CAREER LEARNING AND ADAPTABILITY AMONG PROFESSIONAL IMMIGRANTS IN
THE CONTEXT OF RETRAINING

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study used grounded theory methods to better understand the ways in which professional immigrants learn and adapt in their careers within the context of career retraining. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 84 participants (50 males and 34 females).

The results of the data analysis revealed three overarching themes: learning about self (learning about one’s personality, career preferences and interests), learning about work environment (learning about regulations, expectations and work culture in Canada), and marketing self within current context (networking, developing a competitive resume, learning interview skills). These overarching themes interacted bi-directionally with one other, and with social interconnectedness and expanding self. Social interconnectedness refers to the finding that participants received valuable information from others in their community, and expanding self reflects changes in identity and thinking patterns. Learning about work environment and learning about self directly affected the process by which participants lost and regained a sense of
confidence and competence (*rediscovering self*). *Knowing self* (knowing one’s strengths, interests, and skills) helped participants effectively market themselves to employers. Finally, *willingness to start over* was central to participants’ career development journey in Canada. This theme reflected participants’ openness to retrain, begin with an entry-level position, take responsibility for desired changes, and make necessary compromises.

A new model has been developed based on these results: The Learning and Adaptability Model of Career after Relocation. These results inform policy making for government-sponsored support programs for immigrants and are important for helping professionals who work with professional immigrants and others who are adjusting to a new career environment. Suggestions for future research on career learning and adaptability for professional immigrants are presented.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Foundation of the Current Study

Career and work life has been the focus of a large body of research over the last century. Beginning with Frank Parsons’ trait and factor theory in 1909, the discipline of career psychology has remained of keen interest, perhaps because humans spend approximately one-third of their waking life working (Duane et al., 2002). Work is central to adult life in modern economies and provides an opportunity to develop a social identity, increase self-esteem, and develop useful skills (Creed & Blume, 2013; Grady, 1983; Porfeli & Lee, 2012).

Until very recently, research in the field of career psychology has neglected immigrant populations (Kagitcibasi, 2003; Stebleton, 2007). Until then, career research had focused largely on the experiences of domestic-born, white, educated populations with a high socioeconomic status (i.e., undergraduate students) (Fassinger, 2001; Vespia, Stone, & Kanz, 2000). Owing to differences in culture between domestic-born and foreign-born individuals, the career development experiences of the former population may differ in important respects from the career development experiences of the latter. Therefore, the career development of immigrants is not well understood (Blustein, 2001a; Bohon, Johnson & Gorman, 2006; Stebleton, 2007).

Lack of knowledge about the career development experiences of immigrants is a concern owing to the increasing globalization of our economy and movement of labour, service, and products worldwide (de Vries, 2012). It has become imperative that we understand the career behaviour of individuals moving across borders (Levent et al., 2003). This is especially true for Canada, given that the number of immigrants admitted to Canada
continues to increase with each passing decade (Statistics Canada, 2009). In 2011, approximately two-thirds of Canada’s population growth was driven by immigration (Statistics Canada, 2011). In the Canadian labour force, 70% of the growth in the last decade is attributed to immigration (Vu, 2003). Immigration is predicted to account for 100% of Canada’s net labour force in the near future (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2012).

Professional immigrants are those who possess a university degree or valuable work experience from their home country (Novak & Chen, 2013). This type of newcomer comprises the largest share of immigrants to Canada (Zietsma, 2010), and numbers are continuing to rise, jumping from 44% in 2000 to 67% in 2010 (Statistics Canada 2008; Zietsma, 2010). Immigrants to Canada are proportionally more educated than Canadian-born workers. In 2006, it was documented that 36% of immigrants between the ages of 25 and 54 held a bachelor’s degree, compared to 22% of Canadian-born individuals (Statistics Canada, 2007).

Research on the career development of professional immigrants is important, particularly because of the many career barriers they face after arriving in Canada. Many economic-class immigrants are admitted through Canada’s Federal Skilled Worker Program (Novak & Chen, 2013), a program created by the Government of Canada in the 1960s to assess immigrants based on their skills and qualifications, rather than on their gender, race, or ethnicity (Ng & Shan, 2010). The program uses a point system to award foreign credentials, encouraging highly skilled immigrants to apply for entry (Somerville & Walsworth, 2010). These types of programs give newcomers the impression that their foreign credentials and work experience will be recognized in Canada (Grant, 2008). However, the harsh reality is that this is seldom the case (Barbera, 2013; Guo & Anderson 2006; Reitz 2003; Ng & Shan, 2010;...

Since 20% of professions in Canada are regulated and require a license (Government of Canada, 2011), many professional immigrants find it difficult to find meaningful or comparable work after arriving in Canada (Barbera, 2013; Ng & Shan, 2010; Yap, Holmes, Hannan, & Cukier, 2014). Many professional immigrants experience a “double bind”: they have difficulty getting hired without a Canadian license, but cannot attain a Canadian license without Canadian employer references (Ngo & Este, 2006). Thus, many professional immigrants undergo long periods of unemployment in Canada (Barbera, 2013; Ng & Shan, 2010; Novak & Chen, 2013; Somerville & Walsworth, 2010; Yap, Holmes, Hannan, & Cukier, 2014).

Since unemployment contributes to financial strain and psychological distress, many immigrants will often settle for a job that is available to them in order to reduce these stressors. However, the types of jobs that are available to them are often ‘low-level’ or ‘survival’ jobs: low paying jobs, which are outside their desired field and for which they are overqualified (Barbera, 2013; Kadkhoda, 2002; Yap, Holmes, Hannan, & Cukier, 2014). This phenomenon is referred to as ‘underemployment’. One study found that 77% of professional immigrants in Canada were overqualified for their job (Zietsma, 2010). Furthermore, the same study found that in comparison to Canadian-born populations (4%), more foreign-born individuals (11%) were working in jobs with no skill or education required.

Unexpected shifts in the career development of professional immigrants can negatively impact their sense of self and where they fit in the world of work (Sinacore, Mikhail, Kassan, & Lerner, 2009). In fact, many newcomers must reconstruct their sense of self in order to
progress in their careers. Professional immigrants whose credentials are not recognized often feel a loss of power and social status (Dean & Wilson, 2009). Combined with a loss of social support, these effects may cause psychological stress. Feelings such as frustration, anger, and sadness may be common (Somerville & Walsworth, 2010).

In addition to unemployment, underemployment, and associated financial strain and psychological stress, professional immigrants also face discrimination (Barbera, 2013; Lau, 2015; Ng & Shan, 2010). Yakusho (2008) describes a recent increase in anti-immigration and xenophobic views in the western world. Immigrants who are visible minorities arriving from countries such as China, India, and the Philippines (Statistics Canada 2008, 2012) also suffer from racism (Berger, 2004; Marsella & Ring, 2003).

Discrimination based on poverty and gender often exacerbates these negative experiences. These widespread prejudices, assumptions, and stereotypes can negatively impact professional immigrants’ self-efficacy and can hinder their ability to obtain fulfilling and meaningful employment (Yakusho, 2008). Coutinho and Blustein (2013) found that perceived ethnic discrimination moderated the relationship between career planning and academic engagement in black immigrant high school students. Furthermore, discrimination contributes to the “glass ceiling” effect, a subtle yet powerful barrier for immigrants’ career growth (Shinnar, 2007). The glass ceiling can prevent individuals from attaining managerial positions and tends to increase in severity in higher status careers (Maume, 2004).

Individuals who relocate also face the challenge of integrating into a new culture: a process known as acculturation. Acculturation is an important part of any immigrant’s transition and adaptation to a new country, and involves embracing and incorporating norms, values, and practices of a new culture (Abraido-Lanza, Echeverria, & Florez, 2016). It
involves multiple levels of adjustment including linguistic, socio-cultural, and psychological. Linguistic adjustments involve adapting to the dominant language of one’s new surrounding environment, a vital factor in immigrants’ career development and job success (Yakusho, 2008). Oral communication is vital in any work environment, even one that relies primarily on technical skill (Kadkhoda, 2002). Furthermore, report writing is common in many careers, and employers regard grammar and spelling mistakes poorly. For professional immigrants whose first language is neither English nor French, language can be one of the largest barriers to finding work after arriving in Canada (Lau, 2015; Ng & Shan, 2010; Sinacore et al., 2009).

Individuals moving from Eastern to Western hemispheres often experience a profound change in cultural context, as these cultures differ in their perspectives on what is important in personal and interpersonal contexts. Eastern cultures tend to have more collectivist attitudes and western cultures tend to be more individualistic (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009). Therefore, immigrants who move to Canada from eastern cultures must learn to integrate their collectivist culture with our individualist one. This complicates the task of career development, as cultural identity is crucial in developing beliefs about where and how one fits in the world with regard to work (Juntunen & Cline, 2010; Lopes, 2006).

The acculturation process can be confusing and stressful (Rumbaut, 1991; Stebleton, 2007). This is true even for individuals who are well prepared prior to migration. Other psychological consequences of acculturation include posttraumatic stress, grieving the loss of a previous identity, loneliness, loss of self-esteem, and fatigue stemming from cognitive overload (Berger, 2004; Espín, 1997, 1999; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Yakushko & Chronister, 2005).

Professional immigrants endure many career barriers after coming to Canada, which
disrupt their career development. These include difficulties surrounding discrimination and acculturation, as well as barriers relating to lack of credential recognition and associated unemployment, underemployment, financial and psychological strain. To cope with these stressors, many professional immigrants participate in career retraining (Dean & Wilson, 2009; Ng & Shan, 2010). Retraining provides increased opportunities to find fulfilling and meaningful employment and helps immigrants adapt to their surrounding environments. The process by which professional immigrants learn and adapt to their surrounding environments in the context of retraining is of interest to the present researcher.

**Rationale of the Study**

The above-noted research outlines the many barriers and stressors that immigrants face after arriving in Canada, all of which impact their well-being and career development experiences (Zikic, Bonarche, & Cerdin, 2010). Currently, the paucity of research on professional immigrants in Canada limits our understanding of the immigrant experience and our ability to assist immigrants in their vocational development. Unfortunately, research on immigrant experiences in other countries is not necessarily transferable to immigrant experiences in Canada as the literature identifies country-specific differences in career development (Hamilton et al., 2008; Nanda and Khanna, 2010). Therefore, programs designed to help immigrants transition to Canada should be informed by research based on the experiences of immigrants in Canada.

Furthermore, little is known about the ways in which professional immigrants learn and adapt during retraining. Retraining has been identified as a popular and effective coping mechanism to deal with many of the carrier barriers that professional immigrants face, and can help them find meaningful work (Dean & Wilson, 2009; Ng & Shan, 2010). Of particular
interest to the current researcher, are the ways in which professional immigrants engage in
career learning and adaptability in the context of retraining. The current research will fill in
gaps in the research and advance existing career theory by investigating these phenomena.

Learning and adaptability are concepts rooted in biology and evolution. They help us
understand human behaviour in a variety of contexts. Humans are in a constant state of flux as
they react to changes and new information in their environments. The term ‘career adaptability’
was originally introduced by Donald Super and colleagues (Super & Kidd, 1979; Super &
Knasel, 1979), as a theoretical concept to describe the ways in which adults adapt to changes
in the working world (i.e., job opportunities, qualifications for hire).

Savickas (1997, 2005) re-conceptualized the term as a psychosocial construct
involving readiness and resources for change during occupational transitions and traumas. This
change emphasized the role of coping mechanisms in dealing with career change, and how
these mechanisms help individuals become more aware of their personal strengths, career
resources, and career knowledge in adapting to new contexts (Rottinghaus, Buelow, Matyja, &
Schneider, 2012). Since Savickas’ reconceptualization, career adaptability has been applied to
both career theory and practice in helping individuals make career decisions (van Vianen,
DePater, & Preenan, 2009). Adaptability has also been documented as a useful concept to
apply to person-career models (Goodman, 1994; Savickas, 1997).

In 2007, adaptability was defined as the willingness and ability to change in response
to the environment (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007). More recently, Rottinghaus and
Van Esbroeck (2011) extended career adaptability as a dynamic concept and an interactionism
term, involving both personality and context across the lifespan. Adaptability takes into
account the interaction between emotions and cognitions within changing environments
(Hirschi, 2009). The emphasis on context matches the current trends of career development research. As such, the construct of adaptability has been applied to career assessment and has contributed to the development of traditional assessments based on personality and individual differences (Rottinghaus & Van Esbroeck, 2011).

Individuals who are more adaptable tend to plan ahead, have an increased desire to explore themselves and their environment, have a higher tolerance for uncertainty, and are more comfortable in new environments and across organizational boundaries (O’Connell, 2008; Savickas, 1997). Adaptability is considered particularly important for success in today’s working world, which is becoming increasingly diverse, global, and unstable (Biemann, Zacher, & Feldman, 2012; Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003; Eby, Butts, &Lockwood, 2003; Hall, 1996, 2004; Raabe, Frese, & Beehr, 2007). Being adaptable in one’s career helps individuals succeed in their careers and improves job performance and well-being (Guan et al., 2013; Hirschi, 2009; Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012; Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013). Career adaptability is also beneficial for adolescents, as those who score higher in career adaptability are more successful in career transitions (Creed, Muller, & Patton, 2003; Germeijs & Verschueren, 2007; Neuenschwander & Garrett, 2008).

Research on adaptability in immigrant populations is scarce. One study explored socio-demographic variables and career adaptability development in grade eight Swiss students (Hirschi, 2009). The results showed that students with immigrant backgrounds demonstrated less career adaptability than their non-immigrant counterparts. In addition, they had more difficulty finding an apprenticeship after school. However, more research is needed to clarify the underlying reason for these findings, as both groups were equally motivated to pursue their career goals (Hirschi, 2009).
Research on professional immigrants in Canada has documented the importance of learning about and navigating the Canadian work environment. To obtain meaningful employment in Canada, immigrants need to gain an understanding of work-related concepts (e.g., minimum wage) and work-appropriate behaviours (e.g., punctuality, completing assigned tasks, professionalism) (Novak & Chen, 2013). It is also imperative that immigrants broaden and adopt skill sets including networking and interview skills (Sinacore et al., 2009). Other research on immigrants found adaptability to be integral to employability (Eby & Buch, 1995; Fugate et al., 2004). In particular, maintaining a positive attitude about unemployment may lead to critical reflection about one’s career identity, which may lead to positive changes in one’s identity and increased self-esteem.

The adaptation process in immigrants is a complex one, involving many changes to work environment, job skills and knowledge, networking skills, social customs and practices, personal identity, and work identity. As such, there is a critical need for a vocational model on learning and adaptability in the context of retraining among professional immigrants in Canada.

To date, two qualitative studies have investigated the retraining experiences of professional immigrants in Canada. Barbera (2013) found that retraining helped immigrants to develop self-confidence, self-efficacy, and a career identity. Retraining also improved their ability to tolerate uncertainty, work/life balance, and encouraged them to persevere. In Barbera’s Relative Encompassment Model of Career Resiliency, the interaction of internal and external variables affected the likelihood that an immigrant would be resilient and use appropriate coping methods. These variables included barriers and opportunities, values and norms, social support, coping responses, and individual skills and characteristics (Barbera, 2013).
Lau (2015) formulated an Existential and Human Agency Model of Career Re-development. This model stated that immigrants experienced transitional barriers (i.e., lack of foreign credential recognition, difficulty gaining employment), which contributed to a loss of career identity and an existential death. After this stage, many immigrants practiced acceptance, openness, and freedom, while taking responsibility for their own career development (Lau, 2015). This led to planning and career action until long-term goals were met.

Together, these models outline the ways in which retraining provides an opportunity for professional immigrants to learn information about themselves and their surroundings with regard to their career identity and development. They also highlight the importance of resilience and healthy coping strategies for this population.

The current research is important for career theory. Past research on the immigrant population has tended to conceptualize them as oppressed, helpless, and weak, often ignoring their strengths and resourcefulness (Cole et al., 1992). Research emphasizing the ways in which immigrants learn and adapt to new career circumstances is crucial in providing a more holistic and just representation of immigrants. Furthermore, ongoing research into the retraining experiences of professional immigrants in Canada is crucial in a number of practical ways.

First, this research will help to inform public policy and stakeholders involved in the creation of new programs and revision of existing programs designed to ease immigrant adjustment to the Canadian work environment. This will help to improve the well-being of professional immigrants and to decrease the rate of employee turnover and boost morale (Lopes, 2006). Existing programs include bridging programs offered by the Ontario Ministry
of Citizenship and Education, which offer workplace skills training (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015). Examples of such programs include Skills for Change, LINK, and University Settlement.

Second, increasing systemic knowledge and understanding about this ever-growing, population has positive implications for Canada’s economy and will promote social and political harmony. Third, gaining an understanding of the complex career experiences of professional immigrants will help career counsellors in their work with this population. In particular, counsellors will be better able to help immigrants understand what to expect from retraining, make decisions about retraining, and assist them overall in their career transition. Furthermore, this research will help overseas career counsellors better assist newcomers to Canada in their career transitions and retraining experiences (Savickas, 2005b; van Vianen, DePater, & Preenan, 2009).

**Objectives of the Current Study**

There are two main objectives of the current study. First, this study intends to explore how recent professional immigrants to Canada engage in learning and adaptability in the context of career retraining. These are individuals who possess a university degree from their home country or have worked full-time in a professional occupation before coming to Canada. This research will contribute to existing literature on the unique career experiences of this particular population. Second, this study will posit a new theory of learning and adaptability based on this population. This theory will describe the ways in which immigrants engage in career learning and adaptability in the context of career retraining.

**Overview of Chapters to Follow**

The following chapter, Chapter two, is a literature review outlining existing research
on career development in relation to learning and adaptability for immigrants as well as the general population. Chapter three, methods, will describe the methodology used in the current study. The following chapters will use “newcomers”, “immigrants”, and “professional immigrants” interchangeably to describe professional workers who have recently made Canada their home for career and personal reasons.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the theoretical foundation on which the current study stands. A historical discussion of major career theories presented over the last century will be reviewed, followed by an overview of three career theories: Bill Law’s career learning theory, Krumboltz’ social learning theory, and Savickas’ career construction theory. These theories will provide the foundation for which the current study explores career learning and adaptability among professional immigrants in the context of retraining. Following this section, key concepts in career learning including self-reflection, adapting to work culture, coping, and career compromise, as well as relevant empirical literature will be reviewed. To conclude this chapter, findings on career learning and adaptability among immigrants and the research question of the current study will be outlined.

The Concept of Career

According to Sharf (2010), “being satisfied with one’s career is one of the most important aspects of an individuals’ personal happiness” (p. 1). Work provides feelings of fulfillment and provides economical, spiritual, social, and personal reward. Since humans dedicate an abundance of time and energy to work, those who are dissatisfied with their careers are often dissatisfied with other areas of their lives (i.e., interpersonal relationships,
Defining the term ‘career’ is a complex task, as many career theorists have slightly different perspectives. Some theorists consider career development to be a dynamic, lifelong process (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996; Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1990), whereas others view career development as a stage-based experience in adolescence (Gottfredson, 2002). Despite differences in definitional approaches, Chen (1998) noted that most career theorists agree that career is powerful, influential, active, and essential for most individuals.

Chen (1998) suggested that ‘career’ should be replaced by ‘life career development’, since career experiences have a bi-directional relationship with life experiences. This idea was originally introduced in the 1980’s, when the National Career Development Association included life roles such as leisure and personal interests in their definition of career (Sears, 1982). Gysbers and Moore (1981) and McDaniels (1978) agreed with this viewpoint. Raynor and Entin (1982) extended the definition of career to include one’s self-perception in past, present, and future social contexts.

Approximately one decade later, after technological developments and globalization, the definition of career was expanded to recognize the ever-changing nature of the workforce (Peavy, 1993). At this time, many career theories had not yet incorporated career development experiences of individuals from lower socioeconomic status brackets in their definitions of career (Richardson, 1993). To accommodate for this gap, Richardson (1993) extended the concept of career to include work as a means of earning a living.

Vocational psychology has been described as a “vigorous and relevant scholarly domain, with sophisticated research studies, elegant theories, and a rich set of implications for counseling and assessment practice” (Blustein, 2001, p. 171). With new developments in
theoretical models, psychological measures, and practical directions, vocational psychology is considered a strong and dynamic discipline. Future directions in vocational psychology include increased attention to non-white, lower class populations (Blustein, 2001), as well as those who do not have a post-secondary education (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2000). Another population that is being increasingly researched includes individuals who have immigrated to a new country and are starting over in their careers. A subset of this population includes those who have gained education or work experience in their home country and have enrolled in retraining in a new country.

Career Development in Research: A Theoretical Foundation

As a discipline, psychology has progressed in large part through theoretical inquiry. Theories represent groups of organized laws or relationships, which explain evidence-based phenomena (Heinen, 1985). Career development theories, in particular, strive to explain human reactions to thousands of experiences, over a period of many years (Sharf, 2010, 2013; Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008). In the last century, career theory has undergone numerous changes and revisions. There are three distinct waves that reflect three major changes in vocational theory (Chen, 2003). The following section will discuss career theory development over the last 100 years using these three waves as a framework.

The first wave of career theory is characterized by person-environment fit theories. These types of theories emerged in the early 1900’s and highlighted personality, the environment (i.e., work, school, family), and how the two interact (Sharf, 2010, 2013). Person-environment fit theorists attempted to match personality to environment. This matching process was believed to be integral to understanding career choice and development.
Frank Parsons was among the first to propose a career theory. Frank Parsons worked with youth and placed them in categories based on their physical appearance, personality, and interests. His trait and factor theory was one of the first career development theories to emerge (Sharf, 2013). The overarching goal of the theory was to match the traits and characteristics of individuals to particular characteristics and qualifications required by occupations. The “trait” component was a characteristic of a particular individual, usually measured through testing (e.g., aptitudes, achievement, interests, values, personality) (Parsons, 1909). The “factor” component referred to a characteristic necessary for success in a certain occupation. The trait-factor matching process was conducted in hopes of identifying suitable occupations for youth looking for work (Parsons, 1909). Parsons (1909) suggested that a match between human nature and work environment increased the likelihood that an individual would be satisfied, happy, well-paid, and enthusiastic at work (Parsons, 1909).

Parsons identified three factors central to the vocational choice process. The first of these factors was a clear understanding of self. This included an investigation of one’s own aptitudes, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations, and their causes (Parsons, 1909). The second factor, knowledge of the requirements and conditions of work options, referred to gaining “knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities and prospects in different lines of work” (Parsons, 1909, p. 5). This factor was deemed particularly important, given that information about work options can impact vocational decisions. The third factor integrated the knowledge about self and the world of work.

Although trait and factor theory emerged in the early 1900’s, it is still fundamental to the field of career psychology and is fairly consistent with modern career counselling
approaches (Rottinghaus et al., 2012; Zytowski & Swanson, 1994). Interestingly, Parsons’ agenda was primarily to help poor, working class individuals find work (Blustein, 2001). As such, he was well aware of the unique barriers and experiences of this population (Davis, 1969).

Following Parsons’ trait and factor theory, a number of person-environment fit theories surfaced. For example, the Work Adjustment Project was developed by Rene Dawis and Lloyd Lofquist (1984), which stated that work adjustment, or length of time on the job, could be predicted from satisfaction and satisfactoriness. Satisfaction referred to feelings of satisfaction with work, while satisfactoriness referred to the employer’s satisfaction with the worker (Dawis, 2002, 2005). With foundations in trait and factor theory, work adjustment theory consisted of three stages. First, an individual’s abilities, values, personality, and interests were assessed. Second, requirements and conditions of occupations were measured. Third, the individual’s abilities and values were matched to occupational ability, and degree of fit was assessed.

Another person-environment fit theory that followed Parson’s was Holland’s theory of types (Holland, 1985, 1997). This theory stated that an individual and her environment interact with one other to create six types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. The six types are not described in isolation but in combinations of three using three-letter codes (Holland, 2000; Holland, Powell, & Fritzsche, 1994).

The Myers-Briggs type theory was also developed at this time. The Myers-Briggs theory proposed that people observe events and make judgments based on those observed events. According to Myers (1993), people perceive in two ways: sensing and intuition. Sensing refers to direct ways of perceiving such as touch, taste, and smell while intuition
refers to abstract perceptions about meanings and relationships (Sharf, 2013). People judge in two ways: thinking and feeling. Thinking refers to analytical and objective thought while feeling refers to empathic thought (i.e., concern for the welfare of others).

These four concepts were combined in various ways to make four type-combinations: sensing and thinking, sensing and feeling, intuition and feeling, and intuition and thinking (Myers, 1993). Each of these type combinations was matched to a set of occupations. For example, sensing and thinking individuals were matched to pragmatic positions such as law and business management, while sensing and feeling individuals were matched to people-oriented occupations such as social worker or doctor.

Aspects of first wave career development theories can be seen in modern career theory. However, these theories have been criticized for their limited applicability, as they mainly inform career counselling practices. They have also been criticized for their static approach to career development and lack of attention to the environmental context (Sharf, 2013).

In response to these criticisms, a new wave of developmental theory arose after World War II. These theories viewed career as an ever-changing, developmental phenomena, which existed over the course of one’s life (Zunker, 2006). They allowed for changes in maturation and self-exploration to dictate changing work roles (Super, 1990). These theories strongly contributed to career counseling practices, as assessments began to include maturational stages of development. Furthermore, these theories gave increased attention to the environmental context of an individual’s career path. In particular, the interaction between the individual and environment was considered integral to understanding one’s career path (Chen, 1998b). The emphasis on context represented a shift from the objective career to the subjective career.

Examples of such theories include Bill Law’s career learning theory. This theory
examined changing motivations and feelings about work throughout an individual’s self-development process. Another example is Chen’s (1998) life career concept. In this theory, the concept of ‘life career development’ replaced ‘career development’ to reflect the complexities and comprehensiveness of career throughout an individual’s lifespan (Chen, 1998b). The life-space/lifespan career development theory by Super (1990) explored life roles and life stages (Super, 1970; Super & Nevill, 1989; Zytowski, 2004). Examples of life roles include “studying, working, community service, home family, and leisure activities” (Sharf, 2010, p. 252). The importance of these roles lies in a person’s commitment to an activity and the degree to which a person values that activity.

Through life roles, individuals gather information about their self-concept, which they use to make career decisions. This process is crucial to career satisfaction. Super (1990) also emphasized the interaction of the roles: roles can work in harmony with one another or can conflict with one another. When roles conflict, it is often overwhelming and confusing (Super et al., 1996). However, when they work in harmony, it can enrich life. Super (1990) argued that the degree to which an individual values her career role depends on individual and cultural values. Many different life roles interact to shape each other. For example, non-work roles influence work roles and the meaning that individuals give to their work (Super et al., 1996).

Another developmental theory that arose during the second wave was Gottfredson’s theory of circumscription, compromise, and self-creation (Gottfredson, 2002). Similar to Super’s theory, Gottfredson’s theory aims to describe how people interact with their environments while creating self-concepts. The theory attempted to describe gender and class differences, as they relate to career choices, and stressed the importance of specific barriers that individuals face in the process (Gottfredson, 2002). While highlighting the importance of
group differences, Gottfredson’s theory also recognized the role of individual differences in career development. One of the primary goals of the theory is to discourage individuals from participating in unnecessary circumscription and compromise at early stages of career development, enabling them to find their “best fits” (Gottfredson, 2002). People typically develop a cognitive map of occupations: a cognitive idea of how the self fits with possible occupational choices.

Developmental theories were applauded for offering a novel perspective on career development across the lifespan (Chen, 1998b). However, they were criticized for overemphasizing white, privileged populations. In doing so, these theories largely ignored barriers related to social status and class.

In response to these criticisms, the third wave of career theory emerged. This wave emphasized the cultural and social environment. These theories proposed that there are no fixed realities; individuals create their own personal reality based on their own experiences (Kang, Kim, & Trusty, 2017). The premise behind these theories was that social positions dictate the type of job opportunities available (Law, 2010). In other words, people don’t need to think about what they want to do; they will do whatever is available to them (Roberts, 1977; Willis, 1997). The impact of the social environment may be even more pronounced for individuals who are socially disadvantaged and have less social capital (Shinnar, 2007). Immigrants would fit into this category, since immigrants often do not have an established social circle after moving to another country. Immigrants who are ethnic minorities might also experience discrimination and have even more difficulty building a social network. Therefore, theories in the third wave highlight the social and economic barriers minorities and immigrants...
face in their career journey (Shinnar, 2007). They also recognize various aspects of culture that influence the career development of immigrants.

The third wave included social constructionist and social constructivist theories (Sharf, 2013). These kinds of theories proposed that people construct themselves and the world around them through interpretations and interactions with others. These constructions can be helpful or harmful and differ among individuals (Kang, Kim, & Trusty, 2016). For example, one individual can have the same experience as another, but can construct the meaning of the event very differently. People are self-organizing and are constantly revising their own story to make meaning. In order to find meaningful work, individuals must reflect on their own life experiences and constructs they hold about their lives, themselves, and their work.

Although similar, social constructionist and social constructivist theories differ in important respects. Social constructionist theories examined the ways in which individuals find their place in the world of work and how the world of work finds a place within individuals’ lives (Brott, 2001). Constructionist theories suggested that culture and gender interact within the context of individuals’ actions (Young et al., 2007). Stories exist within a cultural context, as culture guides one’s development of attitudes, skills, and values (Cochran, 1997). Social constructivist theories, however, examined meaning making and constructions from the social and psychological world via cognitive processes (Young & Collin, 2004). Social constructivist theories also acknowledged the interaction between social relationships and internal cognitive constructions (Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Young & Collin, 2004).

Cochran’s Narrative Career Counselling is a constructivist approach, which combined subjective and objective approaches to understand the meaning of work and career choices (Cochran, 1997). Cochran (1997) suggested that subjective approaches to career counselling
can be addressed effectively through literary models and constructivist methods. Literary models, such as narrative approaches, lay the foundation for meaning and meaning making. People commonly tell stories that reflect their actions and placement of meaning in their lives (Howard, 1989; Russell, 1991).

Savickas’ career construction theory explained interpersonal processes by which people impose meaning and direction on their vocational behaviour (Basucca, 2007). Career construction theory is an updated and expanded version of Super’s theory of vocational development (Savickas, 2005b; Basucca, 2007). Super’s theory emphasized an organic model of development while Savickas’ theory emphasized a contextualist model of development (Savickas, 2002).

Other theories in the third wave emphasized the role of both community and culture (Law, 2010). These types of theories stated that people act for and in response to other people. Encounters with and attachment to individuals is the cause and effect of career development (Law, 2010). Relationships with family members, peers and mentors appear to impact career development by influencing career decisions and knowledge. However, relational influences on career development were believed to manifest differently among individuals, genders, and ethnicities (Shinnar, 2007). Therefore, to understand the impact of relationships on career development, the interaction must be considered within multiple contexts and across cultures. For example, Krumboltz’ social learning theory assumed a dynamic relationship between self and community.

Other types of theories integrated both positivist and constructivist approaches. For example, Chen’s integrated theory of career development suggested that careers are dynamic throughout the lifespan and that people exercise agency in constructing their careers (Chen,
The following section will introduce learning and adaptability in the context of career and through the lens of three theories: Bill Law’s career learning theory, Krumboltz’ social learning theory, and Savickas’ career construction theory. A discussion about gaps in the literature with regard to career learning and adaptability among professional immigrants will follow.

**Career Development: Learning and Adaptability**

Career adaptability is central to vocational psychology (Brown & Lent, 2016), but concepts of learning and adaptability are not exclusive to the study of career. In the biopsychosocial discipline, these concepts refer to inborn and acquired skills that help an individual meet challenges and anxieties in the environment (Fine, 1991). Successful adaptation depends on the degree of fit between one’s inner psychological processes, emerging capacities, and the outer world. Mastery is developed and sustained by adverse environmental events.

Within the discipline of career, adaptability is defined as a psychosocial construct, which helps to shape strategies for directing adaptive behaviours (Savickas, 2013). “Adaptability refers to the willingness and ability to change behaviours, feelings, and thoughts in response to environmental demands” (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007, p. 248). According to Savickas (2013), career adaptability has four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Career concern is considered the most important dimension and describes the degree to which an individual plans her career moves. Career control represents the level of felt responsibility toward building a career and being actively involved in occupational transitions (Savickas, 2005b). Career curiosity refers to exploration of the working world and information about jobs and career confidence reflects an individual’s belief
as to whether she has the ability and means to carry out career plans. While these dimensions are distinguishable, they are highly correlated (Hirschi et al., 2015; Konstam, Celen-Demirtas, Tomek, & Sweeney, 2015). However, these studies used only self-report measures and therefore lacked insight into how individuals experience these dimensions.

Career adaptability is related to work outcomes such as job satisfaction (Coetzee & Stoltz, 2015; Fiori, Bollmann, & Rossier, 2015, Chan & Mai, 2015), work engagement (Merino-Tejedor, Hontangas, & Boada-Grau, 2016), career optimism (Tolentino et al., 2014), subjective career success (Zacher, 2014), overall well-being (Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013), teamwork employability skills (de Guzman & Choi, 2013), perceptions of control (Duffy, 2010), job-search strategies (Koen, Van Vianen, Zikic, & Nauta, 2010), career-decision self-efficacy (Duffy, Douglass, & Austin, 2015; Guan et al., 2016), career identity (Negru-Subtirica, Pop, & Crocetti, 2015), and promotability (Chan, Mai, Kuok, & Kong, 2016). Career adaptability has also been found to act as a mediator in predicting career planning, networking and proactive skill development (Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015), career exploration (Li et al., 2015), career competencies (Dumulescu, Balazsi, & Opre, 2015), and strategic competence (Guan, Yang, Zhou, Tian, & Eves, 2016).

Career adaptability was found to partially mediate the relationship between career activity and career engagement whereby increases in activity predicted increases in engagement. Career engagement refers to proactive development of one’s career and includes career exploration and networking skills (Hirschi et al., 2014). The activity dimension included “work compulsion, general activity, restlessness, and work energy” (Aluja et al., 2010, p. 424). These findings were in line with research conducted by Zecca and colleagues (2015) and suggest that people who are more active in their career are also more likely to have
psychosocial resources to help them cope with challenges (Savickas, 2005b). They also suggest that individuals who are more energetic at work may engage in more realistic thinking in decision-making and information seeking, which may predict future success (Nilforooshan & Shalimi, 2016).

Many studies have uncovered a link between personality and career adaptability (Rossier et al., 2012; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015; Zacher, 2014). One recent study found that career adaptability mediated the relationship between personality dimensions (i.e., career activity, neuroticism, sensation seeking) and career engagement (Nilforooshan & Shalimi, 2016). According to the Five-Factor Model (FFM) (McCrae & Costa, 1999), personality traits affect an individual’s characteristic adaptations (i.e., career adaptability), which regulate expressions of behaviour (Rossier et al., 2012). Another integrative theoretical model of personality (Rottinghaus & Miller, 2013) describes career adaptability as a dynamic mechanism by which affect and mood are connected to a career narrative (a story that describes what is meaningful to an someone in terms of their experience and understanding of the world).

Career adaptability was found to mediate the relationship between career engagement and neuroticism, whereby increases in neuroticism among career adaptability dimensions led to decreases in career engagement (Nilforooshan & Shalimi, 2016). It is worth nothing that this study was based on a small sample size and used convenience sampling, and thus the generalizability was limited. However, this type of relationship between neuroticism and career outcomes was also found in previous studies (Rogers et al., 2008; Rossier et al., 2012). This research suggests that symptoms of anxiety, depression, dependency, and low self-esteem may impact feelings related to control and career confidence. Furthermore, neurotic
individuals may be more prone to pessimism and rumination of negative thoughts and less likely to learn about themselves and their experiences (Nilforooshan & Shalimi, 2016).

One study investigated predictors of career adaptability among adolescents. Using the multidimensional measure of career adaptability presented by Savickas (2002), a regression analysis was used to examine whether goal decidedness, capability beliefs, emotional disposition, and social context beliefs predicted the development of career adaptability over time (Hirschi, 2009). Perceived social support and positive emotional disposition, non-immigrant background, and pursuit of vocational education were found to significantly predict career adaptability over and above other variables including socio-demographic and human capital variables (i.e., gender, age, nationality, level of parental education) (Hirschi, 2009). Furthermore, higher levels of career adaptability significantly predicted an increased sense of power and life satisfaction.

Over the years, a number of measures have been developed to assess career adaptability. For example, the Career Adaptability (CA) measure is a subscale of the Turkish version of the Career Futures Inventory (CFI; Rottinghaus, Day, & Borgen, 2005). Components of the CA subscale include positive career planning attitudes, expectations related to outcomes, and aspects of Parsons’ tripartite model and Bandura’s personal agency model (Rottinghaus et al., 2012). Sample items from the CA subscale include, “I enjoy trying new work related tasks” and, “I can adapt to change in the world of work” (Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2015). Other subscales include career optimism and perceived knowledge of the job market (Rottinghaus et al., 2012). The CA is considered a useful tool in understanding attitudes toward career transitions and challenges.

Another scale used to measure career adaptability is the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale
(CAAS) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), which measures the four dimensions outlined above: career concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Sample items for career concern are, “I think about what my future will be like” and, “I am prepared for the future” (Zacher et al., 2015). Sample items for career control are, “I make decisions by myself” and, “I take responsibility for my actions”. For career curiosity, examples are, “I explore my surroundings” and, “I investigate options before making a choice”. Items such as, “I am overcoming obstacles” and, “I perform tasks efficiently” are used to measure career confidence. Other scales that examine these four dimensions include the Career Maturity Inventory (Crites, 1973; Seifert & Stangl, 1986), and the Career Development Inventory (Seifert & Eder, 1985; Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Jordaan, & Myers, 1981).

One study examined the relationship between career adaptability as measured by the CAAS and career entrenchment - a feeling of “immobility resulting from substantial economic and psychological investments in a career that make change difficult” (Carson, Carson, Phillips, & Roe, 1996, p. 274). An individual would have a high level of career entrenchment if they believed changing jobs would mean losing invested time, money, and energy (Carson, Carson, & Bedeian, 1995). Consistent with high career entrenchment is the belief that one has few career alternatives and that changing jobs would incur a significant socio-emotional cost (i.e., losing professional contacts and friendships with colleagues). Career entrenchment can lead to negative outcomes (i.e., occupational strain, poor well-being) and positive outcomes (i.e., commitment to job, job satisfaction). Positive outcomes are more common when individuals make proactive changes in their current work environment to tackle work-related problems. This is a healthy coping response to career entrenchment, and includes behaviour such as asking for new tasks or challenges, waiting for job concerns to resolve naturally, and
focusing on activities outside of work (Carson & Carson, 1997).

One study examining career entrenchment and career adaptability found a negative correlation between career adaptability and career entrenchment (Zacher et al., 2015). Among specific dimensions of career entrenchment, career adaptability was negatively correlated with perceptions of limited career alternatives, suggesting that career adaptability facilitates open-mindedness about alternative career options, and vice versa. However, only 23.5% of the sample in this study had completed college and over half of the sample (55.7%) had been employed in their current job for less than three years. Level of education and amount of time at current place of work may significantly impact one’s level of career entrenchment, which may affect the results of this study.

Employability is a psychosocial construct involving adaptability, career identity, and human and social capital (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashworth, 2004). This is an expanded definition in comparison to more traditional definitions, which are unidimensional, and outcome-based (i.e., someone is employable if she is easily able to gain employment) (Ritchie, 2000; Van der Heijden, 2002). Career identity refers to the ways individuals define themselves in the context of career (Fugate et al., 2004). Often referred to as a ‘cognitive compass’, career identity is used to navigate career opportunities and reflects ‘knowing why’ competencies (i.e., career motivation, personal meaning and values) (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994). Due to the ever-changing nature of the modern career world, externally defined career success has become less reliable and important in comparison to internally defined success, particularly when an individual is unemployed (Anakwe, Hall, & Schor, 2000; Hall, Briscoe, & Kram, 1997; McGreevy, 2003).

Career identity likely interacts with adaptability to optimize efficiency and
proactiveness during unemployment. O’Connell (2008) suggested that adaptability may be correlated with self-confidence and marketability and may contribute to a problem-focused approach to job searching. Furthermore, a strong career identity and a high level of adaptability may encourage individuals to view unemployment as an opportunity to reflect on their career identity and development (Eby & Buch, 1995; Fugate et al., 2004). Individuals whose career identities were bound up in their lost careers may be more susceptible to low self-esteem during unemployment (Shaffer, 2002).

Social and human capital can also be used as a buffer to protect one’s self-esteem during unemployment. Social support has been shown to increase healthy coping and self-esteem in stressful situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; McIntosh, 1991). McKee-Ryan and colleagues (2005) suggested that human capital factors such as level of education can increase well-being during unemployment. An individual who is well educated may be less anxious about finding another job (Price & Fang, 2002).

A longitudinal study investigating employability in relation to self-esteem, job search during unemployment, and re-employment after six months found that “20% of the variance in self-esteem and 42% of the variance in job search was explained by employability” (McArdle et al., 2007, p. 257). Adaptability variables (i.e., open-mindedness and proactive personality) and career identity variables (i.e., identity awareness and career self-efficacy) as well as social support were all found to contribute to the employability model. In one study, networking was found to contribute to employability (McArdle et al., 2007). This study demonstrated that employability has a large impact on one’s mental well-being and self-esteem during periods of unemployment. It was also found to facilitate a proactive approach in engaging with the labour market. Overall, this study sheds light on the powerful impact of employability (McArdle et al.,
2007), particularly in the modern career context, which is riddled with job instability, unemployment, and lateral progression (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003; Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003).

A review of the quantitative and qualitative literature on career adaptability over the past decade reveals positive correlations between career adaptability and sense of control, social support, self-esteem, career optimism, general and professional well-being, employability skills, and a number of personality dimensions including extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness (Duffy, 2010; de Guzman & Choi, 2013; Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013; Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, 2010). Adaptability was found to be positively correlated with career planning and career exploration (Rudolph, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017), although this study was based exclusively on adaptability as measured by the CAAS developed by Savickas and Porfeli (2012).

The relationship between resiliency and adaptability has been examined more recently. Researchers have found that resiliency facilitates adaptation to changing labour markets by increasing the ability to cope with personal and structural barriers (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012; Fleig-Palmer, Luthans, & Mandernach, 2009; Sultana, 2011). Resilience in the workplace has been defined as “the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, and failure or even positive events, progress, and increased responsibility” (Luthans, 2002, p. 702). Research on Turkish undergraduate students found that students who were more resilient, hopeful, and optimistic were more likely to perceive themselves to be adaptable in their careers (Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2015).

The above-noted research highlights the applicability of career learning and adaptability to professional immigrants, as this population experiences various career
challenges while trying to find work in Canada. These include unemployment, underemployment, difficulties associated with acculturation, low self-esteem, and stress (Vaughn, Jacquez, Lindquist-Grantz, Parsons, & Melink, 2017). The literature on career adaptability suggests that an immigrant’s level of adaptability in dealing with these types of career barriers will ultimately affect her overall career transition experience and career development.

**Career Learning Theories**

Career growth and development is a lifelong process. Career plans are subject to constant revision, adjustment, and possible abandonment (Law, 2010). Career choices based on a one-time review of options and priorities are weak because both options and priorities are subject to change. A theory that respects the ever-changing nature of career is considered a career learning theory. This type of theory allows for “thinking and rethinking, action and new action” (Law, 2010, p. 1).

Career learning theories differ from other types of career development theories such as trait and factor theories and self-concept theories in that they consider early learning to be the bedrock of future learning (Law, 2010). Unlike other theories, career learning theories recognize that career attitudes and priorities are under constant revision, as are people’s understandings of themselves and what they are looking for in the world of work.

Three career learning theories, Bill Law’s career learning theory, Krumboltz’ social learning theory, and Savickas’ career construction theory, will serve as a guide in exploring the topic of the current study. Collectively, these theories suggest that people gather information, make comparisons, and anticipate consequences of their career actions. Furthermore, these theories suggest that people have thoughts and beliefs about themselves
and the environment, which arise from genetic endowment, environmental conditions, learning experiences, and task-approach skills (Law, 2010; Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990, 1996). They suggest that people impose meaning and direction on their vocational behaviour within their interpersonal relationships (Basucca, 2007). People engage in these behaviours continuously over the lifespan, as career development is complex and dynamic (Krumblotz & Henderson, 2002; Law, 2010; Savickas, 2005a). These theories assume that career learning and adaptability are central to career development.

**Bill Law’s Career Learning Theory.** Bill Law’s career learning theory suggests that career learning happens in the context of surrounding social and cultural influences. There are parallels between child development and social learning literature because the ways in which people learn and grow in their careers is a reflection of the ways they learn and grow in other areas of life (Law, 2010). Career stories are written through the lens of individual and subjective variables. Individuals have basic capacities and developed capacities. Law (2010) defines basic capacities as those with which we have an innate ability to do and developed capacities as those that require learning.

Career plans are never set in stone, and the concept of progression is a cornerstone of the theory (Law, 2010). Progression is considered a repertoire, which is “a progressively acquired range of material - some basic, some developed” (Law, 2010, p. 7). The concept of progression is common in learning theories (Meadows, 1993). In career development, the repertoire refers to in-depth knowledge of causes and effects, efficiency and precision in acquiring and organizing information, adaptability in negotiating contracts, and competency in handling hardships (Law, 2010). Law (2010) assumes that most people have the capacity to develop a repertoire, but that they need assistance in doing so throughout their career
development journey. The repertoire includes four steps: *sensing, sifting, focusing, and understanding*.

**Sensing.** Sensing is the first step in developing a repertoire. In this step, people gather information and assemble sequences. People need to gather information about work in order to make informed decisions about their careers. In addition, people need reliable and accurate information to identify job opportunities that are practical, achievable and locatable. Gathering information gives people the knowledge about what to expect in the working world.

Sensing begins in childhood. Children often gather information about work by learning about careers through their family and surrounding community. Growing up, children learn about their parents’ careers through observation (i.e., touch, taste, sight, sound, smell). They also take in information from media shared online and on television. Gathering information early in life leads to construction of frames-of-mind that are used to accommodate career learning later in life. Natural frames are considered maps, which include ‘where to go, how to get there’, and ‘expected obstacles’. The process of map-making is reflected in the language of career (i.e., words such as path and road) and is carried into adulthood.

Children can locate work roles topographically and metaphorically. Both of these methods of locating include proximity to the child and between work options. The child can visualize herself on the map, on the road to a particular destination. The child also visualizes herself in roles that have metaphorical relationships (i.e., friend, sister, daughter). This process of attributing roles to the self sets the bar for future ways of thinking about self in work and in relationships with others.

In addition to gathering information, sensing also involves assembling sequences. Whereas information gathering locates work in space, assembling sequences locates work in
time. Memories of past events enter consciousness in fragments and people can typically place them into their narrative. Narratives are also like maps, and include information about the self and work. They are incomplete and complex.

