lack of financial stability. Many of the participants spoke about their fears of not being able to financially support themselves and their family. Other participants report stress related to the desire to return home to their home country and not having the financial means to do so. For others, the experience of acculturative stress was a result of an overall loss of self-esteem and wellbeing related to poor employment outcomes.

**5.4.2 Mental Health Issues**

Six out of 20 of the respondents indicated evidence of mental health issues as a result of the transition from their home country to Canada. These participants described intense feelings of overwhelming stress, depression and anxiety. For some participants these feelings impeded their ability to function at their pre-migration level of competency. Similarly with acculturative stress, the participants were not asked directly about their experience with mental health issues.
and candidly spoke about personal incidences of extreme distress.

**Participant 02:** “But you know, because I have a lot of mental problems these days, I can’t concentrate, and I can’t understand what’s happened to me.”

**Participant 04:** “For example, I’m not in the mood to go to some clubs and with social gatherings with other people if I’m not happy inside, if there’s a problem at my work, and somebody is constantly threatening me that I’ll be fired because the business is downsized.”

**Participant 05:** “I was bitter, very bitter. I actually went through a depression until I started working again.”

When participants described their experiences of overwhelming stress, they were informed about the availability of counselling resources available in the community for new immigrants. Many of the participants were not aware of community resources available to them and internalized their emotions as a negative aspect of themselves. Some participants did not realize that their symptoms of stress was related to the difficulties they were having with employment.

5.5 *Styles of Coping*

All of the participants were queried on their specific coping strategies in response to the obstacles they faced both immigrating to Canada and pursuing their chosen career goals. Ten out of the 20 respondents endorsed using specific coping strategies as a way to deal with the stressors in their life and three types of coping styles emerged; Emotion-focused coping, Task Oriented Coping or Problem-focused Coping and Avoidant Coping styles.

5.5.1 *Avoidance Coping Style*

Avoidant Coping strategies emerged in the interviews with participants when they discussed is typically associated with high levels of distress and is seen as the least adaptive mode of coping. However, when a person is in significant distress, avoidance can be positive
way to deal with the issue temporarily. Six of the 20 respondents indicated that they utilized an avoidant coping style:

**Participant 07:** “I gained weight... I worked a lot; I worked along the lines of 60 hours a week or something like that. And at one moment I just stopped following my eating patterns, and I jumped to 100 kilos in no time.”

**Participant 10:** “I was not coping, I didn’t pay attention to coping, because I didn’t have any choice. I couldn’t live there; it was dangerous, it was harsh economical conditions, bad political conditions, and I cannot choose from two bads.”

**Participant 13:**” The first time, I couldn’t cope, actually. That’s why we went back to Iran. I came from a very bad and miserable life there, I just wanted to escape everything, and go to a new world. Some people just commit suicide in this case, and they want to go to another world, and I took Canada as another world for me, I just immigrated.

**Participant 20:** “I cried and cried. Oh my god, for months I had been crying, and I said, I don’t want to stay here, I want to go home, but I lost my job, a very good job, to exchange for what? I regretted it, I really regretted it. And that’s why I kept on coming back here and going back home, here and home. I am thinking, what will I do next? But I’m not a quitter, I usually continue and push through, and see. So it was hard. And I almost quit.”

**Participant 11:** “I had to start all over again from point zero. I had to forget all about my past, and I had to start a new life in a new country with a system is completely different. And I have to find somehow some way to adapt myself to this new life, this new culture, this new heritage, new things.”
When talking about their difficult experiences participants who endorsed Avoidant Coping styles spoke about not wanting to deal with the difficult situation. They also spoke about behaviours that induced avoidant coping such as binge eating or using substances as a way to escape. For some of the participants the experience if immigrating was so difficult, it may have been adaptive for them to engage in avoidant behaviours temporarily as a way to cope with the loss of their lives in their home country.

5.5.2 Task Oriented Coping/Problem Focused Coping

Task Oriented coping involves overcoming the stressor by building mastery and developing competency by distracting and expelling energy in adaptive ways after the stress occurs (Zeidner & Endler, 1996). This can be done by controlling or altering the environment where the stress exists (Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2009) Five of the 20 respondents endorsed using task orientated coping strategies. These task orientated strategies involved cognitions, such as their person using positive self talk as a way to mitigate negative experiences. Some participants engaged in task orientated behaviours such as spending time with family and friends or exercising. While others focused on task orientated task orientated affective coping strategies such as talking about their difficult experiences with family, friends or professional helpers.

**Participant 02:** “I was entering a new society, I had to learn many things about their society, to know what their customs, traditions and holidays. I’m very flexible, I can handle my situation very well, and I tell myself that, and I like to deal with the challenging issues.”

**Participant 03:** “Listen and always curious, and eager to try, and be brave to try. Like food here, I wasn’t really that picky, but I did miss Chinese food a lot. And the language, even though my husband, he’s a native English speaker, he doesn’t speak Chinese, and it
was a little bit tough for me...And it is exciting for me, because finally I can really immerse myself in this English environment”

**Participant 12:** “Well, I made a few good friends. I joined the International Study Body. I spent a lot of time doing activities with them, so I made a good bunch of friends through that. And that really helped a lot.”

### 5.5.4 Emotion Focused Coping

The goal of emotion-focused coping is to control internal emotional reactions to stress by altering thoughts and feelings about the situation as a way to reduce stress. Stressors, such as immigrating may induce negative emotional responses, such as anger, resentment, grief and sadness and reducing the intensity of these emotional responses can lower the perception of stress (Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2009). Participants spoke about their emotional experiences in relation to their coping strategies. Six of the 20 participants endorsed emotion focused coping styles:

**Participant 04:** “I was totally ready for innovation, for a change, and I prepared myself, and I didn’t have any problems with myself. I didn’t have any frustrations, fear. Everything was totally acceptable to me.”

**Participant 09:** “Well, I try to be positive. Very hard, very hard. Sometimes I was lying on the floor and rolling and thinking, I want to go back.”

**Participant 11:** “Well, I have to adapt myself, and I said to myself, if I’m going to dwell on those things, I’m going to make my life miserable. I had better accept what I have, and deal with it”

### 5.5.5 Social Support

Social support is consistently cited in the research as a buffer against stress and both physical and mental health issues. For many of the participants in the study, leaving their home
country meant leaving their communities and social networks. A lack of social support was indicated by many of the participants as a contributor to their stress reactions and for some symptoms of depression. Other participants discussed getting connected to their community and places of employment as a way to mitigate their stress. 5 of the 20 respondents indicated that social support and getting involved in the community integration positively impacted their cultural and career adaption:

**Participant 10:** “Of course I have some difficulties but because I’m pretty outgoing and sociable person, I had no problems; I ask my neighbours, I ask people in language schools what to do, what they’re doing, and try to find the information I need.”

