

THE EXPERIENCES OF MAINLAND CHINESE IMMIGRANT PROFESSIONALS WHO
BELIEVE THEY HAVE MADE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION: STRATEGIES THAT
HELP OR HINDER

by

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Abstract

Existing literature details the unemployment or underemployment situation of immigrant professionals in Canada. Very few studies describe or explain how, in spite of the barriers and challenges, some immigrant professionals handle their transitions well. The purpose of this study was to explore the first-hand experiences of Mainland Chinese immigrant professionals who believe they have made a successful transition. The study asks the questions: What helped or hindered immigrant professionals to successfully deal with changes that affect their work? What would have been more helpful to deal with changes? Eleven immigrant professionals from Mainland China volunteered to participate in the study. Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) was used to elicit helping and hindering critical incidents and wish list items. Data was primarily analyzed using CIT methodology (Flanagan, 1954). The study elicited seven helping, hindering and wish list categories: (1) Personality/Traits/Attitude; (2) Support from Family/Friends; (3) Taking Actions; (4) Education/Credential/Work Experience; (5) Government/Community/Professional Organization Resources; (6) Work Environment; (7) Self-care.

The results of the study highlight the structural and personal barriers faced by the immigrant professionals, which reaffirmed the findings in the existing literature. The study also identifies various strategies used by immigrant professionals to do well. Specifically, personal attitude, being prepared and networking were among the most cited helping strategies. Although the majority of the immigrant professionals in the study experienced negative emotions with the transition from one country to another, some appeared not affected by this process. Also included in the study are practical implications of the study results and future research.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Setting the Context.....	1
Study Objectives	4
Rationale for the Study	5
Overview of the Thesis	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	10
Social/Economic Significance of Immigrant Professionals.....	10
Demographics and Skilled Labour Shortage	10
Brain Drain – Brain Gain.....	12
Remain Competitive in the Global Knowledge-based Economy	12
Immigration of the Skilled Immigrants	13
Evolution of Chinese Immigration	15
Characteristics of Current Immigrant Professionals.....	16
Current Situation of Immigrant Professionals from Mainland China.....	18
Country Suffers Economically	19
In Worse Economic Situations Compared to Their Counterparts	20
Downward Job Mobility	21
Psychological Suffering.....	23
Barriers Faced by the Immigrant Professionals	24
Structural Barriers.....	25
Ill-informed Before or After Landing in Canada.....	26
Lack of Recognition of Credentials	27
Unequal Opportunity/Racism	28
Individual Barriers	29
Lack of Proficiency in English	30
Lack of Canadian Experience.....	31
Chinese Cultural Influence	32
Adaptive Strategies Employed by the Immigrant Professionals	33
Theoretical Frameworks	34
Economy Theory	35
Human Capital Theory	35
Some New Ideas of Human Capital Theory	37
Institutional Theory	38
Positive Psychology Theory	40
Transition Model	41
Chaos and Positive Uncertainty.....	43

Chapter 3: Methodology	45
History of Critical Incident Technique	47
Data Collection Procedures.....	48
Data Analysis	53
Criteria for Trustworthiness	55
Chapter 4: Results	60
Contextual Components Results.....	60
What Does ‘Doing Well’ Mean to You?	60
What Are the Changes That Have Affected Your Work Life?	64
How Have These Changes Impacted Your Work Life?	68
Critical Incident Results.....	71
Category 1: Personality/Traits/Attitude	74
Category 2: Support from Family/Friends.....	75
Category 3: Taking Actions	77
Category 4: Education/Credential/Work Experience.....	79
Category 5: Government/Community/Professional Organization Resources	82
Category 6: Work Environment	83
Category 7: Self-care	85
Chapter 5: Discussion	87
Comparison with Literature	87
Practical Counselling Implications	98
Future Research.....	101
Limitations	103
Conclusion	104
References	107
Appendices.....	117
Appendix A: Recruitment Ad	117
Appendix B: Recruitment Poster	118
Appendix C: Screening Interview Questions.....	119
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form	120
Appendix E: Interview Guide	122
Appendix F: Certificate of Approval	125