Fiske (1993) emphasizes the importance of narratives and suggests that the best stories are the ones that are consistent and include all of the evidence. These stories help individuals make decisions and make connections between their own role and another’s role (i.e., mother and daughter, employer and employee). Furthermore, they help individuals make sense of the ways in which they progress, making decisions and confronting barriers along the way. Lastly, narratives present sequences that help people better understand cause and effect. In essence, narrative making and story-telling become the primary modes of teaching and learning.

**Sifting.** Sifting is a process by which people make sense of learning, and involves making comparisons and using concepts. Making comparisons is a process by which individuals compare and contrast maps and stories of places, people, and actions. Even children engage in comparisons. For example, children may notice that their mother’s job as a lawyer is different from their father’s job as a teacher. Comparisons help children to classify roles and attach them to particular occupations (i.e., teachers work at the school and lawyers work at the courthouse).

As children learn about jobs, they acquire enough information about them to classify them. This process is called construct formation. Constructs help people organize what would otherwise be an overwhelming amount of information. They are multi-dimensional and personal. Individuals generate their own versions, which are shaped by their own perspectives and past experiences. Constructs can be formed hastily and impulsively when information fits into a particular stereotype. For example, a job can be quickly categorized as unacceptable or
inferior if stereotyped as “women’s work”. Maps, narratives, and constructs help individuals remember important information to guide them along their career development journey. While maps reflect space and stories reflect time, constructs reflect causality. For example, constructs are often used to explain career decisions (e.g., “I don’t want to be a teacher because I want to work outside”).

In addition to making comparisons, individuals use concepts to learn about themselves and careers. Concepts and constructs are similar yet different. While constructs are personal and based on an individual’s subjective experiences, concepts can be learned from others. Concept formation reflects mature cognitive capacities and tends to occur as children grow and develop. Concepts are shared, and therefore help individuals communicate with and teach others about occupations and their roles. For example, an individual may construe that teachers, lawyers, and comedians talk to an audience. However, in order to provide a comprehensive definition of these occupations, she must use concepts such as entertainment, law, and education. The link between constructs and concepts is critical, as it reflects a connection between the personal and the economic.

Career learning theory concepts are adaptable and dynamic, in that they change along with the economy and political movements. Occupations that fit into particular categories such as women’s work, public sector, and teaching will continue to evolve as society evolves. The terms ‘work’, ‘role’, and ‘self’ are themselves generic concepts that involve multi-layers of ways to describe and locate career. There are six core forms of questions that form the basis for identifying career-related concepts. These six questions include location (i.e., at home, in a shop, outside), activity (i.e., talking, using tools), condition (i.e., noisy, clean), time (i.e., 9 to 5, in shifts), people (i.e., smart people, lazy people), and cause (i.e., the job is interesting, the job
pays well). Some classifications are concrete and others are more abstract. Young children tend to think in more concrete terms while older children think more abstractly.

**Focusing.** Focusing is the next step in career development. The assumption behind focusing is that an individual holds a point of view, which shapes the way information is processed. Focusing requires a close-up analysis of events, and involves thinking about how one does or does not fit with particular constructs and concepts. For example, an individual may think about how her own experiences and perceptions led her to classify occupations and how other people’s perceptions and categorizations may differ from her own. This process is called ‘dealing with points of view’ and is an integral task in focusing. People must learn to understand when they can and cannot agree with others.

Children are exposed to others’ points of view in the home, amongst friends, and in the larger community. Seeing another as holding a different perspective is an important milestone in children’s learning. This process also helps children challenge societal “rules” and think outside the box. Some career rules are objective and set in stone (i.e., facts about the labour economy, health risks in particular occupations). However, others are subjective and should be subject to scrutiny and revision.

Encounters with others help people develop new points of view about themselves and their career (Law, 1981). Community interaction plays a large role in the development of cultural, gender, and social class stereotypes. Challenging the status quo often brings about doubt, fear, and insecurity, but also growth, motivation, and learning. Career development is therefore often emotionally charged. Individuals who always choose the “safer” route become passive recipients of societal rules and stagnant in their own development.
‘Taking one’s own view’ is the second component of focusing. Taking one’s own view involves more than just reacting to environmental stimuli. In order to take in, store, and remember information, individuals must be interested in the information or they must consider it to be a confirmation of prior learning. Map making, narrative construction, and classifications created in early childhood establish the framework for this type of learning.

Individuals feel attracted to and repulsed by other points of view. These emotional reactions bring about feelings of motivation and generate self-reflection about one’s likes, interests, needs, and values. Self-reflection emphasizes the motivational and emotional components of career development. Motivations are embedded in cultural values, which are shared through music, stories, people, and work. These processes help people understand why they are doing particular jobs and what motivates them to pursue those jobs. Career choices may accord with cultural influences present at the time. However, an individual should be careful not to blindly choose a career path based purely on cultural influence. Confusion, discomfort, and anxiety often arises in career decisions, as career plans are either similar or dissimilar to cultural values, are supported or unsupported by significant others, and confirm or challenge prior learning and developed points of view. Career learning theory assumes that people are willing to work through these difficulties and confront their own anxieties and uncertainties.

Points of view are dynamic. Individuals may change their points of view multiple times in a short time span. Points of view may also change as a person develops new identities. These processes are similar to accommodation (i.e., altering mental schemas to account for new experience) and assimilation (i.e., altering new experiences to fit existing mental schemas) of Piaget and Inhelder’s (1969) child development theory. In other words, the mind
not does simply react to external events, but engages in a two-way relationship with them. Career learning theory suggests that adults engage in similar processes in their own learning (Law, 2010).

Career learning is experimental and inductive. For example, in deciding whether a particular occupation is suitable only for women, adults may engage in critical thinking. They may ask themselves whether they have enough information to make a decision. This stage of critical thinking often brings about confusion and disequilibrium, as one’s previous ways of conceptualizing the world are challenged and shaken (Law, 2010). As such, learning requires some degree of discomfort.

**Understanding.** The fourth step is understanding, which involves developing explanations and anticipating consequences (Law, 2010). Reflection and point of view development that occurs in ‘focusing’ prepares people for this step. In developing explanations, people make connections between their points of view and their actions.

As individuals witness others’ narratives in literature, they make deductions about why the characters acted in particular ways. These are explanatory hypotheses, which people also apply to their own behaviour. The hypotheses and theories that researchers and scientists apply to their own work are not dissimilar to these commonplace deductions. Sparkes (1994) views understanding as a crucial step in career development, since it is important for creating solutions to new and unique problems. He argues that applying past solutions to new problems may not be appropriate because they may not take into account changing circumstances.

Career learning theory supports this notion: formal thought is a tool to write and re-write narratives, which creates new possibilities for interpersonal and social roles (Law, 2010).
This step distinguishes between personal narratives and wide-angle narratives. Wide-angle narratives describe why people with particular characteristics tend to choose one job over another, or how changes in technology influence society. They are different from personal narratives because they use information from science and literature. They use generalities to explain behaviour and values, and act as a meta-narrative. Some theorists argue that career development is best described through meta-narratives (Roberts, 1977) while others argue that personal narratives are more relevant to the study of career (Willis, 1977). Career learning theory posits that the re-transmission of meta-narratives into personal narratives is integral to career behaviours (Law, 2010).

Anticipating consequences reflects a process of acting on understanding. After individuals create explanations for their past actions, they tend to engage in future actions based on these explanations. These actions are based on anticipated consequences. In deciding what actions to take, individuals also create experiments to try things out. With these experiments, people make inferences about future actions and consequences. These processes involve visualizations of risk, which involve some degree of imagining the self in future scenarios. Credibility and logic is of utmost importance in decisions regarding career. Career learning theory states that in career decisions, individuals should ask themselves whether they have enough information, whether that information is reliable, whether they understand that their decisions are influenced by others, and whether their decision can be seen from alternate points of view.

The process of reflection is often unique to the individual. Career education and guidance can help people recognize the difference between the objective and subjective, and between fact and opinion. In contemporary working life, people manage and re-work their
careers throughout their lifetime. Taking into account community and culture, people sense, sift, focus, and understand at important milestones throughout career development.

**Application to professional immigrants.**

Bill Law’s career learning theory is applicable to professional immigrants because his theory emphasizes unique experiences in the surrounding social environment and thus, the construction of narratives relevant to their career development. According to Law (2010), professional immigrants would engage in all four steps – sensing, sifting, focusing, and understanding, during their career transition after immigrating to Canada. New learning would not replace previous learning, but would complement it. In this sense, preexisting concepts, constructs, and narratives would be challenged and altered. In the sensing and sifting steps, immigrants would gather new information about jobs and would compare this information to what they’ve learned in their own communities and families growing up. As they encounter new experiences in their new community, they would develop new concepts and constructs to help guide them in their career journey. They would reflect on their own work values and skills in a new light. For example, they might reflect on how their skills can be applied to job opportunities in Canada.

Next, professional immigrants would engage in focusing, in which they would develop new points of view and reflect on their own concepts and constructs. They might think about how their new surrounding community classifies careers and how they fit into these classifications. Finally, in the final step of understanding, their personal and wide-angle narratives would be challenged. They would develop new understandings of work values embedded in the surrounding culture and community and reflect on whether their preexisting values fit with those values.
**Krumboltz’ Social Learning Theory.** Krumboltz’ social learning theory of career decision-making emerged at a time when trait and factor theories were most popular (Feller, Honaker, & Zagzebski, 2001). The theory was derived from a research project directed by G. Brian Jones and Anita Mitchell, who worked together with John Krumboltz to create the theory. In social learning theory, instrumental interactions, in which success is considered most important, and associative interactions, in which cultural values are considered most important, are distinguished (Law, 2010). These terms replaced the original terms ‘classical conditioning’, ‘operant conditioning’, and ‘observational learning’, coined by Bandura (1971). Associative learning involves both classical conditioning and observational learning.

In social learning theory, each individual’s uniqueness is recognized, as well as her biological traits and roles in social settings (Krumboltz et al., 1976; Kromboltz, 1984; Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990, 1996). Furthermore, the social context in which an individual lives is taken into account. The goal of Krumboltz’ social learning theory is to predict the degree of fit between one’s personality and one’s occupation of choice.

Bandura (1986) believed that learning experiences have a larger influence on personality than genetic or intrapsychic variables. Krumboltz developed a theory of career decision-making based on this premise, in which behaviour and cognitions play a fundamental role in making career decisions (Krumboltz, 1994b; Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). According to Krumboltz, there are four factors of career development: genetic endowment, environmental conditions, learning experiences, and task approach skills. These four factors help to explain why certain career and academic choices are made.

**Genetic endowment/special abilities.** An individual’s genetic endowment and special abilities are inherited and innate, rather than learned. They include aspects of one’s appearance
(i.e., height, hair colour, skin colour), predisposition to physical illness, and special talents. For example, some individuals are born with special artistic, writing, or musical abilities. People tend to respond better to learning and teaching when they are born with a preexisting talent in a certain domain. For example, someone born with a natural talent in music will respond to musical teaching and is more likely to become a skilled musician than someone born without a natural talent. Social learning theory highlights the importance of learning and enhancing skills and abilities where possible.

**Environmental conditions and events.** It is well known that environmental conditions and events are significant factors that influence career development. These include family traditions, geographical location, and law and legislation (Krumboltz, 1979, Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005). There are many environmental conditions that affect individuals, many of which are outside one’s control. Environmental conditions can be social, cultural, economic, and political (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002). Climate and geography also have significant effects on people and their career development. For example, someone living in a region that is heavily polluted or prone to earthquakes may make different career decisions than someone who is living in an area without these environmental risks.

Social factors largely influence career decisions. Societal shifts and advancements in technology affect job opportunities. Communities differ greatly in the types of jobs that are in demand (i.e., urban areas require bankers and marketing positions while rural areas require farmers and ranchers). Social and personal factors have a significant impact on the availability of educational resources (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002). For example, an individual whose parents have the financial resources and motivation to help them through school will have more educational opportunities than an individual whose parents cannot provide financial
support or encouragement. Social conditions affect the availability of training opportunities: universities, technical schools, and apprenticeship programs all vary as to what types and levels of opportunities they provide. Autin and colleagues (2018) found that among immigrant students, lack of social capital and economic constraints were significant vocational barriers. However, this study was conducted on undocumented immigrants in the U.S. – a population that may differ in important respects from Canadian immigrants.

In addition to social factors, there are many occupational conditions that affect the job market. These variables cannot be predicted or controlled. One such variable is the number and nature of career opportunities; jobs may be limited by the weather (i.e., fishing) or by changes in the economy. Requirements for occupational options also vary; some jobs require a college or university degree while others require a license (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002). Furthermore, salaries of positions vary depending on the level of prestige and societal value, as well as supply and demand. Labour laws put a cap on the number of people in a particular occupation, and safety requirements can also influence job availability.

**Learning experiences.** One’s career development and career choices are largely dependent upon one’s prior learning experiences. A child in school will be exposed to information hundreds of times throughout the day. This information may cause emotional reactions in a child, ranging from excitement and happiness to confusion and disappointment. Each child will react differently due to differences in personality and life experience.

There are two different types of learning experiences: instrumental (H) and associative (O) (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002). Instrumental learning experiences have three components: antecedents, behaviours, and consequences. Antecedents are conditions that precede behaviours. Examples of antecedents include genetic endowments, special abilities,
and environmental events. Examples of behaviours include working on a school project, studying for an exam, or researching an occupation. Consequences result from behaviours and can be obvious or subtle. If behaviours result in positive consequences, an individual will be more likely to repeat those behaviours. For example, if an individual receives a good grade in a course, she is more likely to take that course again and may consider pursuing a career in that field. If she does poorly, however, she may choose to enroll in a different course or may not consider a career in that field (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002).

Associative learning experiences are those in which an individual connects a prior neutral experience with one that has been recently experienced as positive or negative (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002). Observation and classical conditioning fall into this category of learning. Classical conditioning occurs when one event is generalized to a category of experiences. For example, if a person is fired from a job, she may assume that she will be fired from other jobs, and become fearful in future occupations. Less consequential associative learning occurs through observation. For example, a girl may observe her mother perform her work duties and imagine herself in the same role. Positive role models and positive reinforcement contribute to the development of appropriate career planning skills and behaviours (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002). Indirect associative learning experiences occur during activities such as reading and overhearing conversations. People acquire much of their occupational information this way. When inaccurate information is received, this may lead to stereotyping.

People have thousands of learning experiences in their lifetime (Feller, Honaker, & Zagzebski, 2001). Learning experiences have a profound impact on individuals’ perceptions of themselves and how they fit in the working world. They teach people what they like, what they
want, what they expect, and who they are. They also help people better understand their attitudes towards work. This knowledge plays a large role in career decisions.

**Task approach skills.** Task approach skills refer to the ways in which individuals approach tasks (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002) and include work habits, cognitive and emotional responses, and problem solving (Krumboltz, 1979). They also involve goal setting, generating alternatives, predicting future events, clarifying values, and obtaining occupational information (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996; Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002). These skills are crucial in career decision-making and are developed through experiences in the world, such as studying and working. Task approach skills affect the outcome of a task. For example, a student’s ability to study for a math exam is dependent on her natural math talent, how she was taught math, and her math knowledge. These factors will affect her grade on the math exam.

Both task approach skills and social learning affect self-reactiveness. How an individual approaches a task or career decision will determine the ways in which she will self-regulate, which will affect her ability to appropriately apply her task approach skills. Individuals often apply task-approach skills to career decision-making (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002). However, some task-approach skills may not be appropriate for career decision-making because they are not sufficient for people to develop generalizations about themselves and the world. In addition, one’s ability to make generalizations about oneself and the world may need to be challenged.

**Generalizations.** An integral part of career decision-making is the ability to make observations and generalizations about oneself and the world. Observations about oneself include evaluating one’s abilities, competencies, interests, and career values. These
observations are often made during learning experiences. Generalizations about the world include evaluations of the world of work and outside events.

Self-observation generalizations about abilities are assumptions that individuals make about their own abilities. These generalizations are often based on information about the self. For example, one may observe that one has great talent in writing but does not do well in science. However, some individuals make inaccurate observations about themselves and give themselves too little or too much credit. To arrive at a more accurate self-observation, an individual should compare her own view of herself to how others see her.

Self-observation generalizations about interests reflect generalizations about what one does and does not like. Interests can be more or less specific. Interest inventories can be helpful for those who have a difficult time identifying interests based on previous learning experiences (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002). Self-observation generalizations about values are assumptions about one’s personal and work values. Personal values include personal interests or desires and work values include success in a certain field and fulfillment in particular career goals. Examples of other work values include obtaining a job with prestige, security, or a good income.

Krumboltz’ social learning theory is regarded positively in the literature. Bandura (1969, 1977, 2002, 2007) has compiled research that supports a social learning view of human behaviour based on reinforcement and observational learning theory. Roe (1976) suggested that it is a comprehensive and organized theory that includes the many factors involved in career decision-making. Mitchell & Krumboltz (1996) conclude that there is considerable support for key propositions in the theory but that “much remains to be learned” (p. 270).
Strengths of the theory lie in its potential to ‘evolve and change easily as new facts and anomalies are revealed’ (Krumboltz, 1994, p. 29).

**Application to professional immigrants.** Due to social learning theory’s capacity to embrace an ever-changing career world, the theory has applications to professional immigrants in Canada. As mentioned above, social learning theory considers career to be dynamic and lifelong (Krumboltz, Foley, & Cotter, 2013). Many professional immigrants face economic crisis after moving to Canada, and are forced to change career paths or retrain in order to regain employment. They must learn and adjust to a new working environment (Novak & Chen, 2013). They must learn the language, social and cultural practices, and skills relevant to Canadian jobs. According to Krumboltz and Henderson (2002), professional immigrants’ career learning and adaptability would be influenced by their genetic endowment, social conditions, prior learning experiences, and task approach skills. The roots of social learning theory are complimented by Savickas’ career construction theory.

**Savickas’ Career Construction Theory.** Career construction theory is a relatively new theory developed in the past 15 years, although roots of the theory date back to the early works of Super, Holland, and Adler. Developed by Mark Savickas, career construction theory attempts to explain the interpersonal processes by which people impose meaning and direction on their vocational behaviour (Basucca, 2007). Vocational behaviour is a developmental process by which individuals choose and adapt to a career. A career experience is referred to as a “life course” and includes a sequence of occupations in an individual’s life.

Career construction theory uses the response-response paradigm and a social constructionist lens through which to study career (Basucca, 2007). Savickas attempts to understand social constructions from the point of view of the client rather than from scientific
measurement (Savickas, 2002). Savickas’ work can therefore be understood through a “subjective” viewpoint, wherein a client’s story and life history is integral (Savickas, 2002). Career construction theory holds that individuals give meaning to their own career behaviour (Savickas, 2002). Real events give meaning to an individual, transforming individuals from actors in their careers to subjects in their own career story (Savickas, 2002; Basucca, 2007). A central question then becomes: “How can individuals negotiate a lifetime of job changes and transitions without losing their sense of self and social identity?” (Basucca, 2007, p. 58).

Savickas considered one’s adaptation to the environment and events that individuals face to be very important to career research (Savickas, 2005a, 2005b). Stages of life, Savickas noted, are less important. One tenet of career construction theory is that an individual’s career is not made up of test scores or opinions of family and friends. As one’s career unfolds, one makes choices and develops a narrative or a story (Savickas, 2005a, 2005b).

Career construction theory aspires to be a comprehensive theory by incorporating a tripartite framework to organize theories of personality (Savickas, 2005b). Using this framework, Savickas was able to divide the entire theory into three classic segments of career theory (Savickas, 2001): (a) individual differences in traits that address the “what” of vocational behaviour (vocational personality), (b) developmental tasks and coping strategies that address the “how” of vocational behaviour (developmental tasks and dimensions of career adaptability), and (c) psychodynamic motivations that address the “why” of vocational behaviour (life themes).

Vocational personality. Vocational personality refers to individual differences in vocational traits (Savickas, 2013). Savickas suggests that personality types are socially constructed attitudes, interests, and abilities that comprise a person’s social reputation. There
are six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. Realistic types are practical while investigative types enjoy intellectual challenges (e.g., puzzles), reading, or talking about science. Artistic types are creative and enjoy art, music, writing, and cooking, whereas social types enjoy being around others and helping others with their problems. Lastly, enterprising types desire money while conventional types like to organize and plan for the future. Savickas views these six types to be dynamic and ever changing.

The vocational personality segment assumes the following: that individuals have different vocational characteristics, that different occupations require different characteristics, and that occupational success depends largely on whether an individual finds her occupation an adequate outlet for her characteristics (Savickas, 2013).

**Developmental tasks and dimensions of career adaptability.** Career adaptability is an integral concept of career construction theory (Savickas, 2013). In career construction theory, career adaptability refers to psychosocial resources which people use to cope with changes in their career environments. These psychosocial resources are also used to solve problems in vocational development tasks, career transitions and traumas.

An individual constructs her career in a multilevel social world (Savickas, 2002). Within the social world are influences relating to culture, racial group, school and family life. An individual interacts bi-directionally with the surrounding social world. Work connects individuals to broader social groups. For example, an Asian American male might be encouraged by his family to become a physician while a female with the same genetic potential might not be encouraged to this extent and may not reach for the same level of career (Savickas, 2002).
The concept of life space is important. Life space refers to the social roles that are played out by individuals within the time and space of their own culture (Savickas, 2002). For example, the society-created concept of gender impacts career and other life roles. Social elements that create a life space have both core and peripheral roles. Core roles hold a central place and define personality, whereas peripheral roles hold less significance. For example, a medical student’s core role might be student, child, and sibling (Savickas, 2002). These roles interact to shape each other, and give meaning to career decisions.

Childhood pretend play and rules provide a framework for developing preferences for core and peripheral roles and a structure from which to develop them. Children typically use role models as a guide for providing solutions to their problems. Role models are imitated and the results from these experiences are documented, aiding in the development of self-concepts (Savickas, 2002). Hobbies are key components in the development of self-concepts. Career construction theory maintains that one’s work role validates her self-concept. In other words, a job helps a person become who she wants to be (Savickas, 2002).

Super (1953) emphasized one life path with five periods of life through which career changes and goals are implemented. Individuals move from one stable condition to another (Savickas, 2002). Each period of life represents a “stage” and is named after a particular goal. Each stage represents change, however, stages embody societal expectations and are aimed at re-establishing stability. Accomplishing tasks is a sign of healthy role functioning while skipping tasks is thought to result in difficulties at later stages (Savickas, 2002). Tasks and career concerns should “mesh” at each stage, and the degree to which they mesh is proportional with vocational maturity. Stage 1, growth, encompasses the developmental task of forming a vocational concept (Savickas, 2002). Stage 2, exploration, describes the process
by which one learns to fit oneself into society in a way that unifies both inner and outer worlds. Stage 3, establishment, involves implementing a self-concept in a work role. Stage 4, maintenance/management, consists of self-concept preservation and maintaining one’s occupational position and stage 5, disengagement, involves retirement planning and retirement living (Savickas, 2002).

**Life themes.** The third segment, life themes, encompasses the narrative component of career construction theory (Savickas, 2005b). This segment is derived from Adler’s lifestyle concept (Savickas, 1988; 1989), which attempts to explain why individuals make certain choices. The lifestyle concept is thought to have developed by age four to six, and encompasses a theme of inferiority and superiority, which is thought to play a significant role in one’s lifestyle. Adult lifestyles are typically reflections of childhood lifestyles.

The life themes segment addresses work life, and is driven by the assumption that individuals choose work because they want to find personal meaning and contribute to society (Savickas, 2005b; Glavin & Berger, 2012). The meaning of career and the dynamics of its construction are revealed in self-defining stories that focus on tasks, transitions, and traumas in an individual’s life. These stories reveal important themes that individuals use to make meaningful choices (Savickas, 2005b).

Career construction theory is thought to embody fundamental elements in the functionalist system of psychology, and has been noted to have particular strengths (Savickas, 2002). These strengths include the theory’s emphasis on empirical research and the relationships between variables, as well as the “provisional and tool character of its propositions and [its approach to avoiding] premature attempts at stating explanatory postulates and devising logico-deductive super-structures” (Savickas, 2002, p. 183). Analysis
of the empirical research yields the following three conclusions: evidence generally supports
the model, the developmental portions are well documented, and evidence generally supports
the self-concept portion of the theory (Hackett & Lent, 1992; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996).

**Application to professional immigrants.** Career construction theory has been applied
to various at-risk populations relating to gender, sexual orientation, and culture (Swanson &
Gore, 2000). Career construction theory considers each individual’s subjective viewpoint in
her own career development journey. In other words, this theory is sensitive to how each
unique individual sees the world (Guichard & Lenz, 2005). Furthermore, career construction
theorists use a comprehensive approach, which recognizes cultural and social factors in one’s
career development and career choices (Watkinson, & Hersi, 2014). This type of viewpoint is
important when investigating the career development experiences of professional immigrants,
given that they will develop unique career constructions dependent on unique social and
cultural experiences.

**Key Concepts in Career Learning and Adaptability**

There are four key concepts of career learning and adaptability relevant to the study of
professional immigrants: self-reflection, adapting to work culture, coping methods, and career
compromise.

**Self-Reflection**

Lengelle, Luken, and Meijers (2016) define self-reflection as “an active and intentional
process of becoming conscious of and understanding experiences in order to learn from them
for the future” (p. 100). Career development theories consistently highlight knowledge of self.
Knowledge of self is a key component of many theories including Parsons’ framework,
Savickas’ theory, person environment fit models (Rottinghaus & Van Esbroeck, 2011) and
cognitive information processing theories (Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, & Lenz, 2004). Self-reflection is a key step in developing one’s career identity, and enables an individual to define herself in her career story (McArdle et al., 2007). A career identity is as a type of ‘cognitive compass’, helping people to navigate career options and opportunities (Fugate et al., 2004). Career identities help people find career motivation, personal meaning, and individual values. Self-reflection helps individuals make connections between themselves and their environments, a process vital to career adaptability (Savickas, 2005b).

Until midway through the 20th century, individuals had little control over their life course. This is because life course was largely influenced by the surrounding norms and values of the times (Meijers & Wesselingh, 1999). However, the second half of the 20th century brought about major changes in individuals’ career narratives. At that time, individuals gained more control over their own careers. This was due, in large part, to secularization, a worsening economy, and decreases in social barriers. These changes were reflected in a growing individualization of society, which soon became a “risk society” during economic set-backs in North America in the 1980’s (Beck, 1992). In order to succeed in this type of society, people were expected to become self-directed and have more agency in their careers (McMahon & Watson, 2015; Maree & Di Fabio, 2015). Individuals had to synthesize and construct their own career stories using a wide range of imagined stories rather than using an established narrative based on social expectation. In other words, individuals were forced to engage in self-reflection and use learned information to orient themselves in their career journeys.

Today’s turbulent occupational world in North America calls for significant self-reflection. As career trajectories are less externally defined (McGreevy, 2003), using an ‘internal career compass’ has become critical in helping individuals find direction. Individuals
must assess themselves by their values, interests, and motivations rather than by external reinforcements from an employer or company. Career assessments, which were previously based on matching models, are no longer sufficient to meet the needs of today’s changing world (Meijers & Lengelle, 2015; Savickas et al., 2009).

Painful experiences and unexpected events in one’s career act as a catalyst for individuals to construct and reconstruct their story. When problems are encountered, people tend to rely on previously-used coping mechanisms (Meijers & Lengelle, 2012) or avoid their emotions rather than confronting or processing them (Van der Kolk, 2014). They do this by engaging in victimization, entitlement, rescue, and blame (Baker & Strauth, 2003). These are all ways that individuals avoid their emotions, and thus, reality, in order to rationalize what has occurred in a way that leaves the individual feeling more comfortable. These types of strategies can be harmful to one’s emotions, brain, and body.

Successful learning occurs when the emotional brain communicates with the rational brain (Gendlin, 1996). Self-reflection is a critical step in using experiences to challenge stories and develop new perspectives. As Lengelle, Luken, and Meijers (2016) wrote, “our second stories become our second chances” (p. 107).

Career writing has been documented as a useful method for self-reflection (Lengelle, Luken, & Meijers, 2016). In career writing, individuals write down their career thoughts and self-reflections. Career writing is particularly helpful because it cultivates an internal and external dialogue about oneself and others and provides an outlet for individuals to describe their experiences. Furthermore, career writing helps individuals understand the growth process involved in identity formation and fosters a playful, creative response to career narrative formation.
While researchers agree that reflecting on oneself is important in today’s market, and that methods must be developed which make this possible, they also recognize and distinguish between self-reflection and rumination. In contrast, to self-reflection, rumination focuses on passivity reflects a loss of spontaneity, negative thinking, over-reflection, and overthinking (Van Woerkom, 2010). It is associated with worry, anxiety, and depression. Rumination and self-reflection can sometimes occur together. Dohn (2011) states that reflection can lead to rumination if an individual is excessively focused on oneself or is engaging in self-delusion. Because thinking is largely an uncontrolled associative process stemming from unconscious processes, rumination can result. Risk factors for rumination include fear and neuroticism, inability to express inner experience in language, need for absolute truth, being a woman, having had challenging experiences, an external locus of control, and a negative self-evaluation (Dohn, 2011).

Anakwe, Hall, and Schor (2000) found empirical support for self-reflection. They asked MBA students to reflect on their career values, needs, and motivations. Self-reflection resulted in increased goal setting and decision-making among the students. During career transitions or challenges, an individual’s ability to set appropriate goals and make decisions was found to be critical step to identifying and working toward suitable career options (Anakwe, Hall, & Schor, 2000).

However, positive effects of self-reflection have not been found in other studies (Cornford, 2002; Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009; Meijers, Kuijpers, & Gundy, 2013). It has been suggested by Simsek (2012) that the lack of evidence supporting self-reflection could be due to the fact that individuals who self-reflect also tend to ruminate, which can cloud the positive effects of self-reflection. Comparisons between the Self-Reflection Scale and the Self-
Rumination Scale by Elliot and Coker (2008) reveal that self-reflection alone can be meaningful and beneficial, but the possible disadvantage of rumination can bring individuals increased pain. Adversity and negative events often contribute to a feeling of ‘stuckness’ that can arise when individuals become fixated on analyzing themselves.

Takano and Tanno (2009) used the Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire to further analyze the relationship between self-reflection and rumination. They found that self-reflection predicted rumination, but that rumination did not predict self-reflection. They found that self-reflection alone is a positive experience as it allows individuals to become more adaptive to the working world. However, this experience can become tainted (and the outcome muddled) when rumination is present.

Self-reflection is particularly crucial for the career development of professional immigrants in Canada. As the literature suggests, changes in one’s career world make self-reflection necessary in order to make strides in one’s career. As Savickas (2011) indicates, resilient careers can only be actualized when people get to know themselves and identify their life themes. Life themes bring together one’s life story, and have roots in experiences that occur in early life. Constructing and reconstructing one’s life story is usually instigated by a significant painful experience (e.g., loss of job security, burnout, realizing one’s place of work is socially inequitable). In professional immigrants, the experience of moving to a different country and having to retrain in their desired career field would be an effective catalyst for story reconstruction.

There are gaps in the research with regard to self-reflection among professional immigrants during career retraining. Studying this will help researchers understand the ways in which immigrants write their own career narratives and view themselves within those
narratives. It will also help us understand how professional immigrants learn and grow in their careers, and incorporate new information they learn about themselves into their preexisting career story. Exploring the ways in which professional immigrants engage in self-reflection during retraining will help us better understand how retraining influences their career development process.

**Adapting to Work Culture**

In the current study, ‘adapting to work culture’ is defined as the process of adapting to work-related norms, values, and etiquettes. Adapting to work culture describes the ways in which people navigate their way through the surrounding labour market (Bimrose & McNair, 2011). The ways in which individuals adapt to a new work environment affects their career attitudes, values, and beliefs (Rivera et al., 2007). Adapting to work culture is essential for securing a job, seeking out promotional opportunities, and finding a career that matches one’s skills and interests in the host country.

One important factor to consider in exploring adjustment to work culture is learning and teaching style. Learning in other parts of the world including Asia and Africa involve traditional methods involving didactic instruction (Abdulrahman, 2008). These methods reflect a passive model of education in which the teacher is the main source of information for students. North American styles of learning are typically more active and not necessarily didactic. North American styles of teaching also involve feedback to the instructor, which is less commonly seen in other parts of the world (Bates & Andrew, 2001). Therefore, an instructor from a non-western culture may interpret feedback as a personal attack which may result in “loss of face” and decreased self-esteem. Adapting to Canadian education styles is important for professional immigrants to be successful in retraining programs and in their
careers.

Human and social capital factors are important in one’s adjustment to work culture. Human capital refers to “the personal variables that may affect one’s career advancement, including education, work experience, training, skills, and knowledge (McArdle et al., 2007, p. 249). It includes the ‘knowing-how’ competency, referring to career-related knowledge and skills acquired through career learning and professional development activities (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994). Human capital has a positive impact on level of anxiety during unemployment, as individuals who see themselves as employable are often more confident in their ability to find work (Price & Fang, 2002).

Social capital refers to the interpersonal aspects of employability; the ‘knowing-whom’ competency in formal and informal career networks. Social capital is critical in the development of one’s self-perceptions (Eby et al., 2003) and gaining access to career information and resources (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). Interpersonal connections also provide a source of social support, which facilitate coping with stressful events such as unemployment (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005). Individuals with a strong social network are more likely to have high self-esteem (McIntosh, 1991). Human and social capital variables are critical to professional immigrants’ career mobility and development after arriving to Canada.

Speaking about culture in a broader sense, past research suggests that the process of integrating oneself into a new culture is influential to one’s career development and may even be influential to the process of adapting to work culture. For example, cultural aspects of a community as well as interactional infrastructure and leadership was found to largely impact the integration of mobile skilled workers in a rural Canadian community (Kilpatrick et al.,
When considering the impact of acculturation on immigrants’ career development, there are a variety of factors to consider. For example, one’s written and spoken language as well as knowledge of colloquial terms should be considered. A study examining acculturation in the U.K. found that migrant doctors had difficulty understanding local words, colloquial terms, and accents in the host country, despite adequate knowledge of written and spoken English (Singhal & Ramakrishnan, 2004). Deficits in interpersonal skills and social etiquette often accompany language difficulties (Khan et al., 2015). This can be particularly problematic for immigrants when social norms in the workplace are different than those in their home country.

Acculturation has a profound influence on one’s perception of career barriers, self-efficacy, and participation in activities important to career decision-making (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994; Rivera et al., 2007). Miranda and Umhoefer (1998) found that level of acculturation and use of the English language among Latino adults predicted career self-efficacy moreso than length of residence in the host country, age, or level of education. This research suggests that intercultural competence (i.e., multitasking, language skills, social norms, work attitudes) may have implications for career confidence.

Researchers have documented a positive correlation between acculturation to the host culture and career decision self-efficacy among Vietnamese adolescents (Patel, Saluhuddin, & O’Brien, 2008), Asian American college students (Wu, 2009), and Latino middle school girls (Ojeda et al., 2012). In (2016) found evidence for incorporating acculturation and hope to the social cognitive career theory model, as it helped to explain individual differences in career decision self-efficacy among Korean international graduate students.
Research on Hispanic high school students found that level of acculturation greatly affected their academic and career aspirations (Flores & O’Brien, 2002; McWhirter et al., 1998; Ramos & Sanchez, 1995). Ramos and Sanchez (1995) found that students with college aspirations were more acculturated than those without college aspirations. McWhirter et al., (1998) found that level of acculturation indirectly predicted academic pursuit and career expectations among female Mexican American high school students. Family commitment and gender role attitudes mediated this relationship.

To date, no studies have investigated the methods by which a professional immigrant adapts to a new work culture, or the factors that should be taken into account when exploring healthy or optimal adaptation. However, research on adapting to culture more broadly suggests that healthy and optimal acculturation reflects a balance between keeping one’s preexisting values and incorporating values of the new culture (Bimrose & McNair, 2011; In, 2016). Disengagement from one or both sets of cultural values was found to result in high levels of stress (In, 2016). Furthermore, ongoing engagement with one’s preexisting values was found to be particularly important for maintaining contact with one’s immigrant community, which is a source of social support and networking opportunity (Segal & Mayadas, 2005). This research suggests that optimal integration into one’s surrounding work culture may involve some level of balance among contrasting work norms and values.

Although there is research on the relationship between acculturation and career development, there are gaps in the literature on the relationship between adapting to work culture and career development, and more specifically, on adaptation to work culture within the context of career retraining. The ways in which professional immigrants interact with and integrate new information about the Canadian work environment during retraining will largely
impact their career development and overall adjustment to the Canadian workforce.

**Coping Methods**

People use coping methods to help manage a difficult situation (e.g., career barriers, career transitions, work stress, job loss) that exceeds their resources (Chen, Powell, & Greenhaus, 2009; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). There are various types of coping methods. Problem-focused coping attempts to solve a problem, while emotion-focused coping attempts to modulate the emotion attached to the problem. Engagement and disengagement coping are also distinguished from one another. Engagement coping refers to coping methods that approach the problem while disengagement coping refers to methods that avoid the problem (Heckhausen et al., 2010; Roth & Cohen, 1986).

Coping methods are voluntary responses intended to avoid harm or loss and to reduce stress and anxiety (Koerner, Lechner, Pavlova, & Silbereisen, 2015). Coping is related to career adaptability. One’s ability to cope with a career problem lies at the center of one’s ability to adapt to the world of work (Savickas, 2013). Coping influences one’s psychosocial and psychological adjustment. Coping can help people become better adjusted regardless of the severity or type of stressor (Koerner et al., 2015). The effectiveness of the coping strategy depends on the extent to which the problem can be managed and the resources available for overcoming the problem (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Problem-focused coping is therefore more effective when the problem is manageable. Emotion-focused coping tends to be more effective in responding to problems that are beyond one’s control. Research on coping has revealed a relationship between an individual’s ability to cope with general problems and her ability to cope with career problems (Heppner, 1987).

Researchers have suggested that career choices often depend on one’s sense of coping efficacy and coping responses to career barriers (Lent et al., 2000). Coping efficacy refers to
one’s perceived ability to cope with obstacles. Individuals with higher coping efficacy are more likely to work toward achieving their career goals than those with lower coping efficacy (Lent et al., 2002). Coping efficacy has been found to mediate the relationship between career barriers and choice behaviour. Literature on coping has revealed complex relationships between coping and perceived control, self-efficacy, optimism, and cognitive appraisal (Rottinghaus et al., 2012). Coping is influenced not only by internal factors such as resilience and self-efficacy but also by external factors (London, 1998; Rottinghaus et al., 2012). In particular, culture has been shown to influence coping by affecting the type of stressor, choice of coping strategy used, and the coping resources available (Aldwin, 1994).

Professional immigrants to Canada experience many hardships that require the use of coping strategies. Stress associated with acculturation is a major source of pain for recent immigrants. Acculturative stress is the most frequently discussed problem in relation to coping in the literature (Flannery et al., 2001; Hays, 2001). It is correlated with fatalistic thinking (Ross, Mirowsky, & Cockerham, 1983), decreased self-efficacy (Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998), mood problems, depression, and suicidal ideation (Oh, Koeske, & Sales, 2002). Immigrants who do not speak English have the most difficulty with acculturation and have higher levels of acculturative stress (Belizaire & Fuertes, 2011; Yakushko, 2010). Stress associated with unemployment, underemployment, discrimination, and financial hardship among professional immigrants also call for the use of coping methods (Koerner et al., 2015). The type of coping strategy used to deal with employment uncertainty (Silbereisen, Pinquart, & Tomasik, 2010) and job insecurity (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002) can either help or hinder well-being.

Another source of stress for immigrants involves the loss of social connection and contact that occurs after moving to a new country. Immigrants are separated from family,
friends, and colleagues and are forced to create new social networks upon arriving to Canada (Yakushko, Watson, & Thompson, 2008). Social support has been documented by many researchers as being central to well-being and effective coping (Bakouri & Staerkle, 2015). Relationships help people develop resilience in the face of illness, transition, and physical challenges (Haslam & Reicher, 2006; Iyer, Jetten, Tsivrikos, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009; Mikulincer & Florian, 1998). Being a member of a group is a resource for coping with problems, even when the individuals in the group do not directly help the problem or situation at hand. For example, relationships with non-university students were found to be important for coping among university students (Iyer et al., 2009). Social support was also found to play a large role in individual’s perceptions of their ability to cope effectively with life’s challenges (Khan et al., 2014).

By receiving support from others, individuals receive the message that they are valued, cared for, and esteemed by others (Rottinghaus et al., 2012). Others give emotional, instrumental, and informational support using formal and informal means. Support from others in one’s social network can help decrease one’s stress, depression, and barriers to success (Rottinghaus et al., 2012). It can also increase the perception of career opportunities among minority youth (Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005). Support from family contributes to a higher educational self-esteem (Dubow & Ullman, 1989). Hirschi (2009) found that social support predicted career adaptability in eighth-grade Swiss students. It has also been found to enhance self-efficacy while engaging in career exploration and decision-making (Blustein, Prezioso, & Palladino Schultheiss, 1995). Furthermore, identifying with a social group has been found to act as a buffer for the negative effects of societal devaluation among minorities (Latrofa, Vaes, Pastore, & Cadinu, 2009; McNamara et al., 2013), immigrant groups (Jasinskaja-Lahti &
Another coping method discussed in the literature is goal engagement. Goal engagement is a problem-focused coping strategy that involves investing resources into a goal (Koerner, et al., 2015). Goal engagement has been found to contribute positively to subjective well-being and buffers the negative consequences of job uncertainty (Grümer, Silbereisen, & Heckhausen, 2013; Körner, Reitzle, & Silbereisen, 2012; Richter et al., 2013). The opposite was found for goal disengagement. However, goal disengagement and emotion-focused coping was found to be more effective under disadvantaged circumstances (e.g., when career options were limited) (Grümer et al., 2013). Other possible coping methods for professional immigrants include religion, spirituality, and seeking help from professionals (Yakushko, 2010).

In addition to constructive coping methods discussed above, professional immigrants can also engage in destructive coping such as substance abuse, violence, avoidance, and isolation (Yakushko, 2010). Belizaire and Fuertes (2011) found that immigrants who used maladaptive coping strategies such as self-distraction and substance abuse experienced increased acculturative stress. Similarly, Kosic (2004) found that coping methods such as passivity, denial, disengagement, and daydreaming were positively correlated with acculturative stress.

Literature on coping has focused mainly on Caucasians with a high socioeconomic status (Culver, Arena, Wimberly, Antoni, & Carver, 2004). To date, few studies have examined the ways in which recent professional immigrants to Canada cope with stress and perceived barriers during retraining. Since coping has a significant impact on well-being and career development, it is important that we understand more about the coping process in this
Career Compromise

Career compromise refers to the process of “changing one’s career goals to accommodate uncontrollable circumstances” (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 569). Compromise is also referred to as aspiration adjustment (Gottfredson, 2002). Individuals moderate their hopes with perceptions of reality. As this occurs, occupational aspirations will move away from preferred occupations. This is a normal process in career development. People typically compromise on career goals when they perceive real or imagined barriers to achieving those goals (Gottfredson, 1981, 2002). Barriers can either be external (e.g., family circumstances) or internal (e.g., lack of self-efficacy to accomplish a goal) (Creed & Gagliardi, 2015). Compromise can occur in anticipation of barriers, or after barriers have been encountered.

Career compromise has been alluded to in other theories. Holland’s (1997) person-environment fit theory states that individuals tend to choose occupations that meet their abilities, interests, and values, and reject occupations that do not. This process of rejecting occupations reflects the process of career compromise. Lent, Brown, and Hackett’s (1994) social cognitive career theory proposes that if individuals believe they can succeed in the required tasks of a job, they are more likely to choose that job. People will adjust their career options and compromise careers when they confront barriers in achieving their goals (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

Compromises can be large or small, minor or wrenching (Gottfredson, 2002). Small compromises occur when an individual makes a relatively easy choice to leave one occupation for another. These compromises are often seen as a value trade-off, and are considered to be more of a choice than a compromise. Large compromises, however, are more difficult and
usually involve elimination of a suitable alternative (Gottfredson, 2002). Large compromises can be especially difficult when alternatives are outside an individual’s social space. These compromises can damage the self-concept. Typically, as the compromise increases in degree and difficulty, individuals experience increased distress.

Research in this area has shown that having clear goals is important for an individual and that having to abandon a goal is correlated with dissatisfaction, sadness, and distress (Latham & Locke, 2007; Lord et al., 2010). Lack of progress toward a goal is also correlated with a worsened perception of self, decreased self-efficacy, self-doubt, and lowering of standards (Creed & Gagliardi, 2015; Lemyre et al., 2008; Tolli & Schmidt, 2008). These results are especially concerning, given that seeing oneself as employable is positively correlated with career commitment (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007) and career satisfaction (de Vos, de Hauw, & van der Heijden, 2011).

Compromising on a goal is also associated with behavioural changes concerning the compromised goal (Creed & Blume, 2013). For example, a student who is not doing well in a particular course may withdraw from that course. Behavioural changes can also occur in relation to the new goal. For example, a student may explore the best educational pathways to achieve a new goal (Lord et al., 2010). The connection between goals and behaviour is rooted in the idea that goals are powerful behavioural motivators. Career planning is a type of behaviour that is crucial to career compromise (Creed & Blume, 2013). Career planning is an underlying mechanism in career-related agency (Lent et al., 1996). It becomes more salient during career crisis and transition, and includes setting subgoals, using information to make strategies, and creating timelines for finishing tasks (Zikic & Klehe, 2006). Career planning is positively correlated with career success (Hall, 2002).
Career exploration is another behaviour important to career compromise. Career exploration involves gathering information about oneself and one’s environment in order to progress toward career goals. Career exploration is essential to career success (Blustein, 1997). Individuals who engage in career exploration and career planning after compromising on a career goal are more likely to be successful in reaching their next goal.

Recent professional immigrants to Canada encounter many career barriers that lead to career compromise. The largest career barrier for recent professional immigrants is the lack of recognition of their credentials in Canada. Due to the difficulties around continuing in their chosen field, many professional immigrants are forced to make career compromises.

While most career development theories recognize career compromise to some degree, little research has attempted to provide an in-depth understanding of career compromise processes (Tsaousides & Jome, 2008). Furthermore, little research has investigated the ways in which recent professional immigrants in Canada make career compromises during career retraining, or how retraining influences career compromise. It is important that we study these gaps so that we have a better understanding of the role that career compromise plays in the career development of professional immigrants to Canada.

**Professional Immigrant Retraining: Learning and Adaptability**

There is relatively limited research on the retraining experiences of professional immigrants. The research that does examine this area does not provide in-depth exploration of the ways in which professional immigrants engage in learning and adaptability in the context of retraining. As discussed earlier in the chapter, career adaptability refers to psychosocial resources that individuals use to help them deal with unpredictable environmental events and solve vocational development task problems (Savickas, 2005b, 2013). It has also been used to
describe an individual’s attitudes towards change at work and her ability to fit herself into a job that suits her. It is a psychosocial construct that views the self as agent and helps shape the strategies used in adaptive actions (Savickas, 2013). Career adaptability includes one’s readiness to respond to unexpected events and cope with transition across one’s lifespan (Rottinghaus, Day, & Borgen, 2005).