**Participant 12:** “Well, I made a few good friends. I joined the International Study Body. I spent a lot of time doing activities with them, so I made a good bunch of friends through that. And that really helped a lot.”

Participants also spoke about social support in the context of socio-cultural adaption and social competency. For some participants language acquisition was directly related to increased self-confidence and in increase in their social relationships.

### 5.6 Career Development Theory

Participants were asked directly about their career transition and several themes emerged. Job satisfaction and sense of career identity can be best understood in the context of Social Cognitive Career Theory and Super’s Life Span theory.

#### 5.6.1 Job Dissatisfaction

It is well documented that individuals who experience stress in relation to their work become dissatisfied with their career choices. Often when stress is accompanied with job dissatisfaction and as the person becomes emotionally exhausted and disconnected from their role, there is a tendency for a person to leave work permanently. Research has found that
increased job stress is negatively related to job satisfaction (Long, B., Kahn, S., & Schutz, 1992). 5 out of 20 respondents indicated dissatisfaction in their current employment endeavors:

Participant 04: “There are a lot of things, such as training and development, career coaching, HR administration, and employee relations, and some other fields that I would like to learn something new and improve myself, but I cannot, because recruitment is the only thing that this company can offer to me.”

Participant 10: It’s not paid enough, it’s always temporary, it’s not stable. I have this month, maybe I don’t have next month.”

Participant 13: But when they offered me a cleaning job, I was really down, I was shocked. Yeah, because that was, I could do it, it was nothing for me.

Job dissatisfaction among participants of the study was most often related to the variables discussed as contributors to low employment trajectories among immigrant populations such as; unemployment or underemployment and low financial reimbursement.

5.6.2 Job Satisfaction

Despite the fact that none of the 20 respondents were able to find employment at a level on par with their skills and qualifications, nine of the 20 respondents indicated that they experienced a level of satisfaction with their current employment.

Participant 07: “Yes, it’s a change, and I really started to appreciate more interacting with people. So I find this a very rewarding experience.”

Participant 11: “I don’t know how to put that. But working in my field gives me some satisfaction, rather than, from my previous experience, doing the survival jobs, I wasn’t happy. But now I’m partially happy.”

Participant 13: “Well, in a year, I did very well, I believe. Yeah, because in a year, it ended up with me being hired in a bank. So it’s good for me. I didn’t expect myself. I
wasn’t unemployed for a long time. Whenever I needed a job, I had one, so I’m satisfied with it.”

5.6.3 Career Identity

Vocational identity is a key construct within career development theory and is related to the coping processes a person utilizes within their employment endeavors. Career identity was a prominent area of focus throughout the interviews. Participants were directly queried regarding their sense of vocational identity in relation to their current employment. Six of the 20 respondents described having a strong sense of vocational identity in their new roles.

Participants were asked: “Do you feel a sense of vocational and career identity from your current employment experience in Canada? Why or why not?”

Participant 03: Yeah, very much. And that’s one of the reasons I love this job. When I worked here and there, finally I feel I have a sort of direction now. It’s not like, I’ll do this and that; right now I have a direction to go.”

Participant 11: “Because I’m working in my field, I’m utilizing my education and my experience, the one from Canada and the one from my previous home. And it is something that I love to do.”

Participant 13: “Well, my vocational life is actually a big part of my life, because I spend a big part of my life at work, it’s the most important thing.”

Six of the 20 respondents indicated that they do not feel a sense of vocational identity and have not been able to accept their new employment in Canada as their career identity:

Participant 01: “I try to forget, I tell myself I am on vacation. I’m saying to myself that I am on vacation from my career.”
Participant 02: “You know, this is not what I expected for my life. I didn’t get any identity, that this is the person that I’m looking for it. It’s not enough for me. I’m not looking for this type of job.”

Participant 20: “Oh, this one, I don’t consider it a job for me, okay? I really feel like it’s just a way to pass time.”

For participants who did not indicate an overall sense of vocational identity indicated that their current employment status was below their expectations and they could not come to terms with this. Some of these participants spoke about their career successes in their home country and feeling deep regret for making the decision to immigrate to Canada.
Chapter 6

6 Discussion

The results of the study emphasize the impact of stressors and coping resources related to the process of immigration. Acculturation can negatively impact new immigrant professionals as they pursue employment and may lead to acculturative stress responses and evidence of mental health issues (Finch & Vega, 2003). The present findings indicate that despite evidence of career and life satisfaction among the participants in the study, a number of themes emerged demonstrating evidence of stress and mental health difficulties in relation to vocational adjustment. Contrary to current research findings which indicate integration as the most adaptive of the four acculturation strategies, acculturations strategies did not seem to be a predictor of overall psychological adaption. Participants of the study described using a number of different coping resources; including social support and positive self-talk, as a way to mitigate some of the stressors they were experiencing. Those participants using a task orientated or problem focused coping style appeared to endorse higher levels of positive well-being. Despite high levels of stress related to employment trajectories, participants spoke about having a strong sense of vocational identity and job satisfaction.

6.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Implications

6.1.1 Immigration

The process of immigration is inherently difficult and research indicates that reasons for immigrating can positively or negatively impact the acculturation process (Sam & Berry, 2010). Entry into a country is most commonly contingent on three criteria; refugee status, employment status or family relations (Yang, 1995). According to the research study, participants indicated that their reasons for immigrating were based on a “desire for a better life”, an increase in
employment, educational or financial rewards and/or to escape economic and political discord in their countries. This is in keeping with Lobo and Salvo (1998) who indicated that escape of political refuge and employment opportunities were two of the most cited motivators for immigration among Asian immigrants to the United States (Lobo & Salvo, 1998; Chen et al., 2008).

Using a Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) framework, circumstances and reasons for immigrating are of particular importance, and can be one of the key components that influence employment trajectories. Reasons for immigrating can be directly related to employment self-efficacy and outcome expectancies (Yakushko et al., 2008). Further to this, pre-immigration reasons for leaving their home country, such as an absence of choice, has been directly related to acculturative stress among immigrant populations (Berry, 1997; Gil and Vega, 1996). In a study examining pre-migration expectancies and acculturative stress, researchers found that those who were disappointed with post-migration experiences related to community safety and racism were more likely to experience acculturative stress (Negy, Schwartz & Reig – Ferrer, 2009). Participants of this study who immigrated based on a desire for educational and/or employment success described a sense of loss once they recognized that they would not be realizing their educational and employment goals.