Since immigrants often go through career changes and perspective-altering experiences, research that examines the process of how exactly they learn and adapt in their career is very valuable. Furthermore, career learning and adaptability is central to understanding the career development of individuals navigating today’s working world (Raabe, Frese, & Baehr, 2007). Being adaptable to changes in one’s work environment impacts one’s career success, performance at work, and overall well-being (Guan et al., 2013; Hirschi, 2009; Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012).

More research is needed to help us better understand the ways in which professional immigrants learn and adapt to the Canadian career environment in the context of retraining. This will be examined through the lens of four key concepts, identified in the literature as being relevant to the experiences of professional immigrants: self-reflection, adapting to work culture, coping, and career compromise.

Lau (2015) and Barbera (2013) noted that career barriers negatively influenced professional immigrants’ self-esteem, mood, physical health, and social relationships, but that retraining helped improve their self-confidence. These results demonstrate that retraining experiences have a large impact on immigrants’ relationship to themselves and to the external world. Self-reflection has been recognized as essential in today’s ever-changing occupational world (Lengelle, Luken, & Meijers, 2016). It is essential for understanding oneself in relation
to one’s career environment and making accurate and effective career decisions. The current study seeks to explore the methods by which professional immigrants engage in self-reflection in the context of retraining.

Adapting to work culture is another lens through which the retraining experiences of professional immigrants will be examined. The process by which immigrants adapt to work culture is important for their career development and mental well-being (Rivera et al., 2007). This process will either improve or hinder an immigrant’s transition in the face of stressful career barriers (Novak & Chen, 2013; Zikic, Bonarche, & Cerdin, 2010). Recent professional immigrants were found to enjoy learning in Canada and connecting with others (Barbera, 2013; Lau, 2015). They also enjoyed Canadian styles of teaching. Retraining helped them to adapt to the Canadian culture and the Canadian workplace. This literature highlights the relevance of retraining in a professional immigrant’s adaptation to Canadian work culture. The current study attempts to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which professional immigrants adapt to the Canadian work culture and incorporate Canadian work culture values into pre-existing values.

Coping is also relevant to the investigation of career learning and adaptability among professional immigrants. Coping is defined as actions intended to help people manage or deal with life’s problems (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). As mentioned above, immigrants experience many career barriers and stressors after immigrating to Canada. Therefore, investigating the ways in which immigrants respond to these stressors during retraining is necessary in order to understand their career development experiences. The decision to pursue retraining has been noted to be a coping mechanism in the literature on recent professional immigrants in Canada (Barbera, 2013; Lau, 2015). Professional immigrants also relied on social support from family
and friends as well as emotional support from helping professionals. They also relied on spiritual activities, keeping a positive attitude, searching for job options, networking activities, improving their English skills, revising resumes, and volunteering. The current study intends to add to the literature by providing an in-depth analysis of professional immigrants’ relationship to coping in the context of retraining.

Lastly, career compromise is relevant to the study of career learning and adaptability for this population. Career compromise refers to the process of altering career goals to fit the realities of the occupational environment (Creed & Blume, 2013). Compromising on career goals mirrors goal adjustment in goal-setting theory (Wrosch, Scheier, Miller et al., 2003). When there is a discrepancy between what an individual desires and her current situation, goal adjustments are likely to occur. These can involve adjustments to the goal itself, energies spent on the goal, or both (Lord, Diefendorff, Schmidt, & Hall, 2010). Adjusting goals downward (i.e., compromising on a goal) can result in reduced satisfaction and distress (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). The current study will add to the literature by gaining an understanding of the processes by which professional immigrants make career compromises and how these decisions impact their well-being during retraining and overall career development.

In the current study, the career development of professional immigrants will be explored through a lens that honours the dynamic relationship between humans and their environment through historical and sociopolitical influences (Okamara & Miller, 2010). This type of theoretical lens recognizes systematic interpretations and the influence of culture (Arthur, 2006), gender, religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Arthur & McMahon, 2005) on career development.

The mechanisms by which professional immigrants engage in career learning and
adaptability in the context of career retraining is not well understood. Research is needed to clarify which factors career learning and adaptability in this context. In doing this, a new vocational model can be constructed to better explain the path toward career adjustment for professional immigrants in Canada. It is important that we examine this more closely due to career and social barriers that immigrants face, including but not limited to discrimination, unemployment, and financial hardship (Chen & Hong, 2016), which contribute to decreased self-esteem, depression, and stress (Dean & Wilson, 2009).

**Study Rationale**

Pursuing retraining is a common and often necessary decision among professional immigrants, and prior research in this area has been limited. Using evidence from previous research indicating complex and distressing adjustment experiences of recent immigrants as well as theories of career development that recognize context and culture, the current study will explore career learning and adaptability in the context of retraining among professional immigrants in southern Ontario. Key themes will be identified and distilled from the interview data and then analyzed to formulate a theoretical model of career learning and adaptability for professional immigrants.

The current study builds and enhances knowledge in this area. First, the study contributes to knowledge on the unique career experiences of professional immigrant throughout retraining in Canada. Second, this study will inform policy makers, educational organizations, career counsellors, and recent professional immigrants. Third, the study will contribute to theory development and enrich vocational and career psychology literature. Fourth, it will inform best practices with regard to immigration and recent professional immigrants’ transitional experiences in Canada. These contributions to knowledge and
professional practice will inform the design of existing and new programs aimed at helping immigrants transition more smoothly to Canada in terms of stress management, well-being, and finding meaningful work.

**Definition of Key Terms**

The current study defines ‘career learning and adaptability’ as ways in which professional immigrants adjust to the work culture in Canada.

**Research Question**

This study will explore the following research question:

1) How do professional immigrants learn and adapt constructively in their vocational life in the Canadian environment within the context of retraining?

**CHAPTER 3**

**METHODS**

The current research project was conducted at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. The study was part of a larger project whose principal investigator was Dr. Charles P. Chen. His research team consisted of six graduate students. Each student carried out their own data collection and data analysis independently. Both the current study and the larger project used a qualitative approach and open-ended interview questions (see APPENDIX F). However, the current study focused on a smaller subset of topics.

The current study used a grounded theory approach to analyze the data. This chapter will first explain why a qualitative methodology was chosen and provide an overview of grounded theory. Next, this chapter will outline the sampling method, participant inclusion criteria, and participant recruitment and interview processes. The data analysis will then be
explained in detail. Finally, this chapter will describe the role of the researcher and the researcher’s personal perceptions about the research topic.

**Rationale for a Qualitative Design**

Qualitative methodologies allow researchers to generate large amounts of information (Flick, 2009). Unlike other methods of analysis that attempt to prove or disprove a theory, qualitative methods use inductive processes to analyze data. Data is gathered first and assumptions are developed later. New theories are developed based on discovered information (Flick, 2009).

The induction process influences the way in which the participants are viewed. In qualitative methods, participants are considered subjects, experts, and informants (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003; Flick, 2009; Slife, Yanchar, & Reber, 2005). Qualitative methods aim to uncover the participants’ perspectives and allow them to have a voice. There are four implications of this approach. First, differences in individuals and cultures are embraced during data analysis and discussion of findings. Second, the researcher is able to capture the complexities of each participant, since the participant is not reduced to a single entity but is investigated holistically in everyday contexts. By honouring the complexity of each participant’s experience, researchers derive a greater understanding of it. Third, qualitative researchers capture texture and messiness within the participant’s life story. The messiness and incompleteness is respected within the data (Shank, 2002). Fourth, the subjectivity of the researcher is embraced. The researcher’s thoughts, feelings, and reflections on the research are documented and become an integral part of the interpretation. This is a crucial component of any research method, since the researcher’s subjectivities are most often intertwined in the data analysis and interpretation (Charmaz, 2006).
The benefits of qualitative methods are becoming increasingly recognized within the scientific community (Guidon & Richmond, 2005; Ponterotto, 2005). This can be seen within the broad arena of psychology as well as within the field of career and counselling psychology (Chen, 2006; Chen & Lee, 2011; Shein & Chen, 2010; Ponterotto, 2005). Qualitative methods use an exploratory approach, which allows researchers to gather an abundance of information and expand on intellectual ideas. Qualitative methods honour context and environmental influences (Pryor & Bright, 2003). Within the study of career, this means considering the impact of family, community, culture, history, and the broader social influences on one’s career development (Pope, 2003; Pryor & Bright, 2003).

Career is a subjective concept and relates to many aspects of an individual’s life. “Individuals make decisions about their work role, such as occupational choice and organizational commitment, within the circumstances imposed by the social roles that give meaning and focus to their lives” (Savickas, 2002, p. 159). Due to the subjective and dynamic nature of career, career research is best suited to exploratory methods rather than methods that measure and quantify data (Vondracek, 2001).

Qualitative research methods are ideally suited to the exploration of the retraining experiences of professional immigrants. The knowledge that is needed in this area is best gleaned from qualitative methods, which honour the subjective details of immigrants’ lives. Qualitative methods collect and explore minute details of participants’ lives, and in so doing, afford the present researcher an in-depth and holistic vantage point from which to understand the retraining experiences of immigrants. Furthermore, qualitative methods will embrace cultural differences during the data analysis.
Using qualitative approaches, the present researcher was able to explore the uniqueness of each immigrant’s story. Since personal perspectives include affect, cognition, and intention, the present researcher could embrace the ways in which each participant made sense of her circumstances, and how this knowledge affected her career actions and development (Maxwell, 2005). The researcher derived important themes and concepts from participants’ stories. A qualitative design enabled the gathering and analysis of each participant’s unique experience, and what that experience meant to her. Data was gathered using open-ended, in-depth interviews, giving participants an opportunity to focus on issues important to them. This contributed to a comprehensive understanding of each participant’s thoughts, feeling, perceptions, and beliefs (Murray, 1998; Thompson, 1981).

Within the broad scope of qualitative methodology, there are various sub-methodologies. These include ethnography, narrative theory, critical incident theory, phenomenology and grounded theory. Within these sub-methodologies, approaches involve taking a subjective viewpoint and reconstructing structures of the social field (Flick, 2009). Multiple approaches allow for flexibility in the qualitative research process.

Ethnography was the first qualitative approach developed, and refers to a descriptive type of study that is atheoretical in nature (Devers, Sofaer, & Rundall, 1999). Rather than describing the reasons why individuals act the way they do, this type of method aims to describe the experiences of their everyday lives. Narrative theory highlights structure and meaning derived from stories or accounts of events over a period of time (Ellett & Beausang, 2001). The perspective of the narrator and reader are important in narrative theory (Gergen & Gergen, 1986).
In critical incident theory, researchers use a set of procedures to collect observations about human behaviour (Cassell & Symon, 2004). These observations become the basis for practical solutions to problems and psychological principles. Phenomenology describes phenomena or events, as they appear to those involved in them (Ellet & Beausang, 2001). Within this type of method, the investigator and the object under investigation are intricately linked.

Information within a qualitative framework is typically collected by in-depth interviews, direct observations, or written documents (Patton, 2002). In-depth interviews are considered a fundamental method of collecting information for exploration and investigation, as meaning is uncovered through dialogue between researcher and participant (Ponterotto, 2005).

**Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory derives from Pragmatism (Dewey, 1925; Mead, 1934) and Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Hughes, 1971; Park & Burgess, 1921). Developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s, grounded theory methods were considered the most effective method of constructing abstract theories about social processes because they were “grounded” in the analytic codes and categories from data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Like other qualitative methodologies, grounded theory uses inductive methods to analyze data (Charmaz, 2014; Merriam, 2002).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) encouraged researchers to explore a range of data to uncover themes and findings first before developing hypotheses. For example, researchers were encouraged to conduct the literature review after developing an independent analysis. Glaser and Strauss (1967) considered participants to be active agents in research and believed that
human existence was rooted in process rather than structure. They encouraged researchers to use grounded theory strategies flexibly in their own unique way (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In the 1980’s, Strauss and Corbin (1998) diverged from the classic grounded theory method while Glaser (1992) remained true to the original version. Glaser (1992) continued to rely on “direct and often narrow empiricism” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 8) while Strauss and Corbin (1998) became more flexible in their methodological approach. However, Glaser and Strauss continued to agree that data analysis should begin with open coding, an integral part of data analysis in qualitative research involving labeling segments of data (Kendall, 1999).

In 2006, Charmaz re-defined grounded theory to fit into a social constructivist model. This model embodied a consistent yet flexible research process (Charmaz, 2006). Unlike Glaser and Strauss (1967), Charmaz (2006) believed that researchers were a part of the world they studied and the data they collected and that grounded theory was constructed through “past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10). In this way, grounded theory offered an interpretive perspective of the world rather than an exact picture (Charmaz, 2006; Khan, 2014).

Since the present study aims to generate a new theory based on immigrants’ career retraining experiences within the context of learning and adaptability, Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist grounded theory approach was chosen to analyze the data. This method enables the present researcher to discover unexpected trends, meanings, and influences, and to use grounded theories to explain such influences (Maxwell, 2005). Grounded theory honours the researcher’s interpretive view of participants’ stories and provides support for the exploratory process of discovering themes and uncovering the reactions of participants (Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, grounded theory emphasizes the importance of context and social influence,
which is crucial for understanding the career development of professional immigrants (Yakushko et al., 2008).

The first step in data analysis was to highlight and code each participant narrative, line-by-line. This analysis was completed using the qualitative research data analysis software NVivo 12. Each narrative was analyzed and coded multiple times to ensure that important details regarding participants’ retraining experiences are included in the overall theme selection process. Important details and key themes regarding participants’ engagement in career learning and adaptation was top priority. The data were then studied and reduced using grounded theory methodologies. The data were saturated and key themes and categories were uncovered.

**Participants**

**Sampling Strategy**

Two types of sampling strategies were used in the current study: purposive sampling and convenience sampling. In purposive sampling, participants were selected who belong to a specific population. In convenience sampling, participants were accepted and recruited as they became available (Berg, 2007). Since the purpose of the present study was to explore the unique experiences of professional immigrants who recently moved to Canada and were enrolled in educational retraining to continue work in their desired field, participants who were recent professional immigrants to Canada were chosen to participate.

In order to ensure that immigrants from a variety of countries were included in the study, and that many immigrants from the same country could be explored, maximum variation sampling was used. In maximum variation sampling, the variability of a criterion is maximized by selecting a wide range of individuals (Sadelowski, 1995).
Selection Criteria

Participants were selected for the current study who had obtained a university degree and worked full-time in a professional occupation for at least three years before coming to Canada. Three years work experience was required to ensure that participants had developed a career identity in their former country. The following selection criteria were also used: 3) Participants must have been 25 years of age or older, 4) Participants must have immigrated to Canada between January 1st, 1999 to December 30th, 2006, 5) Participants must have engaged in retraining in Canada and earned a university, college or professional and formal diploma, certificate, certification or accreditation, 6) Participants must have held full-time or part-time employment in Canada for a minimum of one year after starting their Canadian retraining, 7) Participants must have been fluent in English and 8) Participants must not have participated in any of Dr. Charles P. Chen’s previous research projects. The selection criteria for this study were based on the National Occupational Classification Matrix (NOCM) system of Human Resources Development Canada (Immigration Canada, 2013). These criteria are used to determine the eligibility of individuals who apply to immigrate to Canada under the Federal Skilled Worker program. However, the current study had stricter requirements to ensure that participants could speak to their experiences around career barriers and retraining experiences.

The third criteria ensured that participants had a good sense of their career identity. The fourth, fifth, and sixth criteria ensured that participants experienced up-to-date immigrant career transition issues and had sufficient time to develop thoughts and feelings about their retraining experience. The seventh criteria ensured that participants spoke English, as the interviews were conducted in English. Immigrant professionals who immigrated to French-speaking provinces who were required to have French proficiency were not included in the
All 84 of the participants interviewed were included for analysis in the present study. This was done to ensure consistency of participant characteristics and prevent selection bias. A sample size of 84 was also determined to be appropriate for the study. Determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research requires a review of evidential support and is dependent on the researcher’s judgment and experience (Sadelowski, 1995). The quality of the data needs to be appropriate in terms of data analysis, the research method, sampling strategy, and the intended research product. “An adequate sample size in qualitative research is one that permits-by virtue of not being too large - the deep, case-oriented analysis that is a hallmark of all qualitative inquiry, and that results in - by virtue of not being too small - a new and richly textured understanding of experience” (Sadelowski, 1995, p. 183). Charmaz (2006) states that “looking at many cases” has inherent value in being able to “strengthen the researcher’s grasp of their empirical worlds and discern variation in their categories” (p. 132).

A sample size of 84 was chosen for the present study for a number of reasons. One reason was related to saturation, a key factor in determining sample size for qualitative research. Formulated by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), saturation is considered the ‘gold standard’ in qualitative research (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Ideally, data is collected until saturation is reached (Morse, 1994).

Saturation has also been referred to as “information power” (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). Information power is based on the assumption that the more information the sample contains relevant to the actual analysis, the fewer participants are needed. The size of the sample, therefore, depends on the purpose of the study, the sample specificity, the use of established theory, the quality of dialogue, and the strategy applied to the analysis (Malterud,
Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). With a larger sample size, the current researcher aimed to achieve saturation of common themes, identify rarer themes, build support for themes, and improve the generalizability of the findings (Guest et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the nature of the study was taken into account. Larger samples are more appropriate for theory development research (Robinson, 2014; Sadelowski, 1995), and studies that are not based on narratives or observations, since these kinds of studies often rely on larger sample sizes to increase generalizability (Robinson, 2014). Lastly, although purposive sampling was used in the present study, the sample was relatively heterogeneous with regard to age, country of origin, type of retraining, and career goals. Therefore, using the entire sample was the best way to evaluate all the data, should there be disconfirming evidence, and to achieve maximum variation (Guest et al., 2006; Kuzel, 1992).

**Recruitment**

Participants for Dr. Chen’s retraining research project were recruited around the Greater Toronto Area through advertising in the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) public transit system, online, and through poster advertisements posted around the community (see APPENDIX A). The poster advertisement included the topic of study and the inclusion criteria. It also included a request for interested individuals to call or email the research team. The research team, which composed of six graduate students, was responsible for checking voicemails and emails and recording the information into a database. This database was placed on a secure server, and was only accessible to the research team. The research team would contact potential participants and provide information about the study using a guided script (APPENDIX B & C). Participants were informed about the nature of the study and content outlined in the consent form. The database was updated as inclusion criteria were reviewed.
with each new potential participant. Eligible participants were scheduled for interviews at the OISE Psychology Clinic. Participants were told to bring a photocopy of their certificate of retraining to their interviews. Participants were offered $35 for participating in the study.

**Characteristics of the Participants**

A total of 84 participants were interviewed for the present study. A brief overview of participant characteristics is outlined below. Participants originated from a total of 30 countries, the most common being China (n=23), India (n=14), and Russia (n=7). A total of 50 participants were male and 34 participants were female. The average age of participants was 43.0 years, with a range of 28-65 years. The average age of male participants was 44.0 years, with a range of 28-65 years. The average age of female participants was 44.0 years, with a range of 30-55 years. The average length of time spent in Canada was 6.0 years, with a range of 3 to 10 years. Education earned before coming to Canada included degrees in finance, accounting, medicine, dentistry, psychology, and law. Education earned in Canada included degrees in law, Master’s degrees, Bachelor’s degrees, Chartered Accounting, college diplomas, and professional certifications. Please see APPENDIX G for tables outlining participant characteristics: outlined by country of origin, and education earned before coming to Canada and while in Canada.

**Data Collection**

A total of 84 semi-structured interviews were conducted by a member of the research team in a private interview room in the Oise Psychology Clinic. At the beginning of each interview, the informed consent (APPENDIX D) was reviewed with each participant. Each participant was invited to ask questions and sign the informed consent. At this point, the interviewer asked each participant to provide her demographic information (see APPENDIX
The interviewer recorded this information in an Excel spreadsheet. The participants were instructed that they had the right to refuse to answer any question and to withdraw participation at any time. They were also told that they could skip questions and could come back to them at a later time. Neither of these options was pursued by any participant.

Interviews were completed using an interview guide created by the research team (see APPENDIX F). This interview guide included 76 questions regarding participants’ experiences before coming to Canada, after arriving in Canada, ongoing vocational adjustment in Canada, retraining experiences, results of post-retraining, and current employment. Specific questions regarding career learning and adaptability included: (1) How did you feel when you initially came to Canada? (2) What was most helpful and least helpful for coping with the challenges you faced after coming to Canada? (3) How did your ability to cope with these changes affect your self-esteem and confidence levels? (4) How did the retraining compare to your original training back home? (5) Did the retraining experience differ from what you expected it would be like? (6) How did you cope with these differences? (7) What were some of the main lessons you learned from your retraining experience in Canada? (8) Did your sense of identity evolve during your retraining experience? (9) What were the major compromises you made when approaching retraining opportunities in Canada?

The interviews ranged from 90 to 120 minutes in length. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing some flexibility with regard to the research question. This allowed participants to raise issues that were elicited indirectly in the interview process and encouraged participants to share all relevant details of their experience. Interviews were audio-taped using a digital recorder. After the interview, participants were thanked for their participation and given the $35 honorarium. Participants were asked to sign a receipt to indicate that they were
given the honorarium.

**Data Analysis**

Each audio-recorded interview was transcribed. The transcriber was instructed to omit words such as “um” and “well”. Each transcript was between 12 and 20 single-spaced pages. Grounded theory guided the analysis of the data. First, transcripts were reviewed for errors. Then, each transcript was coded using *Nvivo* 12 software, in which key themes were highlighted, organized, and analyzed. This process involved a microanalysis through which the data were broken down into smaller parts and analyzed in detail, line-by-line. Open coding was then used to generate themes in the form of tree nodes and thematic groupings. Each interview was compared to other interviews to generate successive themes. The themes generated from the analysis served as a guide in the conceptualization of theories regarding the ways in which professional immigrants engage in career learning and adaptability in the context of retraining.

**Confidentiality of Data**

The interviewer reviewed the rights to confidentiality with every participant during the informed consent procedure. Consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet in a locked research office. Only the members of the research team along with Dr. Charles P. Chen had access to this office. After the interview, audio recordings were uploaded to a University of Toronto secure server and backed up on an audio CD, which was also stored in a locked cabinet. All audio recordings were immediately erased after being uploaded to the server. The professional transcriber understood and agreed to the confidentiality of the information. Each transcript was password protected.

To ensure the anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant.
Pseudonyms were used in all of the electronic files, CDs, electronic transcripts, and demographic spreadsheets. All audio files and written information (i.e., receipts, photocopies of retraining certificates) were kept in a secure location until they were destroyed in accordance with research ethics protocol approved by the university ethics review board.

**Methods of Verification**

The accuracy and validity of the data in the present study was analyzed in a number of ways. First, the audio-recording and transcription of interviews allowed for information to be reviewed multiple times, by multiple people. Transcripts were also reviewed prior to the coding process and twice during coding. Categories and themes that stood out in the data were chosen by the researcher and approved by the principal investigator, Dr. Charles P. Chen. To further ensure the trustworthiness of the data in the study, the researcher reflected on her biases prior to and during the data collection and analysis. In addition, quotes of participants were included in the results and discussion chapter to help clarify meaning and minimize researcher bias.

**The Role of the Researcher**

Interviews in qualitative research are intended to be one-sided conversations, such that the researcher only seeks to obtain information from the participant (rather than the researcher herself or from an observable event). This means that the onus is on the participant to explain, in detail, her experiences and perceptions (Berg, 2007). The role of the researcher is to guide the participant’s storytelling by presenting a series of open-ended questions and using active listening to ask follow-up questions and clarify the participant’s response.

Unlike quantitative research wherein the researcher strives to be objective and maintain distance from the participants and the data analysis, qualitative researchers attempt to
acknowledge their own biases, personal backgrounds, and weaknesses, which inevitably influence the data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 1994, 2003). Qualitative researchers consider their values, opinions, and experiences to be a key component of research. Biases are less likely to impact research when a researcher is aware of her biases (Chen, 1998a).

The Researcher’s Personal Biography and Biases

The present researcher was born and raised in Canada. Her parents were also born and raised in Canada. The present researcher does not have first-hand experience with immigration or have parents who have had experience with immigration. Therefore, the researcher is removed somewhat from the research topic. However, the topic is considered by the researcher to be very important for a variety of reasons. First, the researcher is aware of the stress and hardship many immigrants face during career transition after moving to Canada. Second, the researcher recognizes the powerful impact that research can have on policies that support programs designed to help immigrants become better adjusted. Third, the researcher is aware of the lack of research on the retraining experiences of professional immigrants, and feels strongly about contributing her energy to such a vulnerable population.

While working as an administrative assistant in a chronic pain clinic in Toronto, the researcher gained interest in and insight into the experiences of immigrants. Many of the patients were immigrants who had been injured car accidents or at work. This interest grew when the researcher began writing literature reviews for various career theories while working as a research assistant for Dr. Charles P. Chen. This stimulated increased thought about the career development experiences of professional immigrants.

The researcher’s lack of experience with immigration had positive and negative
implications for the study. The researcher was less likely to connect to the participants’ responses in a personally significant way, which may negatively impact the interpretation of the data. However, the researcher was less likely to apply preconceived notions to her interpretations of the data and to contaminate the data with her own perceptions and emotions.

The researcher undoubtedly has assumptions and biases. One of her assumptions is that immigrants struggle in their transition to Canada. The concern with this assumption is that the researcher may not apply the amount of agency to an immigrant that is required or fair. Another assumption, which was significantly stronger before beginning to do research in this area, is that if an individual has the qualifications, interest, and motivation to pursue a particular job, she would most likely be successful in obtaining that job. This assumption was proved to be incorrect by the results of this study and countless other studies, which outline the many career and cultural barriers that immigrants face, including discrimination, lack of respect, and lack of recognition of foreign credentials. Assumptions like these are dangerous and play a role in why the experiences of immigrant groups and minorities have been ignored.

To adapt when under considerable stress, the researcher often turns to friends and family for emotional support. She finds hearing others’ words of encouragement and voices of reason to be comforting and guiding during times when she struggles to see these kinds of perspectives. She also values having her own emotional experience validated by others, as this helps her to feel understood.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS: LEARNING ABOUT SELF

Overview of Results Chapter
A total of 84 interviews were analyzed utilizing a grounded theory approach. The following four chapters will outline the uncovered themes during this analysis, which reflect the processes of learning and adaptability for professional immigrants during retraining. The semi-structured interview guide (see APPENDIX F) laid the groundwork for the emerging themes. Additional themes relevant to learning and adaptability in the context of retraining will also be discussed. To best organize the content, themes will be divided into the following four chapters: Chapter 4) Learning about Self, Chapter 5) Learning about Work Environment, Chapter 6) Marketing Self in the Current Context, and Chapter 7) Willingness to Start Over. An overview of the themes discussed in each chapter will be presented at the beginning of each chapter. In the current chapter, chapter 4, the following themes and subthemes will be discussed in the following order:

1) Learning about Self during Retraining
   a. Learning about one’s personality, interests, and developing increased self-acceptance
   b. Changes in identity and thinking patterns

2) Rediscovering Self
   a. Starting over: a blow to confidence and self-esteem
   b. Feeling more confident and competent after retraining
      i. More opportunities after retraining
      ii. Increased status and respect
      iii. Discovering new skills and abilities
   c. Recognizing strengths and ability to overcome challenges
   d. Finding self after losing self
Learning about Self during Retraining

Participants in the present study were asked what they discovered about themselves, through working or learning, during the retraining. Approximately half of all participants (n = 40) learned about themselves during the retraining experience.

Learning about one’s Personality, Interests and Developing Self-Acceptance

Some participants became in touch with key aspects of their personality that were previously unknown to them. For example, in the process of becoming more extraverted in the retraining program, P11 learned that she was less confident beforehand:

I think I was quite to myself before, I was not that much open. I won’t talk to different culture of people, but I started doing that gradually. I was not that much confident to talk to different people, but that retraining program, the whole multi-culture society, I started talking to people. That’s what I discovered about myself, that I was not that much confident before (P11).

Similarly, P24 noticed softer components of her personality during retraining: “I discovered I have a compassionate element in me. I could feel for people”. Through participating in more social activities, P73 noticed that she had many altruistic and caring qualities:

Before, I think- because computer is where you work on your own. But after training, you work at community worker, you have to be helpful, sharing, patient. After that I think “I’m okay. I like do that in this way” or “I’m this kind of person”. After the training, you know you have this kind of character: you are helpful. Everybody say, “Okay, you are nice, you are helpful, you’re open mind, you’re patient, you like to help people. You like to share your experience or your knowledge and skills”. So I think “Okay, I’m okay.” Yeah, this is new thought for me: “I’m this kind of person” (P73).

In addition, P28 re-connected with his leadership qualities:

I re-accepted that I am a kind of born leadership person. That was already there, my family used to say I am a manager all the time, so I accepted that it’s there in me. When I was going through these exercises and group sessions, and stuff like that, I had a feeling of myself, I felt (P28).
Some participants felt that retraining connected them to light-hearted components of their personality. P37 exclaimed: “I discovered that I am a very social person, I could say. I like to joke, also. People noticed that, my classmates. That’s why they liked me”.

In contrast to participants who noticed particular aspects of their personality, some participants described feeling more in tune with who they were in a more general sense. For example, P55 explained: “I don’t know what the reason is, but yes, definitely; I feel more distinctively myself and know much better who I am”. Some participants’ re-connection with their sense of self helped them to have a better idea of their career preferences. When asked whether the retraining experience made her feel more encouraged or more discouraged to pursue her desired career, P26 described learning more about her preferences, realizing that she can feel fulfilled as a research coordinator:

I’m still sticking with this field and I think I found myself again as I told that I found myself as a physician in my country, I can say after 2 years of working in this field that also this is a second part of myself and I now maybe better understand myself and can be very well clinical research coordinator and this profession makes me happy as well (P26).

Similarly, P52 stated that he realized research work was more satisfying for him:

I discovered that I’m more inclined to research work rather than practical that I used to do as an electrical engineer back in Aden. For me, doing maintenance on switchgears and transformers isn’t as satisfying as researching in environmental problems, pollution problems, that sort of thing (P52).

P78 realized that he did not enjoy the pressure of rigid deadlines and frequent assignments, but rather preferred the freedom of flexible deadlines. P78 recalled:

Well, I discovered I didn’t like the pressure. I had no idea that I didn’t like the pressure, but actually, I didn’t like the pressure. I discovered that too many deadlines and too many assignments means restriction for me, so the sense of freedom was missing and the sense of freedom is really important to me. So I discovered that actually I do like places where I’m given more time and more freedom than just having to do things rigidly in a certain way, in a certain time, to meet certain criteria instead of
having more say into what do I think about the criteria. So, I did discover what ticks me off (P78).

In highlighting discovered interests, P81 realized that she enjoyed working with numbers and analyzing data and noticed she had skills in accounting and management science:

I just didn’t know that I had skills around accounting and management science. When I started looking at accounting courses, I was like, “Wow! That’s interesting”. And then I got explored towards management science and said, “Wow! That’s another something which I love”. So, it’s something which I didn’t know about myself. I thought, “I love finance, I love investment, I love doing analysis. But you know what? There’s a lot more behind that as well. There’s something which I have never explored within myself. And again, it’s just leading toward the same little route of numbers. That is the seed, and this is planting many and many things. It has a potential to plant many things which I didn’t know (P81).

One participant in particular felt that knowing her career preferences was meaningful for her future happiness and longevity in that career. P70 recalled:

I think at that point, I really think you need to need to have a career that can make you happy. So I learned something from the retraining. It’s like pick up a career that can at least make you kind of happy throughout your life. If you do a career that’s kind of boring to you, later, there’s a good chance you will dump that career and pick up another direction (P70).

Other participants reported that the retraining process helped them to develop a closer relationship to themselves and to become more accepting of themselves. When asked how satisfied P25 felt about his career and work-life experiences in Canada, he responded:

Now I am much more tolerant and loyal to myself because nothing comes very quickly and even though it doesn’t seem like successful enough, comparing some other people, but I knew that just everything comes with time even though it might seem a bit later than average measurement. I knew some financially successful people with broken relationships. It’s not success. It’s all right. I’m here and I’m happy with what I have right now. Of course I have made a lot of mistakes, but I didn’t. I’m just looks like I’m in front of something before, I’m open for some new challenges and I’m just my attitude has changed right now (P25).

Similarly, P74 felt that the retraining experience helped her to develop more acceptance toward herself:
As I mentioned, I understand myself, and I also learned how to accept myself. Because sometimes people do not accept themselves because before, maybe because of the education back home, sometimes I was very hard on myself, I wanted to achieve certain things, but now I can accept what I have right now, so made me feel more comfortable at where I am (P74).

In furthering her explanation as to what led to this change, P74 stated that the retraining program allowed her to understand herself better, become more in tune with what made her happy, and be more comfortable with her current achievements. When asked whether the retraining contributed to her increased self-acceptance, P74 explained:

I guess it’s because of the training experience. The courses we learn, the teacher learned, even though this course is designed to train you how to work with clients, but every people face this problem, how to choose a career, how to find a job. Just a job, it’s not only a job, it’s about you, it’s about the reality and everything around you. So when doing the training process, I understand the environment, and also from other people’s experience, I don’t know how to say that, but I think this program really helps me to understand why I was thinking that way, how to make myself feel more comfortable, to stay at this where I am. And also, when I stay there, it doesn’t mean I’m not going to making progress, so it’s like the mentality you accept but also you are having a happy life, and also you are making progress in your life (P74).

One participant felt that accepting herself more helped her to feel more competent in her job.

When P8 was asked what main lesson she learned from the retraining, she answered: “To not be afraid of people. To not be afraid of myself. To like who I am. To not ask for validation from others. And that I’m actually competent to do the job”.

**Changes in Identity and Thinking Patterns**

Many participants in the study (n = 23) described changes in identity and thinking patterns throughout the retraining experience. One participant in particular (P1) noted that his cultural background taught him to think in black and white, but that the retraining experience encouraged him to acknowledge grey areas of thought. This major shift allowed him to be more open-minded and to develop an increased respect for diverse thought. P1 recalled:

Okay. Let me try to make it simple. In China with my educational background, I was taught ‘either right or wrong’. Very extreme, nothing in between. But here, in this
culture and in this education, I find no ‘right and wrong’; it’s all about difference. I was having so hard time to accept that, so I still remember when my professor, first time he introduce that concept to us, “No right, no wrong. It’s all different” and I went to him, I told him, “When you say ‘no right, no wrong’, you are right”? What I really want to say, that actually, really take time for me to switch from what I have/what I was to what I am, which I like. And actually, I found I was teaching myself how to adapt to the new environment is how to take advantage of MY identity, which is first accept ‘no right, no wrong’ and be open to all the possibilities and respect the diversity (P1).

Similarly, P3 noted that he too experienced a widened perspective pertaining to other forms of thought and inquiry: “You could do the same course back to back, 2 semesters, one after another. You still will learn something new. Your perspective, your lens will kind of open something up”. P25 noticed a shift in thinking patterns, feeling more open-minded about various life perspectives:

I’m, yeah. I’m just very changed. I think you understand me because we have eastern set of life values, but living in the west is pretty different, but just having everything, having it all together right now, we can compare how it works, so I am open minded for this one and just keeping my background as well. It leads to a wisdom and kind of philosophical life or attitude to life (P25).

One participant (P52) felt that her widened lens has helped her to be a better instructor and teacher:

I feel that my attitude towards teaching has changed here in Canada. I’m more open to other views. I would say that I must have been a bit of an impatient lecturer when I was in Aden. I just wanted them to study the curriculum and do well in it in my old mentality of a narrow angle of looking at things. Now, the Canadian approach of a wide angle of looking at things has changed me, I think. I’m now a better trainer, a better instructor and teacher than I used to be: more patient, more accepting of other views, even views that can be in collision or in conflict with my own views. I’m now open to accept them (P52).

P38 recalled:

There were a lot of topics which I knew what I was doing, but the person who was teaching was teaching from their own perspective because of their work experience because of the thing… So, the way they were putting it was different from the way I was taught. So, that gave me… Every time you listen to somebody else, from their point of view, you learn something new. In that way, I felt, it was good because I learned something new in a different way (P38).
Another participant described having to change his thinking patterns in order to cope with the uncertainty of starting over in his career. When asked what main lessons he learned from retraining, P12 responded:

Kind of learn how to start all over and not know what I was getting into. I had to open myself to asking a lot of questions and to learning quickly. Learning how to tolerate uncertainty and learning how to deal with not knowing. Before, I had experience and I knew what I was doing; now I was brand new and didn’t know very much (P12).

A few participants noted that although the retraining brought about positive changes in thinking patterns, the process of learning these new ways of thinking was challenging. One participant in particular (P31) noted that in order to learn how to approach academic problems, he had to use the trial and error technique:

I had to trial and error, a few times to find out what kind of process they’re looking for, instead of being put in front of me from day one. The education system was a bit different. Back home, when they wanted a design from us, they were giving us a program of a building, and we were designing based on that. But here, when we started, they were giving us a building to design, without a program, and we were going to develop that program ourselves as well, so it made it a bit difficult to start thinking of the solution for a problem which is not defined very well (P31).

In addition to changes in thinking patterns, a number of participants felt that the retraining contributed to shifts in identity. P12 reported that retraining in a new field taught him to be humble again. In particular, he learned how to ask more questions and how to learn quickly. P12 recalled:

One of the things would probably be that I had to be humble again after having a kind of status in my previous jobs; I had to humble myself again to start from scratch and be no one in my new field. Kind of learn how to start all over and not know what I was getting into. I had to open myself to asking a lot of questions and to learning quickly (P12).

Another participant (P6) learned how to become more careful and understanding: “For sure it change my personality; make difference in my personality. In the way that make me to be
more careful and understands, yeah”. A couple of participants described becoming more selfish after the retraining. P67 felt that she became more selfish and thick-skinned after retraining:

Others, if someone they know me before now, I’m not sure that they see the difference or not, but myself still the same. I’m more tough then, because the way you have to adapt to the situation, the environment, it make you more tougher and not really sensitive about the other thing, I try to ignore it, focus on myself first. That’s more selfish thing I can say (P67).

P67 also described the Canadian culture having helped her to put her own needs first and that her newfound selfishness helped her to contribute more effectively to society: “That’s what I learned from this culture. Think about yourself, your very close people first, before you think about all over the place, and huge things. But the thing to do, if you don’t make it good for your people first, you’re not going to do anything good for the society”.

Two participants felt that the retraining helped them become more assertive. P75 learned the value of working hard in achieving her goals and how to assert herself:

[I learned] to be assertive. I think the main lesson is, unless you do something, you won’t achieve anywhere. You have to take control of your life. You cannot expect anyone to come and knock your door and say, “Here you go. This is a new job for you.” That doesn’t happen. But it doesn’t matter if you’re an immigrant or not; it’s the same thing. If I were living in Turkey, no one’s gonna come knock my door and say “Here you go. Here’s a job for you”. You have to actually show something, and you have to prove yourself that you can do something for these people so they will give you money. That’s the biggest thing I learned: regardless of where you live, you have to do something to get somewhere (P75).

P65 described learning how to be assertive and how to “deal with people”. She learned to be more “tough” and make her thoughts, opinions, and concerns more clear to others. P65 described:

I was so happy that I made myself, like I asserted myself. I was happy that I’d gone through with all those things because I know how to deal with people, too. I wasn’t assertive before until I met those counselors, that I have to be very tough. I used to kind of like going with the flow before. Like, whatever the manager would say, “Okay,
yes; okay, no”. But then that time when I applied for the financial grant, I have to be assertive. Yeah, that was a lesson for me, and I was so happy that I’ve gone through all those things. It was a good experience. Although it was bad for me because I keep on crying, but it was so good that you know how to handle those people, how to be assertive, how to talk, how to communicate (P65).

Other participants acknowledged cultural influences in discussing their shifts in identity. P47 felt that her experiences from her home country and her experiences from Canada had a strong impact on who she had become:

What I found, and it’s natural, that having gained every day, every month, professional experience, and having already passed those exams and received those certificates, I’ve just grown, in my eyes. From a professional point of view, I’m a completely different person from what I was like 3 or 5 years ago, or completely different from when I immigrated to Canada, because I used to live in that world. Today, I live in a world which is combined by my experience in Ukraine and in Europe, plus, North American Experience (P47).

Rediscovering Self

Many participants in the present study experienced an initial loss of confidence and sense of self soon after arriving to Canada. However, most of these participants restored their confidence and sense of self over time. This section of chapter four provides an overview of the intricate process by which participants felt a loss and subsequent regaining of self.

Starting Over: A Blow to Confidence and Self-esteem

Participants in the present study were asked how their ability to cope with changes after arriving to Canada affected their self-esteem and confidence levels. A large number of participants (n = 51) felt a loss of confidence and self-esteem after moving to Canada. Many participants felt a decrease in self-esteem during the initial transition to Canada. These participants noted a general sense of unease associated with their loss of confidence. For example, having to focus the majority of his energy on financial survival, P33 had less time to devote to family, and felt less confident, more depressed, and more remorseful as a result. When asked how his work life affected his personal life, he responded:
Well, it affects my personal and family life because you don’t feel that confident, you always feel depressed and you don’t have time for the family because all the time I am taking job on the computer, so my more focusing is on my job even if my daughter is saying something, I am not listening to her because I have to have my priorities to pick the job for tomorrow. So it’s either phone or computer. If you have to pick your job yourself everyday, do you think you are going to survive? This is how it is like just to survive (P33).

P8 felt that her transition to Canada had negatively affected her well-being, which she felt was in part due to her familial upbringing:

It affected my self-esteem, and I didn’t have the healthiest self esteem because of the way my parents raised me, and the Catholic religion, you know “put all your trust in God”. I mean, of course, put your trust, but you also have to do a lot of work, and you have to stand up for yourself. I wasn’t very good at standing up for myself. I’ve learned to stand up for myself in the recent past (P8).

A number of other participants noted that difficulties associated with finding a job was the main contributor to their loss of confidence. For example, when P5 was asked how his struggle to find work affected him, he explained that getting repeatedly rejected by employers affected his confidence and contributed to feelings of depression:

It lowered my morale, my confidence. It was very depressing on our part. I would say I underwent depression because if you’re not doing things, if you’re not comfortable, you’re not confident of yourself and you’re thinking “how come these employers aren’t taking me?” They were saying Canada needs professionals, that’s why you’re being accepted for immigration. There are opportunities for us, so why are they not hiring us? (P5)

Likewise, P16 recalled that the process of “failing” at multiple interviews contributed to his lack of confidence:

I was nervous at the beginning because after trying this, trying that, failing … I: Failing to get accepted … P: Yes. I just felt “I think I’m no good”. That’s how I ended up feeling at some stage, ‘cause even going into interviews, sometimes when I look back, some interviews I didn’t do well ‘cause you go with this in you, like “Okay, I’m just going because they called me, but really…?” So you tend to lose confidence in yourself (P16).
Similarly, P41 discussed feeling rejected from employers while having to learn a new set of rules in Canada. The difficulty associated with navigating these new rules made him feel “broken down”. P41 noted,

Yeah, it was difficult. Your self-confidence is broken down on the third day after getting here. Not how you can do it, it was just no. This was coming from a person who you go an ask something to them. So, anyways. You follow the rules anyway, you don’t know that you can make your own set of rules anywhere you go. I did exactly that. When I did not get admission here, my confidence broke even more. It was devastating (P41).

P6 described feeling energetic at first, but after not getting a job, feeling very “slowed down” and unconfident:

I became very old myself. Like before, I was energetic with a lot of things willing to do, then suddenly these hits or punches or whatever puts you in a state where you slow down and you start not feeling very confident with yourself. Then what? I think start grown up, start the brain working it out and not feeling good for yourself. And that’s like something psycho, that until you have the opportunity. Was two tough years that I had. When I got this job, started to improve again, and things were working better for everybody. But yeah, initially it was hard (P6).

P10 stated that being unemployed impacted his confidence and self-respect. He also felt that it negatively impacted the way others perceived him:

Yeah. Most the time, I’m not working. It impact me greatly. Impact my confidence, my decision move to Canada, and then my self worth. And my everything: confidence, everything, self esteem, self respect. And my relation with other people, how other people view you, right? It’s all affected, and how you live in Canada, you feel like worthless because you don’t have a different job (P10).

P10 felt that his difficulty in securing a job combined with the loss of his family, loss of previous professional field, and desire to prove his success to his family back home, resulted in feelings of unworthiness:

It affect greatly, my life, because I wanted to move here, I wanted to immigrate here, I want to find a decent job here. Now I feel like I’m a loser, right? I don’t have a decent job; I don’t have a family; and I lose my previous professional field. So I feel my parents, my family members often say, “Why you still there? Just come back”. But I don’t know because I’m not sure if I can find some job there, like good job (P10).
P19 explained that coming from a country of continuous growth, it was a shocking contrast to experience such stagnancy. She also noted that the poor exchange rate of her foreign dollar gave her increased anxiety about money. When she was asked how being unemployed affected her, she recalled:

Negatively. Very negatively. A feeling of “what can I really do here”, of closed doors. You feel shut out. It was really bad. And it also comes from the fact that the country of origin, right? If you’re coming from a country which is in a period of growth, you’re used to seeing getting jobs, you’re used to seeing people getting up and doing something. But, rather, if you’re coming from a country, for example, where there is unrest, and you’re not working, maybe you’ll be able to accept it more calmly, you won’t be as stressed out. Or if you come with a lot of funds, compared to us who came with little funds, my money what I brought in, was depleting, when I was over here, alone, without a job. That was a cause of alarm for me because every time you multiply a dollar spent of that currency, like, so these Canadian dollars, fifty bucks, so each dollar you spend, each day that passes, you feel you’re wasting money instead of doing something for yourself (P19).

P21 denied feeling depressed, but experienced moments of hopelessness and uselessness:

If I was depressed, no, but and there are moments when you are sad when you see it’s not going anywhere … “Why should I even try?” I felt useless, though. Like, I would wake up in the morning, and this is the time people would go out to their job, and I had nothin’. I’d wake up in the morning and look through the windows and say … “I’m useless. I’m no good for anything (P21).”

A number of participants, who landed entry-level survival jobs, felt that a survival job was demeaning and contributed to a loss of confidence. For example, P9 felt demeaned working as a factory worker and personal support worker to make ends meet:

Factory. That was… When you stand up to breathe, don’t stand up. When you go to drink water on short break time, you cannot do it. It is terrible. When you go to school, you can’t do the other jobs. I tell you. I did PSW, that was a little bit better, but, we were much looked down upon by the nurses and doctors as a PSW, so it was not worth it: So you worked as a PSW, but you didn’t find that rewarding because you felt like the doctors and nurses on that? P: Looked down on me, and asking me “did you go to high school?” So I felt so demeaning (P9).

P8 remembered feeling “worthless and insignificant” during her time at a call centre:

I worked at the mall, I also worked at a call centre, which was hellish. Ugh, that was the worst job, so I’ll just digress for a few minutes. It’s prison. You have to follow a
script, you have to take in all the abuse you get from people, and you cannot stand up for yourself. So, for someone with no self esteem, it was easy to do that job, but it was hellish, it made me feel worthless and insignificant, and maybe that’s why I perpetuated spending time with the wrong person (P8).

Echoing this experience, P10 felt a loss of self-esteem working at a supermarket and explained the challenge associated with finding a job back home at an older age:

The job, especially the later one – the supermarket one – decreased my self esteem. It’s kind of hard or shameful when I talk to my relatives in China, when I talk my sisters or brothers or parents; it’s kind of shameful, eh? They say, “Oh” … so I’m not proud of myself. And they just say, “Oh, come back, come back, come back”. They often say that. Then I know- because now, I’m kinda old, right? I’m not young. But if I go back China, if I get good job, that’s good; but now, it’s difficult, right? Difficult to get good job, difficult to get job (P10).

Sharing P10’s perspective, P22 stated that having to do a security job shattered his self-esteem:

I ended up doing security job which further shattered my self esteem totally. And then I quit after one year and tried to get into some other government programs and self employment. By that time, the funds had run out of my funds, and then fortunately I was given help by another fellow, a better job which really didn’t go for more than 6 months. It was a short contract. And then so on and so forth, small jobs (P22).

P22 shared that losing the social status he had back home was very difficult for his sense of self. When asked what were some major compromises P22 made when approaching retraining in Canada, he stated:

The only compromise that I made in Canada is my status. That loss of status, that loss of stature that I had back home. I don’t know if you would understand that, but that has a tremendous impact on productivity of an individual (P22).

Feeling more Confident and Competent after Retraining

Many participants (n = 73) reported feeling more confident and competent after the retraining. For example, P8 described feeling more sure about herself after her MBA:

The MBA also gave me a lot of confidence in knowing that I could do things. So before I probably felt a little bit unsure about myself, but the MBA, in terms of skills, and ability, and competency to do the work, it laid the foundation. I now feel very good
about myself. Of course, there are days… There were days in the past when, at work I felt “what a waste. What am I doing? I’ve gotta get out of here. I don’t even like what I’m doing”. So, you know, you start job hunting, and then you find another job and you find “oh my goodness, it’s so complicated, but, you know what, I can do it. People are happy with what I’m doing and they think I’m competent”. That constant dynamic flow builds your confidence. So, all aside, yes, personally, it was horrible, but, professionally, it gave me what I needed to be where I am (P8).

Similarly, P9 described feeling an increase in competence after the retraining. When asked how he felt about his skills and abilities after the training program, P9 replied:

I thought I was very competent enough. I: You felt more encouraged afterwards? P: I felt encouraged and I thought, very competent, and the way they always, the professor was always referring to my group “Gerrard, your group, number 1,” so I think the professor had a lot of confidence in me when I went there (P9).

When asked what he discovered about himself during the retraining, he noted:

In retraining, that I’m a competent teacher. I can teach everywhere, because when everywhere doing an assignment, I was getting very good marks, and my professor was happy with me. Retraining actually, I gained more confidence that I can do, I am a global teacher, I can be a better teacher. Because I can fit in all of these people who are not friendly from my country, and whatever I was bringing up, was actually acceptable for people who are trained from different areas, not only Canada. In other words, I was encouraged, so that training encouraged me, and made me to have more confidence, and like my career, that I’m not actually ill-trained (P9).

P10 discovered that the knowledge he gained in a field in which he was interested in pursuing:

likely contributed to his feelings of competency in that field. P10 remembered:

I find that my knowledge field lacking in some areas, like pharmaceutical areas. Like I don’t have knowledge that area, and after training, I would have ideas about the area. I: So learning where your knowledge had gaps and filling those gaps in is what you learned? P: Yeah, filled gaps because this pharmaceutical … some areas related to the medical, so there’s common areas. I have gained the knowledge for that (P10).

When P14 was asked how the retraining affected her sense of “career identity”, she noted that it made her feel more important and more eligible in her chosen field:

I think it made me more important. Because I am in a new career, the current program gave me a good training for a new career, so it make me be eligible in this area and make me feel better (P14).
Furthermore, P11 was asked whether the retraining lead him to be more encouraged about his desired career. He noted that retraining increased his interest in Chartered Canadian Securities, and gave him more confidence:

Yes, it did, on the financial side, because that’s where I wanted to go, it did help me to concrete that path. I: How come? Why did the education encourage you to pursue your career? P: I’m not really sure. There was a course, Chartered Canadian Securities, I like to know about the securities, I was doing a bit of trading back in India, so I wanted to know about the North American market. After I went through the whole course, it caught my interest. I: It furthered your interest and gave you confidence? P: Yes. It gave me confidence (P11).

P72 felt that retraining provided a sense of confidence in relation to presentations, and helped him to reply to other’s questions with ease and poise:

The skills, the confidence, the ability to talk in front of people, to feel that there was something that came up, I could handle it better; we were given little tools to better cope with the situation, to still feel calm when you talked. Sometimes you get the unexpected, which you are never prepared for, but to still ask the question as to see eye to eye with the person and say “That was an excellent question”, not “I wasn’t prepared for this”. “I’m going to take it away, come back to you and either directly speak to you, but if it’s gonna be beneficial for the group, send it out as an ‘FYI’ kind of thing” (P72).

**More opportunities after retraining.** Many participants believed the retraining had opened the doors for them in terms of opportunity. For example, when P13 was asked whether the retraining led her to be more encouraged or discouraged to pursue her desired career, she explained that she felt more motivated to pursue a career in the field she initially chose, but also recognized she had more opportunity to change fields if she wanted to:

It’s more encouraged. Finally, down the road, you say “this is what I really want”, or “this is not what I really want”, or “from now on I will be doing this endlessly” or “I want”. And I have realized that no, no, no, I can’t continue doing this. I can do this part-time, or as a hobby, even as a volunteer, but I feel like I have more potential to work in a different field (P13).
Similarly, P21 realized that after obtaining his CA, he had much more choice in regards to job options. He explained that obtaining the CA was fairly difficult, however, after he graduated, he had an easier time. When asked how he felt about having to take the retraining, P21 replied:

Well, you had to do what you had to do. I was determined to get my CA, and I will do whatever it takes to get it. You know what I did? I logged into the website, and I pulled out the candidates who successfully passed the exams, and I called one. He told, “Well, at the beginning it was really hard for me, but once I got my CA, it was just a piece of cake. I could get any job I applied for”. And even now when I apply for a job, there are always some to choose from. And I feel so empowered because now, finally, I have a choice, where before, I couldn’t; I didn’t have any. I would just take any job, but here, I get to choose: “Oh, no, I don’t feel like going there; I will choose this one because of this...” (P21).

P21 explained further that with his CA, he believed he could “just go anywhere”:

It offered me a whole batch of jobs to choose from. I could just go anywhere. I: So, it was very helpful for you, you’re saying. P: Yeah. And finally people were talking to me. Even now, I’ve had my profile in ‘LinkedIn’ and people call me up and say, “Would you like to hear details about this job?” Well, that’s awesome, right? I: Mm-huh. Yeah, you’ve been lucky. P: Yeah. So of course, it just gives an enormous variety of choice and just to be able to – at any time – not just when I want, but just any time (P21).

Another participant (P16) realized that the retraining helped him to obtain a job in Canada and to navigate the system more efficiently. Furthermore, he was able to ask more questions in his line of work because he was more certain of his rights and felt more valuable as an employee:

It helped me get a different job, and it helped me to navigate the system. It helped me to question certain things without fear of losing my job ‘cause you think, “Oh, if I as this, maybe they might say this” or if I don’t … I: So it made you feel like you had more rights? P: Mm-huh. I: To speak up? P: Yes. ‘Cause I know according to what I learned in class, you know, “According to so and so, this is how they do it”, how come you’re saying it (P16)?

P56 described feeling more competent and comfortable that he would be able to obtain employment or be placed in the financial sector: “It gave me a comfort level that I’ll get employment, or an employer will want to put me in financial sector, I will be able to perform. This comfort I did have.”
Increased status and respect. A number of participants believed that the retraining led to a higher social status and helped them gain respect from others. For example, P5 shared that prior to the retraining, she felt that her voice was not being heard during group discussions:

In one meeting there are different opinions, different suggestions, and we can’t come up with a solution. There are one or two people dominating the discussion, and then if you think it’s more logical, more what you think is being expected of us. But at the end of the day, your voice is just so small as compared to the voices of other people (P5).

However, after the retraining, P5 described feeling an increase in confidence and respect from Canadian employers:

What I liked about the retraining was that it was giving you that three-letter word after your name, which spells higher salary… I: Helped you meet your goals? P: Helped me meet my goals, and gain confidence and having the respect from other Canadians and employers (P5).

P5 noted that having a degree opened up the more possibilities in her chosen field and was associated with prestige. Furthermore, the retraining fulfilled her main objectives and allowed her to refocus her attention on her family. When asked how the retraining changed her priorities in terms of her career and values, she replied:

The prestige, having a designation…you feel that without it, you couldn’t have that position. Now that I’m a professional consultant, if I don’t want to be a manager, I have both in myself so, yeah, you have the prestige of being a CMA, but that won’t stop you to, I want to now value my family because I have already settled myself. I have the retraining, I have this position, I have the salary, and now if I don’t want to be a manager anymore and just be at this level, it’s time to value my family first, rather than my career, because I’ve already achieved my objectives from my retraining (P5).

When P5 was asked whether the retraining led her to become more encouraged or discouraged to pursue her desired career, she replied: “more encouraged, because the competency is now recognized, and since it is recognized, you believe you can move on to the next ladder”.
Similarly, getting a seal as an architect in Ontario gave P7 increased status, which opened up the doors for additional career opportunities in the future and helped him gain respect from others:

After taking my retraining courses and doing my studies for the examinations required to get the seal as an architect here, I guess I got to understand the intricacies of the profession to a greater extent, which I think are helpful. I: Improved your competence? P: Yeah, it has increased my confidence to an extent wherein I can now say that “Oh, okay, if I pass this one exam, I get a seal as an architect in Ontario, but that seal has a value which I can take it anywhere in Canada”. So I can transfer those in any of the provinces in Canada. So, that’s a big thing (P7).

P8 described a significant shift in the attitude of potential employers after obtaining an MBA from UBC. She described feeling that Canadian employers were more concerned with whether she fit with the culture of the company’s work environment, than whether her qualifications matched the requirements of the job. P8 also described feeling less desperate and therefore more focused on whether the job was a good fit for her:

So that point, the minute I got my MBA from UBC, this whole thing of “ooh, are you qualified to do the job? Can you do it? Do you have that Canadian experience?” … that went out the window. It was more of “are you a fit with our company? Do you like to do ‘insert crazy hobby that Canadians like to do’, or the culture that describes the company?” So, at that point, the competition and the challenge became “do you fit our company?”, and, not only that, but also for me, “do I like what they’re offering? Do I like the people? Is this going to further my career and what I’m looking to do in Canada?” So, it was both ways. It was not just “I’m desperate and new, and hire me, I need to pay bills!” It was “I have to pay bills, but, do I really want to work for you, and do I like you, and do I really want to see you 5 days a week (P8)?”

P16 demanded more respect after the retraining. She felt that she gained important knowledge that made her feel more confident in her rights and allowed her to exercise them more efficiently:

Most things when they are not done, you get blamed. They take advantage of your ignorance. But then the training opened my eyes. At least I could argue with them because I was now informed. Like now, you’re here, you have to know your rights. You have rights apparently; that you need to know and exercise them according. ‘Cause the other challenging thing always, depending who you are working with, if
they know that you are new, they take advantage of that and use it to your disadvantage ‘cause they know that you are not going to ask ‘cause for the longest time I’m like, “I’m grateful; I have work”. They ask you to jump, you ask “how high” without saying, “Uh-uh, you are paying me to do A,B,C,D, and that’s what I’m doing” (P16).

**Discovering new skills and abilities.** Participants discovered abilities and skills of which they were not previously aware. For instance, P12 said: “[I learned] that I learn quickly and, with effort, I can do pretty much whatever I want if I take the time and effort to do it. I’m pretty disciplined at the studying part”. Similarly, P32 realized that she could learn quickly and get her work done:

> I feel I can do many things, but not many things at the same time either, too. I feel that if I were given such opportunity, I can learn quickly. It wouldn’t be too hard for me to work, to get work done, to do the work, to complete the task (P32).

Another participant, P60, recalled feeling more confident in his abilities after the retraining in comparison to before the retraining:

> What I discovered was some things like … you see me very positive now. I think after doing here, after still my teacher is given some (01:15:26), “Oh, that year three students end up in 100% in bios”, then I started thinking, “Oh, sometimes I’m underestimating myself”. Like when I came to Canada, that time I was not so positive. So, I think that made me more positive. Yeah, my success, everything. I: So you were kind of underestimating yourself initially, P: Yes. I: and then after your success, you … P: I’m thinking I can do far more, if I want to (P60).

After finishing the retraining P83 felt more in tune with his potential math ability. P83 recalled:

> Yes, I thought I was not a good at math, and obviously I’m very good at math. Potential ability, yes, for sure. I didn’t know I could finish the class, all the courses. I didn’t know I could finish my profession designation, or that today I could enroll in my masters degree. I didn’t know at all because at that time I got such low marks and I thought I was just too stupid to do those things. So I did find my potential ability, after the trainings, I knew I could do it. Today, I’m so confident, I know I could do anything if I want to do it (P83).

P56 realized that she had the agility and concentration to complete her education, which increased her self-efficacy to complete further retraining:
I found that still I have – what it is called – the agility, the concentration to go through some of the education materials. That also helped me to pursue other certifications that is still possible, to go for tough things. I: That's interesting. So, in terms of the learning that you did you kind of re-discovered that “Oh, I can really focus and concentrate”, and it motivated you and opened you up to other retraining possibilities? P: Yeah (P56).

Other participants recognized they harboured particularly skills that they did not know about. P69 explained that she recognized she had unique skills:

Yes, once I started to feel that I have certain unique skills and knowledge, means that… Well, just a person who has unique skills and knowledge is needed, I can always find a job at another company. I felt more secure (P69).

When asked what impact the retraining and work experience had on her perception of self-worthiness as a new Canadian, P69 responded:

Probably when I got more confident in my job and that I can easily find a job, I have transferrable skills now, I have knowledge, I felt secure and I felt “okay, I’m like everybody else, probably”. I did not feel anymore that “oh, why am I better, or I think I’m not better than Canadians because my language skills are not that good, I have an accent, I will never get rid of it, why would anyone hire me?” So I didn’t have confidence, and once that training and work experience, I gained the necessary confidence and I [realized] I have the skills to achieve (P69).

Likewise, P30 realized he had transferrable organizational skills:

I thought I could be good over there, back home. I was good back home, so I could be good here, too, so I realized a lot of skills could be transferrable. Whatever I learned back home is really benefit here. I: So did you discover that you had these skills when you were doing your retraining? P: Yes. I: And what kind of skills were those? P: That I said, organization skills, and realize what I am, and all of the transferrable skills is very important (P30).

P48 realized that he was skilled in analytics: “I’m discovering new things about myself. I think my analytics, which I just do for granted, I actually understand now how much this is my strength. I think, in that regard, my confidence is much higher”.

### Recognizing Strengths and Ability to Overcome Challenges

Participants \( n = 39 \) discovered a variety of strengths including the ability to overcome challenges and accomplish anything they set their mind to. Some participants were surprised at
their ability to rise above the challenges they encountered. Recognizing strengths gave
participants a sense of confidence about their ability to manage future challenges. One
participant’s transition to Canada reminded him that he could effectively cope in the face of
hardship. When asked if he would change anything that he had done when looking back at his
transition to Canada, P3 replied:

No regrets having come here. It’s been a great learning experience, a great journey. It’s
taught me that I can survive with all the challenges and difficulties. All that has been
good, it’s been very humbling. My intellectual arrogance has come down a little, you
know (P3).

Another participant (P25) felt that the retraining was challenging because he was exposed to a
type of learning that was very different from what he was used to. However, he succeeded
despite his struggle, and in doing so, realized that he had the ability to do well:

It was a pretty intense program but I was enjoying because we were working on one
subject at a time, not like six subjects, like everyday. A lot of creative stuff, doing
some assignments and essays, presentations, small group working and we never had
like this. We never had like this. Pretty traditional way of teaching. That’s why I
remember when my teacher gave me 15 out of 15 after my essay. I was so impressed
because begin a mature man going back to school, hmmm I can still do something. I
can say interesting and I was happy (P25).

P25’s newfound recognition of his own strengths allowed him to attribute setbacks to external
factors beyond his control rather than to internal factors such as laziness or lack of effort:

If someone can do something meaningful and worthwhile, why not me. I: Are there
any factors that challenged this belief that you can succeed? P: Fact is I know myself
much better. I have some aptitudes and my strength and I don’t see any encounters not
to do this anymore, because it is not about laziness. It was maybe some difficulties or
my personal kind of barriers, but now I know I have to move forward (P25).

Another participant, P26, began to see himself as a “very persistent person” and a
“very strong person”, having survived many years without a job and not having given up in the
face of obstacles:
I think that if I can say, in only myself, I am a very persistent person with what I want and very strong person making the decision and not giving very easy act and that maybe helped me to survive all these years without job because that makes me more stronger and always tell me I need to try again or get more education or more sources or trying for other things to do to make my goal real (P26).

P26 also perceived his ability to cope with life’s challenges had made him stronger:

I think that from the time that I came here until now I think that I become more strong enough and prepare much better for any surprises that can life get you because I was faced with two big challenges or surprises for myself that will be getting job here not easy way and another one unexpected event with my heart issue for my younger daughter and that make me more stronger and not maybe that the life is unpredictable for everybody and we need to be strong enough for face this challenges. All the time (P26).

While many participants discussed being able to survive challenges, other participants talked more specifically about their ability to accomplish their goals. For instance when asked what she gained or lost through retraining, P20 mentioned that she gained knowledge about her ability to learn fast and easily, which reaffirmed her self-worth:

I gained my understanding … despite I failed just once out of my retraining, I still keep being ambitious in my career because I’m not young, but I still moved: I did that, that, that. And if required, I would do more. And I realize I understand important points. When I was taking this course at George Brown College, yes; it’s college. But still, I was doing very well. Like, very fast and very well and very easily. So it affirmed me that I still cost as much as I used to cost (P20).

Furthermore, P83 realized he had the strength to succeed at any task, even ones in which he had never encountered. When asked what he gained or lost through retraining, he answered:

I gained a lot, obviously. I gained experience, opportunity, the values that they teach you, how to approach… Even today I feel that is the best. Now, if you give me anything, even if I’d never encountered it, but if you give me that one, I know how to approach it. Virtually anything. I feel that’s the best part (P83).

P45 remembered doubting his ability to succeed in the retraining, but was forced to recognize his abilities when he began to do well in his program:

I didn’t really imagine myself like “oh, I could still do this”, or “I could still manage to juggle this” or “I’ll be able to accomplish this one”, so there was a lot of realization
when doing all this retraining, personally and professionally. I: Were the realizations more, would you say, positive or negative ones? P: Positive. I think it really helped me to become a better person, and it also more than molded my personality. It makes me more knowledgeable. There’s just a lot of other positive impact resulting to that (P45).

P45 also discussed feeling a sense of accomplishment after achieving his goals in the job he obtained after retraining:

My current job, which officially ends today, today is the last day. I feel so happy that I’m able to connect to people, and I feel so accomplished that I’m able to do what I was able to do in the organization that wasn’t done by anyone before, and I was acknowledged for that, so, that’s where the realization comes in that “Oh, I am able to do it, and I’ve made a lot of difference to people”. The impact on people when you talk to them and follow up on them on what happened after the initial meeting...(P45).

A few participants discussed being surprised by their ability to juggle multiple tasks at once.

For instance, P2 recalled:

I know I have this potential ability to do study and to work the same time. Before, I didn’t realize I could do this, but I, now I look back, I still couldn’t understand how I go through all that. I: That’s amazing. And as you said, you still work 7 days. P: Yes (P2).

P80 was also surprised by his ability to balance multiple tasks:

Not only because of the training, but because of the experience in Canada. You have to balance many things, and I know nothing is perfect: this is not paradise. And because of the training, I knew I was able to stay focus in your career if that’s your goal. It’s not because of the training; maybe because of the way I think, the way I behave, but the training was a tool to go through that. I: So, you discovered that you could do it, get it your goal. P: Yeah (P80).

Finding Self after Losing Self

Participants (n = 17) felt they had lost their sense of self and later, regained their sense of self. P1 described a process whereby she lost herself and came to find herself again by engaging in self-reflection during retraining. When she was asked what she enjoyed the most about her learning at George Brown, P1 replied:

In general, I learn about myself, how flexible I could be, just to fit in the culture, just to get what I want. I: So you found that through fitting in, you were able to get what you wanted? P: Yeah. And I come who I am by losing who I was. I: In what way did you
lose who you were? P: Just like what I said: You know, I have to make the choice at that moment, how to answer that question so I can win. I: What did you enjoy the least? P: I lost myself. I: Did you find yourself again? P: Yeah, because I become who I am by losing who I was (P1).

P1 was then asked how she would describe her identity now. P1 explained: “I know myself better, and I know how to make realistic decisions and I know how to go with flow. I’m grounded.”

Another participant (P8) described feeling “broken down” during her MBA:

And my last term in the MBA was the most difficult, isolating experience, and I felt very stressed, I felt that I was going to snap in two, I had no backbone, I had no self confidence, I had no self esteem. When you come in with a very weak sense of self, and you come into a country and there’s really no one and you have to figure out things on your own, and you don’t know how to trust people. That really broke me down completely (P8).

When describing her sense of career identity after the retraining, P8 recalled:

As a person, it definitely left me very lost, unsure of where I stood, unsure of what I wanted. I: What about in terms of your career identity? P: For a long time that was also uncertainty and a little bit of fear, because, I’m an MBA, but where do I fit in? (P8)

However, after finishing her MBA, P8 regained her sense of self and her confidence:

And I can now say that the MBA no longer defines who I am. It’s not until now that I finally have a very healthy sense of self, and sense of worth, and self esteem. It’s that sense that I don’t need anyone’s approval. During the MBA, I felt that I needed approval. But, the MBA is just an artificial environment because you’re competing with others, you’re competing with yourself, to get a job, to get the internship (P8).

P8 went on to explain that her sense of identity evolved during the retraining experience:

Thankfully it has evolved. I finally have a sense of self, and of worth, and of esteem that’s healthier. I do not need the MBA to define who I am. I don’t need the MBA anymore to say “I can do this, I’m better than you”. I lost myself, and I found myself (P8).

Similarly, P67 felt a strong need to hide before the retraining. However, the retraining program gave her a voice and the confidence to be seen, which encouraged her to regain her sense of self:
I lost my... How do you say? Like, your witness, like you not feel confident, I lost those stuff, like you feel like you're invisible in the public place. I’m not talking about work, but public place, most of the Asian people, they see themselves very invisible because they don’t have a chance to talk, to do presentation regularly in school, so they don’t have that. I lost that one here. But I gained more confidence. Here, the school show you that it’s okay to talk anything, even stupid things. But not stupid at work, right? If you talk stupid then you’re in trouble. But the school try to encourage you to loosen up. I: So you felt, because of your school experience, you loosened up and were able to talk more? P: Yeah (P67).

Another participant, P72, felt uncertain as to whether she would be able to complete what was asked of her during the retraining:

I would say the beginning was this uncertainty: “Oh, my God. Can I do it? Am I going to do it? Am I going to look like a fool?” And this is something we have as immigrants. When they ask you a question, people would just blurt out things and it might be the ridiculous things that you have ever heard and they would feel normal about it, but I would say it and if it was something that was not right, it would just ruin my day (P72).

After discovering hidden talents, she felt much more comfortable in her own skin and able to problem-solve with more clarity and level-headedness:

Hidden talents that I never thought I had. These are things that were hidden, that I would have never explored until I did this retraining. My presentation skills; my confidence to bring somebody and thrash it out if there was something that was bothering them, bothering me, and in the past I would just say “Oh my God. I’m not ready to start this conversation now”. After the retraining, “You have a problem. Let’s address it now. Let’s put an end to it now. Let’s do an action plan so that moving forward, these are the things that I expect of you. Or if it’s something that I’m doing that’s bothering you, let’s see what we can do so that we can work together in a more civil way”. My sister, my mother, my family: they see a different me (P72).

One participant (P55) felt uncertain about his identity at the beginning of his retraining program, but gathered more certainty about who he was after finishing the retraining and working for some time:

I think it was a little bit like floating somewhere in the air: I couldn’t define myself very well. I’m not sure that this is just a function of my education and my work experience in Canada; it could be just the age, the time I worried because at the time I immigrated to Canada, I had maybe in all 6 years of work experience, maybe this is the time you’re not very sure about who you are and what you represent as a professional.
And additional 6-7-8 years would give you this age to clarify those things for yourself so you’re able to … I don’t know what the reason is, but yes, definitely; I feel more distinctively myself and know much better who I am (P55).

When P55 was asked whether his career had taken on a different role in his life as a result of the retraining, he explained that focusing less on work allowed him to feel happier, more stable, and more like himself:

Ten years ago, a lot of people like myself, and I called them ‘mediocres’ because they were unable to maybe shine enough at their work. But perhaps I don’t try this, doing my work as well any longer, but there is a very good reason because I have so many other responsibilities that I can focus only that much time to give only so much of myself to my work, to my profession … so many more to my life now. And just thought maybe that’s a factor. I feel that profession and career cannot be the meaning of life. Perhaps just the means but not the final result. I feel myself generally more settled. I don’t have where my emotions were going, for example, like 100% up and down, then now maybe in most situations, a bit more than 10%. More stable. I want to say more happy, but more stable. This is how I feel myself (P55).

Lastly, P66 recalled feeling like he was “missing something” because he was unable to be productive and contribute something of value. However, after a few years, he began to feel more productive and valuable. When asked how retraining impacted his experience as a new worker in this country, P66 responded:

I guess I was frustrated by not being able to get, you know, to lead the gate, you know what I’m saying, to get moving. I felt like, you know, there was a lot more than meets the eye to understanding things and being able to be productive and to contribute something of value. That was missing for a few years. I: Did that change for you after a few years? P: A little bit. It’s just beginning to start to emerge again I think even now (P66).

CHAPTER 5
RESULTS: LEARNING ABOUT WORK ENVIRONMENT

This chapter will discuss the themes associated with learning about the Canadian work environment. First, this section will review the ways in which participants learned about and navigated the Canadian system (i.e., regulations, expectations, the job market). Second, this
chapter will outline the processes by which participants learned about the value of networking and the Canadian work culture. This includes learning about social rules in the workplace and Canadian work-related values. Third, participants’ exposure to Canadian methods of learning and teaching will be discussed.

The themes and subthemes in the present chapter will be outlined in the following order:

1) Learning about the Canadian System
   a. Learning about rules, regulations, and expectations
   b. Learning about the job market

2) Learning about Unwritten Rules
   a. Learning about the value of networking
   b. Learning about Canadian work culture

3) Exposed to Canadian Methods of Teaching and Learning

**Learning about the Canadian System**

**Learning about Rules, Regulations, and Expectations**

Many participants ($n = 62$) engaged in active learning of the Canadian system. This included learning about rules, regulations, and expectations for succeeding in the Canadian work environment. When P10 was asked what was most helpful for him in dealing with the transition to Canada, he explained that learning about school, welfare, and pension systems in Canada was useful, as well as appropriate methods to apply for jobs:

I cope with that transition, I come to a lot of places, I go different places. There’s like a lecture or workshop and then I go there. I like to go there. I: I was going to ask what was most helpful or not helpful, so you’re saying going to some workshops was helpful when you first came? P: Yeah. Because when I first come, I don’t know if is good or not. I just go in, and then you get some training, something like longer. Something like that. Like they tell you how to prepare a resume, how to prepare cover letter. Some
introduce different aspect of Canadian life, like the school system here, like welfare system here, like pension system here (P10).

Similarly, P11 believed that learning about how things work in Canadian companies helped him to be more prepared to begin working in Canada. When discussing the retraining experience, P11 noted:

I liked the case studies and the presentation. They give us a case and you work on the assignment for the whole semester in some courses. Basically knowing about that company, they give you a company, the background of the company, and what would you do to take it to the next step? It was quite different from what I studied, what I did before. That really helped me to understand the depth of the company and how other things work in Canada. It was mainly a lot of practical knowledge give, I think it was only 20% the book knowledge. It wasn’t really difficult to go out and work for any of the companies because we had already been trained on that side (P11).

P16 also found learning about the Canadian system and in particular, why certain jobs have certain requirements, particularly helpful:

After going through the trainings, then now you’re starting understanding why they insist on the Canadian experience, why they insist you should be trained here. Like, for example, the healthcare system, the whole research ethics pod – all these organizations – it was now clearer to see how things are done because I’m in class, I’m learning all these things (P16).

When asked about how important and useful her Canadian retraining experience was to having access to employment opportunities in this country, P16 responded:

I would say 100%. That was THE thing. As newcomers, when you come in, that’s something that you should be told about, made aware about. I: That it’s really important and helpful? P: It’s very important, helpful, because yes, you also have laboratories where you come from, but here, a lot of things you overlook. It’s like you’re coming from a place where there are no rules or regulations. They are there, but you kinda … I: And there’s very different rules here? P: Yes. So now here, it’s different. And you also get certain professions that are regulated, so you had to register; you have to do this, you have to do certain things. And also they are specialized (P16).
P16 further explained that learning about the Canadian system was very beneficial in helping her understand how to obtain information and what responsibilities were involved in various jobs:

There are certain things that no one tells you; you can only learn that when you go through the school system. Like, that’s when you get to know that “Oh, there’s this, there’s that, there’s that”. So it’s become clear. It’s just how to navigate … that is a huge challenge. You know, applying for Masters, okay, although you go on internet to see all the requirements and what have you, there is more to it than that which nobody tells you because you didn’t go to school here, so you don’t know some of these things. Like, you’ve gone to school here, so you know how people choose subjects, how you talk to this one, the importance of career advisor or advisor or that person, right? You know who to turn to. And you’ve also learned that here, with work, it’s specialized, right? The example I can give -- maybe like with a nurse – where I come from, if you’re a nurse, you do literally everything. But here, it’s different (P16).

Many participants were active in their learning about the Canadian system. One participant (P17) began volunteering to learn about the system and found this to be incredibly valuable. P17 recalled: “We don’t have nursing home system; it’s all under family obligation to take care of your elder, so I went to volunteer for nursing home to see how the system works here. I was very happy like this”. Another participant (P24) actively learned about the Canadian system even before moving to Canada in order to become more knowledgeable about job opportunities:

First of all I knew that money would be an important factor to re-educate, but in those days I was not sure about the student loans here, neither did I want to take any because I didn’t want to come here and start off with a loan and a debt. So the idea was to learn the system, to get to know what’s available, to reach out to the resources to see what I could get out of it, and give back to (P24).

P5 recognized the value of obtaining information about which Canadian industries were superior to others in terms of opportunity and stability:

Our cousins, our relatives who were giving us pieces of advice on “this is a good company, this is a good position, this position will lead you to more opportunities, this industry is more stable than that industry”, so, opinions from other people (P5).
P26 identified the difficulty around coming to Canada without first knowing the system and the process he endured in learning how to navigate this country. P24 admitted feeling lost after initially coming to Canada:

I can tell honestly that I was expect so much different that it was, it’s took me some time to settle myself and start to live a different way that was in my country because obviously the system here is very different and the lifestyle is very different than in my country and also the relation from other people you need to have some other connections and it takes some time. I think that in the beginning of that period I was a little lost in this whole environment and it took me some time to find myself and the way how you need to live and what you need to do here (P26).

When asked what P26 gained or lost through retraining, he explained that the retraining helped him to become more familiar with the Canadian system:

I think that I didn’t lost at all. I gained so much knowledge in this field and specifically as I explained from this program I recognized better how the work environment is here and how is this whole system for hiring somebody is established (P26).

Many participants found that learning about Canadian job requirements helped them to get a better sense of how to go about meeting requirements for desired occupations. For instance, P16 found learning about her options and next steps after retraining was particularly useful:

It opened it up because it wasn’t just focusing on what you were learning. They would tell you, “If you want to study that, this is what you can do: you can work here, you can do that”. And some of the facilitators – most of them – they work elsewhere, they’re just teaching part time. So they also tell you that if you want to work in this field, this is what you expect. So it was more practical. I: So you’re not just locked into healthcare necessarily, P: No, no, no. I: but in other areas. P: Because there were some from the pharmaceutical industry, some from the hospital, some from the government agencies. So really, you could get a sense of who and what’s happening this way (P16).

When asked what were the most important career-related lessons she learned, P16 emphasized the importance of knowing what is expected in terms of education and qualifications in Canada. When describing what P16 would have done differently, she recalled:

Sometimes doing differently, it’s find out in terms of where- like, the credentials ‘cause where I come from, we think with just a first degree, that’s all you need; you
don’t do a Masters, you don’t need a PhD. You can, but it’s not like here where you feel you have to … I: It’s expected more. P: Yeah. That’s something I would have maybe found out more or maybe do it while I was at home in preparation to come into Canada (P16).

P16 regretted not volunteering and not exploring a range of career options based on her qualifications. Having had this knowledge beforehand, P16 might have made a different career decision:

Also being strategic with regards to volunteering; don’t just volunteer for the sake of volunteering but volunteer with what is it that you- is that organization, what’s in it for you. So whatever you’re doing, ask yourself: “How is it going to help me?” And also, with regards to further trainings, now that I’ve come to know that- ‘cause I come here with a lot of skills; I’m sure if I’d sat down with myself and said “I know how to do twenty things, but which one of these is going to give me a better career?” Maybe if I’d gone to the lab -- like now I’m realizing that I can also work in the lab – maybe that’s where I should have focused, I don’t know (P16).

Another participant (P47) prepared for her transition to Canada prior to her move by familiarizing herself with job requirements, accounting rules, and Canadian approaches to banking. However, she also recognized she could have engaged in more planning. When asked what planning she did prior to coming to Canada, P47 replied:

I could just have contacted let’s say like a well-known Canadian Securities Institute, and basically being at home, I could already have studied the material in order to foster, basically to become ready here. Yes, because expecting what type of job, looking through internet, requirements and so on and so forth, being at home, I basically already been at home with those foreign specialists, when I was in that consulting, that was my company, basically I drew more attention on Western, say for example Western rules of accounting, financial analysis, evaluation and approach to different aspects of banking. I asked myself “okay, you need to be ready for the interview, and you need to talk on the same language with people who will be interviewing here in Canada (P47).

Many participants gathered information about which qualifications were and were not recognized in Canada. P5 expressed frustration after realizing that his foreign qualifications were not recognized in Canada:
I think the greatest motivator was more the Canadian experience. First and foremost, though we have all the qualifications, it’s not being recognized. Training-wise, education-wise, it’s not being recognized. What will offset that is Canadian experience, but it’s like the chicken and the egg. That’s what Canada is lacking, I should say. How can you get Canadian experience when you’re not recognized having experience in that field, and then before you can be hired, they need Canadian experience (P5).

Another participant (P52) was surprised by the rigidity of the Canadian system in requiring Canadian work experience and/or qualifications, although recognized the reasoning behind it:

The only unexpected event was when I had to talk with people in the job fairs. I didn’t expect them to tell me, “You should get something North American: either Canadian or American qualifications”. I was expecting them to look at my British qualifications and say, “Well, close enough to North America”. I would have said they are very close, now that I’ve done a first degree in Canada. The approach is different. Canadian system is more sort of open; it tries to give you a broad view. The British system is more of a specialized, narrower angle of looking at things. I can understand the logic of it, that if you have a British, European, Vietnamese or Chinese qualification, you need to get accreditation by the Canadian system because there is a difference in the approach (P52).

A few participants discussed the importance of learning about an appropriate place on the career ladder to begin building their career in Canada. For instance, P6 described her experience in identifying a reasonable place in start over in Canada. Moreover, her experiences in Canada allowed her to observe the differences between accounting roles in Canada and accounting roles in her home country:

I knew that initially it’s like I could start in some steps down, so I don’t need to start as an accountant but I can start as an assistant, see how things are done here. For sure, country has different rules, different way of doing things. But the main part, I knew about it, so I was not expecting to get accountant here, but yes, assistant or clerk. Something that can introduce me and see how things are done here so I can learn because I feel I’m capable to learn things very quickly (P6).

Similarly, P15 recognized the value of learning about how to gather Canadian experience in his chosen profession. When asked about whether he felt he would be able to find a job in his field in Canada, he replied:
That was my goal, but not really. I knew it was hard, so I had to gather a lot of information about how to get in the Canadian experience in my profession. Accounting or finance, because back in Albania, with the degree that I had, I did everything related to finance or accounting. Everything. Like, here, they are specialized, like, let’s say accounts payable or receivable. They’re very specialized here, but back in Albania, I did everything. I went to CGA, and I was so disappointed when I went there because only 1 or 2 of my credits was recognized, and I had to start from scratch (P15).

Lastly, a few participants noted becoming familiar with the high frequency of layoffs in Canada. Learning this, P7 felt shocked and angered:

So, that was a big, big thing for me, taking that first shot at layoff. It was big. I literally had to get my emotions out, kind of get used to the fact that there is something called ‘layoff’ in this country. It took time; it took awhile. I: Did it affect you in any particular way, in terms of making you feel sad or frustrated or angry or … P: It made me feel angry, and it made me feel a little bit dejected, I would say. I don’t know the right word for it, but probably that was more of, you know, getting used to the fact that ‘layoff’ is a way of life here. Layoff/life, layoff/life … same thing. But the first layoff was terrible. I couldn’t take it. There was a little bit of anger there (P7).

Participants learned about differences in technology in Canada, and considered this to be a major component of their knowledge about how to fulfill their job requirements in Canada. One participant (P6) recognized the importance of technological differences in his transition to Canada. When asked what his expectations were of the retraining process, he responded: “they will give me the notice of those two points that I keep repeating: notice of the Canadian laws and the way of doing things. Technology and all those things”. He recognized the importance of learning about Canadian technology while working in Canada:

Probably Canada is more technified than my own country, so probably things are not technologically based; probably based more on head than computers, sometimes, and rating the computers. So that’s not so difficult to understand; it’s quick. I: So you learnt more about technology here. P: For sure (P6).

Likewise, P25 expressed readiness and willingness to learn about the differences in technology and equipment after arriving to Canada: “Everything is different and technologies and knowledge and equipment. So, I was pretty open and just ready and willing to learn”.
Other participants noted, perhaps more subtly, other differences besides technology.

For example, P42 noted having to learn differences in engineering technical codes:

I had to understand the technical codes, for example, the building codes. Canada is I think a little different from China. The technology is the same, but the technical codes is similar but it’s different. So this kind of training before I come here, I think I need to take (P42).

P77 reported having to learn software differences:

Of course, I changed in terms of more experience, in terms of … for example, I forgot to say you, I did Autocad in George Brown. It’s a course to learn how to use that. You can build a car with this multiphase Windows, as you can see in a project. You can do it in three dimensions, you can rotate it. Inside a house you can show this is a little room. This is more for architects, also engineers. If you have this course, it will help you a lot (P77).

**Learning about the Job Market**

Participants engaged in learning about the Canadian job market ($n = 39$). This included knowledge about the Canadian economy on a domestic and global scale, the stability of various industries, and job demand in particular fields. A number of these participants directly pointed out the usefulness of knowing about the Canadian job market. One participant (P4) explained that learning about the job market helped her to have a better sense of the Canadian economy and helped her to identify which career she should pursue. When discussing main lessons from her retraining, she recalled:

I think most important is to learn the knowledge of this field. And second thing is to know about the job market. But it’s from employment centre, just know too superficial. Not deep. But from training, maybe more contact, much more. My career has taken on a different role in my life, partly because of my retraining experience, and my general experience in Canada as a whole. And the Canadian work scene, and what’s happening in the employment market right now. I tend to look at things more than just my career. I tend not only to look at my career as the be all and end all of my general existence, it’s a sense that I can’t bang on the door for a career, damn it, if the economy is tanking and going to hell, I have to look to paying my bills as well (P4).
In discussing what he would have done differently, P20 explained that he would have done more research on labour market trends in Canada, which would have informed his career goals:

If I had a chance and if I had time in Russia before my immigration to here, I would find the connection with employment consultant here. And at my first arrival, when I cross the Canadian border, I would go to that person and I would look for statistics on the labour market and I would choose the retraining as this help desk/IT or software training or software testing, software tester or something like this. I still don’t know who should be this person who knows labour market trends and who can definitely tell that in a few years, you can finally work there (P20).

P39 advised new immigrants to research the Canadian job market and alter their career decisions based on this information:

Don’t be scared. Look at the market first. Look at the job requirements in the market. For example if you see in the market they need people, let’s say, computer technicians and they check the tendency for certain period of time, if you see them go and you see yourself as a computer technician, then go take this course. For example, if you like psychology and you would like to become psychologist, then try to see the recruiters positions. Go take the recruiters course because they need psychology to select right people. You have to be smart, here, what you’re choosing. I: That’s good advice. P: No, no. It’s real. You have to look at the market first (P39).

When P79 learned that engineering jobs were not in-demand in Vancouver, she made the decision to move to Toronto instead:

At first my husband want to go to Vancouver, and I said “I heard Vancouver doesn’t have much engineering jobs”. He’s also engineering area, so I said we had better go to here (P79).

A number of participants said that finding out more information about the job market guided them in gaining a better understanding of their own struggles in securing employment. For example, obtaining information about the job market helped P19 to understand why him and others like him were not having success getting jobs in particular fields:

Job availability is less, employability is less, [consequences] of recession again. Of course, if your career is booming, and your particular line of work is booming, and you’re doing absolutely nothing, then in that respect, that’s a clear sign that you’re not
doing something correct. But when you see people who are as qualified as you who are not getting jobs, and you have one, maybe it’s time that you get realistic with your expectations. Still keep your hopes and goals, but you find yourself getting frustrated a lot less if you look at things in perspective (P19).

Job market statistics also helped P19 to more accurately compare himself to other Canadians:

I always gauge myself against a fellow Canadian who was born and brought up over here, and I see them also struggling. That was the unexpected thing. I think maybe it was colour which would give them a better opportunity, but, no, some of them have completed university degrees, and they’re not getting jobs, and they have huge loans on top of that, to pay. So, that was a great leveler. Understanding what’s going on in society itself, that was the unexpected thing. When you think they are having a cakewalk, not everyone is really having a cakewalk (P19).

Furthermore, learning more about the market helped him to make important career decisions, such as moving from the airline industry into the banking industry:

I was in the airline industry before. I wanted to get into Canada 3000, at that time, or Air Canada. But I shifted my career into banking and accountancy because of prompting from certain individuals. They said “Toronto is the financial hub of Canada. You have a Masters in Finance, why not shift your focus into the airlines, into something which is more practical, which will get you earning something and on to a career path?” So, there were prompts there, definitely. Unexpected, and expected, which did lead me to being more flexible, and being more open minded as to what my career should be (P19).

P19 was grateful that the retraining itself offered up-to-date information on the Canadian job market:

One thing I have to give credit for, the courses offered in Canada are very current in terms of what’s happening in the market. They’re revised frequently and they’re very up to date. I would definitely say that they correlate to what’s happening at ground level (P19).

A number of participants actively sought out information about the Canadian job market. P74 researched the labour market through volunteering, asking people in the community, and searching online:

Yeah, there is a demand in the labour market. I: And how did you learn about that demand? P: I did lots of research. I asked the people in community, I did volunteer jobs in community, and I know there’s a demand, because at that time, there’s not many
Chinese people work in the communities. And also, I researched on the websites, like the job futures, and working in Canada, and Ontario Employment, and also I went to the Centennial, George Brown, and Seneca career centres, and they give me all this information, so I know this type of job are in demand at that time, so I would graduate, I would be able to get a job (P74).

P83 did research before he moved to Canada:

All that is information you have to find yourself, and no one is going to tell you. All the schools say on their website, but no one is going to guide you or ask you your interests, what do you want to do later, what is the job market going to be, what’s the top 10 hot positions in 5 years… No one will tell you, you have to do the research yourself (P83).

Similarly, P35 attended numerous workshops to understand more about the job market in Canada:

What I did was, I attended almost 16 workshops run by HRDC, just to understand how the job market works and how I can get into a career. So, 16 workshops. Each workshop anywhere from one month to three months (P35).

P35 outlined the value of knowing the economy and how strongly it can affect one’s career:

The difference is the economy’s scale. It’s not a question of the company. It’s a question of the economy. The Canadian and US economy is much larger than Asian economies. The second thing which is different is the market I used to work in Asia is sort of catching up right now with American economy. Whatever happens here happens there five years after. Now I am ahead of the curve. Now I am working for a company which has a base in Asia. So, basically whatever I design here is applied in Asia (P35).

Some participants expressed disappointment after learning about the job market. For example, P4 described his experience of learning about the market of mineral analysis lab work:

And I try to stay there longer, but during that time, the market is not good, especially for this kind of the company. They do such as about the gold, the silver, something; the business is going down the mines. If the mine operation or projection is high, okay, the business of the lab is good. But if it’s in winter, the mine get low. So the job of the lab also get fewer. That’s a problem (P4).
In addition, P66 discussed difficulty transitioning back into the academic field due to the competitiveness of the market:

I eventually thought I might transition back into the academic setting at some point. It hasn’t happened for a variety of different reasons. Haven’t been any new openings and so on. And I’m now, you know, got, I’m not really geographically mobile right now. And so that’s where I am, that’s why I’m here and what I’m doing. I’m not able to jump to another city, to a university something, somewhere else. There are not that many positions, not many at all. It’s a very competitive market. P: Yes, it is (P66).

P71 regretted pursuing a career in his chosen field, and wished he had done more research about job opportunities in advance:

When you ask about lessons … one thing only, I should say that although I would say that I studied a lot, I did a good research before going for this retraining, but I think there was something lacking, and still there is something lacking in that. It was not very good research, I would say. Potential job opportunities in that field were not that much. I should have gone, I should have chosen any other field instead of this. That, I’m regretting on that account (P71).

Likewise, P3 had misconceptions about the connectedness of Canada’s economy to the global economy:

The challenge is … again, the two things you must keep about Canada: 1) we’re a small economy 2) the size of our companies are small 3) we have very few organizations that are Canadian head-officed, that are conglomerates in the global scale. That’s why I came here. I want to work in a Canadian head office that is a global conglomerate, tackled by the fire in my belly. Again, there are not too many, and that, to me, was disappointing. Kind of said “Okay, so maybe there are big companies here too that are global in scope and scale and, you know, you will work your way toward the HR for them”. No. There are not that many (P3).