6.1.2 Acculturation

Acculturation is the most common construct used to conceptualize the mental health outcomes of new immigrants. The four strategies of acculturation; assimilation, separation, marginalization and integration are seen as predictors of socio-cultural and psychological adaption. Immigrants who embody the strategy of integration are more likely to experience positive adaption (Sam & Berry, 2010). Participants were not directly queried about the four
acculturation strategies, however when questioned regarding their cultural and vocational adjustment, clear acculturation themes emerged. With the exception of marginalization, participants endorsed notions of integration, assimilation and separation. There did not appear to be a consistent link between acculturation strategies and the prevalence of acculturative stress or mental health issues and acculturation preferences seemed to have little bearing on cultural adjustment. This may be due to acculturation research being predominantly conducted with adolescent participants. Also, acculturation strategies have never been explored in the context of professional immigrants, which in itself is a unique population. In the context of employment, given the high levels of workplace discrimination, it may be more adaptive to assimilate, as opposed to integrate. The workplace reflects the society as a whole; however there are norms within various employment cultures, which are not representative of the greater society.

There is a growing trend of research which focuses on culturally diverse workplaces and how cultures interact with one another in the context of work (Oerlemans & Peeters, 2009). In a study examining acculturation and multicultural work environments, researchers found that adopting maladaptive acculturation orientations result in a poorer quality of intergroup relationships in the workplace for immigrant blue collar workers (Oerlemans & Peeters, 2009).

6.1.3 Acculturative Stress and Adaption

A high number of participants indicated symptoms and experiences of acculturative stress. For some of the participants their experience of stress was during the initial phase of immigration and overtime they were effectively able to cope with their difficult experiences. For other participants the experience of acculturative stress was prevalent even years after they had moved to Canada. There is evidence in the research that a relationship exists between age and acculturative stress with adult immigrants more likely to experience difficulties during the
acculturation process and more likely to experience acculturative stress (Berry, 1997). The participants in our study were older adults and this may be a factor related to the high levels of stress within this sample.

Themes of socio-cultural and psychological adaption emerged in the participant responses. Participants discussed barriers and successes related to language acquisition, social competency and financial stability. On all three domains, participants described feeling vulnerable and facing multiple barriers in both their personal and work life. In relation to language acquisition, participants indicated a lack of the English language as a significant barrier to overall career adjustment. This is consistent with the research of Chen (2006) in that language, namely host-language proficiency, is a predictor of an immigrants’ adjustment and often lead to feelings of insecurity and limited social interactions (Chen, 2006). Further, employers and immigrant workers cite language proficiency as the number one predictor of underemployment in immigrant professionals (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009).

Participants of the study spoke about their experience and perception of discrimination and a small number of respondents indicated that they were impacted by discrimination. This could be partly due to the interview questions not directly targeting perceptions and experiences of discrimination. Also, depending on the ethnicity of the interviewer and interviewee, respondents may not have been comfortable speaking directly about the discrimination they were experiencing.

In a study examining acculturative stress in Latinos living in the United States, Miranda and Matheny (2000) indicated that acculturative stress is related to a person’s self-efficacy. Utilizing an SCCT framework, the contextual stressors related to negative psychological adaption could also impact on a person’s self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Career
performance and career choice may be directly impacted by the stressors faced during the process of immigration (Yakushko et al., 2008).

6.1.4 Coping Styles

Most of the respondents of the study endorsed using coping strategies to mitigate the stressors they were experiencing in relation to their employment and overall cultural adjustment. Task Orientated or Problem Focused coping was cited as the most effective means of dealing with psychological stressors (Lazurus & Folkman, 1986) and was utilized by the least number of participants. Themes of Emotion-focused Coping and Avoidant Coping were identified more often by participants throughout the interviews. An interesting finding which emerged in the research was evidence that participants endorsing Problem Focused or Task Oriented Coping, expressed positive themes in their dialogue and increased positive outcomes of their acculturation and employment experiences.

Social support has been cited in both mental and physical health literature as a buffer against the negative effects of stress (Ahmad et al. 2004; Khawaja, et al., 2008). The concept of social support emerged repeatedly throughout the interviews and was described in terms of friends, family or community integration. Participants with low levels of social support indicated feelings of isolation, loneliness and depression in relation to their cultural adjustment. Whereas participants endorsing high levels of social support and community involvement were more likely to report gratitude for their loved ones and a sense of security. This is in keeping with research findings regarding immigrant mental health experiences.

6.1.5 Career Development Theory

For many professional workers the process of immigration involves a downturn in their employment trajectories (Berger, 2004; Yakushko, 2006 and Yakushko et al., 2008). Immigrants
are less likely to be hired in positions in line with their skills and abilities and earn less than their non-immigrant counterparts (Yakushko, 2006). Participants described their levels of job satisfaction and despite all 20 participants reported working in a career outside of their chosen profession, a high number of participants reported a general sense of job satisfaction. This may be due to effective cognitive coping strategies which may involve re-evaluating expectations around employment and education outcomes.

Participants were queried regarding their overall career identity with a high number of participants indicating that they did not feel a sense of identity in relation to their Canadian employment. Vocational identity and sense of self are thought to be so interconnected and impact a person’s overall psychological well-being and stability (Super, 1990). The importance of vocational and career identity is particularly important to consider when exploring the experience of professional immigrants, as most immigrant professionals are not working in their chosen career as expected prior to immigration. This lack of career identity expressed by the participants of the study may be a significant predictor of overall acculturative stress responses. Career identity is also closely linked to occupational and social status. For participants who were highly regarded in their home country because of their profession, it may be harder to reconcile a personal identity based on a less prestigious career.

The process of acculturation can be attributed to both personal and public facets of an immigrant’s life and as such, the employment trajectory of a professional immigrant can be examined through an acculturation framework. According to Montreuil and Bourhis (2004), employment can be seen from both the perspective of the dominant culture (does employing immigrants reduce employment opportunities for the dominant culture) and the immigrant (what barriers does the immigrant experience when securing employment?)
There are a number of studies which indicate that employment is a key determinant in successful integration of immigrants (Yost & Lucas, 2002; Oppdal, Roysamb, & Sam, 2004). Using Berry’s definitions of psychological and socio-cultural adaption, successful occupational integration in the new culture is an indicator of positive adaption among immigrants (Berry 1997). In our study, clear themes emerged regarding unemployment and underemployment and participants described feelings of significant stress in relation to their lack of employment opportunities.