Learning about Unwritten Rules

In addition to learning about the rules and regulations in the Canadian system, participants learned valuable lessons about the unwritten rules of the Canadian system. This included the value of networking for getting ahead and the Canadian work culture.

Learning about the Value of Networking
Many participants \((n = 61)\) directly referenced the value of networking in order to succeed and advance their careers in Canada. For many participants, networking was new and unfamiliar. This section describes the process by which participants came to learn about the value of networking in Canada. For example, P41 realized that connections were one of the most important factors related to obtaining a job in Canada. She also noticed that if there was a pre-established social connection with an employer, the interview was often just a formality.

When asked what steps she took to build her career in Canada, she responded:

> I think after that, it was just social networks. I had a hard year applying for jobs. There’s always someone who hears about me and then they call me and they ask me to come for an interview. I haven’t applied for a job in a long time. I: It’s just social networking. P: That’s how I learned what social networking is. I learned that these jobs don’t even come out, or if they come out, they just come out superficially. They have already given me the job and they ask me to come for a fake interview. The job is posted because the union asks them to post it, meaning I already have the job. It’s all about connections (P41).

Similarly, P7 noticed that networking and making friends helped him get a job in architecture.

When asked what factors made the job search easier and/or more difficult, he replied:

> I think getting into architecture today is not easy. My first job was based on my, I would say, decision- because I was just so passionate about my field, I was willing to do anything to get my job. And also, my networking and friends helped me get that thing. But I don’t think it’s easy to get into architecture, even today (P7).

While job searching in the U.S., P12 realized that networking was key to finding work:

> I think most helpful to me was my job searching in the U.S., where I realized networking is key to finding a job. Also, the English part was very helpful because I would see the struggle of a lot of people that didn’t have good English. What made it harder is that I didn’t know anybody, so I didn’t have any connections. And my brother – although he worked at General Electric -- I didn’t get that first job at General Electric through him (P12).

In describing some supports he found while job searching in Canada, networking was highlighted:
People that I met in my networking – people who didn’t know me at all – tried to connect me with other people … you know, with recruiters and potential employers. I also had a very good recruiter from my recruiting company who did an awesome job putting my resume out there with a bunch of employers (P12).

In discussing important career-related lessons, P12 replied, “One of the most important things I’ve learned is the value of networking and helping people”.

Another participant (P23) noted the value of networking. When asked what actions made his retraining experience possible, P23 replied: “By going and asking questions and networking”. Moreover, P23 highlighted the benefit of reaching out to people in other social circles and cultural communities:

Well, I see that, when I was working with the doctors, a lot of the immigrants stayed within their own communities, and isolated themselves that way. Because I didn’t have a specific cultural community, I think I had more of an opportunity to reach out and get work, because I didn’t isolate myself. And because my language is English, I was able to communicate clearly. But what I’m noticing from people who are in that situation, their steps are not made as quickly. I: So you think it’s important for people to be open to different communities and social networks? P: Yeah (P23).

P28 found networking extremely helpful in finding a full-time job. In discussing the ways in which she searched for a job, she outlined the following:

I was searching, and here they say ‘networking’, so I was getting connected with people, and also recruitment agencies. I submitted volunteer applications and tried my best to get into that networking culture. I: Who did you network with? P: Like my friends, through my friends, so, they refer all relatives refers light (?00:32:30), so I meeting him at coffee places and stuff like that. I: Did you find those things helpful? P: It really helped me to get jobs. My first full-time job through an agency. One of my previous staff knew the boss, and I didn’t see it in Workopolis. Even I have now very good network, bigger network than I had when I came to Canada, because my earlier job was very successful. So those connections, those medias, and things are helping in Canada, and I have good connections. I got this job, today I responded to an email from my previous group or company and different business partner, she was VP, she was emailing me, “somebody said there’s a vacancy for this position, are you interested?”, so that kind of identity is there. I have a good, very satisfied career identity (P28).

While giving advice to other immigrants, P28 mentioned the importance of networking:
But I still remember, and I still quote, when I try to counsel or tell people who are immigrants, I do that on volunteer basis, immigrants, I help people, friends or relatives, immigrants, to settle here, “it is not what you know, it is whom you know”. It was in one of the subways, when I came to Canada, so that shows the networking connections (P28).

Similarly, P72 provides similar advice:

Embrace anything with a positive attitude. That’s my motto, and I continued to tell anybody that is struggling, to take anything for the start. Sometimes you take something and there’s somebody or somebody’s uncle is … networking is huge – sometimes it’s not what you know, who you know. It’s such a wrong thing to broadcast, but it has worked for a lot of people. I: The networking. P: The networking (P72).

Some participants not only felt that networking was helpful for finding a job, but that it was crucial to do so. For example, P34 described needing a connection in order to secure a medical residency:

In order to get residence you really need to have somebody in the hospital and get reference from that doctor and no one is taking immigrants just to help them because there is no, that, term, like shadowing doctor in Canada for immigrants. No, absolutely no. So, you really have to know somebody in the clinic if you don’t know in the hospital and get some experience, but that doesn’t guarantee that you are going to get residency. So, that’s the reason because it was very, very insecure (P34).

P38 found that employers tended only to care about his social connections, rather than his knowledge or skills:

One thing I noticed here, is they don’t give any value for your studies or your knowledge or your skills. As far as you know somebody in the company is more a referral that they go based on. So, if you know somebody in the company or you… It’s mainly if you know somebody personal. I: Right, like network. P: Yeah, network. That’s all they care about. It’s not based on your skills that they hire you (P38).

Other participants recognized that networking was critical but felt that it was very difficult to build a network as a newcomer. For example, P8 explained that building a network without external support was difficult for an immigrant:

I think it’s very important to have a network, and when you come on your own, you don’t have that network. I love the fact that there was this Immigrant Services Society,
and that is fantastic. I: Did that help you build a network? P: Yes, I neglected to mention, I did meet the host, but then I got transferred to another hostess and that was so great, so I had a friend! I: So, they linked you with somebody, and you said that you didn’t find anything similar here in Toronto? P: I have not found something similar to the Immigrant Services Society of Vancouver. There are job clubs in Toronto, but I haven’t done one (P8).

Similarly, P20 struggled to build a network after arriving to Canada with very few friends at an older age. When asked what were the main lessons he learned from the retraining experience in Canada, he replied:

I wish I go to this school ten years earlier, when I was thirty, because professional relationships … like, many people build professional relationships based on people they know from college, from school. And this is important. But when we are in continuous education, it’s a different … I: So, connections are important. P: Yeah, connections are very important, but unfortunately I was unable to build many connections because, again, continuous education is different. I: So, age differences, you mean, or … P: I was newcomer, and I was scared to speak up my mind. I was embarrassed, very often shy (P20).

P1 also felt that it was difficult to network as a newcomer. When asked how difficult or easy was her original job search, she replied:

It was very difficult. Very, yeah. I: What do you think made it difficult? P: Confidence is the first. Second, the networking; and, as they said that 80% is in the hidden market, so 20% is advertisement. So the networking is very important. And for newcomer, where to have the networking (P1).

P54 felt that the system of finding a job in Canada was very different from the system back home, and felt unsure as to how to navigate this new system:

Finding job in my country was not that difficult in the sense that everything was transparent. So for example, the place I was working, I didn’t know anybody in the organization before I stayed for the first day. So I wrote the examination; I passed the region test and I was interviewed then as group discussion took place, and the (08:03) and sent it to the banks. So once my name was short listed, usually they take from those lists unless the list expires. So, I didn’t have to know anybody. No networking, know each other, to get a job. That thing is totally new in here, which shocked me because I don’t know anybody here. I don’t have friends, relatives. I don’t know the language in here (P54).

**Learning about Canadian Work Culture**
Many participants ($n = 66$) actively exposed themselves to the Canadian work culture, in an attempt to learn about, adapt to, and immerse themselves in it. Many participants discussed cultural differences within work-related interpersonal communications and their experiences of navigating and growing accustomed to these differences. For instance, P16 described key differences in friendliness in the work environment:

Even interaction with people … where I come from, you would not work for a few minutes without stopping to chat and say, “Hi, hi”. You chat with everybody, and it’s happy/happy. And everyone notices: “Oh, I didn’t see you on Monday. Where were you?” So, you go expecting … but here, you are with people and you are alone. I think it was the first time I realized the meaning of the word ‘lonely’. But, where I come from, it’s different. Yes, you live with strangers, but they are not completely strangers. Somehow, you know what’s going on (P16).

P16 expressed discomfort and uncertainty around social rules in the workplace:

In terms of familiarity, where I come from, it’s an environment that I know. If people do things in a certain way, just looking at them I can tell “Mmmm, something is not right here. I shouldn’t even smile”. Like, you could read certain things; you just listen to people, just observe. Where I am now, I haven’t reached that stage yet. I’m still studying ‘cause I don’t know if they shout that or say things in a certain way or if they say “It’s up to you”, what that means. So I’m still learning the culture. I: So you’re on your toes. P: Yes, tiptoeing all the time (P16).

Similarly, P17 had to pay careful attention to differences in interpersonal communication in the workplace:

I knew that I have to learn English, I have to find a way the people communicate, get very, very close to the culture because the way people express themself in Ukraine and in Canada, very different. Ukraine is more upfront culture. People can afford to be rude to you if they know that they are right. Here, it’s very unacceptable. You have to still have a barrier, you have to find a way to express your consent in a way people will be able to be reflective and not to tangle the emotions, right? So, I was workin’ on it. I was readin’ a lot, I was readin’ a lot of Canadian, so I was studyin’. It’s like a new baby, eh? (P17)

P16 was frustrated and confused while learning the social customs around making appointments:
Where I come from, you just show up, right? It’s not by appointment. So, it was frustrating to go, like when you are looking for information, you go. They ask, “Do you have an appointment?” I say, “No”. Say, “Oh, you should have called”. So I’m like, “But I’m here.” They’d be like, “No, you, you …”. I was frustrated. I thought people were rude, not knowing that that’s how things work here (P16).

P18 found it difficult to adapt to cultural differences in communication. When asked how her transition to Canada impacted her well-being and the well-being of her family, she responded:

I think that time is a little bit… Because, I think the communication is not smooth, is not good, so definitely I think, a little bit effect to the family relationship, because people are not relaxed at home. Here, you cannot say what you want to say, because it’s a different language, and then also the culture is different, so I think you need to adapt to that. I: So, finding it hard to be able to get your message across? P: Yeah, as a first beginning, I will say that (P18).

P18 found the retraining particularly effective in exposing him to the Canadian culture:

I will say, during the retraining, you learn different culture stuff as well, such as English literature. I watch a movie, and read a lot of the books before, relating… It’s kind of… Not like the local author, in back home I read the other countries’ peoples’ fiction as well, and I think that helps to more understand the culture (P18).

P20 looked forward to the retraining because he knew it would help him know more about the Canadian work culture. In particular, he was excited to learn about cultural standards, rules, and how to be successful in Canada:

I wanted to find some standards, some genuine ideas how to proceed because in a new country, in a new culture, you don’t know what works, what doesn’t work; you don’t understand rules … cultural rules, ethical rules. And I was thinking, “Okay. I’ll learn how to be intelligent in this world from my previous experience. I: So you expected to gain knowledge about how to get … P: To get knowledge, exactly. And how to interact, how to expose myself, how to sell myself … which is a proper way to sell yourself during the job interview and to find out … really, the behaviour part in most of this (P20).

P20 recalled having difficulty deciphering what kinds of behaviour was accepted on the floor because the work culture was so different from that of his home country:

I worked at call centre, and I totally misunderstood people. I totally misunderstood the type of behaviour which was accepted on the floor, the type of interactions between supervisors and the customers, representatives. I didn’t understand this teamwork; I didn’t understand some things which really seemed to me to be very rude, acceptable
here. And I felt like destroyed. Every time I had to work I felt destroyed because I didn’t understand people. Let’s say my co-worker says to me, “Watch my back. I go for lunch.” For me, it’s very rude to say that. And my co-workers’ behaviour, my co-workers’ habits, their jokes … simply very rude. I: And unsympathetic, you were saying. P: Unsympathetic and very vulgar. Russians are very emotional people, but still, the culture I worked for was always very formal. And here, I had to face this informality (P20).

Another participant (P28) learned that it was vital to learn tone-free talking and writing in order to excel in the business world:

I learn tone-free, talking tone-free and stuff like that. Those terminology I learned from after moving to Canada. You know it was looked at it as a cultural language, it was more there with the immigrants, they have tone when they approach things, but I would say it’s not more for cultural, it’s a personality, too. I: What is it, a tone-free? P: Tone-free, it says, this is something I learned in my Business Communication course, see, when you are writing email, they say you have to make sure that it’s tone-free. You shouldn’t have that negative tone. It has to be very diplomatic, technical, but you still have to put the message across, so that kind of this thing (P28).

P32 spent time learning the “English-way” of communicating in an interview. She described this as less to do with the English language and more to do with a way of speaking:

I feel, just my feeling, the way I talk, my accent, and the way I speak English, will immediately tell everybody that I’m an immigrant, like I’m kind of different with people who grew up here. So, I get help from some English tutor, I even ask them to prepare my interview questions. I write it down. I wrote it down in my own way, and then I asked them to revise it for me, they revised a lot because I felt that my way to answer those questions is a Chinese way, not an English way, so they helped me to prepare that in an English way. So, they prepared that for me, they helped me, I’m very grateful for that, but at the same time, made me realize that the culture can be a barrier (P32).

P35 hired a psychologist to help him navigate cultural differences in the workplace:

One big thing which I did, was I hired a psychologist to understand the cultural difference between me and the local workforce. Two big things came out of that. One was reading between the lines. The cultural which I come from, we are very poor at reading between the lines. We are more straightforward there. It’s not something you can just walk into a program and get trained. I think it comes over a period of time. And that’s what they call the Canadian experience, I think. The second was behaviour. The way they behave in a team is different from the way we behave in a team. So, when any assignment or task is given here, the teams would divide the responsibility and start doing on a particular subject or topic in that task. Whereas the culture I come
from, we would brainstorm collectively. So, that’s a difference and something which it takes time to understand it nobody tells you that (P35).

While most participants discussed the cultural intricacies of communication in the work environment, some participants highlighted the value of exposing oneself to the values of the Canadian culture. For instance, P20 was grateful for the retraining as it helped her to understand Canadian values:

It helped me to understand values. While studying, I met different people from different social group, and I understood well values of this society, and I started to appreciate them. When I came in and had to start from minus, I didn’t understand their values. I did have values from my home country, my culture, and now I appreciate these values and I prefer them. If I had to choose again, I would do it again. I love these values, right? I: So it was most necessary to gain an understanding of the values of the culture here? P: Yeah. It’s more about culture (P20).

Similarly, P38 observed differences in values pertaining to health care. These differences affected her choice of job:

When I came here, I looked at the culture and the health things that is provided here. I realized that people here are not too keen on natural medicine compared to Australia and also the type of the drug plans the things like that and the work environment in a retail setting was way different compared to there. I felt here they were not too keen on helping out the general population. They were not giving out the right advice that was supposed to be given. That’s one of the things that I didn’t want to work in a retail setting. Ethically, for me, I felt it was not right to work that way (P38).

Exposed to Canadian Methods of Learning and Teaching

A large number of participants (n = 65) noticed key differences in learning and teaching in Canada in comparison to their home country. Many participants noticed a student-directed approach in Canadian schools. This approach encouraged more initiative on behalf of the students and typically involved less power imbalance between the student and teacher. For many participants, this type of learning was very different from what they were accustomed to. For instance, P84 was much more familiar with didactic instruction and had to grow accustomed to taking more initiative in his learning:
In China, most of time student learn what teacher teach, and the student has less ability to learn … seldom – like me – to take initiative to learn something. So actually, I was busy with some of the professors. In Canada, for example, my supervisor just simply give me a direction or a general topic for me, and then I have to do research by myself. So I think from this experience, I think right now for me, I benefit from– like, I can speed up my reading and I can sort out the material quickly to find out useful information for me quickly. So I got my brain trained well (P84).

P44 discussed observed that students here take a much more active approach in their learning in Canada:

It’s totally different because back in China, whatever study you take, not about the project, exams every day, paper every day, and basically just kind of a theoretical study. Here, you need to talk, you need to research, you need to do everything by yourself. Also, even the presentation is totally different. Over there, you have your group, you have your team, but for my program here, I remember, you’ve just got tonnes and tonnes of books you’ve got to finish before you go to class. And in the class, the teacher doesn’t spend time talking, actually it’s the students that take the role. It’s very different. Over there, as a student, you just sit there to listen, and here actually, you talk, you take the lead. So, yeah, really different (P44).

Another participant (P2) felt he had more control over his grade throughout the course of the year and also noticed more interaction between the professor and students, leaving more opportunity for students to ask questions:

Yeah, I love- I think here, in Canada, the teaching way and the study way is different from China, really. I: Can you describe how you find it different? P: Okay. In China, no matter you start good or bad during the semester, the final exam (clap). I: That’s it. That’s the part that counts. But in Canada, no way. The final only count for 30%, 24%, 40%, but during semester you have to well on every single assignment, exams, ‘cause every one count for the final marks. I: And you like that better. P: Yes. And the other way is here, I think the professor to the interaction with the students … probably at Seneca College, probably they only put 35 students, more interact with the professor; you know, ask questions, do problems, something. Really, I love it (P2).

In contrast to a purely didactic style of teaching, this allowed for open communication among students. Similarly, P67 described more interaction between professor and student than what he was used to and described equal power between teacher and learner:

Back home, even you want to talk, but when you raise your hand, your teacher doesn’t want their student to talk. “Stay there, and listen to me, won’t talk, you’re not able to
talk here”. But here, you need to participate in the class. If you don’t talk, you get into trouble. That’s kind of different. I: How was that for you? P: It’s more fun. I try to speak to myself, speak out, and try to do presentation in the class, and I get more confidence. I think that the relationship between teacher and student here, more like equal than back home (P67).

Similarly, P70 described students having more power in the classroom, being able to challenge professors and ask them questions:

What I mean is like if you have ideas, you can bring up as many questions as you want during lecture time. Sometimes, basically, you can just give tough questions to your professors. But in China, this sort of behaviour actually will be treated as kind of rude. The general sense would be professors should know everything. So if a professor didn’t answer a student’s questions very well, the professor will be treated like not qualified. They will just lose your business. But here, I think things are different. When I was attending lectures, some of my fellow students raise up tough questions to professors, but professors sometimes are humble. They just honestly told you “no, I don’t know the answer, but I’m pretty sure I’ll find proper answers for you. Come to my office”. So I think that’s really good (P70).

P5 also described more student-directed learning and a more subjective marking system, whereby students are marked based on their decision-making process rather than whether they were right or wrong:

Back home in university you had concrete answers. This is the question, this is the answer. Checkmark, checkmark, checkmark. But in CMA, there is no definite answer. It depends on how you approach, because it’s about decision making. You have this case, and your answer is not considered wrong, or correct. It’s how you tackle the problem. That’s how you’re being marked. We have 2 different answers, but our marks are the same. Back home, there’s a standard answer, and if you get the standard answer, you’re 100%. If you have a mistake somewhere, you have 98% (P5).

Furthermore, P83 discussed having more flexibility in his learning in Canada as compared to China: he was able to choose what courses he wanted to take and when:

The university system in Canada and in China are totally different. For here, you finish based on your credits. Let’s say, for my program in e-commerce, you needed to complete 20 credits. The students have the full flexibility to choose the course you go, even which year you want to do, even the next semester you don’t want to register, you want to take a break, you can do so. In China, it’s totally different, everything is fixed (P83).
Lastly, P1 enjoyed writing reflection papers in class as they facilitated self-expression and helped her better understand her thoughts and feelings:

The first program, I truly—the most favourite part I had is the professor always ask us to write a reflection paper. That really help me to express myself and really help me to verbalize my feeling and my thoughts. I think that’s important for anyone and also, that’s how the counselor help people. That help. And I went with that flow, so step by step, I started to know myself. And so, that’s very important (P1).

A number of participants described classroom content as more practical than what they were used to. For instance, P4 described her general impression of her retraining experience:

I think this one it is more teach me more practical knowledge. For example, that is teach us about the wire, the gauge, and doing the work, we can compare such as the temperature or size of something or style something; we can compare in the workplace so that it’s more practical (P4).

P11 felt that the practical aspects of the retraining helped him to succeed in his chosen industry:

It was quite different. It was more on the practical side, a lot of project works and assignments, which we never did in back in India. It was mainly, the style they use is more theoretical. It’s all book knowledge and they test you on your book knowledge. So as I started here, it’s quite different, and it helped me a lot. To know a lot of things and helped me to work. It makes it easier to work in this industry right now, after getting that kind of experience, and the studies helped. Basically knowing about that company, they give you a company, the background of the company, and what would you do to take it to the next step? That really helped me to understand the depth of the company and how other things work in Canada (P11).

In describing how the retraining compared to the training back home, P23 recalled:

It was more practical. It was like “here’s your information, now you gotta use it now”. Like that. It was immediate. Because it was so immediate, it wasn’t like “okay, here you’re gonna go for a year or 2, and then you’re going to use it maybe after that”. It was like “here we are, this is the first hour lecture, next hour we’re doing it”, and I loved it (P23).

P30 echoed this sentiment in recalling what he liked and disliked about the retraining:

The most enjoyable, just knowledge I learned, I really like, not the teaching styles here, I think that the way they teach is more practical. The least, I don’t think there is anything I think about the negative part. Yeah, I think the education in college, the
education is very good. It’s very practical, and whatever you learn, I could use in my workplace. It’s very good (P30).

In comparing the retraining in Canada to that of his home country, P30 indicated:

Back home, it’s only theory. You learn all of the theories, and don’t have experience until you go to work and you learn from workplace (P30).

In addition to student-directed learning and more practical content, a handful of participants also described more emphasis on presentations then what they were used to. For example, P5 described having to develop her presentation skills to adapt to this kind of learning style:

The last two years of the program in CMA was more about group work and presentation, and analytical skills, so I tried to develop that portion of myself. Since English is not my first language, I adjusted in learning through presentations. I was advised by our moderator to improve my presentation skills, to try the Toastmasters. I tried Toastmasters to gain my confidence, and I adjusted so that I would be more at ease in making presentations. That’s my adjustment as far as learning is concerned (P5).

P32 described having to adjust to presentations and teamwork:

We didn’t do much presentation in the past, in China, but there are a lot of presentations. Not only you have to work hard, do your research, but you have to present to the audience, that’s kind of quite different with my past experience. I: Was there any other thing that was different? P: Teamwork, a team assignment, you have to work together and make sure the overall result is handed in before the deadline. I: And how did you find this learning experience? P: It’s very helpful. I: In what way? P: This is way that is different with my old learning way, and actually I was ashamed by the old learning way as well. I had though I can get anything done simply by working hard, but things can be different, so I began to change (P32).

These skills incidentally helped him appear more competitive to employers:

Present as well to let other people know you did the work. And teamwork as well, so deal with other people, cooperate with people is also… I: So you learned those things also? P: Yes. Actually, then, when I start work and went through some interview, the employer focused a lot on the teamwork (P32).

Lastly, P43 also had to develop presentation skills. When asked if she had to change her learning style during the retraining, she recalled:
Yes, presentation. This presentation, I’d never met this kind of format in the past education, even I have 2 Bachelor’s degrees in China, we don’t have to do this presentation. Initially, I feel weird. Why they have to do this? And gradually I think maybe that’s for student to organize what he learned and also practice his spoken English. That’s good, and now I know about that. I: So you had to adapt to that? P: Yeah, right (P43).

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS: MARKETING SELF WITHIN CURRENT CONTEXT

This chapter will outline the themes associated with marketing oneself within the Canadian work context. This refers to participants’ methods of adapting to the Canadian work environment and making themselves desirable to Canadian employers. First, this section will describe the methods of marketing oneself in the Canadian environment, including developing a resume, interview skills, and networking. Second, this section will emphasize the value of knowing oneself (i.e., strengths, skills, interests) in effectively marketing oneself to Canadian employers. Third, the value of social connection and communication with others will be discussed. The themes and subthemes in the present chapter will be discussed in the following order:

1) Marketing Self within the Canadian Context
   a. Developing a resume
   b. Developing interview skills
   c. Marketing self
   d. Engaging in networking

2) Knowing Self

3) Social Interconnectedness
   a. Receiving information from others
   b. The value of communication
Marketing Self within the Canadian Context

This theme outlines the ways in which participants made themselves more attractive to Canadian employers and succeeded in the Canadian work environment. This includes developing a resume, developing interview skills, knowing self, and the value of social interconnectedness.

Developing a Resume

A large number of participants ($n = 55$) talked about learning how to write a resume that was competitive and marketable to Canadian employers. Participants used a variety of sources for help, including government-funded resource centers. Participants described these lessons as valuable for their career development. When P6 was asked what he did to try to get a job related to his professional background, he recalled:

The procedures you have for the job search, and I had some government developer help me with that: writing resumes, sending resumes, all what I can do in order to get a job with so many resources. And talking with people. And that’s how it came up, this person. It didn’t come from the help side; it came from a contact person (P6).

After becoming an employer, P6 came to appreciate how important an employee’s resume is to the selection process:

I was in the other process before: I had to employ people and know what employment means. So probably because I see the other person, what is he striving with, I see that sometimes to take a decision for them is they need to realize … I should have a resume, I should have all this. Otherwise if I don’t get it and this person doesn’t end up to be what I expected it to be, I will get in trouble. I’m seeing that (P6).

When P10 was asked what type of support was helpful to him in his transition to Canada, he noted:

Like they tell you how to prepare a resume, how to prepare cover letter. Some introduce different aspect of Canadian life, like the school system here, like welfare system here, like pension system here. Like, everything. The first workshop will help you with the resume, cover letter; it’s helpful. But if you keep going on the same
service, the helpfulness, you should get the jobs more; they just help you with resume and cover letter (P10).

P13 enrolled in a workshop to help him find a job. One of the main processes he learned was how to write a resume and cover letter in Canada:

I took a workshop to apply how to make a resume and a cover letter, because all of that stuff was new for me. It’s different, making the resume, writing it. Let’s say, for instance, back home you include a photo with your resume. Here, you don’t have to … in Colombia you have to say what your civil status is. You don’t do that here. It was completely different, so you had to learn the new stuff here (P13).

Similarly, P32 also received help in writing her resume:

I get help to revise my resume. The first here resume of mine, the English version, is just a simply translation from Chinese to English, and I find it doesn’t work. The later translation wouldn’t work, so I have to do some research and rewrite it. I: You did the research yourself and rewrote it? P: Yes. I get some help from the consultant too, but the consultant often provide some generic writing of the resume, I have to rewrite it myself to prepare it in a professional way, so that it will get myself inside of the door (P32).

After completing the retraining, P32 felt more confident about her skills and looked forward to putting her new qualifications on her resume:

I did learn something, and I can use that to improve my resume. I: Did you feel better or discouraged about yourself, or the same? P: I feel better. At least I can use the words that they use. We possibly did the same thing in the past, but maybe I choose a word that’s only literal translation from Chinese (P32).

When asked what factors made his career life difficult, P63 mentioned lack of information about how to properly search for jobs in Canada. However, he noted that taking workshops in college on how to prepare a resume helped him to better understand how to market himself:

Fact at the beginning I had not enough skills, not enough understanding how to do search here because when I got to workshops or in college, they also helped us to prepare resume, to search jobs and it also was helpful (P63).

Lastly, P64 remembered receiving help on his resume from counsellors, who ended up advising him to apply for lower-status positions:
Well, I had my resume viewed by a whole bunch of counsellors, I guess, and then they started to dig into, okay, where's your experience, what exactly do you know how to do? You know, how long have you been doing this for? And everything was less than a year. So they basically said, you're too fresh to do anything. You've got to start really low. So here's a few jobs where I could put your application forward to (P64).

P64 explained further why his initial job-search was particularly difficult:

Yeah, it was difficult. It was difficult because you had to re-do my resume, you know, focus on things that - I mean, I tried to find something appealing in my resume from my previous experience, but as I said there was not much there that was really valued here. So, you know, I had to make compromises, I guess (P64).

Many participants talked in-depth about the intricacies of resume editing and in particular, using a resume to make oneself desirable to an employer. P16 felt that marketing herself using a resume was very different from what she was accustomed to:

I think it was one of the YMCA info sessions, and then I later on joined another organization – I’ve forgotten its name – they had an intensive program for newcomers, helping them to settle into- to gain the Canadian work experience. So you go there every day; you have to start with the resume, how to write your resume, which is totally different from at home. Where I come from, we write it differently, how to market yourself … here, you have to advocate for yourself. Where I come from, you don’t have to; it wasn’t necessary. So changing that … ’cause where I come from (inaudible 22:45), you’re being proud which here, it’s the opposite. If you don’t do that, you won’t get anywhere. So, it was quite a huge challenge to learn how to do that (P16).

P16 realized that a resume or cover letter could advocate for her on her behalf:

So even when you are writing your letter of intent, because you are not in the system, sometimes you don’t really know what they look for. You may have it in you, but it’s about how it’s presented. You know, sometimes it’s not what you present there; I might have something that looks good here, but there has to be somebody between to advocate for me (P16).

When asked if there was any particular strategy that was helpful in finding a job, P26 mentioned:

I think that my resume was my major issue to improve before I got my first job. I spent a lot of time for doing some training to prepare myself for interviews, for attending the job, and also to make my resume more professional, how it should be because in my country are very different policy for applying for the job (P26).
Like P16, P26 also realized that a resume had the power to advocate for him and recognized that a poor resume contributed to his difficulty in getting hired:

I was asking myself all that time why nobody get me some interview or why nobody tried to hire me and see if I am skilled or not. On the first moment, I found my resume is not maybe appropriate for being impressive for employer. As I mentioned, I took one and a half months to make better that resume. After that, I was also surprised, after that my resume, who was prepared by assisting the very educated professionals at Humber College and checked that it is correct and good enough, I was still looking and applying for the job without. Yeah, I think that my resume was, but after that I really can’t understand why nobody didn’t hire me and maybe I found that I didn’t have enough Canadian experience as second one reason. First my resume, then my Canadian experience was missing from my resume (P26).

P55 put a lot of work into his resume because he knew it was a “strong marketing tool”. When asked what led to his current employment, he noted:

My resume, which I crafted over a very long time. So one thing is that I put tremendous amount of work in my resume. And that’s not something what was created in a month, two months; it was day-after-day work, so I crafted it almost to perfection. This is- it became a very strong marketing tool. Strangely enough, I had many times professionals to help me with my resume. Unfortunately, as much money, of course, it was absolutely useless, so it never took me anywhere. What helped me, a few talented people who had no affiliation with human resources whatsoever – never worked – but had close to my background and work experience. Specifically, there was on person in my life who – again, I don’t know – perhaps he is very talented, so he created the first draft. I just continued working on this draft year after year, month after month, week after week and somehow, it just works (P55).

Furthermore, P63 mentioned that it was very important to match her resume to what an employer is looking for. This means listing relevant skills and work experience:

I sent resume and went to one of interviews. I: So you sent resumes for positions as a developer and programmer. P: Yeah, I sent. Most of my resume was sent to those position, and now I understand why general labour did not reply, because I sent those resume with programmer developer experience! I: Yeah, you have to have a different resume for everything. P: Yeah (P63).

Although most participants found consistent resume advice, some participants received conflicting advice. For example, P10 described her experience:
Access seems like more professional, more helpful. Because I went some places, like University Settlement, the people even don’t know- even correct my resume and cover letter wrong. I give like a good one, and then it get corrected wrong. They only have one (36:38) to correct your resume. I: So you had mixed results: some places were more helpful than others. P: Yeah (P10).

Similarly, speaking about a particular resource center, P22 recalled:

They helped with nothing. I got a resume written by one person; the other guy said, “Go and trash. Who has written this resume?” So that obviously speaks volumes of the lack of coordination, the lack of uniformity and lack of actual knowledge (P22).

Another participant (P56) was told to customize his resume, but over time he came to find that it didn’t always help:

So when I was applying and applying and applying and applying and the tools, they’re still telling me – and I disagree a little bit – is that “Oh, customize your resume, customize your resume, customize your resume, customize your resume”. So it seemed to me 50% times ridiculous. Still! What are you looking for this entry level job? The thing they told me again and again, oh, they’re looking for this thing, they’re looking for this thing, they’re looking for this thing, they said the behavioural stuff and they look for very good fit, the right fit. Yep. I agree partially with that statement still. But finally, the job I got through a recruitment agency. They don’t bother about my resume. They don’t bother about “customize this, customize this”, nothing. So in that sense, what I learned from them is not completely true. It’s 50% true, I would say (P56).

Developing Interview Skills

Many participants \((n = 36)\) engaged in learning about appropriate social etiquette in an interview, as well as how to present themselves in a favourable light to an interviewer. P16 remembered having difficulty landing a job despite having numerous interviews. After seeking assistance, she realized the importance of marketing herself effectively during an interview. In describing the process of finding a job after retraining, P16 exclaimed:

Yeah, it was very competitive. Mostly they wanted people with Masters, the experience. They didn’t look so much about the credentials, where they come from; it was about how you presented yourself. So it was more, I found, (01:17:30) with regards to marketing myself. ‘Cause I remember at some stage I shared with some workmens to say, “You know, I’ve been to so many interviews, but no one ever hires me”. They say, “Okay, come. Let’s see. Let’s do a mock interview and see. Maybe something you are not doing right”. So they help me polish up in there. I: Give you
feedback? P: Yes, in terms of re-marketing yourself. You have to show them that you are the right candidate. Wow them! (P16)

Another participant (P49) shared a similar perspective, emphasizing the difficulty associated with learning how to communicate in interviews in Canada:

Getting a job after school wasn’t as easy as I thought. I thought it would be easier, but no, it was challenging because again, now you’re competing with your classmates and the other schools. And the biggest thing I lacked was interviewing skills. I didn’t know how to speak in an interview. I mean, I could honestly say learning how to speak in an interview was the biggest challenge I had to overcome. And again, there are two: the behavioural interview and then if you have a technical interview. So I got it, but it took me a long time to get over that because those people who come from India - communication is the biggest challenge for us. So communication is biggest challenge, yet is for me, because then you have to present, and it is overwhelming for me (P49).

P59 also had to learn how to “sell” herself in interviews:

So there was a program run by HRDC, Skills for Change, so they conducted some demo interviews, so that was for everybody, banking, non-banking, and one of the directors from CIBC Mellon was there doing the interviews. So, when she interviewed me, she said “you’re not selling yourself. Your resume has this, this, this, and that”. I: That helped you the most? P: That helped the most (P59).

During retraining, P84 learned how to speak “the professional language” in job interviews and communicate to an employer that he possessed the skills for the position:

I know especially in the professional jobs, you have to know how to speak the professional language. For example, for you, you had to know how to interview peoples; you should know some industrial terms that people can understand you right away. And the employer knows you are right person, and they know you have such skills and you can do a job. I: So that was a good thing about retraining because you learned the language that was used here for what you were doing. P: Right (P84).

With respect to social etiquette, P21 learned what kind of vocabulary to use, and what was considered appropriate small talk:

And what this program did for us, they introduced us to okay, for example, ‘what to ask the interviewer’ or ‘how to answer certain questions’. They also came with vocabulary that is appropriate to use during the interviews. So that was very helpful, and we played these different scenarios. So we went through this series of questions, and they also talked about things like ‘small talk’, what is this. So they talked about
what are the appropriate things to talk about: say, weather, traffic and sports. And inappropriate is sex, religion and politics (P21).

Similarly, P84 described learning about social etiquette for job interviews:

To be honest, just shortly after my graduation, I got couple of job interviews, but I failed all of them. And there was a chance that I run into the second round, but finally I didn’t succeed. But later, I review those interview, like how my behaviour and what’s my shortage, and I know … I would say the interview is a social cause I have to learn but most of time – I mean for most people – the school doesn’t teach such things. I: So, what did you do to learn that type of thing? P: Yeah, I need to scratch those interview materials and to practice with people to work out interviews. I: Did you do some practice interviews? P: Yeah (P84).

A few participants discussed the importance of wearing appropriate clothing to an interview. P46 recalled that buying a nice suit proved to be very successful for him:

I wasn’t taking the board interviews very seriously. I thought it was kind of a casual thing, but it turned out to be a corporate, CEO was interviewing me. So, I didn’t get my first job in the Toronto Catholic Board, but every job after that I got, because I bought a suit, it was really nice. I: That helped the process? P: Every interview I had with that suit, I got the job. I: So you had a lot of confidence? P: Yeah, once I got out of it, into the job world, I knew that I knew what to do, and could relate really well (P46).

P63 learned the hard way that he should wear nice clothes an interview:

When I came to Canada, I came to my first job interview with green sweater with bird here. So, right now, I still- person doesn’t understand that I just don’t know how to even- which clothes I should go in certain clothes for interview. It’s good that I got these jobs. Then I find out that people who is going to interview put on some certain clothes. I didn’t understand at all Canadian life. Okay, I was completely lucky to get this job because my former manager told me, she said “Ways that I came to first interview, it’s not way … this bright green sweater, this bird here” (P63).

A few participants noted the significance of presenting themselves in a positive light during an interview. For instance, P19 recalled that the retraining helped her to “talk the talk” during an interview:

It did help me to relate to what’s happening in business around here, it does have its practical uses. To talk the talk during an interview, it does help (P19).

When asked what impact the retraining had on her perception of self-worthiness as a new Canadian, she replied:
A lot. At least it gives you a chance to talk in an interview. “I have done this.” You won’t talk as much as me as you would talk about this, because the guy sitting across the table has not done an MBA, he’s done this most probably. So, at least, it gives you some kind of inner strength to speak (P19).

Marketing Self

Participants \((n = 26)\) actively marketed themselves to the Canadian work context. This included attempting to sell themselves to employers by sending resumes, cold calling, and setting up in-person meetings. Some participants reached out to higher-level managers rather than sending a resume online. These methods were often more efficient. For example, when asked what were some expected and unexpected events that influenced her job-seeking and vocational development in Canada, P17 replied:

I notice that in my case, I never been called on the interview, applying online. I: So, it’s always been what happened and who you know? P: I have interview only when I reach the high level manager, either company owner or hirin’ manager, but never when I send my resume. It’s never reach. I: So, you said sometimes the people you met were helpful in getting you a job. Was there anything … P: Very helpful. Most the jobs directly from the people who looking for. Not a middle person, not the HR, not the hirin’ agency; only the person who is lookin’ for job. They have a vision who they want to hire and they say, “Okay, you fit into this job” or “Huh-uh, I don’t feel you can do it”. And they tell you right away (P17).

She also noted the importance of persistence and going above and beyond to reach individuals higher up in companies. When asked how important her own actions were in helping her find work, P17 replied, “It’s this issue of no one else can do it. I don’t have parents here, I don’t have someone powerful who can say, “way to go”. You have to knock the doors, contact people, be persistent”.

Similarly, P27 had success by talking to the owner of a store after noticing a help-wanted sign:

So, the first place that I saw, I went to ask. I saw a sign, they said “help wanted”, I was walking with my child in the stroller, and I told my husband “look, what does it mean, that? Help wanted. They need people. You’re going to go to work”, he says that, you know? I said “yeah, if they hire me, why not? Let me go ask”, and then I went to ask,
and said “are you hiring people?” My English was very broken English, even though now you see, I have very broken English. And the lady says “oh, are you looking for a job?” I said “yes”, “but you want to come tomorrow”, I said “okay, what time?”, “the manager is going to be here at 10:00, 11:00, I think”, “okay”. So, I end up having the job. I: Just by walking on the street. P: Just walking and asking (P27).

P67 echoed this by having more luck meeting an employer in-person than applying online:

You apply online, and you never get called. That’s a surprise. We got a job, they advertise job every day, and you register, they send you job, every day, you apply for it a thousand times, you never get a call. Why? I don’t know. They tried to do advertise (00:28:31) company, but if I go to the company and somebody interviews me, I get a job right away. Always like that. Because when you go there, it’s more like they need you. On internet, I’m not sure that what you try to do, not like they want people like looking for the employee. They’re looking for something else (P67).

In describing what was most and least helpful for him in his job search, P67 recalled feeling more confident by approaching employers in-person:

I gain more confident then, because I go there, I search, I call them, I try to do it by myself, I gain more confidence, because I know that when I talk to them, I know that, okay the type of job, these things, I can handle it. And kind of practice are there, so I feel more confident then (P67).

Lastly, in discussing things that were helpful in his transition to Canada, P64 described the importance of learning how to approach people: “I guess, information resources, which are really good to have and how to approach people, how to do a cold call, interview, job search, things like that. Those were really good.”

Participants marketed themselves by highlighting to employers what they were looking for in terms of skills, confidence, and competence in a Canadian environment. For instance, P17 realized the importance of using “key words” when talking to a potential employer to emphasize job-person match:

A week ago, it was a call from Ukrainian Credit Union: “We’re lookin’ for someone interdisciplinary degree who does customer service, entry level position, good environment with possibility to grow through the company”. I contact them. It’s happen to be Human Resources and they say, “Oh, we’re lookin’ for someone in bankin’ and financial experience”. I said “I don’t have banking. I have credit card
experience, and I have insurance experience and I have customer service”. “No, we need credit, we need bankin’, financial …” So, stuck into the key words. You don’t give them key words, you don’t exist. I: So, tryin’ to market yourself as much as you can. P: Yeah (P17).

After reading books on how to “sell himself”, P26 learned to always appear confident and present himself in a positive light:

I knew books and so on how to sell myself and so on, and I have to be 100% confident and you have to make a self presentation. I’ve never done it before, so that’s why I had to improve the skills. Even though you are not the very best expert, but you have to make an impression on your interviewer (P25).

P28 also expressed the importance of selling himself to a potential employer, highlighting the power of discussing his strengths at length. However, P28 experienced difficulty doing this due to cultural differences and being raised as an “introvert:

Being flexible, and also, here, you have to sell yourself. Back home, we can’t talk too much about ourselves, even in the interview, we are not trained, that was not the culture. Here, you have to talk too much about yourself to sell yourself, so that’s a different culture. I: So it sounds like the connections, the networking was very important? P: Networking was important. The least helpful was the so many years brought up being an introvert, that was really making it very difficult to go and sell ourselves. I: So the cultural difference? P: Cultural difference, yeah (P28).

P28 also recognized the importance of listing his skills that were applicable to the job:

I was able to talk about software systems, accounting systems, and computerizations. So that knowledge in the field, if I got a housewife and coming here, educated housewife, or educated home-sitter, coming here, compelled to work for finance reason, it is different. But, for me, I was able to talk about software systems, accounting, and stuff like that. So, it really helped me, that background. And I was really proud about what I gathered while I worked there. Even today, it helps me. I: Did it help you in your job search? P: Yes, I was able to talk to the agencies and impress them, explain to them, so it helped me. I: Find a job? P: Yes (P28).

P64 worked hard at obtaining the credentials specific to the job he wanted, and presenting those credentials in a systematic way:

After Compaq, both those experiences led to the job at Bell. And then these courses at UofT led to the M&A job at Bell. I: And why do you think that's so? I mean I interview people, lots of people, and that doesn't happen for everybody. They go for
retraining and it doesn't lead to a job. P: For me work - I think most of it is because over time I tried to get that - like I - in my mind, that's how the system works. You need to be able to provide credentials. You needed to be able to prove experience. And if you don't have a lot of experience, you need still to provide credentials and some related experience to get to the new job that will give you experience. So basically for me it's been always starting from the goal, and how do I get the puzzle to work so that when I present myself as a candidate for those jobs, I can get them (P64).

Some participants went above and beyond their duties in the workplace in order to prove themselves to their managers and make advancements in their career. For example, P72 helped another employee develop a new strategy to manage cash balances in the company and mentioned this to his boss, which proved his value as an employee:

I worked as an intake customer rep for the government. There was somebody who would balance all day, and I wasn’t wanting the job; that’s not my style at all. But I found her struggling, and I said, “Can I see what you’re doing?” And I just assisted her. She didn’t even have logs in place. I just had to draw up a log; it was manually done in ’99. I just drew it out. And at one point, when we had one-on-ones with our manager, I had to bring it up. I’m not blowing my horn, but I did say “I put this process into place. She is following it through”, and she retired after a year of me joining it. And my manager just approached me and said, “Would you want to take this?” It was higher paying, the title was different; you became a team lead kind of a thing (P72).

While volunteering in a law firm, P76 demonstrated his skills in the workplace and gained respect and opportunity as a result:

She didn’t expect- she didn’t know what my abilities and skills were. She thought a foreign lawyer in second year law school: what’s he gonna know? So, at nine o’clock, I took a chance. I walked over to her office. So I took it over and I said, “Here’s the brief that I prepared on it”. She looked at it, a cursory look, and goes, “Okay, what do you understand about the file?” I said, “Can I read this brief to you?” “Sure.” So I read the brief. She almost fell off her chair. She said, “You’re not gonna go home by yourself today. I’m gonna give you a ride”. She dropped me home, and from the next day I was getting more serious stuff than the articling student (P72).

Engaging in Networking

In the previous chapter, learning about the value of networking was identified as a crucial component of participants’ learning and adapting. This chapter outlines participants’
engagement with networking and seeing, first-hand, how it helped them in their career development.

Participants \((n = 46)\) described engaging in networking in order to advance in their careers in Canada. Many participants talked about networking in a positive light, noticing that it helped them immensely in their transition to Canada in all avenues (i.e., job search, social life, sense of connectedness). P45 noted that networking helped her to maintain contacts while working, which she found to be helpful in her job. In discussing the impact of her retraining, P45 noted:

I learned a lot, I really learned a lot. That’s one good thing, and also networking. If you go to school, especially in my work as a settlement counselor, I’m always looking for people to come to the centre and talk to my clients. So, the networking portion helps me a lot. Let’s say I have a classmate who’s from mental health “can you come and talk about mental health to caregivers?”, and I have somebody who’s very good at English “can you come and do English conversation?” It helps me out, the networking, and also, let’s say now I’m out of work, I talk to people and ask them if they have anything that I could do. So that helps out (P45).

P12 found attending networking events in her field to be effective for connecting her to others in similar lines of research and with similar cultural backgrounds:

I joined a couple of professional associations related to the industrial engineering field, to the logistics field. Also, I attended networking groups related to the Colombian or Hispanic associations. And then just in my own field, went to a couple of networking events. I was very focused on networking (P12).

Participants noted the effectiveness of networking in helping them find a job. Some participants noted that having a co-op or internship during retraining helped them get their foot in the door because they were able to meet people in the industry, increasing their job opportunities. For instance, in discussing what factors made the job search easier, P11 explained:

First, I would say, very importantly, was the course, which had a co-op, which gave me a breakthrough, a step into the door of where I wanted to work. That was the main
thing. My work was quite simple. The course that I took had this Canadian securities course, and after giving that exam from that actual institute, which is Canadian Securities Institute, you get those licenses, accreditations to work as investment representative, to trade, which is basic requirement at the brokerage. That’s where I was working, CIBC Investors Edge. I: So the schooling made things a lot easier, and the connections you made through your co-op? P: Right (P11).

P31 also recognized the significance of “planting himself within the professional community”:

I felt it helped me, it gave me more experience and it was easier for me to plant within the community having done the 2 years degree, and 3 years internship was very helpful. I: So I hear you saying getting into the community a couple times. Do you mean the community as in the architect community? P: Yes, the professional community (P31).

In discussing what helped P23 find a job, she noted that networking with other Canadians was key to her success: “I would talk to other Canadians, network. I networked like crazy”. In asking what actions she took to make her retraining experience possible, she noted, “by going and asking questions, and networking”. Similarly, P62 discussed the key to networking:

I: You mentioned networking earlier. P: Yeah, networking. I: How did you network? P: Networking also good because if you have very good network of people in professional area, then they can actually give you information about job openings in their organization, and they can give you the information about requirements of those positions: how to get yourself ready to get those positions. Actually, it’s very important here. I: So that was helpful. P: Yeah (P62).

In reviewing what P28 did to look for a job, she described connecting with people in her community and with recruitment agencies:

Oh, to look for jobs? Yes, I was searching, and here they say ‘networking’, so I was getting connected with people, and also recruitment agencies. I had gone through recruitment agencies, and immediately I learned here volunteer application, I submitted volunteer applications, and also gone to recruitment agencies, head hunters, and tried my best to get into that networking culture. I: Who did you network with? P: Like my friends, through my friends, so, they refer all relatives refers light (?00:32:30), so I meeting him at coffee places and stuff like that. I: Did you find those things helpful? P: It really helped me to get jobs. My first full-time job through an agency (P28).

P49 noticed that his diligence in keeping in contact with a company who had previously interviewed him was a major contributor for eventually landing a job with them:
So I was called for a second interview. I met the SVP at that time and I know he liked me. But they found, actually, another girl who had investment banking experience, so it was a complete total fit with the job, and she got it. And I kept in touch, and they really liked me, and I knew that. So I kept in touch with the HR person; this was in October and either Jan or Feb she called me and she said, “Look, these aren’t full-time positions; they’re contract positions just for year”. I said, “I’ll take it”. So I went for the interview. She gave me this thing, I researched on that topic and went in, and 2 or 3 days later I went in to the manager, and he was completely blown away by the research I had done. I was instantly hired (P49).

Another participant (P55) began connecting with professionals in the Russian community, which helped him find work. When asked what P55 did to get a job in his chosen field, he responded:

I was networking, meeting people. I: Where were you networking? P: When I realized that I completely failed to establish any contacts with locals, I switched gears and I started networking with Russian population. And I was somewhat successful. I started looking for a job. So next step from IBM. It was extremely lower and it’s only a word that it was IBM, and I was doing some work with computers. It was extremely basic. So I was able eventually through one of my professional contacts here to pass my resume to Constellation Software Group, and they took me as some sort of technical support analyst (P55).

Similarly, P37 described the activities she participated in while searching for a job:

Networking was more important. I met a guy at an art reception. I: When you first came here… P: It was an art exhibition or something. I don’t remember exactly. I met a person there and we just had a good conversation and we exchanged contact information. He told me you cannot find a job in Canada through the internet. You cannot depend on the internet to get a job. He mentioned that in conversation. Just 1% of people if you are lucky get a job through the internet. I like networking. I like to talk to people and to get to know more about… You can’t get a feeling of that environment so you need to talk to people. I: Is that how you got your jobs? P: References. Through friends. I: Through friends. Perfect (P37).

P54 received a job because of her relationship with a contact from school who used to work at the company:

So for just few months I got a job which was still entry level, Ontario Ministry for (09:06). I worked for 8 months, and the job dried up because of recession. I got that job because of my Seneca connection. One other lady, she used to work there obviously, and she took my name, my address and my resume, and she called me to work for her. So, that was the only significant job I did in here; the others, just survival jobs (P54).
Another participant was put in contact with a company who needed an accountant and was hired as a result. P6 explained:

I don’t know if I was lucky or if it was my time, but one way or the other I was lucky. I got in touch with the right person who needed a cheap accountant that calls him (16:35) and me as an immigrant, he had it. When he try me, he not sure what I was; he was really happy now. So he was paying 3 or 4 times than what he would pay me. But that gave me opportunity. I worked for more than 5 years with him, and okay, the company didn’t do as well. But at least he had what he wanted and it helped me (P6).

P6 discussed having social contacts helped him land a job in his chosen field:

Usually friends. People that you are contact with. And that’s how it came up, this person. It didn’t come from the help side; it came from a contact person. They give you opportunities, tell you what the experience is (P6).

For another participant (P31), it was a mentor who connected him to a colleague and provided an excellent recommendation:

I had my mentor there in Ottawa, which helped me a lot, professionally. He advised me, and guided me through the internship, and at the end, when I wanted to move to Toronto, he introduced me to his colleague in Toronto, and gave me a very good recommendation, so when I came here for interview, I didn’t have any problem, and I started right away (P31).

Contacts from work or school proved to be helpful for many participants. For others, however, it was a friend who connected participants to opportunities. For instance, P67 was struggling to a find a job when he a friend connected him to an opportunity at a pharmacy:

It’s funny, when I got here, I went to the mall, to try to get a job, right? They ask to hand in my resume, and I sent out my resume, but I didn’t get a job, I didn’t get any call. But one of my friends, she worked in the pharmacy because she’s studied pharmacy technician, and somebody left, some student there, they worked part-time, they left, and then she got me that job. I came, and he interviewed me for 5 minutes, and he told me “go home and we’ll call you if we hire you”, so they called me back, and that’s how I got a job. I: So it was through your friend? P: Yeah, it was not really hard at that time (P67).

P17 was given an opportunity at a call centre by a friend:

And then I found finally- my friend, I went to Primerica Cirrus course for insurance course. And they had disability and life insurance course where I learned all these
procedures and processes. And one of the girl I met there, she was quittin’ her job for the reason she didn’t like the company; she was fed up. And she said, “They lookin’ someone who speaks Russian ‘cause they don’t have any Russian-speaking translator”. So I took over her, and I like it because it was call centre. I had ability to talk to people, direct speech, and it was very, very precise script we had to conduct reports (P17).

P44 made a good friend in one of her classes who offered her a job as a culture liaison:

My husband, my teachers, and I made my best friend here, from that program. Kind of my role model. I: Was she a teacher, or…? P: No, classmate. She’s older than me, she has bigger kids, she’s single mom. She fulfilled her life here, so I think I have the possibility, too. And now she’s working for York Region School Board, management position. Nice! And she wants to offer me a job, like a culture liaison person for the York Region School Board, but I said now with my little kids, I don’t have time, later I will think, I will try. I: That’s wonderful, so you have a connection. P: Yeah, she said that she believed I was the best person to start that program for the board, especially for Chinese students (P44).

P80 also described getting many job opportunities through friends. One, in particular, as a draftsman:

And when I got a job – the first job using this certificate – was a company looking for a draftsman, and I knew somebody there. And the person who talk to me gave me the job immediately. And later he told me, “Okay, I receive more than 200 resumes through the fax machine and mail, and I only look at 2 or 3 that were both from (38:55)” (P80).

And another as a parking lot attendant:

So, connections … Sorry, I forgot to tell you. I went to another job working for a parking lot downtown, and at that one, connections also. I knew somebody whose friend was working there and was leaving the job. I didn’t know when was he leaving but he told me, “Okay, the boss will be here tomorrow. Come tomorrow with your resume. Don’t call before 10 o’clock; we’ll be here at 10”. So I was there at 10 o’clock, I submit my resume, and the only thing is “Go around to see the job is, and we’ll talk later”. I went around for 10-15 minutes to see the parking lot downtown, a busy place, and 10 minutes later, “Do you have time to start work the rest of the day, or do you have something to do?” “No, I can stay here.” “Okay, stay here for the rest of the day.” I: So those connections were very helpful to get those little … P: Yeah (P80).

A large number of participants also talked about how the retraining experience itself allowed them to network and make connections in their chosen field. For instance, P14 recalled:
Through retraining, I think I gained a lot of connections with people, connections with the company, connections with the new career, like alumni in the industry. You get to know about a lot of students who studied with me. This is a gain (P14).

P29 echoed this sentiment:

I think I gained a lot for the retraining. I didn’t feel I lose anything. I gained the friendship, that’s something I mentioned. The friendship, not only for the student, but for the teacher as well, those teachers, I still contact them sometimes. Because I worked at school as well, that’s why… Programmer, like part-time. They still have the programming I wrote for them, sometimes they might have some questions, have some contact. It’s not quite often now, but we still have some kind of a communication (P29).

Knowing Self

Participants ($n = 42$) noted that knowing themselves, including their strengths, skills, and interests, assisted them immensely in their career development journey in Canada. Knowing themselves helped participants market themselves to employers. Some participants’ knowledge of their own strengths and beliefs in their abilities to succeed proved to be very useful for them in keeping them motivated and persistent in achieving their goals. For example, when P3 was asked how he coped with the changes and difficulties after coming to Canada, he explained:

I kind of have a mindset wherein I know I’m good, I’m competent, I’m capable, and it’s just a matter of time, success will come my way. I was a phone call away if I ever wanted to go back to the Middle East and head the organization again, I mean, my chairman was always willing to accept me. So, for me it was “lets see how long it takes, but it better fall through the cracks because there is no reason why I shouldn’t be successful here, what’s different? (P3)”

When asked how his ability to cope with these changes impacted his self-esteem, he noted:

Truly, to me, like I said, I’m fairly thick skinned, I’m mentally strong, yes, there are times you go up and down, but overall, you know what, you punch, I punch back. I’m not scared, I’m not running away, I’m going to fight my way through. You do it with a smile, you do it with your competencies, you don’t have to make a fuss about anything more than that (P3).

Similarly, P5 answered the same question with:
I’m a person who is goal-oriented. Whenever I want something, I always look in my mind that if my husband is not that strong, I should be stronger. Since we decided to come over and we don’t want to go back, we should really work hard on finding a job and do everything that we can. I was that go, go person. I made it a point that one of us should show that we’re determined, that one of us should be strong. If the kids can see that both of us are depressed and stressed out, they too will feel the same way. Who is the person who will be stronger? I: You wanted to set an example? P: Yes (P5).

When asked how she believed she would perform in the retraining, P5 replied:

I know I’m a hard working person, intelligent, resilient, and I’m always thinking “I can do it, I used to do it”. I was valedictorian in high school, so I thought “this might be easy, I can do it, because I know I have been a good adult student, so this will just take more hard work and more sleepless nights (P5).

P41 noticed that believing in himself was one of the most influential factors that helped him to succeed in his career development within Canada:

I think family support was huge. That’s one factor. Another thing, you know, is you believe in yourself that yes you can do this. Not only that, but one thing to do it. That is very important (P41).

Some participants talked more specifically about their skills and level of experience. These participants demonstrated that they were in touch with their skills and that this knowledge was beneficial for them in their journey. For example, P42 described feeling confident in her ability to do well in the retraining program because of her technical background:

I’ll tell you why that help me. Because actually, in China, in the university, I already took this kind of courses. All these courses, I have the technical background; I have not only the courses in university, but also in my job, I do this kind of job, exactly. So all this training and work experience helped this kind of retraining. So in the retraining, I actually know what is my strengths and what is … (01:07:25). I: So, you already knew before you started the courses that you would do well in this? P: Yeah, I already knew (P42).

Likewise, P28 was confident in her ability to land a job because she aware of the skills she gained in her previous training. When asked how a period of unemployment affected her, she noted:
I was scared, worried, but still confident. Financially, savings were used, not much other than those things. I: So you were still confident? P: I was still confident. I: And what helped you still be confident? P: Maybe thanks to the background I came from, because I was able to go… I had done an International Accountancy, parot qualified (00:45:23), and I had a degree, I had (00:45:27), so I was able to go, communicate, and get those things, sell yourself, I was able to sell my qualification, talk about it (P28).

When asked what factors had been the most influential in helping her to succeed, she replied:

It’s my experience and my confidence and my openness to learn more, like I was open to get myself trained, so that also helped me. And then, basically those are the four, my experience and education background, my openness, and then, as I say, the network (P28).

P42 was also aware of and using her strengths to her advantage:

At beginning, I just needed to focus on my previous experience. So sometimes I’m not successful very quickly, but I think no matter how difficult, I need to focus. I: Is that on what you want… P: On take advantage of my background; otherwise, I will not be successful. Yeah, because of my age when I come to Canada, was almost 40 and what I can do if I move to a new job, new career, the young students is 20. That competition with people was impossible. I: So really focusing on what you already know. P: Yeah. I need to take advantage of my strengths (P42).

P45’s knowledge of her work experience from her home country allowed her to feel more confident to contribute in class:

I guess my experience, let’s say now, I am in my MSW program, I would consider that I do have a lot of experiences, during discussion I could contribute more, because my ideas was something that they didn’t experience here. So, maybe the uniqueness of my experience there is good in a way to deepen the understanding of the concept or the theories (P45).

In addition to participants having knowledge of their skills and previous experience, participants also discussed the value of being aware of personal characteristics. For example, P37 believed that he would succeed in his career because he knew he was resilient. When asked what made him feel he would always succeed, he responded:

Because I am resistant and resilient. I like to, because I am a sportsman, I played tennis for a while for 10 years. I played basketball in university. It makes me (1:28:17). I: You feel like the sports help you. P: Resistant. Resilient (P37).
P6 also felt confident in his ability to succeed in his career and was aware of his tendency to have common sense and of his ability to manage individuals and find solutions to problems:

I think I’m a person that has common sense on many things and know how to manage people, and I know how to coordinate with people and understand the person and try to find solutions and future problems, and I see ahead of time a lot of things. And that can be a lot of things that will happen, and this time there was bad time for the company, and the company was more hearing to me because I was advising all these procedures. And I was giving company heads-up. And I was not wrong. So yeah, I find that I have some qualities that can help (P6).

P9 described the interview process as “fun” and stress-free because he knew he had the qualities of a good teacher:

I went for interviews. They are giving us, actually, one hour. They ended up getting, I ended up getting more than one hour. I don’t know what it meant to me, because I don’t know much about the experience of interviews here, but we were always laughing with them. Laughing, because “You didn’t think you would pass?” I said “No, I cannot fail a teaching interview. I was born a teacher, and I will die a teacher, I can never fail!” So, it was fun when I was doing this (P9).

In discussing what factors helped her to succeed, P20 replied:

What factors helped me to succeed: I believe my retraining and my personality. I: What do you mean by that? Characteristics like … P: I’m a hard worker and I’m a stress reliever. In a team I’m always have my unique skills to offer and have a good sense of humour. I would never intimidate somebody, and I will have my standards. I: So, those things have helped you? P: Yes (P20).

Similarly, when P34 was asked what was helpful in obtaining a job, she listed qualities that she believed the interviewer had observed:

I think that maybe that my personality… I’m not very difficult or a very closed person and I think I’m easy to get-along with so maybe it’s simply… Maybe interviewer can sense that. I can think of that. I cannot… I don’t know what else (P34).

Furthermore, in discussing what factors had been influential in helping her succeed, P34 listed some positive qualities. Being in touch with her qualities helped her to strive for a decent job in the service-industry:

What factors… Maybe my own personality that I am pretty realistic person, you know, not somebody who is… and I think so. I think, I mean, I always relied on myself and
my family, of course, they helped, they supported me and were always making very
good when I had to study and not bother me. Yeah, I think that answer to that question,
I really tried to help myself to find place under the sun, to get some decent job. I: So,
your own kind of… P: Own desire to study new things, confidence in my knowledge,
kind of people skills and tendency to care about other people, to… that service oriented
skills (P34).

While many participants’ awareness of personal characteristics encouraged them to reach for
higher positions, one participant used his knowledge of his own characteristics in a different
way. P66’s knowledge of his personality contributed to his decision to continue in an analyst
role rather than apply for a management role:

The way my personality is that it’s structured that, you know, you either, you stay in
the sort of analyst positions or you move to management. And management is a very
different set of skill sets and the only way to move up is to move into those kinds of
areas and not everybody’s suited for that. So I’m not really suited for that so I’m not
really going to move up in that structure probably very well. I: How do you feel about
that? P: It’s a little bit frustrating. I do, you know, have some things I’ve done outside
of that major, that main job to supplement to try to keep myself professionally alive. I:
Okay, I hear you, there’s kind of like the social element and then there’s the technical.
And you’re more of a technical. P: Right, technical expertise, yeah (P66).

Some participants’ knowledge of their interests and passions helped guide them in their
career journey. P44’s knowledge of her preference to teach adults rather than children helped
her have more realistic expectations of the retraining program, which ultimately helped her
make a decision not to go:

I went to so many information sessions. After gathering all the information, I didn’t
think I was really kind of in it. I like to work with adults. That’s my strength. For the
young age one, or the high school or middle school, I don’t think I can fully control
that part. For me adults, yeah, that’s better (P44).

P68’s confidence to succeed in a retraining program and his awareness of his enjoyment for
learning encouraged him to enrol in retraining. When asked how he thought he would perform
in the retraining, he replied:

Well I always did well in like kind of exams and stuff like school and university, so I
was pretty confident I should be okay. If I study hard then I should pass those exams. I:
Okay. How did you feel about having to do your retraining? Were you excited about doing the CIP? P: I was actually really excited. I: Were you? P: Yeah. I: Why were you so excited? P: I don’t know. I like to study, I like to learn new things and I felt like I’m doing something good because it’s benefiting my career (P68).

Similarly, P22’s knowledge of her strengths and interests contributed to her decision to retrain.

When asked what led to her decision to retrain, P22 responded:

Well, because I’m a good teacher, and I’m also very passionate about social work, and I want people to have basic medical knowledge to look after themselves and their dear ones. So that’s why I thought Red Cross and training and everybody in first aid would be a good idea (P22).

Another participant (P78) was aware of her likes and dislikes at work. This knowledge helped her to decide what career to choose and how to make a living for herself in Canada:

I liked the sense of freedom, definitely, with both jobs as research assistant or as professor, you have the sense to do your work, and with research assistant, you don’t have much choice into how you do the research or how it’s intended to be done. But you have a flexibility of time into doing that. And I totally like jobs where I’m not in a constant noisy environment; I cannot resist the noise. So the research assistant job perfect ‘cause it’s very quiet. I totally love the part when I had the interview, the quality research part in the research; I totally loved having to interview people and learning about their experiences and asking questions. It was like an opening experience; I loved it. I didn’t like much the transcribing part, so when it comes to tidy elements of the job that everything is so technical and so focused into where I see that my thinking doesn’t matter (P78).

Social Interconnectedness

Being connected to one’s social world was significant to participants’ career development in Canada. Participants’ connection to their surrounding community proved to be useful in a variety of respects, including receiving information from others and receiving opportunities directly or indirectly via relationships with others.

Receiving Information from Others

For many participants (n = 66), receiving information from friends and other contacts was a key component of their career development in Canada. Participants received information
about retraining opportunities and expectations, work options, and living in Canada. With regard to retraining, participants recalled learning about their options. For instance, shortly after arriving to Canada, P2 met two individuals while volunteering in a community centre who informed him of the quality of teaching jobs in nearby schools:

> He give me all the school information. He said, “Don’t pick up any school. The quality’s not very great”. He said “In Toronto, there are five adult schools belong to the TDSB; is the public school. They are very formal and straight. You will really get something there”. So he give me all the information, even help me to book the test, they will assess your English. So that’s why I went to Seneca College. I: So, you hadn’t planned to do that originally, but as you said, at the starting line, you got advice just after you came. P: Yes, I just met very, very right people (P2).

P2 was unaware of the schooling opportunities in Canada, and therefore valued the information from people who had lived in Canada for a long time:

> ‘Cause I new, came here, I don’t know the society; totally brand new for me. Even I really don’t know. At the beginning, I didn’t register the accounting and the finance, but the professor and the CEO – both of them – they don’t know each other. Both of them have an MBA, and one is professor and one is CEO. They both live here more than 40 years. They have very high level and they live here long time; they know everything. Too much better than me, so they strongly suggest to me to go to the Accounting and Finance, so that’s why I went there (P2).

P33 also relied on information from people who had achieved their goals in Canada and had been through similar experiences:

> Taking the help of some people who are big here and went through same circumstances, it was easier. Yes, meeting the people and going community centres and picking up the flyers and going to my own temples and stuff to meet people. In the beginning when I came, one of my friends, a teacher, she was a teacher back home, so she was a teacher here and they had a good life and everything so she influenced me in a positive way that I should get into teaching and that’s why I went home and did my BE.d. (P33).

Soon after P35 arrived in Canada, she learned that other immigrants had a difficult time advancing in their careers without retraining. This information contributed to her decision to enrol in an MBA:
I wouldn’t say I was surprised because, basically I was networking well and connecting with people, trying to understand what they went through. So, the one message which I got from talking to various people was that none of the immigrants I met, and I must have met over 100. None of them were successful in their career life after immigrating here. None of these were at the level that they were in their own country. So, that’s the message I learned very fast. And one of the reasons I went for the MBA (P35).

P41 learned from another volunteer that he had the credentials to apply for a public health and safety program, which influenced his decision to apply:

Through the volunteering process, I met a friend, who is my best friend now and he went to UofT then he went to Ryerson. He was training to be a dietitian. He said, until I wait to get into a dietetic internship, I’m going to apply to a public health and safety program to do this. I was oh what do I need for that. He said you can apply for that if you want to. And then I applied for the program, so that’s how it came through, that someone else told me I can apply for this program too (P41).

Alternatively, P55 met someone on the street who gave him advice: “The Russian person I met on the street, and it happened that he was from the same university as myself, and he experienced the same difficulties. So he enrolled in CMA program, and he recommended me to do the same. So this is why I did it.”

In addition to receiving information from others about retraining opportunities and the reputation of particular programs, participants also obtained information about what to expect in the retraining process. When P40 was asked what she expected of the retraining, she responded:

We had friends here at the beginning, and everything was as they were telling us, so it really matched with my expectation. They were students in the same program, so they told me in advance what to expect, so I was prepared for that. I: So your friends already gave you some information? P: Yeah (P40).

Similarly, P62 knew what to expect because he had previously talked to friends who already lived in Canada:

I had knowledge about Canadian system because a lot of my friends, they work here. And I had telephone conversations with them, email communication with them, and they told me here more job-oriented, more practical-oriented academic programs. And
it was not very much unexpected for me. I just quickly re-oriented me to the need of the Canadian system (P62).

Participants also received information about potential jobs in Canada. For example, P5 heard about the stability of companies and industries from relatives:

Our cousins, our relatives who were giving us pieces of advice on “this is a good company, this is a good position, this position will lead you to more opportunities, this industry is more stable than that industry”, so, opinions from other people (P5).

Similarly, P52 was given advice about the job market from a friend who moved to Canada 30 years ago: “The advice from my friend who came to Canada 25-30 years ago. He knew the job market, so he used to help me and give me some advice.” Another participant’s (P63) friends recommended that he apply for a position and go to a particular college:

It was completely different experience here for job search than overseas. Many jobs come from friends or just like network there, so some people recommended me to apply for my last position. I was giving private lessons, how to do software development, and they recommended me to apply. I got from social network this recommendation because also there were Russian teachers as well in this college, so because I was scared about my English. So teachin’ in Russian, but you can ask after your classes still in your own language. I find out that my friends that I called from my contracts in Ottawa here. And I find out that some friends from them already went through those quality assurance courses and it was helpful and they recommended me to go to this particular college (P63).

Many participants received information from others about living and working in Canada. For example, P4’s coworkers taught her about how to do her job and how to adapt to the workplace in Canada:

Another thing that is okay; with the job now, that is I got lot of help from my co-workers. I: Was that a surprise, or did you expect that your co-workers would be helpful? P: Surprise. Very welcome. I: That’s always nice. How did they help you? P: That is at least from beginning, they accept me. When I start working, maybe it is (01:09:07), that is I mean not so skilful. So they understand and teach me from very beginning. And they are very friendly and also for company, the culture is very I would say opened because they have different … a lot of immigrants from different country. So you can say it is multiculture (P4).
Furthermore, P4’s coworkers helped her with her homework and helped her search for a house. When asked about whether she ever asked her coworkers for help with what she was studying, she responded:

Yeah, yeah. With my homework. I: That was good! They can help you with your homework! That’s great. P: Yeah, I think the job is very important because I and my co-worker is a very close relation. That is, they are very helpful for my family life. For example, my friends help me searching for a house, and that is work, that I take hope from them. And they are very helpful (P4).

Before arriving in Canada, P31 contacted colleagues about what to expect in regards to living in Canada, which helped him immensely:

It was pretty much the same, because I talked to the people that were there before me, so I got some contacts, I sent emails, I telephoned them, I asked what to bring, how it’s going to be like, and stuff like that. I made an image in my imagination and it was the same. I: And who did you contact for this information? P: My colleagues, the people who… Like students that were there, I found them through websites and social networks (P31).

When asked about how he coped with the changes and difficulties upon arriving to Canada, P31 replied:

Well, in terms of the weather, you can never cope with minus 30 degrees, so it’s always there, but as I said, you can always seek help from the people who are your peers, and they came before you, they know how to deal with this stuff, and they’ve been here a couple of years more than you, so I asked a lot of question from them, I made mistakes…(P31)

Lastly, another participant (P43) contacted some friends before moving here. When asked how confident he felt about finding work in Canada, he responded:

Not so confident, but I have several options before I come, because, you know, internet provide us a very easy and direct communication between me and my friends who are already in Canada. So I can browse some websites, set up by local people in Toronto, to introduce their life in Canada. I: So you did some research? P: Yeah, did some research, and I got the match more information (P43).

When P43 was asked why he felt it was easier to find a job then other people, he responded:
Friends. Some friends I have known even when we were in China, or you can say, the old people, old friends who know each other, who trust each other. I: So how did they help make it easier for you to find a job? P: Lets change, in other words. Now I have been here almost 6 to 7 years, in case another friends, new immigrants, come to here, I will definitely give him a lot of information. I: Okay, so in that way? P: That way. How to adapt to this new environment, from traffic, to get the further education, I will tell him. That way, it don’t have to search, like a blind man searching in darkness (P43).

**The Value of Communication**

Due to the importance of social interconnectedness in participants’ career development, participants ($n = 58$) recognized the value of communicating effectively with others. This included knowing how to listen and respond in the English language, socially appropriate methods of communication, and accent reduction. Many participants expressed frustration around the challenge of learning the English language after coming to Canada. When asked whether transitioning to Canada was what she expected, P14 clearly expressed the difficulties surrounding the language barrier:

The most different thing is about the employment opportunity. It’s tough for the English as a Second Language people. It is tough for the people who want to go back to school, because of the language barrier (P14).

Furthermore, when P14 was asked what was her most significant difficulty after coming to Canada, she replied:

I think it’s the language. I: Communicating with people? P: Communicating with people, yes. I: What about housing or job searching? P: Yeah, job searching. Telecommunication, you’re calling somebody, or you receive a telephone with [someone] speaking English, that’s a difficult thing to do because the spoken English is poor. I: a) How did you cope with the changes and difficulties in life? P: Take some time, because I stay here, I take the opportunity to practice my English. I watch t.v., I talk to people, and I went to the government program which helps newcomers (P14).

P15 echoed this sentiment in his reply of the same question. P15 differentiated learning English in his home country and learning conversational English in Canada:

I started in Albania, English, right? But I didn’t have the conversation skills, weren’t that great. When I came here, I was looking at people’s mouths, what they’re saying,
understanding nothing, almost nothing. And I had to stay home because my younger son was 2 years old, so I had to stay with him. So I didn’t have contact in the first months with a lot of people, but I went to the bank, and that was the first thing that I had to think of it is to understand, even though I studied English, but it’s different if you don’t talk (P15).

Another participant (P18) felt that Canada was particularly tough when it came to communicating in English. When asked how she felt when she initially came to Canada, P18 responded:

I think it’s kind of strange because it’s… I do travel outside before, in other countries, but I think Canada is kind of not comfortable as feeling as home, I think that’s one thing, because the lifestyle here… The weather for me is fine, but the language, I think the communication, yeah, it’s kind of fairly tough. I: So that’s one thing you noticed when you came, it was harder to communicate? P: Yes (P18).

When asked what were the most significant difficulties she experienced when arriving in Canada, she responded similarly to P15, and noted the differences between conversational English and written English:

I think you need to learn a lot of the language, and daily words you need. I do have the English, I started there, but mostly it focused on books, so the verbal communication I think. I: Was the biggest challenge? P: Yes (P18).

In addition to P15 and P18, P28 noted key conversational differences between British English and Canadian English. He also noted having difficulty navigating cultural differences in communication:

Although I came from a British colony, which as we already have a good sense of English background, my mother was an English teacher, but I came here, the English in Canada is different than the British English, so then I thought North American English was even a great language, we say we wait in a ‘queue’. Here they say ‘line’, ‘lineup’. Every word has a few words difference. Also, here how people behave so confidently. One of the thing, I came from a Catholic convent background, I educated, so when I come here, that was in my first job, we get up when supervisors come, talk to supervisors. That culture is changed in Sri Lanka now, but when we were growing up, we used to raise up from the chair when supervisors or elders talk. That looked us here, it’s like too naïve, and too not confident, smart enough and things like that. Those type of things challenged me (P28).
Similarly, P43 mentioned being confused by particular words embedded in Canadian conversations. When asked what was the most difficult barrier, P43 responded:

English language, or some extent my misunderstood, for example, now everybody knows subway is a place to order food, snack food, right? But the beginning stage of my arrival, if I look up this word in my dictionary, that mean subway station, something to do with train, so I saw ‘Subway’, and also I see the arrow on that logo “okay, that give me direction. Subway over there, I need to take the TTC train so should be go over there, as per the arrow direction”, and you can see I definitely will not get to my destination. I walked almost 10 minutes, because this is a store logo, a direction like there, so I continue to walk, 10 minutes, I couldn’t find entrance to go down to get the train (P43).

In addition, P45 experienced anxiety during conversational English and noted the value of the retraining program in overcoming her fear. When asked how she believed she would perform in the retraining, she responded:

I don’t think I would be able to do it. Even talking to people, it’s so difficult, the more that you focus, the more that you’ll have mispronunciation. It’s so difficult when I talk to people the first time, it’s really challenging. I don’t know what I’m talking about. But the more that I am educated, the more that I have the credentials, I’m beginning to really make sense when I talk. I: So you weren’t very confident when you began the program, is that right? P: Yeah (P45).

In discussing language as a barrier, P32 felt that cultural barriers were embedded in the language barrier. P32 attempted to reduce his accent and learn how to structure his interview responses:

I realize that, language experience, and the culture barrier is the biggest one for us to work in our profession, to get a job in our professional field as well. I: Can you tell me a little bit about the cultural barrier, how did that affect your job seeking? P: I feel, just my feeling, the way I talk, my accent, and the way I speak English, will immediately tell everybody that I’m an immigrant, like I’m kind of different with people who grew up here. So, I get help from some English tutor, I even ask them to prepare my interview questions. I write it down. I wrote it down in my own way, and then I asked them to revise it for me, they revised a lot because I felt that my way to answer those questions is a Chinese way, not an English way, so they helped me to prepare that in an English way (P32).
When asked about her most significant difficulties after arriving to Canada, P25 also mentioned the importance of learning business ethics and meshing with people of various nationalities:

I think it takes maybe six or seven month to open the (0:18:33) because regardless if you are English knowledge so it takes some time to understand the psychology of business ethics, to get along with people of different nationalities, different accents, but okay, accents maybe it’s not very important but business ethics is the most important. Because… and communication skills of course. That’s why I though I can start from scratch, from bottom and slowly, slowly, step by step, I have to take extra classes and find something decent (P25).

In addition to describing the unique challenge of communicating with Canadians and other immigrants with various nationalities, many participants noted that developing communication skills in Canada was key to their success. When P14 was asked she felt it was necessary for her to pursue retraining in Canada, she noted the importance of learning English:

In my understanding, it’s very important for me to get a new job because the new retraining program improved my English and gave me something new about industry, about Canada. So, I think it is very important (P14).

When asked what she did to prepare for her education to be recognized in Canada, P14 described focusing on her English skills:

I did some preparation, which is all about English studying, language studying. I improved my English in China to prepare for my new life. I: How did you do that, did you take a course? P: Yeah, I take some course. A training course in China (P14).

When asked what helped her to succeed in her career development in Canada, P14 noted:

I think it is language. Language ability, like, speaking or writing English is the most important thing in career, I think, for me. Actually I have some suggestions for the newcomer, if people plan to come to Canada, they do more work before they come to Canada. They should know more about Canada as much as possible, and get their English ready, because this English is very important. That’s my main idea. Bilingual abilities is very important, if people speak both English and French, that’s my suggestion (P14).
P25 did not have high expectations for her first year after moving to Canada, because she knew that she would have to spend time improving her English:

I understood this is… My English is my third language and I have to improve this first and it takes some time to look around and… That’s why I didn’t expect a lot especially for the first year. I knew this would be pretty difficult time and this is why you always have to think about all aspects of life. The settling down and just studying as well, especially improving my English too. I was pretty serious and open minded (P25).

P35 also described spending a large amount of time attempting to learn conversational English and reducing her accent:

The second thing I really focused on was the English language. Three things with the English language. One was the accent. I attended 3-4 of the 16 workshops to understand how different my accent is. Again, that did not help me at all because most of the student who did not have the basic English language skills. The second, I tried to find out programs which would help me with English lingo. Lingo means I use one word that means something else here. I could not find one program like that, which was surprising. The third, was that I joined some comprehension and writing skill programs. And again, they are so basic that they are meant for people or student who do not have basic English skills. I was looking for more advanced classes, and that was not there (P35).

Similarly, P56 attempted to improve his listening and speaking skills:

One major factor is I was aware about my language skills, my communications. I was a good communicator. At least I do have reasonable skills in that area, but the language was a problem: listening and speaking. Though I was good at writing, but we did seldom use English in our daily life, particularly before coming Canada, in speaking and listening. But here, it is one of the most important thing, listening skill and speaking skill. So that area I was aware of, and I was looking something that will eventually boost me up to enhance those skills. That’s why I was looking for retail jobs, to be with people (P56).

P56 regretted not further developing his language proficiency before coming to Canada:

I could have developed my language proficiency at least a couple of level higher before coming here. I could have completed at least couple of levels, or even the full things of the CFA, this stuff. But still, it’s not grounded, but I could have done those 2 things. One most important thing is the language and the communication skills. This is very important (P56).

CHAPTER 7
RESULTS: WILLINGNESS TO START OVER

This chapter outlines the themes related to participants’ willingness to start from the bottom in their career development journey in Canada. “Starting over” or “starting from the bottom” refers to a willingness of and an acceptance of the steps necessary to build one’s career in a Canadian context. This includes being open to retrain (i.e., perceiving retraining as an opportunity rather than an inconvenience), accepting a low-status and low-paying occupation after first arriving in Canada, taking responsibility for one’s own career development and desired changes, and being motivated to make compromises. These themes will be discussed in the following order:

1) Taking Initiative and Openness to begin with a Low-Status Occupation
2) Openness to Learn and Take Responsibility for Change
3) Motivated to make Compromises

**Taking Initiative and Openness to Begin with a Low-Status Occupation**

Although the majority of participants worked hard to learn the necessary skills and behaviours to thrive in the Canadian environment, some participants \((n = 21)\) demonstrated above-average initiative. These participants were willing to go above and beyond to survive financially and improve their skills to make themselves more employable. In addition, they were open to beginning their career development journey in Canada with a low-paying, low-status occupation. These participants saw this as not only a necessary step but also a positive step in their journey.

One participant in particular demonstrated outstanding initiative to survive financially after arriving to Canada. When asked how his ability to cope with the changes after his move affected his self-esteem, P7 responded:
Well, in terms of self-esteem and confidence, I would say I was ready to take up change the way it came, and that being the reason my very first job, very first few days, there was kind of- nothing was working out in terms of employment, and I really felt the need that I need to earn some money. It makes me recall how did I get my first cent in Canada! One fine day I just get up, I go to the airport, and I do the trolley thing – 25 cents – I work for 4 hours, I get $45-46, something like that. I come home and I tell my friend, and he says, “Oh, you do something, like some movie,” he’s saying; “in some movie, some actor did this”. I said, “Wow, that’s nice”. Anyway, that’s the way I earned my first cent. That’s not the real way of earning first cent, but I earned it that way (P7).

Not only did P7 take initiative to make money, he was open to starting from the bottom of the career ladder by accepting a labour-intensive position. Another participant (P8) also demonstrated a high-level of initiative. P8 revealed that he performed better than expected in the retraining because of his willingness to market himself and learn a new software:

Actually I did, because not only did I, well, I ended up with an A average. I was not afraid to step out of my comfort zone. I was not afraid to make those mistakes, and I was not afraid to step out of my comfort zone, because, I self-marketed myself. That is a big strength, because I marketed myself. I ended up doing this market analyst job, using a software that I’ve never used before in my life, and from that tiny experience, I parlayed that in job interviews, in my job hunt subsequently, and because of that particular experience, I got hired in my current job (P8).

In addition, P25 put a significant amount of work into herself before she moved to Canada in order to make herself more desirable to Canadian employers and adapt better to the Canadian environment:

I decided to focus maximally and also to work on myself because even before I came to Canada I was reading some self-help books motivational literature and listening to some tapes. It was also, yes, like I just took some classes according to the private tutor. Meeting some new people and try to find, yeah, just like to make my inner circle of communication and environment and I couldn’t even one year later when I came back home I realized how much I improved. I: Improved in what? P: In everything. I wouldn’t say professionally, but maybe understanding just in life, in preparation life attitude or philosophy or communication skills because Toronto is the most multicultural city in the world so when you see people from everywhere, it was incredibly educational and great experience (P25).

Even after moving to Canada, P25 continued to work learning new skills:
I understood that 40 hours a week is enough for someone but I was thinking about doing something else when I had spare time. Like improve my skills or just keep studying or doing another job and that time I wasn’t very, maybe it was the situation in 2004 or 2005 before the recession that people could keep just one job and be happy with this, but I was always doing something else extra, either studying or work (P25).

Similarly, P31 put effort into adapting to the surrounding environment. When asked about her expectations with regards to retraining, P31 answered:

I thought it’s going to be difficult, I had to transfer some of the experience and knowledge into another setting, another culture, another language, so I didn’t expect it to be easy, but I adapt to the situation pretty fast (P31).

When asked what she learned about herself, P31 replied:

I did, because it was a new environment and I discovered that I could adapt easily and fast to the new environment. I: And what about on a more career related level, did you discover anything? P: I found that my experiences were transferrable, I’m still creative, and I could use those characteristics that I had before in a new setting (P31).

Another participant (P32) described taking her future into her own hands by putting one foot in front of the other and completing the tasks she needed to get ahead. She also described being open and adaptable to an entry-level position:

I: You said you coped by being patient and talking to yourself, saying how you have to plan and have to do certain things and change yourself. How did that change your self-esteem? P: I walk around. I buy a Metropass, and I drop by a lot of job agencies, and they gave me some tasks to do, and it turned out to be very simple. They called it entry-level job, or, you know, the standard. I find if anyone who can do this, ordering, sorting, filing, basic Microsoft Office, of course I can do that. I can adapt myself to that kind of job very quickly. That kind of walking around and getting to know what kind of job is available made me kind of self confident. And I had a couple of interviews, and I feel like I didn’t get the job, it’s not because I’m not qualified, there might be other reasons for me to get employed by that company, so that kind of thing made me feel a little bit self confident for my skills (P32).

Moreover, P32 described having learned that she needed to make changes for herself:

I discovered that I have to change, too, instead of complaining that I cannot get the job as I did at the beginning, I think I need to change as well. The change can be specifically, the resume, the interview excuse, and even the way I talk with people and deal with people. How to deal with the relationship in the working place. I: What about on a personal career related level, did it make you discover anything about yourself in that way, like you as a person on a career level? P: Yeah, kind of. I feel I can do many
things, but not many things at the same time either. I feel that if I were given such opportunity, I can learn quickly (P32).

When asked what advice she would give to a new immigrant, P32 replied:

Change is necessary. Don’t believe that you don’t have to change. Everybody has to change to adapt to the new environment. But, be smart, be selective (P32).

When P62 encountered some discrimination in the workplace, he responded by learning the necessary skills to get ahead:

Yeah, they’re pretty much savvy with technology and with Excel, Powerpoint, like that. And actually, our job managers, they think “They’re more smarter. They’re more eligible than us to get a promotion”. It’s a little bit frustrating. I: How have you dealt with that difficulty? P: No, I had to just overcome my lackings in technology and computer. I: Did you teach yourself? Did you have to go and learn all that stuff? P: No, not actually. Self practice was good, and I did some online courses in IT. And it’s good now. I: So now you’re comfortable with all the fancy technological stuff. P: Yeah, comfortable, yeah (P62).

P18’s journey was quite difficult to start because he felt behind. However, the more he learned, the more he began to feel confident and competent:

I think the first time is tough, but when you’re just overcome that, you can feel it’s kind of achievement. I say first it’s tough, and then you overcome it. It takes time. So you just feel achievement. I can recall the feeling… It’s like people on the train, I’m kind of people chasing the train, people on the train are faster because the language you learn is gradually, so I think I feel I’m chasing the train. But when you get on the train, I think it’s kind of an achievement (P18).

After arriving to Canada, P8 was open to any position in the marketing field and stressed the importance of being able to “roll through the punches and adapt to survive”:

When I came to Canada, because I was not looking for another consultant job, at all, I was very open to anything. I was open to a marketing job. You know, you start at the bottom. Maybe that’s the Marketing Coordinator job, or the Marketing Assistant. So I was very open to starting from the bottom, and that didn’t shame me. I know, and I’ve met a lot of immigrants who feel so insulted, and there’s all this negative and toxic energy emanating from them out of that anger and resentment, and I stay away from that because that’s not healthy. I came to Canada, and half of it was an experience, and you have to go through it, you have to roll through the punches and adapt to survive. After all, there is a theory about Survival of the Fittest. People may not believe in it, but that’s how a lot of species have evolved and become stronger. To me, it was
about… In El Salvador I am doing one thing, but in Canada, I’m doing something else (P8).

P12 was also open-minded about starting with a lower-ranked position in Canada:

My plan was to start a job in my career, independently at what level it was. Even though I had been a manager, I would be willing to start on the lowest level and then work myself up in time. I: Did that include plans for retraining at that point? P: Yes. Some of the retraining that I was planning on doing was specifically the computer-oriented systems that I was not aware of, that I didn’t have experience on, that were required in a couple of jobs that I was looking for (P12).

After moving fields and “starting over”, P12 learned how to tolerate uncertainty:

I had to open myself to asking a lot of questions and to learning quickly. I: So, are you saying you had to learn how to tolerate uncertainty? P: Learning how to tolerate uncertainty and learning how to deal with not knowing. Before, I had experience and I knew what I was doing; now I was brand new and didn’t know very much. That was kind of one of the main things. I: Is there anything that you lost through the retraining? P: I guess maybe a little of status, in a way. I lost pretty much all my connections. I had a different field where I knew a lot of people; then I moved to one where I didn’t really know that many people. I had lost that network; that was part of the change (P12).

Although P45 described feeling surprised by her inability to find a job in Canada with a Master’s degree, she was able to recognize her own weaknesses, which helped her to begin making the appropriate changes:

You would be surprised, I was really thinking “Oh, I have a Masters, it will be easy for me to look for a job”, but even when you just go there, even your Bachelor’s degree, nobody is going to take a look at it, so difficult! But also I wasn’t sure of myself as well, when I applied for jobs, I don’t know what I was talking about. Are they expecting something else? Maybe. Because the thing I’m doing there, because let’s say I’m doing community development programs, and I was living with the poorest of the poor where the problem is about food and really getting into basic necessities, but here it’s not the same thing, so maybe then I was really talking about a different thing. During interviews, when I have interviews, and that comes out, I don’t get a job, and I was thinking “maybe that’s it” (P45).

When P45 was asked how she coped with these difficulties, she replied, “I go back to school, and I study, and I learn”. This kind of response indicates that she was willing to work hard to overcome the challenges that she was faced with. P64 also described having false expectations for his success in Canada. However, like many others, he was willing to start at the bottom in
order to build a life for himself in Canada. When asked how confident he was to find work in his profession, P64 replied:

I think I was extremely confident, probably a bit unrealistically confident. Because I was at such a high level where I was, you know, I think we were five people in the whole office in Romania and then maybe, you know, two or three hundred others around the world in the firm, so you know, that bubble I was living in, I think it could be really easily transferred here. It was not the case. And so basically after, you know, very shortly, because I didn't have a lot of savings, very shortly I decided that if I have to start lower I'll start lower, and if I have to learn English I will earn English. I did not enter at an equivalent role, but you know, it was not a problem for me at the time. I didn't have any family to support, any obligations, anything like that, so it was just another challenge, I guess. That's how I took it (P64).

**Openness to Learn and Take Responsibility for Change**

Many participants \( n = 66 \) described having a positive attitude toward their retraining. Many participants accepted the process of retraining and some even mentioned feeling excited for it. When P83 was asked about his general impression of the retraining experience, he replied, “What I enjoyed the most was that I feel learning is fun to me. I love to study other things, and I met very intelligent fellow students there.” When P81 was asked what his general feeling of the retraining experience, he replied:

I don’t remember anything which I didn’t enjoy. Let’s put it this way. I enjoyed every moment of it actually. Working with the peers, working in the case studies. The professors were extremely helping. I enjoyed pretty much every bit of it. Later in the class we used to get together, hang around with my peers, students, we used to talk about how Canada is. It was a great time. It was one of the greatest times I’ve had (P81).

When P81 was asked how he felt about the retraining, he emphasized the skills that he learned:

I don’t feel it was necessary, but I’m very glad I did, because it added extra skills, it added extra accounting skills which I never had, it added extra statistical skills which I never had. Learning about taxation, learning about laws in Canada… Taxation was something which I loved. This is a concept which is new to me. If I knew this taxation existed in this world, I probably would have specialized in taxation. I probably would have become a tax lawyer (P81).
When asked whether he believed his hard and soft skills were being used in his work-life, P81 discussed the importance of generating new skills:

There are skills which I feel have not been as explored as could be, but I don’t mind resting them for awhile because I’m exploring in other skills. You cannot use all skills at all times. You need to rest your skills, you need to work around with your skills which you have and generate more skills. You need to explore the skills. So, there are pieces that you have to commit yourself. So, there’s the skills which you have: great. Grow your skills which you have: excellent. Learn to new skills. I have skills which have been underused right now, and some of them are actually not being used. And I don’t mind, because I’m learning new things. And that is the reason I said, “If I am not learning new things, I will probably move on because I am not adding anything to my profile. I: So, that striving for learning is very important to you. P: Always. I: It drives you. P: Yeah (P81).