6.2 Practical Implications

The results of the study indicate a number of factors, which negatively impact the experience of acculturation and career transition for professional immigrants. The participants endorsed experiences of acculturative stress and some participants indicated evidence of mental health concerns. Many participants were not aware of the availability of community resources designed to assist those having difficulties with cultural adjustment. These findings indentify important implications to the individual immigrant, helping professionals as well as systemic considerations.

By using the career development theories in regards to the psychological impact of employment among professional workers, we can further develop career specific interventions, which may improve the overall psychological and vocational well-being of professional workers immigrating to Canada. The most obvious career counseling intervention would be to assist workers in developing more effective coping strategies. According to Long et al., individualized cognitive-behavioral interventions that facilitate the development of adaptive coping strategies are the most effective when helping professionals deal with their own stress and employment burnout (2008). Furthermore, because a strong sense of self-efficacy may result in an excessive
or persistent coping style, problem-solving strategies that define a person’s options for change would be a useful intervention.

As discussed, self-efficacy permeates throughout career development theory and is also one of the core components of positive psychological adaptation. As such, an understanding of self-efficacy and how a person perceives their ability to cope with a situation should be at the forefront of career counseling interventions. Career development theory has found the concept of self-efficacy useful in predicting work adjustment, job satisfaction and engagement coping. (Sharf, 2006). High levels of social support lead to high levels of self-efficacy and lower levels of overall acculturative stress. The opposite is true in that low levels of perceived support contribute to low levels of self-efficacy and stress. Career counseling needs to be aware of the interplay of such relationships in order to assist clients in preventing and buffering against the negative impact of acculturative stress.

A number of participants in the study indicated that they did not know what to expect when coming to Canada. Many participants left their home country to pursue new opportunities and were accepted for immigration as part of the Skilled Workers program. This program boasts work opportunities available in Canada, within a number of employment sectors. None of the participants in the study were working within their career of choice and although many participants indicated that they experienced varying levels of job satisfaction, they indicated having to lower their expectations as a way to cope with their situation. These findings are indicative of major flaws within the immigration procedures to Canada. Policy makers and government bodies need to be aware of the number of foreign trained professionals coming to Canada under the pretense of working within their desired occupation, and not doing so. If high numbers of professional immigrants are not finding employment based on their skills and
experience and become vulnerable to the negative effects of acculturation, they are more likely to access social welfare and health care services.

A high number of participants in the study indicated a general lack of community support during the process of immigration. Some participants indicated that they were able to find career and employment support from community agencies, however were not aware of mental health services available to immigrant communities. Many participants endorsed feeling depressed and stressed due to their employment circumstances and attributed their lack of employment successes to themselves. Community agencies need to reach out to immigrant communities about the negative impacts on stress and depression on all domains of an immigrants’ life. Psycho-educational programming would be an effective way to teach new immigrants experiencing stress and how to find healthy ways of coping.

*Future Directions*

Although there exists significant research outlining the psychological and socio-cultural impact of immigration on individuals in Canada and internationally, it is still in its infancy. The process of acculturation involves many variables such as the individuals relationships to their culture, reasons for immigrating, diversity of host country and these variables are in constant transition (Berry, 2006). Thus, the process of acculturation is difficult to study and requires continual awareness of cultural transition. Further, the there is a paucity of research on the acculturation processes of internationally trained professionals. This group represents the largest population of new immigrations in Canada and as such their psychological adaption is important and both systemic and individuals levels. The qualitative exploration explored a number of factors impacting acculturation processes with professional immigrants and each factor requires additional research efforts.
Firstly, there are dramatic differences within immigrant groups and their experience of acculturation to Canada. For instance, Caucasian European immigrants would have different experiences immigrating to Canada than those immigrants representing a visible minority, who experience higher levels negative psychological adaption due to the experience and perception of discrimination. Furthermore, within cultural groups there exists copious differences which require individual examination to avoid compounding variables.

Secondly, occupational differences among professional immigrants require further study. The experience of a foreign trained doctor immigrating from India in midlife, would vary considerably from a young business professional. The differences may be attributed to language proficiency, reaccreditation expectations in the host country, ability to adjust to new surroundings and pre-migrations expectations.

In addition to the breadth of differences within immigrant groups and occupational choice, there exists a great deal of specificity related to the factors associated with acculturation. It is well documented that culture and individual experiences play a role in a person’s perception of stress and therefore the psychological impact of factors such as language proficiency, social support and social competency would vary a great deal from person to person and culture to culture.

There are theoretical limitations in the research related to professionally trained immigrants. Immigrant populations represent a unique group of individuals with high levels of diversity and change. This proposes difficulty for theory and there exists no career development paradigm that adequately addresses the unique experience specific to immigrant professional workers. Chen (2004, 2005) has developed career chance models which may speak to the needs of immigrant professionals, however further research efforts are required. Furthermore, theories
related to acculturation and adaption is often specific to adolescent population and there exists no acculturation theory which takes into consideration the variables relevant to professional immigrants.

There are numerous of stress and coping models which could potentially be adapted to understand the lives of immigrant professionals, however research is limited in this area. Yakushko (2010) devised a model specific to immigrant stress and coping, using both a biosocial and ecological paradigm. This model highlights the role of both the individual and the environment and how cultural differences impact the perceptions of stress inherent within any given experience.

Much of the research focused on career development theory related to immigrant professionals uses a qualitative framework of analysis. Research on professional immigrants is in its infancy and for the most part garners a qualitative exploration. It may be relevant to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative analysis to better understand the relationships between immigrant groups, acculturative stress and employment trajectories. It may be useful to quantitatively explore the individual characteristics, which are resilient to acculturative stress and subsequent mental health issues.

This study revealed interesting findings related to the concept of acculturation. Although eight of the 20 participants spoke about the concept of integration, which has been determined the most adaptive of the acculturation strategies, a number of these participants endorsed significant levels of acculturative stress and evidence of mental health issues. Acculturation research lacks the specificity to professional immigrants and thus, it may be difficult to generalize findings to this population. Also, the concept of integration is seen as the most desirable from a researcher or governmental standpoint. It may not be the most desirable from
the standpoint of the immigrant.