P80 described the retraining as being a useful tool to open the door and to learn new things:

So I think the training I took was the tool to open the door, and that’s it. Every day you are learning, and if I can learn myself, another thing I have to take a course … like, 6 months ago I started taking a French course just for hobby. But not because you have to do something in terms of training more. Just to keep your mind active and to keep you busy and to learn something different. I couldn’t finish that because of time. I: Did you enjoy it? P: I really enjoyed it. I enjoy learning. I: For the sake of learning. P: Yes. I read almost everything that came into my hands. I: So, that plays a big role, too: just learning on your own, and you get a lot of satisfaction from that. P: Yes (P80).

When P78 was asked whether she felt resentful about having to retrain or whether she saw it as an opportunity, she responded:

I felt grateful for the opportunity, definitely. No, I didn’t felt resentful by any means of having to do the Masters. I still think it was a great opportunity, and I’m very grateful for it, for having done that, absolutely. And the hard parts are, most of the time, the blind spots (P78).

P78 went on to say that her tendency to value education was influenced by her culture. When asked what her understanding was of why it became necessary for her to pursue retraining, she responded:

I think it was actually mostly a perception I had- a cultural perception that education is a very valuable piece into your career and very valuable to your growth. So is that all the value that we put into the education probably a very cultural thing. So, because that was a very strong belief that it’s a must and definitely education is a very valuable
piece and is very important, so if I value that and everybody else will value that kind of thing (P78).

Similarly, P72 described feeling ready to retrain after coming to Canada:

I was ready to do anything. We also had the financial background to do it, so if I had to go back to university, I was ready to do that. The retraining is definitely you want to go higher in the hierarchy, so what is it that will take you to that level? Definitely the leadership, the people-managing skills, doing good communication, getting some policies, trying to learn how policies work. Government offers so many courses that they pay for, for you to train, and they have lovely training career paths (P72).

When asked how he felt about having to retrain, he responded:

I was more than happy to take it. I was yearning for this. I: So you kinda saw this as an opportunity. P: An opportunity. I: For growth, both professionally and … P: For me, both personally and professionally (P72).

Lastly, P68 described feeling “excited” to retrain:

I was actually really excited. I: Were you? P: Yeah. I: Why were you so excited? P: I don’t know. I like to study, I like to learn new things and I felt like I’m doing something good because it’s benefiting my career. And my bosses were obviously very happy that I – because usually they have to kind of force the people ‘Do your CIP. Do your CIP.’ And everybody’s like ‘No, I have already so much on my plate, I’m not going to do more.’ So I really wanted it and that’s why I did it so fast. So I was really motivated. And I think that kept me in the job for so long. I: Why did you really want it? I: Why I really wanted it? I: Mm hmm. You said it with such conviction there, like “I really wanted it”. P: I don’t know. I like degrees. Well it’s you’re doing something and you know it has a purpose and it’s going to pay off. It’s going to be good for your career. You’re putting your work in and it’s going to pay off (P68).

In addition to feeling open to retraining, many of these participants demonstrated a desire to learn in a variety of contexts. In essence, these participants took responsibility for their desired career changes. For instance, P2’s approach to being demoted was not only to accept her circumstances, but also to be open to learning more in that specific environment:

I have over 20 years’ work experience, and when I was in China, was not entrance level; was pretty, to some extent, some level. I: You were a manager. P: Not manager, but we took more the senior people there to lot of responsibility. Now change to a new career, started from very bottom, so how to humble. Some people very easy, you know, oh, put like this. I: Nose in the air. P: Yeah. No, cannot be that way. You know, some people, they are much younger than me but they work in this career, this accounting longer, much longer than me. They have more experience although they much younger
than me. But try to be the humble. Is the right words? To put down yourself, to learn, to do things, take your responsibility and give more tolerance for other people. I think that is very important (P2).

P83 kept an open mind when it came to learning the language, the culture, and the Canadian work environment:

Today I think I can speak English pretty well after all these years, practice, I keep learning things. But, at that time, when I just switched to one environment in which they speak a totally different language… Language barrier, culture barrier, environment, and all those difficulties. I: a) How did you cope with the changes and difficulties in life? P: Well, I’m still learning today. I observe other people, and I’m fortunate to have met some good friends, and they understand your side. Lots of cultural things are totally different (P83).

Similarly, P82 described feeling responsible for the changes she desired. In essence, she believed her own actions were important to achieve her goal of becoming a teacher:

Everything depends on you. The decisions you make, how you carry out those decisions, and what you eventually become, are very important. For instance, for me, I said “I’m a teacher by profession. Let me go into early childhood education and see how it works”. When I qualified, I started working as expected. So, those actions are on me. I’m the one to… Nobody else should tell me what to do, because I know. I know what I’m supposed to do. So, I’m responsible for my actions and I should ensure that whatever I’ve been trained to do, is what I do. I take full responsibility for my actions (P82).

She also described feeling excited about extra coursework that she was required to finish:

Yeah, that coursework I have to do because I feel there is still a gap. Because I don’t feel I’m tired of this, especially when there’s no exam tied to the end, that one I’ll just take because I love knowledge and gaining more knowledge and, you know, interpreting and evaluating, or whatever, to see what I can get from it that can enhance what I already have. I think, whatever I missed out, if I had a chance, I would just take some extra courses (P82).

P67 emphasized the importance of learning in his career development journey. When asked what factors he was considering when trying to find employment in Canada, P67 replied:

Not really financial survival, because I’m not that desperate, but the most I’m looking for is Canadian experience. And the place that I can grow up, I can learn, study and grow up, that’s the most important when I’m looking for a job. I: So finding an organization that you can really develop your career in? P: Yeah (P67).
Lastly, when P65 was asked what motivated him to move to Canada, he mentioned his desire to grow and learn in a new environment:

> Just something that pops up in my mind that maybe I could be somewhere better than myself, that I used to have. Like seeking for more, more learning, more knowledge, more meaningful life. Like, keep on searching … something. I: So, like growing and … P: Yeah, like keeping growing. I told myself, “I don’t wanna stay like this for long time, like maybe I should go some other places and experience some other things that makes life more interesting” (P65).

**Motivated to make Compromises**

Participants ($n = 41$) felt motivated to make compromises to progress in their career development in Canada. Many were accepting of sacrifices they had to make in order to succeed in their retraining program (i.e., less time with family, less time for hobbies, less money). With regards to sacrificing time spent with family, P42 described being willing to make these kinds of sacrifices for his future:

> That is because everything has price. You have to sacrifice, and then we have to sacrifice, for example, I told you I don’t have time to have fun. Even don’t have time to go shopping with my wife and my kids. That is true. But I think they can understand what will happen, because I needed to do both work and training and then pass the exam and work. I would be very careful. Yeah, I have to sacrifice, so I don’t think about “I don’t have fun”. I: So, you never think about it? P: Yeah, never think about it. I: How did you decide you had to make those compromises? P: Oh, yeah, because if I don’t do this and finish this and this big job, then 3 years later, 5 years later, I can’t get progress (P42).

Similarly, P43 had an open-mind about having to sacrifice time with his family:

> I say that time is the only one issue I feel tight at that moment. So, sacrifice, if you want to say, my leisure time. During that moment, I didn’t have too much chance to go outside with my family. Like, here, Ontario Art Museum, this area, I went there until completion of this certificate. Science Centre, or… I: And how did you decide what to do when you had to make a compromise in retraining? How did you decide to say “okay, I’ll sacrifice my time”? P: I think if I determined to take this program, I have to prepare for that, right? I: So you were expecting to have to…? P: Yeah, of course. I: So you were okay with it? P: Yeah (P43).
P44 also discussed feeling motivated to compromise her time with family in order to succeed in the retraining program:

I say that I give up my personal life, my family time for my retraining, but I get more from my training towards my career development, and also my personal life. I: So now your personal life is better? P: Confidence, I mean, that feels really different. I said before my retraining, I was like a person struggling under the water. Now my head finally head up. I: That’s great (P44).

When asked how P44 felt about having to make a compromise, she explained:

I feel it’s very necessary. If you don’t compromise this, I couldn’t accomplish my study. So, no complaints, no regrets. But now, honestly, I couldn’t believe I can accomplish that. Now I am thinking to take bus at night, and not spend time with my kids… For now, I couldn’t do it. I just say “wow, how’d that happen?” Maybe just because at that time I was new to this country, everything not certain. I had to compromise something. I was so determined (P44).

In addition, P52 was willing to spend less time with family in order to finish his program:

All the compromise was I had to study, be a full-time student while looking for casual jobs; so that was one compromise, that I had less time to spend with my family. But it didn’t really impact us a lot. My wife is a teacher, so she is herself busy marking the exercise books. My two children are still full-time students. And so the whole family is sort of reading. I: In education. P: In the whole environment of education, yeah. (57) How did you feel when you had to make a compromise? P: I’m happy with it. I never minded at all (P52).

P63 struggled to balance her daily tasks and responsibilities, However, when asked about her struggle, she emphasized that the compromise was worth it:

Yes, was hard, and I probably did not do enough at home; I did not cook enough, my apartment became mess and I lost some connections with my son during that time, but at the same time, I needed my son to just- and it was hard time for my son at that time. So it’s affected for sure. But at the same time, it’s no other way and it’s affected also in good way because I got good job after this training and I got knowledge and certifications. I: For sure. It’s a compromise. I’ve had almost no spare time (P63).

Lastly, when P63 was asked how it felt to make these kinds of compromises, she responded:

I feel like little bit sorry for my son, and not to do him, not to cook enough, to buyin’ microwave since my son full time, but at the same time I was doin’ for him, not just for myself (P63).
A number of other participants reported having to sacrifice time for hobbies and other interests. For instance, P45 described her experience in a Master’s program:

I don’t get to spend time for myself anymore, because, let’s say in my Masters at Windsor, I do it on Friday and Saturday, because that’s my day off. I work from Sunday to Thursday, so practically it leaves me only a half day in the morning on Friday before the start of my schooling, because I go to school from 3:00 to 9:00 in the evening. So for that morning on Friday, that’s all that I have. I: So that’s when you get your massage and everything you need? P: Yeah (P45).

When asked how she felt about having to make this compromise, she replied:

I just feel that this is something that I need to do, but it’s not going to last forever. This is just temporary. After this, I’ll be good, I’ll be okay, be able to do what I need to do. So this is just really to accomplish what needs to be accomplished (P45).

P58 also expressed difficulty around finding time for hobbies or earning extra money.

However, P83 accepted this as part of the deal:

I sacrificed my interest to write and my hobby or something. Or earn extra money, I didn’t. I just focus on the retraining. I: How did you feel about making those sacrifices? P: I’m willing to that. I don’t feel really sacrifice; I want do this way (P58).

In addition, P64 had to sacrifice biking in the woods, earning money, and her spare time:

I: You made some compromises, not riding your bike in the woods. P: Well yeah, yeah. I: Money. Respondent: Yeah. Money, time, you know - yeah, I guess those two. Those two are the biggest. Money and time. I mean time in the sense that I could have done something else with my time (P64).

When asked how she felt about the compromises she made, P64 replied:

Well I guess everything that I did, so far, helped me to get where I am, so it's all been with a purpose, so in that sense I feel pretty good about it. Maybe it could have been done faster, or had I taken a different path, but I wouldn't know how that would have been. So I guess everything's been positive, you know. I really enjoyed every moment (P64).

A number of participants discussed having to sacrifice money in order to complete the retraining. For example, when P55 was asked what major compromises he had to make when taking retraining in Canada, he emphasized the depletion of his financial resources:
Financials because I was running very short on cash, and I didn’t want to delay it. So I didn’t go on the street and beg people to fund my education. I wasn’t able to get any bank loan for it, so I had to resort back to the medical studies to test medication on me to get myself funded. Yeah, so I would say under normal circumstances, I would never take this path of taking medication on myself just to get funding. But if you want to get somewhere, perhaps you … I: Do what you have to do. P: Yeah, exactly (P55).

When asked how he felt about making this compromise, P55 responded:

Once I decided, I didn’t feel anything. I think I just proceeded. I: You said once you decided, you didn’t feel a thing. P: Mm-huh. And usually I have regrets in one case: when I do nothing. Usually even if I do things and I fail, I don’t have too many feelings about that, but when I see something that was an opportunity and I missed it and I haven’t done anything about it, this is where my guts are (P55).

P18 also noted having financial struggle but also felt that making compromises was necessary.

When he was asked whether there were any compromises he needed to make to finish the retraining, he responded:

Definitely, because you need to put full-time on that, so maybe your financial level is not good. You need to spend less, I think so, because full-time training, and for me, I guess (00:48:28), it’s not like to support to do the luxury life, so you need to balance your financial level. I: How did you decide to make that compromise? Was anyone involved in that decision with you? How did you decide? P: It’s just kind of a natural thing. I think family members helped me as well (P18).

In addition to sacrificing money and time with family, as well as time devoted to hobbies, some participants discussed having to compromise their preferred occupation. For example, P60 abandoned teaching for another job:

The compromises is just the change of the line. I: Mm-huh, your career. P: The career which I love. I love teaching. And then after the profession, the work I do, so I made compromises in this way (P60).

In discussing why he made these compromises, he emphasized the financial advantages involved in his decision:

Well, it’s like 50/50, you can say. I still not 100% satisfied, but then I just compromised myself saying, “Okay, I’m on good now. I have one full-time job, and other people keep on calling me”. If I need to, I can even have some more money if I
need. So then I can get (01:21:55). I: Okay. So, sort of the financial success that you’ve experienced helps you with the loss of your career? P: Yeah (P60).

P62 also accepted an undesirable but necessary career shift:

It’s little bit different job role here than back home, than my previous job role or position. But I accepted it. I: How do you mean, it was different? P: Different because my previous job position role was banking training, yeah? It was more academic. I just conducted lectures or I just did some research study. But here, it was just operational job. I: Sounds like you’ve had a positive experience, but there’s also a little bit of loss, too. P: Little bit of loss, of course. I enjoyed my previous role, but here, to get a position in academic or research field, it is necessary to do some extra academic achievements in Canadian educational institutes (P62).

CHAPTER 8
DISCUSSION

The findings of the current study will be discussed within the context of relevant literature. Findings will be organized in a way that is synonymous with the new theoretical model: the Learning and Adaptability Model of Career after Relocation. The key areas of discussion will include: 1) Learning about Self, 2) Learning about Work Environment, 3) Marketing Self within the Current Context, and 4) Willingness to Start Over. The theoretical and practical implications of the study’s findings will then be explored, followed by an overview of the study’s limitations and future directions for research in this area.

The Learning and Adaptability Model of Career after Relocation

This new theory emerged out of the findings of the current study, and captures the many factors that play into a professional immigrant’s career development within the context of retraining. More specifically, this theory outlines the answer to the study’s research question: the ways in which professional immigrants learn and adapt to their surrounding environment in the context of retraining. By examining participants’ answers to a variety of questions regarding their experiences in retraining, the current study was able to identify some key processes involved in learning and adapting for a professional immigrant. The Learning
and Adaptability Model of Career after Relocation (see Figure 1 on next page) outlines this process in detail.

The three shaded sections in the center of the model contain the three main components of the model: *learning about self, learning about work environment, and marketing self within current context*. These components are the cornerstones of the model. Immigrants engage in a multi-layered process of learning both about themselves and the world around them and use this information to adapt to the surrounding context by marketing themselves to employers in their new environment. *Learning about self* and *learning about work environment* both contribute to a process of *rediscovering self*. Other components in the model include *expanding self, social interconnectedness, and knowing self*. *Willingness to start over* in a new environment is the final component, which underlies the groundwork for the entire model.

The following description of the model will first outline each of the three main components: *learning about self, learning about work environment, and marketing self within current context*. Each component will be defined and described within the current study and supporting research will be outlined. Following these three sections, the bi-directional relationship between each of these three components will be outlined in detail. Next, the remaining components of the model will be defined and described with supporting research.

**Learning about Self**

This is the first main component of the career transition model, seen at the top left-hand corner of Figure 1. This theme describes the process whereby immigrants
FIGURE 1: The Learning and Adaptability Model of Career after Relocation

- **Learning about self**
  - e.g., strengths, abilities, and personality

- **Learning about work environment**
  - e.g., job market, rules and regulations, work culture

- **Marketing self within current context**
  - e.g., developing resume and interview skills, networking

- **Expanding self**
  - e.g., changing identity and thinking patterns

- **Rediscovering self**
  - e.g., finding self after losing self

- **Willingness to start over**
  - e.g., learning as an opportunity, motivated to make compromises, openness and resilience

- **Knowing self**
  - e.g., strengths, skills, interests

- **Social interconnectedness**
  - e.g., information from others, communication
learn about their personality, preferences, and interests, and develop increased self-acceptance. Participants noted the retraining itself to be extremely important to gathering new information about themselves. Participants also found that the general process of starting over in their career in a new country led to self-reflection.

_Learning about self_ is a major component of the model because in the current study, learning about oneself and one’s environment was found to be integral to adapting to the current context and effectively marketing oneself to employers. These three components rely equally on one another in the process of learning and adaptability for professional immigrants. A bi-directional relationship connects each component.

Self-reflection and learning about oneself (i.e., one’s personality, interests and preferences) has been studied extensively in the career development literature. It has been noted to be a key component of career exploration (Blustein, 1990; Super, 1990; Taveira, Silva, Rodriguez, & Maia, 1998), and career development (Porfeli & Lee, 2012; Germeijs & Verschueren, 2009). Learning about oneself has also been studied extensively within the literature on career adaptability.

Learning about oneself and self-reflection has been the focus of recent research due to increasing career instability (Joo & Ready, 2012). Increased global competition, changes in technology, restructuring, and downsizing, has shifted the responsibility to the employee to hold down a job, rather than the employer to keep them hired (Baruch, 2006). Therefore, individuals must actively sell themselves to maintain employment. Without an in-depth understanding of one’s strengths, skills, interests, and personality, marketing oneself would be a much more difficult task. Therefore, self-reflection becomes essential to taking ownership of one’s own career development and becoming adaptable and employable in an unstable career.
Savickas (2005b) identified the ability to form connections between one’s inner and outer worlds to be important for career adaptability. In order to make such a connection, one’s inner world needs to be familiar to an individual, making self-reflection a vital component. In addition, Lengelle, Luken, and Meijers (2016) view learning about oneself and self-reflection to be an important step in one’s career-related growth involving perspective shifts and developing healthier coping mechanisms in response to challenges. Learning about self has also been noted to be important to the development of one’s career identity (McArdle et al., 2007), a cognitive compass in one’s career journey (Fugate et al., 2004).

Within research on career exploration, self-exploration has been identified as a sub-type of career exploration involving exploration of core features of the self, including interests, values, and life goals (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). Self-exploration in the context of career exploration is considered to be a key component of career learning and adaptability (Savickas, 1997, 2002). Furthermore, Savickas’ (2002) notion of a self-concept as central to his idea of career adaptability denotes the importance of learning about oneself.

Bill Law’s career learning theory alludes to self-reflection and learning about oneself throughout. For example, in the Focusing stage, Law (2010) discusses ‘dealing with points of view’ as including a notion of oneself, one’s viewpoints, and an evaluation of how one’s own viewpoint interacts with others’ viewpoints. “The self is set in a social context” (Law, 2010, p. 13). Law (2010) also describes the process of ‘taking one’s own view’ which refers to knowing about one’s point of view, one’s perspectives, and one’s beliefs. This is consistent with the findings of the current study, which show that immigrants engage in purposeful learning about their own preferences and interests with regards to their career and more
generally about who they are.

Law (2010) also talks about the importance of the surrounding social world in developing of one’s own point of view. This is consistent with the findings of the current study, whereby participants often discussed learning about themselves while engaging with their environment (i.e., starting a new job, starting a retraining program, talking to a manager or friend). For example, when P81 began looking at retraining courses, he became more keenly aware of his interest in accounting, which encouraged him to seek out these kinds of courses and later to pursue accounting as a career.

Immigrants in the current study described developing more acceptance of themselves throughout retraining and working in Canada. For example, P74 found that the retraining helped to shift her mentality about herself: she began to feel more accepting of her own progress and more comfortable in her own skin. Some participants described feeling more competent in their jobs as a result of this increased acceptance. To date, there has been no research that has examined the impact of self-acceptance on one’s career development journey. However, research has investigated the role of self-esteem in career development. Self-esteem was found to correlate weakly to moderately with aspects of career adaptability, including career self-efficacy and identity awareness (Mcardle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007).

Other research has also identified self-efficacy as being important to career development (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006; Gushue, Clarke, Pantzer, & Scanlan, 2006), which is defined as one’s perceived ability to successfully complete a task (Jantzer, Stalides, & Rottinghaus, 2009). Furthermore, Patton, Bartrum, & Creed (2004) found self-esteem correlated moderately with career planning and exploration. More research is needed to clarify the role of self-acceptance in career learning and adaptability.
Learning about Work Environment

The next main component of the model, situated at the top right-hand corner, is *learning about work environment*. This component describes the process of learning about regulations, expectations, and the job market of the surrounding environment. It refers to learning about the value of networking in building one’s career in Canada as well as the Canadian work culture (i.e., social rules in the workplace, Canadian work values). This component also refers to gaining a better understanding of and immersing oneself in Canadian methods of teaching and learning.

With regard to rules, regulations, and expectations, participants described learning about career-related expectations and responsibilities of employees in Canadian companies, educational and work-related requirements for occupations, the level of stability in various Canadian industries, rules in particular industries (i.e., accounting, banking), the frequency of layoffs in Canada, and technological differences in Canada. Most participants welcomed this information and many sought out this information. Some participants even went so far as to begin volunteering to learn more about the Canadian system. Participants described learning about these areas to be particularly helpful to their career development journey in Canada. For example, P47 noted that learning more about Canadian rules in accounting and financial analysis helped her better prepare for job interviews in Canada.

With respect to the job market, participants described learning about the Canadian economy both on a domestic and global scale and in relation to job demand in various industries. Participants emphasized the usefulness of this information. They described having a better sense of what careers they should pursue, knowing where in Canada they should reside,
and holding a more compassionate view of their own difficulties in gaining employment. Participants were active in their search for this kind of information (e.g., researching online, holding volunteer positions, asking others in their community, attending workshops).

In discussing the value of networking in Canada, participants recognized networking as a crucial step in landing a job. They noticed that jobs were very often difficult to obtain without a prior social connection. Often times, participants noticed that interviews were only a formality if there was an established connection beforehand. They noticed that employers often prioritized social connection over knowledge or skills. Participants also talked about the difficulties associated with obtaining a social network after moving to Canada.

Most participants actively immersed themselves in the Canadian work culture with the hopes of learning more about it and adapting to it. For instance, learning about social customs in the workplace was found to be important. After getting a job, P17 quickly learned that workplace social customs in her home country of Ukraine were very different than in Canada. In Ukraine, she was taught to be “upfront”, but this kind of behaviour was deemed to be rude in the Canadian workplace. Other participants, like P17, described the usefulness of immersing oneself in Canadian work-related environments to learn more about Canadian work values, values relating to healthcare, and more general societal values.

Many participants enjoyed being exposed to Canadian styles of learning and teaching methods. During retraining, many participants learned about student-directed learning, which encouraged open communication between student and teacher and more leadership on the part of the student. They were also exposed to a more flexible schedule and an increased emphasis on practical learning, such as through presentations and team projects.

According to relevant literature, learning about the surrounding work environment is
important to effectively learn and adapt to that environment. Both Savickas (1997, 2002) and Law (2010) emphasize this in their theories. Savickas (2002) emphasizes the importance of one’s interaction with the social world in the development of career. This includes gathering information from role models about what work should mean to them and what the working world expects of them. Savickas (1997) defines career adaptability, in part, as an individual’s ability to explore his or her environment.

In Law’s (2010) career learning theory, the first step is sensing, which involves gathering information about opportunities (particularly those that are open to them) and where those opportunities can be found. Sensing allows individuals to build a picture of how, in career terms, things are (Law, 2010). This first step sets the foundation from which all the other steps follow. Gathering of such information is a prerequisite for individuals to develop cognitive maps, which are assembled into sequences and sifted. This information then forms frames of understanding and focusing, the latter two stages of Law’s career learning theory.

A cornerstone of career exploration is gathering knowledge about one’s surrounding environment. Environmental exploration refers to gathering information about career options, and other aspects of an occupation such as salary, demands, prestige, and the education required. Environment exploration is a major component of career development (Dietrich and Kracke, 2009; Germeijs & Verscheuren, 2009; Porfeli & Lee, 2012; Super, 1990).

**Marketing Self within Current Context**

Located in the centre of the bottom half of the model, is the third main component: *marketing self within current context*. In the current study, participants were found to have engaged in a number of activities in order to make themselves marketable to Canadian employers. For example, many participants had sought help in developing a resume that met
Canadian standards. Many participants described having arrived to Canada either without a resume, or with a resume that would not effectively and adequately convey their strengths to Canadian employers. Participants learned to describe work experience, skills, and abilities in the context of job they were applying for on their resume. Many participants noted honing their resume in this way helped them land a job. In addition to resume development, many participants learned how to adequately “sell themselves” in interviews. This included learning appropriate social etiquette, appropriate dress, and coming across in a favourable light to the interviewer (i.e., self-confident, a team player, a good fit for the position).

A number of participants proactively reached out to Canadian employers by cold calling or by introducing themselves in-person. Participants found these methods of self-advertisement more effective than sending a resume alone. Once hired, other participants worked hard to prove themselves to management, which often led to being promoted or having doors opened for other work opportunities. Furthermore, participants actively engaged in networking in order to market themselves. Participants reached out to others they knew in work and personal contexts for the purpose of building a professional network and increasing their chances of receiving a paid or volunteer opportunity within a workplace.

Although there is little research on the specific ways that immigrants market themselves to employers (i.e., learning how to write a resume or cover letter, learning how to perform in an interview, setting up in-person meetings), research on career adaptability emphasizes making changes to fit external circumstances (Savickas, 1997, 2002, 2013). In other words, adaptability requires that individuals change what they are doing to cope with changes in the environment. Participants in the current study did this first by noticing differences in the Canadian work environment in comparison to the work environment in their
home country. These differences are embedded in Canadian social culture and work attitudes.

The process of anticipating consequences, making a plan for action, and finally acting on that plan in order to adapt to observed differences in one’s environment is consistent with Law’s (2010) understanding step, the step following sensing in his career learning theory.

In terms of networking, Seibert, Kraimer, and Heslin (2016) maintain that developing a professional network is crucial to career resilience and adaptability. Previous research by these authors suggests that having a large professional network can help people become psychologically resilient and maintain a strong sense of self against career shocks including unexpected poor performance evaluations, negative political incidents, and job loss.

Putnam (2000) distinguishes between bonding and bridging networks: bonding being strong ties with family or friends and bridging being weaker ties with professional contacts. Bridging networks provide individuals with work-related information, knowledge, and ideas, and for entrepreneurs, potentially financing and other material necessities (Katila & Wahlbeck, 2011). Furthermore, networking has been identified as crucial for helping immigrants find and secure employment (Fernandez & Castilla, 2001; Zlolniski, 2001).

**Interaction between Learning about Self, Learning about Work Environment, and Marketing Self within Current Context**

The three main components of the model interact bi-directionally with each other. In the following section, the interaction between these components will be broken down and explained in detail. First, the interaction between *learning about self* and *learning about work environment* will be explored, followed by the interaction between *learning about self* and *marketing self within current context*. Lastly, the interaction between *learning about work environment* and *marketing self* will be discussed.
An interaction: learning about self and learning about work environment. As shown in the model, learning about self has a bi-directional relationship with learning about work environment. This link was demonstrated in the present study by participants’ descriptions of self-learning in the context of learning about the work environment. Participants would learn about the Canadian work system, including the rules, regulations, and expectations, and then reflect on themselves and how they saw themselves fitting into the work system in Canada. For example, many participants described learning about themselves while retraining and being exposed to the Canadian work environment. P3 was able to learn more about her strengths and what she was capable of doing while facing professional challenges embedded within the retraining program. P3 noted, “…professional challenges and whatever challenges life throws at you…if you can go through all of this without being depressed, breaking down mentally, emotionally and you just plug away and not allow anything, you know you’re made of steel.”

Furthermore, after becoming more familiar with the social practices in Canadian culture, P16 was able to reflect on how social practices were different for her growing up and how she had been impacted by those practices. In this situation, gathering information about the Canadian work environment led P16 to reflect upon herself and her own experiences. This reflection likely lead to further reflection about her personality and career preferences (e.g., she might choose a career with more flexible social expectations or choose a leadership position where assertiveness is valued).

Learning about the work environment also occurred in the context of learning about oneself. Participants developed new insights into their career preferences after learning more about themselves, sometimes even changing occupational directions as a result. These shifts in
perspective would ultimately influence what and how professional immigrants learn about their work environment in the future. For example, during retraining, P26 learned that he was “a kind of born leadership person.” He noted further, “…that was already there, my family used to say I am a manager all the time, so I accepted that it’s there in me.” This reflection of himself would will affect what careers he pursues in the future and therefore what kind of information he gathers in the future. For example, if he becomes interested in management positions, he will look for information about the job market for management positions. He will observe and notice what kind of work culture surrounds management and what expectations are placed on him in order to obtain work or be promoted.

The interaction between learning about oneself and learning about one’s work environment has been documented in the literature. As mentioned above, Law (2010) considers the surrounding social world to heavily impact one’s developing point of view about oneself. This view can then impact information gathered about the surrounding social world in the future (Law, 2010). Law considers information about work gathered from the surrounding environment and information gathered about self as the two primary sources of information involved in career learning.

Other research emphasizes one’s interaction with the social world in the development of one’s career (Savickas, 2002, 2013; Whiston & Keller, 2004; Howard & Walsh, 2010). Career development involves developing ideas of oneself and the environment (Porfeli & Lee, 2012; Taveira, Silva, Rodriguez, & Maia, 1998) and analyzing fit between self and environment (Savickas, 1997). Savickas (1997) considers the shift from the individual to the individual-in-situation (i.e., asking “How do I fit into surrounding culture and context?”) to be essential to career learning and adaptability.
An interaction: learning about self and marketing self within current context. As shown in the model, learning about self interacts with marketing self within current context. These components have a bi-directional relationship. This relationship was demonstrated in the present study in various ways. First, participants described learning about themselves and then using this information to help market themselves. For example, P8 discussed having made cold calls to potential employers, using what she knew about herself to sell herself. She stated, “I grabbed my Rolodex of contacts from the Consulate. [I said] I’m doing an MBA, I’m specializing in this, and reading this article that appeared in ‘Business in Vancouver’, it appears you’re doing this, and I think I can help you because, with my skill set, I can help you achieve this goal.” P8’s success in marketing herself to potential employers was, in part, due to her knowledge of her own skills and abilities, which cannot be generated without engagement in self-reflection.

Second, participants described marketing themselves in the Canadian context and learning about themselves in the process. For example, while P28 was learning that she would have to actively network and talk about her skills, abilities, and passions in interviews, she reflected on herself and her own upbringing. She stated, “Back home, we can’t talk too much about ourselves, even in the interview, we are not trained, that was not the culture - so many years brought up being an introvert, that was really making it very difficult to go and sell ourselves”. In this situation, engaging in the process of marketing herself encouraged her to reflect on her personality and how her culture has influenced her behaviour.

Results from the present study are consistent with research in this area. Savickas (1997, 2002, 2013) talks about career adaptability as involving self and environmental exploration and the importance of adapting to changing circumstances rather than mastering a predictable
set of responses. He stresses that career adaptability requires an ever-changing reflection of self as well as behavioural changes to adapt to the environment. These processes influence each other in various ways as individuals progress in their career development.

**An interaction: learning about work environment and marketing self within current context.** As shown in the model, there is a bi-directional interaction between *learning about work environment* and *marketing self within current context*. This relationship presented itself in the current study in various ways. One way is that participants described learning about the value of networking, which reflects a process of learning about one’s work environment, and then actively engaging in networking activities, which reflects a process of marketing oneself within the current context. This process is logical: if immigrants learn what the Canadian work environment expects of them, they are more likely to try to meet that expectation in order to succeed.

In addition, participants also described learning about the value of networking after engaging in networking themselves and realizing how beneficial it is for their career development. For example, P12 described having learned about the value of networking after having success with it herself. She stated, “People that I met in my networking – people who didn’t know me at all – tried to connect me with other people … you know, with recruiters and potential employers. I think most helpful to me was my job searching in the U.S., where I realized networking is key to finding a job”. Without having learned from her own experiences, P12 may not have willingly placed so much value on networking itself.

Another way in which participants experienced the interaction between learning about the work environment and marketing oneself, was by learning about social expectations in the Canadian work culture. This knowledge made it more clear for immigrants how to market
themselves in person (i.e., impromptu meetings with potential employers, scheduling interviews) and on paper (i.e., writing resumes, cover letters). Participants described knowing better how to behave in an interview (i.e., knowing social customs, how to sell oneself, professional code of conduct), after learning about the Canadian work culture. For example, P19 believed that learning about the work environment during retraining helped her to relate to Canadian businesses and know how to “talk” in an interview. She stated, “In terms of local knowledge, yes it did help. It did help me to relate to what’s happening in business around here, it does have its practical uses. To talk the talk during an interview, it does help”.

Participants also learned about social customs in the Canadian work culture while gaining experience marketing themselves. In this sense, they learned through trial and error what was expected of them socially and professionally.

The relationship between learning about the surrounding work environment and marketing oneself with regard to resume writing is documented in the literature: Oreopoulos (2011) found that employers’ are often strongly concerned with an applicants’ language skills when reviewing resumes.

The bi-directional relationship between learning about the work environment and marketing oneself has been noted as important to career learning and adaptability in the literature. Similar to the relationship between learning about oneself and marketing oneself, Savickas (1997, 2002, 2013) emphasizes the role of learning about oneself and one’s environment in making effective changes to meet the needs of the surrounding environment. Law’s (2010) theory also emphasizes information gathered about the surrounding environment in all stages of his career learning theory: sensing, sifting, focusing, and understanding. All of these capacities require gathering knowledge about the surrounding work environment. Law
(2010) suggests that this kind of information helps us make career decisions and ultimately take action in our career development (i.e., search for a career, market oneself).

Rediscovering Self

Rediscovering self is situated at the very top of the model. This theme refers to the process whereby immigrants lose and regain a sense of self and feelings of confidence and competence about themselves and their abilities. After arriving to Canada, many participants described feeling a loss of confidence. This affected their sense of self and feelings of worthiness. This occurred due to a variety of factors, including difficulty obtaining employment, feeling uneasy in a new environment, limited financial resources, losing career and social status, and not feeling respected in a survival job.

However, many participants also described feeling more confident and competent after retraining. Participants described learning more about their skills and abilities relevant to their desired career. After retraining, they felt they had more career opportunities and that others treated them with more respect. All of these factors, in turn, helped them to feel more worthy as Canadian workers and more confident in themselves.

Some participants noted that, with time, they came to realize how strong they were to have overcome many of the challenges of transitioning to Canada. These participants were proud of themselves for persevering through these tough times and coming out the other side in a better position than before (i.e., with a degree, employed). Other participants described initially losing grasp of who they were, what defined them, what they wanted, what they valued. Later, however, they regained their sense of who they were, what they desired, and what defined them.

These findings are consistent with previous research. Similar findings were found in
qualitative studies using the same sample of participants: Barbera (2013) and Lau (2015) found that retraining helped professional immigrants to develop self-confidence, self-efficacy, and a career identity. A recent study by Titzmann and Jugert (2017) found that in comparison to experienced adolescent immigrants, newcomer adolescent immigrants had lower levels of self-efficacy but more pronounced increases in self-efficacy. Acculturation and developmental factors including use of language, social support, discrimination, parental education, age, gender, and financial security contributed to increases in self-efficacy. These findings are consistent with the results of the present study, since they indicate a significant increase in self-efficacy and that various factors in an immigrants’ environment can contribute to such increases.

Savickas (2013)’s definition of career adaptability includes a dimension relating to confidence in one’s ability to carry out career plans. This model fits with the findings in the present study. Immigrants in the present study reported gaining more confidence as time passed and as they engaged in retraining and other work experiences. These kinds of experiences and subsequent self-growth reflected their level of adaptation in the context of their career. In other words, they gained more confidence in themselves as they adapted to the surrounding context.

This reality is reflected in the model, as shown by the one-directional arrow from learning about self and learning about work environment towards rediscovering self. Rediscovering oneself cannot take place without a) reflection upon one’s own strengths, skills, abilities, and personality, and b) learning about the work environment through engagement in work or academic experiences. Both of these processes set the framework within which a professional immigrant can begin to develop how she sees herself in the context of her career.
Expanding Self

*Expanding self* is located on the left-hand side of the model, and is connected to *learning about self* and *marketing self*. This component refers to a change in identity and thinking patterns throughout retraining. Participants described experiencing shifts in perspective during retraining. For example, some participants abandoned more narrow perspectives and became more flexible in the ways that they processed information. Other participants described learning how to tolerate uncertainty and take life day by day. Many participants discussed having learned from their instructors and fellow classmates different ways of approaching problems and challenges in life.

In addition to changes in thinking patterns, many participants described having experienced shifts in their personal identity following retraining. For example, some participants experienced were humbled after losing status in their career and having to start over again. These participants had to open themselves up to learning and asking questions. Other participants noted personality shifts around having to slow down, be careful, and try to understand, while still others found that they became more thick-skinned and could put their own needs before others. Some participants found themselves becoming more assertive. A last group noticed that they absorbed some Canadian cultural values and that these values combined with their cultural values from home.

Career learning theory discusses the process of changing thinking patterns and changes in identity in one’s career learning, particularly in the focusing stage of the theory (Law, 2010). Law (2010) states, “If new learning can be fitted to what I already know (or think I know) I may use it, shaping and re-configuring it to a form that I can reconcile with prior
learning” (p.15). This suggests that professional immigrants who find themselves surrounded by new ideas and ways of thinking might have had a pre-existing foundation of thought which at the very least supported the new ideas. Very few participants mentioned having this kind of pre-existing foundation of thought or belief, and it is possible that this kind of thought is subconscious or not something that they would have actively taken notice of. Law (2010) states that for learning to take place, an individual must take in information from the outside world and actively think about whether that information fits with who they are or what they would like to do. This may lead to a ‘change-of-mind’, also considered a ‘perspective transformation’ (Law, 2010; Mezirow, 1977).

*Expanding self* has a bi-directional relationship with *learning about self* and *marketing self within current context*. *Learning about self* and *expanding self* are inter-related processes that interact at every step. As participants interacted with their environment, they gathered information about that environment (i.e., values of others, perspectives of others, expectations of others) (Law, 2010). They compared this new information with what they knew about themselves (i.e., values, interests, personality). It is at this point that they made informed decisions about if and how this information would change their perspective and/or identity (Law, 2010). Once that decision was made, immigrants engaged in continued self-reflection and exploration, continually comparing what it is they had gathered and decisions they had made with their own preconceived notion of self.

*Expanding self* interacts bi-directionally with *marketing self within current context* in a similar manner. The process of expanding oneself in response to environmental demands or stimuli is not unlike the process of adapting to one’s environment to successfully market oneself to employers. Experiencing shifts in perspective and changes in identity provides a
foundation for changes in action to take place. Immigrants are more likely to adapt to the surrounding environment by making themselves desirable to Canadian employers (i.e., through networking and/or developing interview skills) if they have previously been exposed to Canadian values and made changes in their thinking patterns and identities as a result. For example, P75 noticed major differences between his home culture and Canadian culture when it came to communication. In the U.S., P75 was taught to be aggressive and straightforward. However, in Canada, he learned quickly that this style of communication was not appropriate. Therefore, he changed his perspective and modified his behaviour:

Here in Canada we have a thing called ‘assertiveness’, so you have to be assertive, not aggressive. That’s what I learned here, and I think that’s very important because in the States, it’s very straightforward. I observed it, and then there are a lot of things which actually verified this. And then I adjust (P75).

Attending to cultural differences and making appropriate behavioural changes would make P75 more desirable to current and future employers. In addition, actively marketing oneself in a ‘Canadian’ way is likely to result in changed perspectives. This is because the more energy one focuses on adapting to the Canadian environment, the more energy one will spend reflecting on how one fits into (or doesn’t fit into) that environment.

**Social Interconnectedness**

*Social interconnectedness* is situated in the lower right-hand corner of the model. It is connected to *marketing self within current context* and *learning about work environment*. This theme refers to a connectedness to others in the surrounding community. Many participants received valuable information from others and learned the value of communication. Participated received key information about retraining opportunities, expectations about retraining, work options in Canada, and day-to-day living in Canada. This kind of information from others was described as very useful in their transition to Canada as well as their career
development journey. Some information such as the reputation of particular programs, expectations of students in retraining, and day-to-day living in Canada was difficult to find elsewhere such as in resource centers. Social connections for these participants proved to be key for their adaptation to Canada’s work environment.

Other participants noticed how valuable communication skills were for their development in Canada. They learned that being able to listen and respond in the English language and being familiar with socially appropriate methods of communication was extremely important for their advancement in Canada. This finding is supported extensively by research on immigrant populations (Baldi & Branch, 1997; Shinnar, 2007). Participants described having learned this after becoming more in touch with the value of networking and receiving information from others. A large number of participants described having spent a considerable amount of time and energy developing their ability to speak English and communicate effectively in Canada.

Many participants found the process of learning to speak English to be extremely challenging. Furthermore, participants learned that having an accent was challenging for them, and many took accent-reduction courses to minimize their accent. Learning communication skills was described as necessary to “fit in” and grow in their careers in Canada.

*Social interconnectedness* has a bidirectional relationship with *marketing self within current context*. Being part of the surrounding social community allowed participants to market themselves to Canadian employers more effectively. Being part of a community allows one to communicate with others, develop relationships with others, and receive information from others (Friedman & Krackhardt, 1997). Communicating and developing relationships facilitates networking, which increases one’s chances of receiving a job opportunity (Shinnar,
Receiving information about retraining programs, work opportunities, and day-to-day living helped participants to know how and where to advance in their careers in Canada. For example, P13 described learning about the job market while retraining and making connections with others. He said, “As a person, you grow in those two years because you share with new people and friends. You become aware of the job market and how it works.”

Participants recognized that marketing oneself (i.e., developing interview skills, learning how to write a resume, networking) helped them to make a good impression on Canadian employers, which helped them to develop a solid reputation in the community. They could build more social contacts, leading them information and opportunities.

*Social interconnectedness* also has a bidirectional relationship with *learning about work environment*. The more that participants worked to join their community, the more they received information from others. Some of this information is relevant to the Canadian work environment and would help them better understand regulations, expectations, and the Canadian work culture. For example, when P6 was asked how he planned for retraining, he stated, “…usually friends - people that you are in contact with. They give you opportunities, tell you what the experience is.” In this way, P6’s social connections helped him to learn more about what to expect in terms of work and retraining opportunities. An immigrant who is actively seeking knowledge about the Canadian work environment is more likely to talk to others and use her social resources to the best of her ability. In essence, she becomes a part of her social community. Therefore, these two processes rely upon and feed into one another.

Both Law (2010) and Savickas (2002, 2005) recognize the impact of one’s social environment on career development. Savickas (2002) discusses the importance of extending oneself into the community through work in order to develop one’s vocational identity. Law
(2010) emphasizes the role of gathering information in his sensing stage of career learning. He suggests that individuals need to gather information about what opportunities are open to them and how to go about accessing them. Law (2010) specifies that information gathering requires direct and personal contact with others. This information gathering step is the first step in his theory, and sets an individual up to advance through the other career learning stages, including developing career-related values and points of view.

**Knowing Self**

*Knowing self* is located at the bottom right-hand corner of the model. This component highlights the finding that being familiar with one’s strengths, skills, and interests was beneficial for participants’ career development. *Knowing self* is distinct from *learning about self*. *Knowing self* refers to information participants already know about themselves, whereas *learning about self* refers to the process of gathering new information about themselves.

Being familiar with their strengths, skills, and interests helped many participants to persevere in pursuing their career goals. The story that many participants told was that because they knew they were strong, capable, and/or hardworking, they believed that career success would follow eventually. This belief contributed to their motivation to keep going. Other participants talked more specifically about their knowledge of their work skills, which they gained from work experiences. Being familiar with one’s work skills acted as a catalyst to produce increased confidence and self-esteem with regard to one’s work-related efforts and goals. For example, participants described feeling more confident about their ability to succeed in their retraining program and in a job interview because of their work skills.

Some participants noted that knowledge of their own interests helped guide them in their career development journey. One participant (P68) described feeling excited about
retraining because he knew he liked to study, while another participant (P44) knew what retraining program to choose because she knew about her interests and therefore was able to effectively match her interests to a retraining program. Other participants noted that knowing their likes and dislikes helped them to decide what career path to take.

The results of this study suggest that being in touch with one’s strengths, skills, and interests positively impacts the ability to market oneself. Therefore, knowing self has a unidirectional relationship with marketing self. Participants’ knowledge of their own strengths, skills, and interests helps them to be able to ‘sell’ themselves in resumes, cover letters, interviews, and while networking with potential employers and other people in the industry. This is because participants’ knowledge of themselves allows for increased confidence in discussing their career goals, interests, skills, and work experiences during conversations with potential employers.

Research on the ‘self-concept’ (Super, 1990) and ‘self-narrative’ (Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 2005b; Glavin & Berger, 2012) supports these results because it emphasizes the importance of self-reflection as well as developing one’s own story and thinking about how one fits into that story in one’s career. In other words, it emphasizes one’s ability to be adaptable in one’s career. For example, Super (1988, 1990) contends that development of a self-concept helps individuals to not only make career decisions but also helps them find career satisfaction. Savickas (2011) echoes these results, as he suggests that getting to know oneself and identifying one’s life themes is an important part of developing career resiliency.

**Willingness to Start Over**

Willingness to start over is the final component of the model. It is not identified as a separate component because it permeates the entire model. This theme reflects an openness to
retrain, an openness to take an entry-level position after first arriving to Canada, taking on responsibility to make desired changes and meet desired goals, and a motivation to make necessary compromises.

Most participants described having to undergo an attitude-shift after first coming to Canada. This attitude-shift involved working toward accepting that they would have to start from the bottom in terms of their career and financial situation. A smaller number of participants, however, demonstrated an unusually positive attitude about these challenges right from the start. These participants developed creative ways of making money when they were unemployed, and spent significant time learning about how to succeed in their careers both before and after coming to Canada. They used words such as “adapting” in their descriptions of learning. They focused on their own weaknesses and put effort into improving those weaknesses rather than focusing on problems or challenges in their environment. In addition, these participants maintained an open-mind about having to start entry-level positions in order to work their way up the career ladder.

Most participants described having a positive attitude regarding their retraining. Many participants even expressed excitement about entering retraining. Some participants mentioned being excited to learn new skills (e.g., communication skills, career-related skills) and generate more knowledge about the Canadian work environment (e.g., policies). Others appreciated the opportunities that retraining might lead to.

In addition to being open to retraining, many of these same participants described having a desire to learn in a variety of contexts. Some participants described becoming more humble after arriving to Canada and being demoted in their careers. They described this as a positive experience that led them to being more open to learning. In particular, participants
discussed being ready to learn about various cultures and the English language. Reflected in participants’ motivation to learn more, was an acceptance of responsibility. Some participants referred directly to taking the responsibility for their own desired changes while others described acting in a way that indicated taking responsibility for change.