This study examined both men and women and did not differentiate cultural or career adjustment based on gender. There is substantial research indicating differences in acculturation experiences between men and women, with women experiencing greater challenges related to family responsibilities and role expectations (Choudhry, 2001; Khan & Watson, 2005; Neufeld et al., 2002; Yakushko and Chronister, 2005). It would be interesting to determine whether the men and women of the study experienced stress differently and also if there were differences between coping resources used by men and women.

6.7 Limitations

It is important to acknowledge methodological limitations that may impact the generalizability of the findings. This sampling approach focused on recruiting professional immigrants who had secured employment opportunities within Canada at any time point after they had immigrated. During the interview participants were asked to reflect on their experiences prior to immigration, at the time of immigration and their present experience. For some immigrants in the study they had been in Canada for over ten years, which would make it difficult to accurately reflect on their emotional experiences.

Further to this, recruitment was based on those individuals who wanted to participate in the study and reflected individuals who were confident to share their experiences, by way of an interview, as well those who felt it was important to relay their story. The study may not reflect individuals who were content with their experience and satisfied with their cultural adjustment. Likewise, participants who were experiencing high levels of stress and depressive symptoms, may not have had the motivation or desire to attend such an interview and therefore, the participants may not reflect individuals at either ends of an adjustment continuum.
It is also important to note that the research sample was small, consisting of 20 professional immigrants, which may make the transferability of the findings questionable. Semi-structured interviewing was used to ask participants broadly about their experience of immigrating and subsequent educational or employment experiences. There was the lack of direct questioning related to mental health and psychological adaption. Also, there were no specific questions related to the acculturation strategies. Although prominent themes in the area of acculturation, acculturative stress and negative psychological adaption emerged, it may be more salient had the participants been asked directly about these variables. Future research related to the psychological and mental health impacts on underemployment and unemployment among professional immigrant workers is required.

Other limitations in the study may have been related to the interview process itself. Participants had to be able to communicate in English and were interviewed by an English speaking graduate student. This may have excluded a large number of participants who are not confident in their English language abilities.

6.8 Conclusion

The experience of professional workers immigrating to Canada was fraught with difficulty and challenges, that for some participants were too difficult to overcome. For most of the workers coming to Canada, they were seeking a “better life”, increased employment and educational opportunities and a chance to escape political and economic disparity in their host countries. For some, the experience of coming to Canada fulfilled their wishes and they were able to cope effectively and secure meaningful employment. More often, the professional immigrants in the study spoke about loss, grief and negative impacts on their ability to adapt.

Coping behaviour was identified in the experiences of the professional workers and high numbers of participants’ utilized emotion focused or avoidant styles of coping, which may
negatively impact their cultural and career adjustment. Participants engaging in task oriented coping spoke about their experiences using positive language and appeared to radically accept their situation, problem solving around the losses they experienced. The presence of social support also positively impacted the experiences of the professional workers. Workers who were engaged with family, friends and their community also endorsed positive experiences and used positive language when relaying their stories.

Most surprising of the research themes was the high number of participants indicating evidence of stress and mental health concerns in relation to their unfavorable employment outcomes. Career development theory was used to understand the importance of vocation in the lives of these individuals and there was evidence that positive employment outcomes may improve the overall well-being of professional immigrants.

Overall, this study advances our understanding of the process of acculturation, adaption and coping among professional immigrant workers. The implications of this study relate directly for the need of a number strategies to help improve both, psychological and vocational well-being among professional immigrants. Access to mental health and psychological support is imperative during the process of acculturation with more intensive targeted intervention to assist individuals in navigating their career trajectories.
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APPENDIX A: Recruitment Advertisement/Poster

RECRUITMENT ADVERTISEMENT

RE: Worklife Adjustment of Immigrant Professionals in Canada

The recruitment poster will contain the following information:

A Study on Immigrant Professionals' Worklife Experience

We are looking to conduct interviews with new immigrant professionals to examine their employment and worklife experiences after coming to Canada. These interviews are part of a research project lead by Dr. Charles Chen in Counselling Psychology at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). The interview will be conducted in person, and will take approximately 2 hours to complete. A financial compensation of $35 will be provided to each participant. You are cordially invited to participate in our study if you are interested in this project, and meet the following criteria:

1. You are at least 25 years of age and older.
2. You came to Canada as an immigrant within the last 13 years (i.e., January 1, 1994 to June 30, 2006).
3. You had a university degree and worked full-time in a professional occupation for at least one year in your county of origin before coming to Canada.
4. You are currently employed either on a full-time or part-time basis, i.e., you are holding paid employment for at least 16 hours per week.

For further information or to set up an interview, please contact:

Charles Chen, Ph.D.
OISE/University of Toronto
(416)923-6641 ext. 2485
cpchen@oise.utoronto.ca

Name(s) of the Research Assistant(s)
OISE/University of Toronto
Telephone number
Email address
APPENDIX B: Telephone Script

TELEPHONE SCRIPT (or LETTER) FOR FIRST CONTACT

RE: Worklife Adjustment of Immigrant Professionals in Canada

Thank you very much for calling, and we really appreciate your interest in our research project. First I would like to tell you a bit about the study. Then you can take some time to consider whether you would like to participate in this project or not. If you have questions, please feel free to interrupt me at any time and ask them.

You are cordially invited to attend this interview. The interview is part of a research project being conducted by Dr. Charles Chen, an Associate Professor of Counselling Psychology at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), and his research assistants. The interview questions are designed to examine the worklife adjustment experiences of new immigrant professionals. It is expected that the results from this study will lead to a better understanding of immigrant professionals' career development experiences and needs, and of the specific barriers and opportunities present for immigrant professionals in their vocational life transition in Canada. The interview questions will cover information about your current life career goals, possibilities for career planning and development, relevant demographic information, and about the people and events in your life that affect your effort in rebuilding your vocational life in Canada.

There are no foreseeable risks in completing this interview. We hope that you will benefit from the interview process with an increased self-awareness on issues related to career exploration and planning. We also hope that you would find the exploring nature of the study an interesting process from which you might learn something. However, even if the study does not benefit you directly, we hope that it will assist us in developing career counselling programs that will be beneficial to many other new immigrant professional workers arriving in this country every year. We really appreciate your interest, and we are very grateful to your participation.

To follow the nature and purpose of the study stated above, research participants in this study will include a total of 90 to 100 recent immigrant professionals. All participants selected will be 25 years of age and older. Each participant is invited to complete an audiotaped interview that will last for about 2 hours. The interview will take place in a meeting room at OISE/UT. As part of the interview, you will be asked to complete and return a 2-page Participant Information Sheet that contains your contact information and basic demographic information relevant to this research project.

The term "new immigrant professionals" in this study refers to a person who meets the following criteria:
(1) You are at least 25 years of age and older.
(2) You came to Canada as an immigrant within the last 13 years (i.e., January 1, 1994 to June 30, 2006).
(3) You had a university degree and worked full-time in a professional occupation for at least one-year in your county of origin before coming to Canada.
(4) You are currently employed either on a full-time or part-time basis, i.e., you are holding paid employment for at least 16 hours per week.

As one of the participants, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to complete the study, even if you finish a portion of it and then decide that you do not wish to continue. You may choose to refuse to answer any particular question or questions posed to you and still complete the interview. You may also refuse to participate or withdraw from the study, at any time, without any negative consequences to your personal life, academic standing, and other career prospects later.

Your employer(s) will NOT be informed either of your involvement in the study or of any aspects of the interview discussion.

In recognition of the time and effort you have given to participate in this research project, we would like to offer you an honorarium of $35 if you agree to participate and complete the interview process.
While we will be making an audiotape of this interview, your responses to this interview will be kept completely anonymous. Your results will be assigned to a code number to protect your identity. Any information that could lead to identify you (e.g., name) will be removed from the data while the interviews are transcribed into written data, i.e., written transcripts of the interview session. You will be assigned a pseudonym in the interview, as well as throughout the entire research process, including in the data analysis, final research report(s), and other related presentations and publications. Any possible identifying information about you will be replaced by a code during the research process. Your contact information, such as your name, phone numbers and email address, will be coded and kept separately from other files. All written and audiotaped data will be kept in secured files, and in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher and his research assistants have access. The data will be kept for 5 years starting from the completion date of the research project. After this 5-year time period, all the data including the audiotapes will be destroyed and/or erased.

The results of this study may be used again in another study. However, they will only be used by Dr. Chen and his assistants for research related to immigrant professionals’ vocational and career development issues. These research results may be presented in public settings such as professional and/or academic conferences, and other public forums. Reports and articles based on the research may also be published in academic and/or professional journals. Under such circumstances, your identity will remain strictly confidential, and only your pseudonym and coded information may be utilized.

We will be very glad to provide you with a summary of the current study’s results if you wish to receive such a summary report when this research project is completed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask either Dr. Chen, or his research assistant(s) (name of the prospective research assistants).

If you need more time to think about your option, please feel free to do so. You may contact me in a later time if you are interested in arranging an interview schedule with me.

If you are sure that you want to participate in this research, I can set up a time schedule with you now for the research interview.

Whether you will participate in the interview or not, I really appreciate your interest. Again, thank you very much for your time, and your inquiry about our research project!
CONSENT FORM

RE: Worklife Adjustment of Immigrant Professionals in Canada

You are cordially invited to attend this interview. The interview is part of a research project being conducted by Dr. Charles Chen, an Associate Professor of Counselling Psychology at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), and his research assistants. The interview questions are designed to examine the worklife adjustment experiences of new immigrant professionals. It is expected that the results from this study will lead to a better understanding of immigrant professionals' career development experiences and needs, and of the specific barriers and opportunities present for immigrant professionals in their vocational life transition in Canada. The interview questions will cover information about your current life career goals, possibilities for career planning and development, relevant demographic information, and about the people and events in your life that affect your effort in rebuilding your vocational life in Canada.

There are no foreseeable risks in completing this interview. We hope that you will benefit from the interview process with an increased self-awareness on issues related to career exploration and planning. We also hope that you would find the exploring nature of the study an interesting process from which you might learn something. However, even if the study does not benefit you directly, we hope that it will assist us in developing career counselling programs that will be beneficial to many other new immigrant professional workers arriving in this country every year. We really appreciate your interest, and we are very grateful to your participation.

To follow the nature and purpose of the study stated above, research participants in this study would include a total of 90 to 100 recent immigrant professionals. All participants selected will be 25 years of age and older. Each participant is invited to complete an audiotaped interview that will last for about 2 hours. The interview will take place in a meeting room at OISE/UT. As part of the interview, you will be asked to complete and return a 2-page Participant Information Sheet that contains your contact information and basic demographic information relevant to this research project.

The term "new immigrant professionals" in this study refers to a person who meets the following criteria:
(1) You are at least 25 years of age and older.
(2) You came to Canada as an immigrant within the last 13 years (i.e., January 1, 1994 to June 30, 2006).
(3) You had a university degree and worked full-time in a professional occupation for at least one-year in your county of origin before coming to Canada.
(4) You are currently employed either on a full-time or part-time basis, i.e., you are holding paid employment for at least 16 hours per week.

As one of the participants, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to complete the study, even if you finish a portion of it and then decide that you do not wish to continue. You may choose to refuse to answer any particular question or questions posed to you and still complete the interview. You may also refuse to participate or withdraw from the study, at any time, without any negative consequences to your personal life, academic standing, and other career prospects later.

Your employer(s) will NOT be informed either of your involvement in the study or of any aspects of the interview discussion.

In recognition of the time and effort you have given to participate in this research project, we would like to offer you an honorarium of $35 if you agree to participate and complete the interview process.

While we will be making an audiotape of this interview, your responses to this interview will be kept completely anonymous. Your results will be assigned to a code number to protect your identity. Any information that could
lead to identify you (e.g., name) will be removed from the data while the interviews are transcribed into written data, i.e., written transcripts of the interview session. You will be assigned a pseudonym in the interview, as well as throughout the entire research process, including in the data analysis, final research report(s), and other related presentations and publications. Any possible identifying information about you will be replaced by a code during the research process. Your contact information, such as your name, phone numbers and email address, will be coded and kept separately from other files. All written and audiotaped data will be kept in secured files, and in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher and his research assistants have access. The data will be kept for 5 years starting from the completion date of the research project. After this 5-year time period, all the data including the audiotapes will be destroyed and/or erased.

The results of this study may be used again in another study. However, they will only be used by Dr. Chen and his assistants for research related to immigrant professionals' vocational and career development issues. These research results may be presented in public settings such as professional and/or academic conferences, and other public forums. Reports and articles based on the research may also be published in academic and/or professional journals. Under such circumstances, your identity will remain strictly confidential, and only your pseudonym and coded information may be utilized.