Many participants were motivated to make compromises for their career development in Canada. For example, many participants were motivated to make sacrifices in order to participate fully in their retraining program. These sacrifices included spending less time with family, spending less time engaging in hobbies, and having to spend money to retrain. Participants often acknowledged that these kinds of sacrifices were difficult to make, but that they were necessary in order to develop in their careers. Other participants had to make undesirable but necessary career changes.

There are components of willingness to start over which resemble the quality of resiliency. There are numerous definitions and conceptualization of resiliency in the literature (Munoz, Brady, & Brown, 2017). Bacchi and Licinio (2017) describe resilience as the ability to withstand and recover from mental hardship in an effective manner. Moeller, Saxone, Davis, Stewart, Diaz-Granados, and Herman (2015) define resiliency as “a dynamic process in which psychological, social, environmental and biological factors interact to enable an individual at any stage of life to develop, maintain or regain their mental health despite exposure to adversity” (p. 126). Seibert, Kraimer, and Heslin (2006) define resiliency as “the capacity to bounce back from disruptions” and in terms of career, “the capacity to continue making progress toward your current career goals with the resources and strategies you have already developed” (p. 245).

Resiliency has been connected to many factors, including personality, self-esteem, and
coping styles (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Higher levels of resilience were associated with lower levels of distress among a group of Australian medical students (Bacchi & Licinio, 2017). In the current study, participants’ openness to learn and start from the bottom of the career ladder, maintain a positive attitude regarding retraining, and take initiative all encompass the quality of resilience since they are methods of coping with adversity that would help them face challenges more effectively.

Unger (2012) supports an ecological perspective of resilience, whereby reciprocal person-environment interactions are emphasized. In his theory, the physical and social environment is the locus of resource for personal growth, and one’s social ecology is more important than individual factors in sustainable well-being for populations under stress. Unger’s (2012) theory is supported by the results of the present study, as willingness to start over is understood in the context of environmental demands and experiences, as are the remaining components of the model relevant to learning and adaptability.

Additional research on taking initiative and accepting responsibility for change in the face of career transition is well-developed (Obschonka, Hahn, & Bajwa, 2018; Swann & Jetten, 2017). Crant (2000) created a construct called ‘proactive personality’ that describes being active rather than passive in improving one’s current circumstances. This construct involves persistence, motivation, and responsibility. It also relates to a strong belief in one’s ability to overcome challenges. Proactive personality was found to be associated with promotion, salary increases, and career satisfaction (Barnett & Bradley, 2007; Erdogan & Bauer, 2005; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). Proactive disposition was also found to predict agency related to career development including motivation to learn and engagement in development (Chiaburu, Baker, & Pitariu, 2006).
The Learning and Adaptability Model of Career after Relocation describes the complex ways in which professional immigrants adapt and learn in their new surroundings to grow and succeed in their careers. The model emphasizes the importance of relationships with oneself, others, and the environment. *Learning about self,* *expanding self,* *rediscovering self,* and *knowing self* all enrich an immigrant’s relationship with herself. *Learning about self* and *rediscovering self* increase familiarity with oneself by fostering reflection about one’s skills, strengths and weaknesses, personality, and interests. *Knowing self* reflects a pre-existent familiarity with oneself. *Expanding self* and *rediscovering self* involve self-development and growth to fit the needs of the changing environment.

*Social interconnectedness,* *marketing self within current context,* and *learning about work environment,* all enhance an immigrant’s relationship with others. Through connecting with others, professional immigrants gather information about work and school options, the Canadian work environment and work culture, and learn the value of networking in one’s career development. *Learning about work environment* and *marketing self within current context* improves an immigrant’s relationship to the surrounding environment. These relationships emphasize the importance of observing social and cultural practices, taking in information about the job market, observing rules and regulations, and learning about the best ways to market oneself in Canada (i.e., resume writing, interview skills).

Although the present study has categorized the model’s components into one of the three types of relationships (i.e., with self, other, environment), each component inevitably involves all three types of relationships, because they interact with each other. It is important to note that most components in the model interact bi-directionally. In addition to relationships,
the model emphasizes the importance of taking initiative, taking responsibility, and a willingness to begin developing one’s career at a less-than-ideal starting point. As stated, this permeates the entire model, and emphasizes resilience in the face of challenge.

Career learning theory models such as Bill Law’s career learning theory and Savickas’ career construction theory illuminate the importance of relationships with others and the environment. Brown’s (2002) Model of Wisdom Development also supports the interaction between oneself and one’s environment. Brown (2002) suggests there are four conditions that contribute to learning-from-life: orientation to learning (attitudes and expectations people bring to interactions with others), experiences (structured and unstructured), interactions with others, and environment (where orientation to learning, experiences, and interactions with others come together). This kind of model supports the interactional and dynamic features of the Learning and Adaptability Model of Career after Relocation.

This model relates to, and speaks to, literature on acculturation. It has most relevance to Arends-Toth and van de Vijver (2006)’s Framework of Acculturation Variables. According to this model, acculturation outcomes include psychological wellbeing, socio-cultural competence in ethnic culture, and socio-cultural competence in mainstream culture. Socio-cultural competence includes interaction with hosts, acquisition of skills and behaviours of the majority culture, and academic and job performances. Acculturation outcome is influenced by acculturation conditions, which include perceived inter-group relations and personal characteristics. Similar to the Learning and Adaptability Model of Career after Relocation, this model takes into account one’s personal characteristics and interaction with others in a new environment, as well as taking on new skills, ways of communicating, and job expectations that are predominant in the new environment.
A model that depicts the ways in which individuals learn and adapt in their career development after relocating was needed. The Learning and Adaptability Model of Career after Relocation adds to literature on professional immigrants’ career learning and development after relocating. It also adds to literature regarding non-immigrant populations. For example, it speaks to career learning and development for individuals who have moved to Canada or another country, or for individuals who are going through other kinds of career transitions.

**Practical Implications**

This study has practical implications ranging from policy-making to professional help and self-help.

**Implications for Policy**

The current study should inform policy making for government-sponsored support and training programs for immigrants. The development of research-informed models of service for professional immigrants would better ensure that immigrants receive the proper knowledge and tools to adapt to the Canadian work culture quickly and effectively in their career development. Services are needed that help immigrants learn about the Canadian work environment, their own skills and abilities, and how to market themselves effectively in Canada.

Programs such as Skills for Change, LINK, and University Settlement are funded by the Canadian government in order to help immigrants adjust to and develop their careers in Canada. These programs offer assistance to help immigrants prepare for job interviews and become more employable in Canada. They also connect immigrants to resources that can help them learn how to speak English and retrain in Canada.
These kinds of programs should teach immigrants the value of networking in Canada and how to network effectively in Canada. Included in this type of program should be information on using and recognizing phrases and colloquial terms in daily conversations to increase the likelihood of social connection. In addition, immigrants should be given information about the Canadian social culture in work environments. Immigrants in these kinds of programs should have a chance to converse with other immigrants and other Canadians, to help them make social connections and network.

Many immigrants in the present study reported not having been given information about what kinds of retraining programs were available and the differences among various schools in terms of reputation and quality of education. These programs should connect immigrants to mentors in the community who either have trained in a particular field or can speak to the process and quality of various programs. Mentors can also help immigrants understand what to expect in terms of cost, type of training model, class schedules and help them with any other questions or concerns about retraining in that particular field.

Immigrants in the present study noted that resume training offered by these kinds of programs was often unhelpful. It is important that effective resume assistance be given to professional immigrants and that engaging in self-reflection to identify one’s strengths, interests, and skills, is identified as an important first step for resume and interview preparation.

In pre-existing classes that these kinds of programs offer, teachers should validate and normalize immigrants’ experiences of losing confidence and competence after coming to Canada. Furthermore, teachers should discuss the ways in which professional immigrants can restore confidence and competence (i.e., retraining, gaining work experience, feeling
supported by a community). They can also discuss the interaction between learning about oneself, learning about one’s work environment, and marketing oneself within the current context and how this interact can help an individual to learn and adapt in their new environment.

As many participants noted having trouble finding information on the job market and regulations for Canadian jobs, government-funded programs could offer online or other resources to immigrants to help them obtain information about the job market and regulations for Canadian jobs.

**Implications for Helping Professionals**

The findings of the current study will help professionals working with professional immigrants and others who have relocated from another area or are going through major career transition (i.e., switching to a different work environment). The findings are applicable to career counselling and general psychological services.

Current guidelines for career counsellors working with immigrants emphasize the importance of being sensitive to experiences of discrimination (Kennedy & Chen, 2012) and providing useful information to help them adapt to the environment (i.e., interview techniques, dress code) (Stebleton, 2007). These guidelines are consistent with the findings of the current study and with guidelines for working with culturally diverse populations.

The findings of the current study reveal a tremendous loss of confidence and sense of self after arriving in Canada. Current counselling guidelines stress that counsellors should expect that immigrants will likely have less self-efficacy than other clients (Kennedy & Chen, 2012) (particularly soon after relocating) and should be mindful of this when providing psychological services. For instance, professional immigrants should be helped to improve
their self-efficacy to more effectively cope with challenges such as unemployment and cross-cultural barriers (Coogan & Chen, 2007). These proposed guidelines are consistent with the findings of the current study. It is paramount that counsellors help clients to find strength within their own sense of self and help them to rediscover their values, skills, and interests in a new context. Since retraining was found to improve confidence in many immigrants, counsellors should encourage clients to retrain if it will also benefit them in a practical sense (i.e., improve their ability to find fulfilling employment). Counsellors should also inform clients of the positive effects of retraining (i.e., increased confidence, networking, social skills).

Elez (2014) suggests that strategies including listening, acknowledging, raising awareness, and challenging unjust situations can be used to help immigrants cope with loss and ambiguity. Interventions aimed at fostering resiliency or hardiness are also recommended by Elez (2014). These suggestions are supported by the current study, as being motivated to make compromises, being willing to start over, and being resilient was found to be crucial to career learning and adaptability. Clients who are feeling unconfident in their abilities and defeated by their circumstances are less likely to be willing to learn and advance their careers in Canada. Counsellors can help clients recognize their strengths and remind them of things they have overcome in the past. Counsellors can also create, with clients, a detailed plan of how they might approach day-to-day challenges with the ultimate goal of progressing in their career.

Recent developments in career theory have contributed to career counselling with immigrants in important ways. Newer models of career counselling with immigrants use a dynamic interactional and integrative approach that combine intrapersonal (i.e., personality), relational (i.e., family, community), and larger contextual factors (i.e., discrimination, cultural
values, economy) (Yakushko & Chronister, 2005; McMahon & Patton, 2006). This type of career counselling model fits with the results of the present study, as it describes an interactional system that involves the immigrant herself, the world around her, and the interaction between the two.

The findings of the current study indicate that on an individual level, counsellors should facilitate and encourage self-reflection. Counsellors should help clients to think about their strengths, abilities, personality, and interests. At the contextual level, it has been recommended that counsellors inform clients of the local labour market (Ma & Yeh, 2010; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya & Gonzalez, 2008). This suggestion is consistent with the findings of this study, as learning about the work environment (i.e., labour market, rules and regulations, work culture) has been identified as important processes in career learning and adaptability. In addition to this, counsellors should help clients learn methods of marketing themselves and obtaining employment in their new environment (i.e. networking, resume preparation, interview skills).

In terms of the multilevel integration, clients should be encouraged to expand their sense of self by being open to shifting their identities and thinking patterns in response to new experiences. In addition, clients who feel a loss of confidence and sense of self should be guided to re-discover themselves in a new context. Counsellors should review their strengths, skills, interests, and personality and determine how these characteristics could be transferred to their new environment and ultimately be fulfilled in their careers in Canada.

It has been recommended that counsellors should be sensitive to experiences of culture shock, and work with clients to increase their language proficiency and improve their cultural competence in the workplace (Ma & Yeh, 2010; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya &
Gonzalez, 2008). This is another example of individual and contextual level integration. Additionally, counsellors should help clients market themselves effectively in a way that highlights their strengths and abilities and also matches what is expected of them in their work environment.

On a relational level, it is recommended that counsellors encourage clients to expand their social networks (Cook, Heppner, & O’Brien, 2002; Krakauer & Chen, 2003; Elez, 2014). This is especially crucial considering the value of networking in a professional immigrant’s career development. Expanding one’s social circle will increase the chances of making an important contact in the working world that could potentially lead to a job opportunity. It also provides increased emotional support. Counsellors should keep in mind that learning about oneself and the work environment will promote social connection, as clients will be better able to converse in colloquial English and have a better sense of who they are and how they would like to present themselves when networking or making friends.

**Implications for Professional Immigrants**

This study’s findings illustrate the power of self-driven coping strategies for professional immigrants while adapting to new career contexts. There are various self-help strategies that can be used to not only increase one’s sense of well-being but can assist them in learning and adapting in their careers. However, it must be stated that many immigrants cannot rely on self-help alone to help them through these difficult adjustments. These strategies are not always possible or helpful for immigrants, and it should be recognized that other supports are usually necessary to help an immigrant learn and adapt in a new environment.

First, immigrants would greatly benefit from engaging in daily self-reflection. This reflection would involve daily mindfulness about one’s strengths and weaknesses, skills, interests, and personality characteristics while interacting with the environment. Immigrants
will also benefit from looking for opportunities to learn about themselves and how they see themselves fitting into the Canadian working world. Self-reflection would also include incorporating learned knowledge about the outside working world (i.e., job market, work culture) and how to market oneself (i.e., networking, interview skills) into their own conception of who they are (i.e., strengths, personality) so that they are able to move forward effectively and comfortably in their careers.

As the present study and countless other studies indicate, moving to another country and starting over is a very difficult process for many immigrants. Therefore, it is understandable that many immigrants would experience a range of negative emotions including sadness, grief, anger, frustration, and depression. These kinds of emotions would understandably be associated with a lack of motivation, a closed mind about the future, and social isolation. The current study demonstrates, however, that being open to opportunities and being resilient in the face of hardship is particularly helpful in an immigrant’s career development. Therefore, whenever possible, professional immigrants would benefit from attempting to shift their perspective toward challenges associated with career transition, including starting with a lower paying job, having to retrain to obtain the necessary credentials, and having to make compromises for learning and growth. One way that immigrants might make this possible is by managing their expectations about what the relocation and career transition will be like for them.

Third, since the present study shows that being connected to the social environment is crucial for an immigrant to collect information, learn methods of communication, learn about the work culture in Canada, and network more effectively, is it crucial that professional immigrants attempt to connect themselves with others in their community. Professional
immigrants can make an effort to reach out to others at work, helpers in immigrant resource centers, and friends of family members. If language is a barrier, immigrant can reach out to others who speak the same language. Making social connections will also will also be significant source of emotional support for professional immigrants. As the results indicated, many immigrants found reaching out to other immigrants who had already moved to Canada to be very helpful and reassuring.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations to the present study. First, one researcher completed the majority of the data collection and analyses. Although the researcher’s supervisor oversaw the data analyses, the researcher was the only one to review each transcript and select patterns that would eventually lead to the development of themes. This is a limitation because with only one researcher, the risk for researcher bias increases. However, Charmaz (2006) states that researchers’ biases are inevitable and are meaningful constructions of knowledge in qualitative research. “Enlisting grounded theory in a contemporary, more reflexive mode, keeps you interacting with your data and emerging ideas” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 179). Furthermore, the researcher was actively reflective and aware of her own biases, which helped her to maintain distance from the data. In addition, the researcher continually checked with her co-researcher and committee members as to whether the key themes the data analysis generated were relevant, and included direct quotes from participants in the results to convey true emotion and meaning.

Another limitation to the present study concerns the nature of the data collection. The researcher used a semi-structured interview to guide each participant interview. Each question was designed with the ultimate goal of gathering a large amount of information and was specifically designed to be open-ended to allow for this. However, it is inevitable that each
question will guide the interviewee in a particular direction, shaping the kind of information generated from participants. In addition, the large number of interview questions (76 questions) could have limited the extent to which participants could describe their experiences in an in-depth manner. The large number of questions aimed to gather a large amount of data about a range of topics and issues in professional immigrants’ retraining experiences. However, for future studies in which more specific focus, less questions would allow for participants to elaborate, providing more in-depth responses and a richer data set.

Another issue with the data collection was that interviews took place only in English. Many participants in the study spoke English as a second language, which inevitably put limitations on the effectiveness of their communication. Information was likely lost in having participants attempt to speak English to the interviewer rather than speaking in their native language. Unfortunately, due to limited funding, the researchers in the study did not have access to translators.

Another limitation concerns the generalizability of the study’s findings. Convenience sampling was used in the present study. Only those who saw the recruitment poster or knew someone who might want to participate, participated in the study. This particular portion of professional immigrants may have different characteristics and experiences than the rest, meaning that the participants in the study may not adequately represent the entire population of professional immigrants. For example, the posters were posted on the Toronto Subway line, meaning that only individuals who resided in the Toronto area and took the subway would see the posters. Individuals who drove and who lived outside of the Toronto area were not included.

The other issue concerning generalizability concerns the exclusion criteria of the study.
Although all exclusion criteria were put in place for a reason relevant to the study’s aims, there were three criteria in particular that may have limited the generalizability. One criterion is that participants must have held employment in Canada, either full-time or part-time, for a minimum of one year after starting their Canadian retraining. Although this criterion is put in place to ensure that the participants could adequately speak to their work experience and sense of self after retraining, it excludes individuals who had either worked for less time or had not yet found employment after retraining. These individuals either took longer to gain employment or had not had success in gaining employment after retraining. As such, these individuals might have had different experiences than the rest of the population, which might speak to internal or external factors relevant to the career learning and adaptability of professional immigrants.

Another criterion is that participants must have immigrated between January 1st, 1999 and December 30th, 2006. This criterion limits the generalizability of the study because it excludes individuals who immigrated before or after these dates. Immigrants who immigrated before would have had more time to establish themselves in Canada, or at the very least would be able to speak to a wider range of experiences that would have inevitably occurred over more elapsed time. Individuals who would have immigrated after that time period would have experienced their transition to Canada more recently. As such, their experiences in seeking help from government-funded resource centers could differ, considering there might have been significant changes over the years. Furthermore, there may have been changes in retraining opportunities and accessibility, the Canadian job market, work culture, and job requirements.

Lastly, the criterion that participants must have known how to speak and understand English inevitably excludes those who do not speak English. This is a major factor since
professional immigrants who do not possess these language skills would likely have a very different transition experience than those who are English speaking. It is likely that non-English speaking immigrants would have more difficulty adapting and learning in their careers.

Although the generalizability of the study is of concern, the researchers took precautions to increase generalizability. Most notably, maximum variation sampling was used to ensure that participants were chosen from ten different countries of origin, multiple career fields, and an equal number of males and females.

**Future Directions**

Future direction in this area of research could examine a wider breadth of population to better understand the experiences of the general population of professional immigrants. This would include professional immigrants who live outside of Toronto, who do not ride the subway, who moved here more recently, who do not speak English, or who have held employment for less than a year following retraining or not yet found employment after retraining. Furthermore, breaking down the language barrier and allowing participants to speak in their native language by having translators in the interview, might help researchers obtain a clearer perspective of the participant’s experience.

Future research would benefit from exploring aspects of the proposed Learning and Adaptability Model of Career after Relocation. Certain aspects of the model could be expanded and/or teased apart to provide a more in-depth understanding. For example, future research could investigate what kinds of factors contribute to participants regaining lost confidence. Although the participants in the current study described the retraining as re-instilling a sense of confidence for various reasons (i.e., feeling more competent and encouraged), the current study did not identify all the factors that led to participants feeling more confident and did not identify or explore the process by which participants developed
more self-confidence. In terms of confidence, the present study identified “what”, whereas future studies can identify “how”.

In addition, future research could further investigate the ways in which professional immigrants learned about themselves during retraining. Some areas to be explored include: what led participants to begin engaging in self-reflection and personal growth? How are immigrants’ relationships with themselves influenced by their relationships with their career? How do career-related successes and failures affect one’s relationship with oneself and what are the factors that play role in this relationship? (i.e., resiliency, motivation, self-esteem).

Since the present study identified self-reflection and being knowledgable about one’s strengths, skills, and interests to be important factors in one’s career learning and adaptability, future research could investigate immigrants’ relationships with themselves and with their career before coming to Canada, and potentially compare it to what occurs in terms of self-reflection and growth after they arrive in Canada and start to engage with their new surroundings. This would help to identify any changes in one’s relationship to self before and after arriving and would highlight predisposing factors that make some immigrants’ more likely (or willing) to learn about themselves, expand their thinking styles, and know themselves in the context of their careers. It would also make clearer the steps that individuals take to get to know their own strengths, skills, and interests, and highlight the role of self-acceptance in their career journey. Researchers could also identify how one’s relationship with oneself influences one’s relationships with others, since social connections and networking was deemed such an influential factor in career learning and adaptability.

In this line of research, resources could be allocated to helping immigrants prepare better for their transition to Canada. For example, if future research identified that immigrants
who spend time engaging in self-reflection before coming to Canada are more willing to learn about themselves, expand their thinking and identities, and be more knowledgeable about themselves after coming to Canada, individuals working with immigrants in their home country before moving could encourage them to begin to engaging in self-reflection in the context of career before they arrive in Canada.

Being willing to start over, viewing learning as an opportunity, being motivated to make compromises, and being open and resilient in the face of challenge has been identified as crucial to the career development of immigrants in the present study and in others (Barbera, 2013; Lau, 2015). However it remains unclear what helps immigrants develop this kind of outlook. For instance, is it a personality characteristic or something that develops in reaction to experiences such as challenges and setbacks? Is it a learned behaviour that immigrants observe in others? Do immigrants begin to incorporate these kinds of attitudes because they feel they have no choice? Do they develop these attitudes after realizing that they are helpful?

Additional research in this area and developing answers to these questions will help counsellors in their work with immigrants. Having a better understanding of how these beneficial attitudes develop will help counsellors provide better guidance and assistance in helping their clients develop this kinds of outlook.

Lastly, future research could ask professional immigrants questions about what processes made career learning and adaptability more difficult, more effective, and more challenging. This includes government-funded supports as well as supports and courses in their retraining program. In particular, questions about what supports immigrants found helpful or unhelpful regarding developing their resume, interview skills, and networking skills, and learning about the job market, rules and regulations and work culture. Furthermore,
general questions about what immigrants found to be influential to learning and adapting in their careers and how they feel government-funded supports and/or retraining programs could be improved. These kinds of questions will help identify how our government-funded resources and retraining programs could better accommodate the needs of professional immigrants in their development.

Regardless of how exactly the research in the area of career development of professional immigrants expands and grows, the Learning and Adaptability Model of Career after Relocation aims to encourage increasing focus on career learning and adaptability and related areas including career development of professional immigrants, networking in professional immigrants, career-related self-reflection and self-expansion in professional immigrants, and learning about the work environment for professional immigrants. This research is important not only for the well-being of professional immigrants, but also for harmony in Canadian society and for the continued improvement in Canada’s economy and labour force.
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Livingstone.


RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS WANTED

for a study of the

CAREER RETRAINING EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANT PROFESSIONALS IN CANADA

- You came to Canada as an immigrant within the timeframe of January 1, 2001 to December 30, 2006
- You have a university degree that was earned outside of Canada
- You worked full-time in a professional occupation in your country of origin for at least three years before coming to Canada
- You engaged in retraining in Canada and earned a university, college, or professionally certified and formal diploma, certificate, certification or accreditation (records/proof of retraining/program completion required)
- You have held employment in Canada, (full-time or part-time), for a minimum of 3 years after completing Canadian retraining
- You are at least 25 years of age and older

If all of the above applies, please contact:

416.978.0725
careerstudy.oise@utoronto.ca

Interviews conducted in English - Fluency is required
FINANCIALLY COMPENSATED $35

The interviews are part of a research project led by Dr. Charles Cleen in Counseling Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. You must not have previously participated in any of Dr. Charles Cleen's research projects in order to be eligible to participate.
APPENDIX B: Email Script of Initial Contact

Hello Sir/Madam,

Thank you so much for your interest in our research project! This research project is being conducted by Dr. Charles Chen, a Professor of Counselling Psychology at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto, and his research assistants. It’s a study that is looking to better understand the career training experiences and needs, barriers and opportunities that are present for immigrant professionals in their career transition in Canada. We are looking to conduct interviews with a total of 90 to 120 recent immigrant professionals who have completed retraining in Canada. During the interview, we will be asking questions about your recent retraining experiences, 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. It is our hope that you will benefit from the interview process by gaining an increased self-awareness on issues related to career retraining, career exploration, and planning, and find the exploring nature of the study interesting. We also hope that it will assist us in developing career counselling programs that will be beneficial to many other new immigrant professional workers.

The interview will be audio-taped and it will take place in a meeting room at OISE/University of Toronto and it will last for approximately 2 hours.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to refuse to answer any questions and you may also refuse to participate or withdraw from the study, at any time, without any negative consequences. Your employer(s) will NOT be informed of your involvement in the study or of any aspects of the interview discussion.

Your responses to this interview will be kept completely anonymous and confidential. Your contact information and data will be labeled with a code and kept in separate locked cabinets, to which only Dr. Chen and his research assistants have access. The data will be kept for 5 years starting from the completion date of the research project, after which all the data will be destroyed. The results of this study may be used again in another study by Dr. Chen and his assistants. These research results may be presented in conferences or published in academic and/or professional journals. Your identity will still remain strictly confidential.

If you agree to participate and complete the interview process, we would like to offer you an honorarium of $35 for your time and effort.

All of our participants must meet the criteria of the term “new immigrant professionals who have completed retraining in Canada” in order to participate in our study.

1) You are at least 25 years of age and older.

2) You came to Canada as an immigrant within the timeframe of January 1, 1999 to December 30, 2006.
3) You have a university degree that was earned outside of Canada.

4) You worked full-time in a professional occupation in your country of origin for at least three-years before coming to Canada.

5) You engaged in retraining in Canada and earned a university, college or professionally certified and formal diploma, certificate, certification or accreditation (records/proof of retraining/educational program completion required).

6) You have held employment in Canada, either on a full-time or part-time basis, for a minimum of 1 year after completing your Canadian retraining.

7) You are fluent in English (interviews are conducted in English).

8) You must not have previously participated in any of Dr. Charles P. Chen’s research projects to date.

If you don’t meet any one of the above criteria, you are unfortunately not eligible to participate in this study.

If you meet all the requirements and are interested in participating in this research study, please respond to this email providing the following information:
- your full name,
- your country of origin,
- your profession when you lived in your country of origin.

Also, please indicate the days of the week and times that you are available to come in for your research interview (e.g., Mondays and Thursdays from 2-4pm). We will contact you to schedule an appointment should you be eligible for our study and should our quota of participants from your country of origin not yet be fulfilled.

We thank you very much for your time and interest in our research project! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Chen and his research team via telephone at 416 978 0725 or via email again at careerstudy.oise@utoronto.ca

All the best,

CRC research team
OISE/University of Toronto

If they reply and say that they don’t fulfill the requirements:

Hello Sir/Madam,

Thank you again for your interest in our research project and for answering our questions. Unfortunately, as you don’t have...(repeat whatever criteria) we regret that you are not eligible to participate in the study. For research purposes, we must strictly adhere to our inclusion criteria. We greatly appreciate your taking the time to answer our questions and we thank you again for your interest in participating in the study.

Wishing you all the best,

CRC research team
If they are from a country that we have already maxed out our quota on, reply with the following:

Hello Sir/Madam,

Thank you very much for your interest in participating in our study. In order to be comprehensive with our research, we have to interview individuals from a number of different countries. It turns out that we’ve already spoken with a number of people from your home country and for the time-being, we must limit that number of people to a particular quota. I will write your name and contact information down on our waiting list. If it’s ok with you, we may potentially contact you in the coming months as our research progresses. Thank you very much again for taking the time to answer our questions and for your interest in participating in our study.

Wishing you all the best,

Your name
CRC research team
OISE/University of Toronto

If they are interested and give us their availabilities for the interview:

Hello Sir/Madam,

Thank you again for your interest in our research project and for answering my questions. I have scheduled your appointment for (indicate date, day and time).
Please respond to this email to confirm your availability to meet at that date/time.
I will be waiting for you at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)/University of Toronto lobby, which is on the main level in the OISE building located at 252 Bloor Street West (at the corner of Bloor and Bedford) near the St. George Subway Station. Please remember to bring with you a record/proof of your re-training.

I look forward to meeting with you!

All the best,

CRC research team
OISE/University of Toronto

If they reply and say that they are not interested:

Hello Sir/Madam,

Thank you again for taking an interest in our research study. Please feel free to contact us again if you would like to participate at a later date.

All the best,

CRC research team
OISE/University of Toronto
APPENDIX C: Telephone Script of Initial Contact

If we reach their voicemail:

Hello sir/madam,

This is (state name) from the immigrant retraining study returning your call. Thank you so much for your interest in our study. I would like to speak with you about our study for 5 to 10 minutes to evaluate whether you are eligible to participate in our study and to schedule an appointment. Since our telephone system is automated, we will have to call you back once you have left us another message, so if you could please call us back and leave a detailed message with your name, the phone number we can reach you at, and the days and times when you will be available to take our call.

Thank you again for your interest in our study and I look forward to speaking with you!

*Please call us back at 416-978-0725.*

If they pick up:

Hello sir/madam,

This is (state name) from the immigrant retraining study returning your call. Is this a good time to speak with you about the study?

**Answer: No say the following…**

Alright, would you like to speak with me at some other time about the study? The telephone screening should take approximately 5-10 minutes of your time.

**Arrange a time.**

**Answer: Yes (proceed…)**

Great, thank you so much for your interest in our research project. To start off with, could you please tell me your full name and country of origin? And what was your profession when you lived there? (Record that information into the “Participants” excel spreadsheet.)

If they are from a country that we have already maxed out our quota on, say the following:

Thanks so much for your interest. I’m going to write your name and contact information down on our waiting list, because in order to be comprehensive with our research, we have to interview individuals from a number of different countries. It turns out we’ve already spoken with a number of people from your home country and for the time-being, we will have to limit our numbers to a particular quota. If it’s ok with you, may we potentially contact you in the coming months as our research progresses?

Great, thank you very much again for your interest in participating. All the best, goodbye.

If they are from a country that we need say the following:

Great, I’d like to tell you a bit about the study so you can consider whether you’d like to participate. If you have questions, please feel free to ask me at any time. This research project is being conducted by Dr. Charles Chen, a Professor of Counselling Psychology at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), and his research assistants. It’s a study that is looking to better understand the career training experiences and needs, barriers and opportunities present for immigrant professionals in their career transition in Canada. We are looking to conduct interviews with a total of 90 to 120 recent
immigrant professionals who have completed retraining in Canada. During the interview, we will be asking questions about your recent retraining experiences, 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. Does that sound of interest to you?

Answer: No, say the following…
I understand, thank you very much for your initial interest and for contacting us. All the best, goodbye.

Answer: Yes (proceed)
Great, well let me tell you a bit more about the interviews.
All of our participants must meet the criteria of the term “new immigrant professionals who have completed retraining in Canada” in order to participate in our study. I’d like to go through the requirements with you now if that’s alright? Thanks,

1) Are you are at least 25 years of age or older?
2) Did you come to Canada as an immigrant within January 1, 1999 to December 30, 2006?
3) Do you have a university degree that was earned outside of Canada?
4) Did you work full-time in a professional occupation in your country of origin for at least three-years before coming to Canada?
5) Did you engage in retraining in Canada and earn a university, college or professionally certified and formal diploma, certificate, certification or accreditation? Do you have records/proof of retraining/educational program completion? (this is required for participation)
6) Have you held employment in Canada, either on a full-time or part-time basis, for a minimum of 1 year after completing your Canadian retraining?
7) Are you fluent in English (interviews are conducted in English)?
8) Have you previously participated in any of Dr. Charles P. Chen’s research projects to date?

*if needed, clarify whether they came as an International Student on a student visa. If yes, they are not eligible. They need to have come as immigrants.

If they do not meet criteria say:
Thank you again for answering my questions. Unfortunately, it seems that, as you don’t have…(repeat whatever criteria). I regret that you are not eligible to participate in the study. Sorry about that but thank you very much for your interest in participating, we really appreciate your taking the time.
All the best, goodbye.

If they are upset that they don’t meet criteria and want an explanation, say:
I’m sorry, let me explain, for research and ethical purposes, we must strictly adhere to our inclusion criteria. We greatly appreciate your taking the time to answer our questions though and wish you all the best. Thanks for understanding. Goodbye.

If they meet criteria say:
Great, you meet our criteria. (and proceed..) Let me tell you a bit more about the study.
The interview will be audio-taped and it will take place in a meeting room at OISE/University of Toronto and it will last for about 2 hours.
There are no foreseeable risks in completing this interview.
It is our hope that you will benefit from the interview process by gaining an increased self-awareness on issues related to career retraining, career exploration, and planning, and find the exploring nature of
the study interesting.

We also hope that it will assist us in developing career counselling programs that will be beneficial to many other new immigrant professional workers.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to refuse to answer any questions and you may also refuse to participate or withdraw from the study, at any time, without any negative consequences. Your employer(s) will NOT be informed of your involvement in the study or of any aspects of the interview discussion.

Your responses to this interview will be kept completely anonymous and confidential. Your contact information and data will be labeled with a code and kept in separate locked cabinets, which only Dr. Chen and his research assistants have access. The data will be kept for 5 years starting from the completion date of the research project, after which all the data will be destroyed. The results of this study may be used again in another study by Dr. Chen and his assistants. These research results may be presented in conferences or published in academic and/or professional journals. Your identity will still remain strictly confidential.

If you agree to participate and complete the interview process, we would like to offer you an honorarium of $35 for your time and effort.

Do you have any questions?

Would you like to participate?

Answer, Yes:
When will you be the best time for you to come in for your research interview?
(Record their availability on excel sheet)
Thank you, a research assistant who is available on one of those days will contact you to schedule an interview with you.

If booked:
*Remind them to bring a record/proof of retraining and that we will not be able to conduct the interview if they don’t bring it.
*Let them know that you will meet them at the lobby on the main level in the OISE building. Give the OISE address and closest subway station:
I will be waiting for you at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)/University of Toronto lobby, which is on the main level in the OISE building located at 252 Bloor Street West (at the corner of Bloor and Bedford) near the St. George Subway Station. Please remember to bring with you a record/proof of your re-training.

Answer, No:
Well thank you again for taking the time to answer my questions. Please feel free to contact us again if you would like to participate at a later date. All the best, goodbye.

If they are not sure:
If you need more time to think about your options, please feel free to do so. You may contact me at a later time if you are interested in arranging an interview schedule with me.
Thank you very much for your time and interest in our research project!
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Chen or his research team at this phone number, 416 978 0725 or via email at: careerstudy.oise@utoronto.ca
All the best, goodbye.
APPENDIX D: Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

RE: How retraining affects re-entry: Immigrants' vocational well-being

You are cordially invited to attend this interview. The interview is part of a research project being conducted by Dr. Charles Chen, a 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 career retraining and 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 retraining 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 recent retraining experiences, 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 retraining, career exploration, and planning. We also hope that you will 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 you for 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 120 recent immigrant professionals who have completed retraining in Canada. All participants selected will be 25 years of age and older. Each participant is invited to complete an audio-taped interview that will last for approximately 2 hours. The interview will take place in a meeting room at OISE/University of Toronto. As part of the interview, you will be asked to complete and return a 2-page Participant Information Form that contains your contact information and basic demographic information relevant to this research project.

The term "new immigrant professionals who have completed retraining in Canada" 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 timeframe of January 1, 1999 to December 30, 2006.
(3) You have a university degree that was earned outside of Canada.
(4) You worked full-time in a professional occupation in your country of origin for at least three-years before coming to Canada.
(5) You engaged in retraining in Canada and earned a university, college or professionally certified and formal diploma, certificate, certification or accreditation (records/proof of retraining/educational program completion required).
(6) You have held employment in Canada, either on a full-time or part-time basis, for a minimum of 3 years after completing your Canadian retraining.
(7) You are fluent in English (interviews are conducted in English).
(8) You must not have previously participated in any of Dr. Charles P. Chen’s research projects to date.

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 a code number to protect your identity. Any information that could lead to identifying 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 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 audio-taped 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. In the event that, during the interview, you express an intention to harm yourself or to harm others, it is our duty to break confidentiality and report this content to the authorities.

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 and retraining 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 will 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). 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 cooperation.

Charles Chen, Ph.D.
Professor
Canada Research Chair
Counselling Psychology Program
Department of Adult Education
and Counselling Psychology
OISE, University of Toronto
Tel.: (416) 978-0718
Email: cp.chen@utoronto.ca

************************************************************************

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.

(Please print: First and Last Names of Research Participant)

______________________________________________________________ Date________________________________________
(Signature of Research Participant)
APPENDIX E: Demographic Information

Demographic Information

1. Gender:

2. Age (in years)

3. Month and Year arriving in Canada:

From – home country ________________________________

Imigrated with: Spouse ___ Family ___

Close contact in Canada prior to immigrating? (state relationship: e.g., friend, cousin, etc.)
________________________________

- Level of Education obtained before coming to Canada (e.g., college education, bachelor's degree, professional certificate, etc.): ________________________________

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

- Degree or type of retraining completed after coming to Canada:

- Institution ________________________________
- Program length ________________________________
- Type of qualification/credential ________________________________

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

7. Please indicate your industry: ________________________________

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

8. Please indicate the job title you are currently holding in Canada:

__________________________________

9. Please specify how long you have been working in this employment: __________

Date of interview: ________________________________
APPENDIX F: Interview Questions

I. Before Coming to Canada
(1) I’d like to ask you about your education experience.

a) What was the name of your degree?
b) How many years was your degree?
c) Was there a practical component to your degree?
d) Was there a registration component to your profession?

(2) I’m going to ask you some questions about your life and work experiences before coming to Canada.

a) What was your job like before you came to Canada?
b) How satisfied were you with your career prior to coming to Canada?
c) Things you liked and didn’t like?
d) How central was your career to your sense of self?
e) Did you find your job/career meaningful? Did you find you work fulfilling?

(3) Why did you want to come to Canada, and how did you make this decision to come?

--Reason(s), and main purpose.
--Events and experiences and information that triggered your decision

(4) (If not answered already) Was employment and work-life involved in your decision of immigration? (and how) What were your expectations for employment in Canada? (if not already answered) How confident did you feel about finding work in your profession?

Did you do any preparation for your qualifications to be transferable to Canada before coming to Canada?--(If not already answered) Can you tell me about your preparation and planning for employment in Canada?

(5) How much control did you feel you would have in Canada over employment decisions?

(6) Did you anticipate or plan on having to do retraining once you arrived in Canada?

(7) If yes, did you do any planning for your retraining prior to coming to Canada? What planning did you do?

(8) What were your expectations of the retraining process? What did you think the experience would be like?

II. After Coming to Canada: Initial General Experience

(9) How did you feel when you initially came to Canada? (Were things different than your expectations/what you expected?)

(10) What were the most significant changes and difficulties you experienced when you first came
to Canada?
a) How did you cope with the changes and difficulties in life?
b) What was most helpful, least helpful for coping with these changes?
c) How did these experiences impact your well-being? (mental and physical health), and the well-being of your family?

(11) How did your ability to cope with these changes impact your self-esteem and confidence levels?

(12) Did you search for help or resources? If so, what were they?

(13) Having faced these difficulties/changes, did you develop a plan of action for your career development? Did that include plans for retraining?

**III. Ongoing Vocational Adjustment and Transition in Canada**

(14) How important was it for you to find a job when you first came to Canada? Which kind of jobs did you intend to find to get your work-life restarted in Canada?

(15) (If not already answered, Cover all of these points) What were the major factors you had to consider when you were trying to find employment in Canada?
--Concerns for financial survival.
--Gain Canadian experience.
--Some relevancy to previous educational and professional background experience.

(16) What did you do to try to get a job that is related to your previous vocational and/or professional background experience from your home country? (Use discretion).

(17) Could you tell me briefly in sequential order the main jobs you have held since coming to this country, and your experiences with these jobs?

(18) Was there a period of time during which you were unemployed after coming to Canada? For how long? How did this affect you?

(19) How difficult or easy was your original job search? What factors made the search easier and/or more difficult?

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

(21) What were some of the supports you found in your job search in Canada? Could you give me some specific examples?

(22) In your job-search in Canada, how useful was your work experience from your home country?
(23) Were your qualifications and training from your home country useful in getting work?

(24) How long after you came to Canada did you decide to pursue retraining/ further education? What led to that decision? What factors influenced this decision? Did anyone influence your decision?

(25) What had you hoped your retraining or education in Canada would lead to?

(26) How did you plan for your retraining? Did you encounter any barriers in this process?

(27) What actions did you take to make your retraining experience possible? -- What resources did you seek out? Did anyone help you?

(28) (If not already answered) How did you find out about available retraining opportunities? (career centre, internet, social network, job etc...)

(29) What form of retraining or professional training did you do once you arrived in Canada? -- Did you try to regain your pre-Canada professional qualification/designation?

(30) In what field was your retraining? How did you choose the program/field? --Why did you stay in the same field? OR Why did you change fields? -- If you changed fields, how did you come to the decision to change?

(31) How did you find this new "learning" experience in Canada? Did you have to change your "learning style"? In what ways?

(32) Could you describe your general impression and feeling about this training experience? --Things you enjoyed the most. --Things you enjoyed the least.

(33) How did the retraining compare to your original training back home?

(34) Did the retraining experience differ from what you expected it would be like?

(35) If different how did it affect you? How did you cope?

(36) (If not already touched on) Were there any unexpected or chance events that occurred prior to, during, and after your retraining? -- Any unexpected events that occurred that led you to take the training program? -- Any unexpected learning experiences? -- Any unexpected benefits or costs from retraining?

(37) How much control (or lack of control) did you feel you had in terms of your retraining experience? (ref for interviewer e.g. choice of institute, choice of certificate, ability to re-accredit in your old field vs. being forced to retrain for something completely new, limitations of funding sources or finances for training, etc...).

a) What led to this feeling and what did you do in response to it?

(38) Thinking about your pre-Canada skills and abilities, how did you think you would perform in
the retraining? (interviewer: thinking about self-efficacy)

(39) How did you feel about having to take this retraining? (e.g. resentment for the necessity of retraining vs. framing it as a new opportunity, positive chance for growth vs. feeling lucky that retraining was a possibility...)-interviewer give both sides of possibility.

(40) What were some sources of support for you during your retraining experience? (e.g. family, classmates, mentors, friends, etc...)

(41) What was the role of your interests or hobbies in coping with your retraining experience? How do these activities help you cope? (e.g. losing yourself, engaging)

(42) Were you employed during your retraining experience? Which role? What was it like having to balance both? Do you feel it impacted your retraining?

IV. Results of Post-Retraing

(43) How important and useful was your Canadian retraining experience to your employment opportunities in this country?
--Leading to employment that was similar or close to your background experience.
--Leading to new vocational choice and opportunity.
--Leading to no beneficial outcome for employment.

(44) What is your understanding of why it became necessary for you to pursue retraining in Canada?

(45) (For those of you who re-trained in your original career), do you agree that the retraining was necessary for you to be competent in your profession after arriving here in Canada?

(46) How did you feel about your skills and abilities after the training program? (Did you feel better or discouraged about yourself, the same?)

(47) How did the process of retraining affect (or not affect) your sense of "career identity"? (Sense of yourself or experience of yourself as ___profession)
  a) Did your sense of identity evolve during your retraining experience (identity at the beginning vs. middle vs. end)?
  b) What impact does this experience have on your perception of self-worthiness as a new Canadian?
  c) Did you find the re-training process meaningful and/or fulfilling?

(48) Has your career taken on a different role in your life as a result of your retraining experience?
-- Has your career identity changed as a result of your retraining experience?

(49) During the retraining, what did you discover about yourself? (Prompt: Self-discovery and meaning on a personal career-related level)

(50) Did your retraining lead you to be more encouraged or discouraged to pursue your desired
career? How come?

(51) How did the retraining program impact the factors that motivate you within your career? Did your career-related values change? (e.g. enjoyment of work and interest in professional activities vs. importance of prestige, salary, promotion) If so, how so?

(52) Is there anything else that you feel you gained or lost through retraining?

(53) What were some of the main lessons you learned from your retraining experience in Canada?

(54) Was the retraining what you expected it to be? If not, how did it differ? What issues did this raise? How did you feel about those issues? What did you do about those issues?

(55) How did any difference in expectations versus the reality of your retraining affect your sense of identity or value as a person, your confidence levels, and feelings in terms of your career?

(56) What were the major compromises you made when approaching retraining opportunities in Canada? How did you decide what to do when you had to make a compromise in your retraining? (Joint action - family, mentor, community)

(57) How did you feel when you had to make a compromise for your retraining choice?

(58) In general, how has your retraining impacted your experience as a new worker in Canada?

(59) How important were your own actions in setting up and completing your retraining?

(60) After your retraining, what did you do to build your career in Canada? (Steps toward current employment… see next section)

V. Current Employment

(61) Could you tell me about the circumstances that led you to your present work life? --The nature of your employment.

(62) How do you feel about your current job? Could you tell me the things you like and/or dislike about your current employment?

(63) How does the employment you hold now compare to the employment you held prior to moving to Canada?

(64) How important is your vocational life in your total new life in Canada? How does your work life affect your personal and family life here?

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

   Do you find your work meaningful and/or fulfilling?

(66) Do you feel that some of your qualifications (e.g., hard and soft skills) or strengths are not being used in your work-life? For example, do you have skills that are not used in your job?
What needs to change for your skills to be better utilized? (e.g. actions you can take, actions your employer or the system can take)

(67) Overall, what factors have been the most influential in helping you to succeed in your career development within Canada? What factors have made your career life difficult?

(68) Have any factors challenged your beliefs that you could succeed in your career/work-life?

(69) How satisfied do you feel about your career/work-life experience in Canada?

(70) Consider your life as it has turned out until now, how much of an element of choice has there been? For example, is the job you do a chosen vocation or more or less the result of a series of chance events? Are there any aspects of your life that are the result of a considered choice?

(71) What has the role of chance been in your life and career in Canada? What did you do in response to chance events?
  a) How do you feel about the chance events in your life?

(72) What are some of your main concerns and needs 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?

(73) Do you intend or expect to pursue any additional retraining in the future? Why or why not? What type?

(74) What will you intend to do to improve the quality of your work-life and to enhance your career development in Canada?

(75) Anticipate your vocational direction 5 years from now.
  a) How have your career priorities changed?

(76) What are some of the most important career-related lessons you learned and looking back, is there anything that you would have done differently?

(77) Any final comments and/or suggestions you want to make?
APPENDIX G: Demographic Tables

Table 1

*Country of Origin*

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Table 2

*Education Earned*

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