We will be very glad to provide you with a summary of the current study’s results after the completion of this research project. If you wish to receive such a summary report, please indicate it clearly in the Participant Information Sheet attached. We would appreciate it that you could complete the Sheet and return it separately to the interviewer.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask either Dr. Chen, or his research assistant(s) (name of the prospective research assistants). Signing the bottom of this form will constitute your consent to this interview, as well as your consent to participate in this research project.

Thank you very much for your time and valuable assistance.

Charles Chen, Ph.D.  
Name of the Research Assistant(s)
Counselling Psychology Program  
Counselling Psychology Program
Department of Adult Education  
Department of Adult Education
and Counselling Psychology  
and Counselling Psychology
OISE/University of Toronto  
OISE/University of Toronto
Tel.: (416)923-6641 ext. 2485  
Telephone number
Email: cpchen@oise.utoronto.ca  
Email address

I understand the above information and voluntarily consent to participate in the research project described above. I have been offered a copy of this consent form for my own reference.

____________________________________  
(Print: Name of Research Participant)

____________________________________  
(Signature of Research Participant)  
(Date)
Dear Research Participant,

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this research project. We would appreciate it that you could complete this Information Sheet, and return it separately to the interviewer. Please PRINT the section entitled "Participant Response" below the line, and make a "Check Mark" where appropriate to indicate clearly whether you wish to receive a summary of the study results when it becomes available.

Charles Chen, Ph.D.  
Name of the Research Assistant(s)
Counselling Psychology Program  
Counselling Psychology Program
Department of Adult Education and Counselling Psychology  
Department of Adult Education and Counselling Psychology
OISE/University of Toronto  
OISE/University of Toronto
Tel.: (416)923-6641 ext. 2485  
Telephone number
Email: cpchen@oise.utoronto.ca  
Email Address

Participant Response

A. Preference for Research Results (Summary)

I would like to receive a summary of the study results when it becomes available.

YES ________  NO ________

Mailing Address:
Street_______________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
City____________________________  Province________________________
Postal Code_____________________
Tel.:  (Home)____________________  (Work)__________________________
     (Cell)______________________
Fax:  ____________________________________________________________
Email: ___________________________________________________________

Demographic Information

1. Gender:  female □ male □  other □ __________________
2. Age (in years) _____

3. Month and Year arriving in Canada: __________________________

4. Level of Education obtained before coming to Canada (e.g., college education, bachelor's degree, graduate degree, professional certificate and/or designation, etc.): ________________________________

   Please specify the Major/Discipline of your education from your home country (i.e., arts, science, engineering, commerce, etc.): ________________________________

5. Have you attended college or university after coming to Canada: _________
   If yes, please specify ________________________________

6. Please indicate your professional and/or vocational title before coming to Canada (e.g., teacher, nurse, engineer, accountant, etc.): ________________________________

   Please specify your workplace in your home country (i.e., school, hospital, factory, accounting firm, etc.): ________________________________

7. Please indicate the job title and/or the employment you are currently holding in Canada: ________________________________

   Please specify how long you have been working in this employment: ________________________________
THEME QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW

RE: Worklife Adjustment of Immigrant Professionals in Canada

I. Before Coming to Canada

(1) Could you tell me about your life and work experiences before coming to Canada?
   --Your family (parents, brothers and sisters, spouse/partner, children): What do they do?
   --Your educational background
   --Your work experience and vocational background
   --Your interests and hobbies

(2) In general, how would you describe your vocational life and career experiences back in your home country? Could you give me some examples?

(3) Why did you want to come to Canada, and how did you make this decision to come?
   --Reason(s) and rationale
   --Events and experiences that triggered your decision

(4) What preparation did you make when you decided to move to Canada as an immigrant professional?
   --Anticipated difficulties?
   --Compromise you made to facilitate the immigration process?

(5) What was your expectation and planning for your employment and vocational life in Canada?
   --Any information you gathered about employment in Canada?
   --Any preparation or action for this planning?

(6) How important was the role of employment and worklife in your decision of immigration to Canada? Why this was so, and could you provide some reasons?

II. After Coming to Canada: Initial General Experience

(1) What was your main purpose for coming to Canada? And when did you come?
   --Skilled independent worker, family reunion, refugee, etc. ?

(2) Could you describe your initial living experiences in Canada?

(3) What did you encounter when you first came to this country?

(4) How did you feel when you initially came to Canada?

(5) How did you cope with changes in life?

(6) What were the difficulties you encountered when you first came to Canada?

(7) What were the things you enjoyed most when you came to Canada

III. Ongoing Vocational Adjustment and Transition in Canada

(1) How important was it for you to find a job when you fist came to Canada? Which kind of jobs did you intend to find to get your worklife restarted in Canada?

(2) What were your basic priorities when you were searching for your new employment in Canada, e.g., money, job security, fit with past experience, personal interest, level of prestige, etc.?
(3) What did you do to find your initial employment in Canada? Could you tell me in sequential order the main jobs you have held since coming to this country, and your experiences with these jobs?
--Action you took to obtain these jobs.
--Events and/or people that led you to these jobs

(4) What were the common situations you encountered during your job search in Canada?

(5) What were some of the most common barriers in your job search in Canada? Could you give me some specific examples?

(6) Was there a gap between your employment expectation before coming to Canada and the reality of employment you were facing in Canada? If so, what were some of the main issues presented by this gap? How did you feel about these issues, and what did you do to deal with these issues?

(7) In your job search in Canada, how useful was your previous professional training and work experience from your home country? What did you do trying to get a job that is more related to your previous vocational and/or professional background experience from your home country?

(8) What were some of the expected and unexpected events that influenced your job-seeking and vocational development experiences in Canada? And how did you deal with such events?
--Anticipated or unanticipated barriers.
--Opportunities/people that led you to a vocational choice.

(9) How important is the impact of such events and opportunities on your vocational life in Canada?

(10) How important is the role and function of your personal action in responding to or creating these opportunities for your vocational development in Canada?

(11) What were the major compromises you made when approaching to an employment opportunity in Canada? How did you come to a decision when you had to make a compromise in finding and maintaining your new employment in Canada?

(12) How did you feel when you had to make a compromise for your vocational choice in Canada?

(13) What were some of the main lessons you learned from your job-search experience in Canada?
--Things that were helpful or not helpful to your worklife adjustment.

(14) What were the major factors you had to consider when you were trying to find employment in Canada? Why were these factors important?
--Concerns for financial survival.
--Gain Canadian experience.
--Some relevancy to previous educational and professional background experience.

(15) What was the role of retraining in your vocational development? Did you try to regain your previous professional qualification you had obtained from your home country? If so, what did you do and what happened to you as a result?

(16) Did you try to enter any academic and/or professional training programs for the purpose of better employment prospects in Canada? If so, could you describe in more details about your attempt or experience in these programs?
--Formal degree and professional designation programs.
--Various certificate/diploma programs.
--Trades training.

(17) If you had the experience of academic and/or professional retraining in Canada, could you describe your general impression and feeling about this training experience?
--Things you enjoyed the most.
--Things you enjoyed the least.
(18) How important and useful was your retraining experience to your employment opportunity in this country? And how do you assess the outcome of this retraining experience?
   --Leading to employment that was similar or close to your background experience.
   --Leading to new vocational choice and opportunity.
   --Leading to some employment with little or no satisfaction.
   --Leading to no beneficial outcome for employment.

(19) What were some of the most important factors that had an impact on your vocational adjustment process in Canada? Could you describe why these factors were important and how they had an impact on your coping experience?
   --Related social, economic, and cultural factors.
   --External support from the government, community, and friends.
   --Family relationship.
   --Other personal situations and circumstances.

(20) Could you tell me about your experiences in your current employment in Canada?
   --Circumstances that led you to your present worklife.
   --The nature of your employment.

(21) What was it like to be a new worker in a new country? How do you feel about your current job? Could you tell me the things you like and/or dislike about your current employment?

(22) In your current workplace, what are some of the most important factors that facilitate and/or hinder your vocational advancement? How do you cope with the difficulties you counter in your current worklife? Could you provide some examples?

(23) In general, how would you describe and assess your experience as a new worker in Canada? What impact does this experience have on your perception of self-worthiness as a new Canadian?
   --Pros and/or Cons, Gains and/or Losses?

(24) Do you feel a sense of vocational and career identity from your current employment experience in Canada? Why or why not?

(25) How satisfied do you feel about your vocational life experience in Canada?

(26) In your view, how important your vocational life is in your total new life in Canada? In what way your vocational life has had an impact on other aspects of your personal and family life in Canada? Could you give some specific examples?

(27) What are some of the main concerns and needs you have about your future worklife in Canada? How do you feel about your future vocational development prospects in Canada, and why do you feel this way?

(28) What will you intend to do to improve the quality of your vocational life and to enhance your career development in Canada?
   --Anticipate your vocational direction 5 years from now.
APPENDIX F: Administration Consent Letter (Printed on the Letterhead of OISE/University of Toronto)

Administration Consent Letter

RE: Worklife Adjustment of Immigrant Professionals in Canada

We are asking your permission to post a research Recruitment Advertisement/Poster (see attachment for the Ad) in the public bulletin board of your organization.

This Ad is intended to invite potential participants to attend a research interview. The interview is part of a research project being conducted by Dr. Charles Chen, an assistant professor of Counselling Psychology at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), and his research assistants. The interview questions are designed to examine the experiences of worklife adjustment of immigrant professionals. It is expected that the results from this study will lead to a better understanding of immigrant professionals’ employment experiences and needs, and of the specific barriers and opportunities present for immigrant professionals in their vocational life transition in Canada. The interview questions will cover information about the participant's past and current employment experiences, possibilities for vocational and career development, relevant demographic information, and about the people and events in the participant's life that affect her or his effort in rebuilding their vocational life in Canada.

There are no foreseeable risks in completing this interview. We hope that the participant will benefit from the interview process with an increased self-awareness on issues related to career exploration and planning. We also hope that the participant would find the exploring nature of the study an interesting process from which she/he might learn something. However, even if the study does not benefit the participant directly, we hope that it will assist us in developing career counselling programs that will be beneficial to many other new immigrant professional workers arriving in this country every year.

To follow the nature and purpose of the study stated above, research participants in this study would include a total of 90 to 100 recent immigrant professionals. All participants selected will be 25 years of age and older. Each participant is invited to complete an audiotaped interview that will last for about 2 hours. The interview will take place in a meeting room at OISE/UT.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The participant is under no obligation to complete the study, even if she/he finishes a portion of it and then decide that they do not wish to continue. The participant may choose to refuse to answer any particular question or questions posed to you and still complete the interview. The participant may also refuse to participate or withdraw from the study, at any time, without any negative consequences to his/or personal life, academic standing, and other career prospects later. The participant's employer(s) will NOT be informed either of the participant's involvement in the study or of any aspects of the interview discussion.

In recognition of the time and effort the participant has given to participate in this research project, we would like to offer each participant an honorarium of $35 if he/she agrees to participate and complete the interview process.

While we will be making an audiotape of this interview, the participant's responses to this interview will be kept completely anonymous. The study results will be assigned to a code number to protect the participant's identity. Any information that could lead to identify the participant (e.g., name) will be removed from the data while the interviews are transcribed into written data, i.e., written transcripts of the interview session. The participant will be assigned a pseudonym in the interview, as well as throughout the entire research process, including in the data analysis, final research report(s), and other related presentations and publications. Any possible identifying information about the participant will be replaced by a code during the research process. The participant's contact information, such as name, phone numbers and email address, will be coded and kept separately from other files. All written and audiotaped data will be kept in secured files, and in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher and his research assistants have access. The data will be kept for 5 years starting from the completion date of the research project. After this 5-year time period, all the data including the audiotapes will be destroyed and/or erased.
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We will be very glad to provide you with a summary of the current study’s results after the completion of this research project. If you wish to receive such a summary report, please indicate it clearly in the bottom part of this Consent Letter.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask either Dr. Chen, or his research assistant(s) (name of the prospective research assistants). Signing the bottom of this Letter will constitute your consent to permit the Recruitment Advertisement (in the attachment) to be posted publicly at your organization.

Thank you very much for your time and valuable cooperation.

Charles Chen, Ph.D
Counselling Psychology Program
Department of Adult Education
and Counselling Psychology
OISE/University of Toronto
Tel.: (416)923-6641 ext. 2485
Email: cpchen@oise.utoronto.ca

Name of the Research Assistant(s)
Counselling Psychology Program
Department of Adult Education
and Counselling Psychology
OISE/University of Toronto
Telephone number
Email address

I understand the above information. On behalf of my organization, I voluntarily consent to permit the Research Recruitment Advertisement (in the attachment) to be posted publicly at my organization. I have been offered a copy of this consent letter for my own records.

(Print: Name of the Organization)

(Print: Name and Position of the Organization Representative)

(Signature of the Organization Representative) (Date)