List of Tables

Table 1: Demographics	50
Table 2: Themes from the Question: “What Does Doing Well Mean to You?”	61
Table 3: Summary of Changes Experienced.....	65
Table 4: Impacts on Work.....	69
Table 5: Critical Incident and Wish List Categories.....	73

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Setting the Context

The Canadian economy is facing skill shortages. Demographic and other factors mean that these shortages are likely to increase and may constrain economic prosperity (Li, 2000; Salaff & Greve, 2003). The need for skilled immigrants is essential for Canada's competitive position in the global economy (Blair, 2005). Further, as a result of globalization, highly educated Canadian professionals continue to emigrate to the US or other countries for better economic opportunities. The annual emigration of Canadian professionals to the US from 1991 to 1999 ranged from 16,000 to 35,000 per year (Zhao, Drew & Murray, 2000). Consequently, as a counter-measure, Canada has hoped to attract skilled professionals from other countries to realize brain-gain. Foreign-trained professionals are seen as assets to the Canadian economy, as they come with post-secondary education and extensive work experience (Avery, 1995). Canada will benefit from utilizing these human resources because immigrants bring the skills and innovative ideas that help to fuel economic growth and productivity.

However, Salaff, Greve and Xu (2002) stated that Canada's "manpower programs lack mechanisms to integrate professional and technical employees into good jobs" (p.3). Despite strong educational and professional qualifications and a relatively welcoming Canadian immigration policy, studies demonstrate that many immigrant professionals suffer unemployment or underemployment after landing in Canada (Basran & Zong, 1998; Bauder, 2003; Boyd, 1985; Boyd, 1992; Brouwer, 1999; Calleja & Alnwick, 2000; Depass, 1989; Mata, 1999; McDade, 1988; Wu, 2001; Zhu, 2005; Zong, 2004). They have examined immigrant professionals' adjustment and transition, mostly focusing on the barriers and

challenges to integration and re-entering their professional fields. These barriers include both individual barriers, such as poor English skills or lack of Canadian work experience, and structural barriers, such as non-recognition of foreign professional experience, devaluation of foreign-earned credentials and subtle discrimination existing in the Canadian work place. In response to Kaufman's (2000) call for more research on skilled immigrant women, several researchers studied what happened to these professional women after immigration and the types of barriers and challenges they faced during integration to Canada (Man, 2004; Salaff & Greve, 2003; Shan, 2005; Shih, 2005).

Brouwer (1999) identified the difficulty for immigrant professionals of gaining recognition of foreign academic credentials from Canadian academic institutions, occupational regulatory bodies and prospective employers. The evaluators, he pointed out, are not knowledgeable enough about the curriculum, content or grading systems of foreign institutions to make rational and informed assessments. Mata (1999) described the problem in terms of the system fragmentation. There is no national body responsible for the foreign credential recognition, and educational and occupational standards vary by province, which obstructs the mobility of immigrant professionals. Basran and Zong (1998) expressed concern with devaluation of the foreign credentials and its impact on foreign-educated immigrant professionals. Richmond (1984) concluded, after reviewing 25 empirical studies of immigrant economic integration from 1969 to 1981, that immigrant professionals from third world countries experience additional hardships because of prejudice and discrimination. Blair (2005) argues that Canada's economic growth and stability depends greatly on its ability to maximize skilled immigrants' abilities effectively and in the shortest possible time.

In recognition of the fact that Mainland China has become the largest source country of immigration since 1998 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007), there is a small but growing body of research on immigrant professionals from Mainland China (Basran & Zong, 1998; Li, 1999; Liu, 1995; Salaff, et al., 2002; Salaff & Greve, 2003a; 2003b; 2005; Wu, 2001; Zong, 2004; Zhu, 2005). This body of research has emphasized the incongruity between Chinese immigrant professionals' educational and professional levels and their current employment in Canada. In summary, most of the research focuses on three barriers faced by the immigrant professionals from Mainland China: non-recognition of credentials, lack of Canadian experience and lack of competency in the English language. Salaff and Greve (2005), along with other scholars, have conducted a decade-long, several-stage investigation on transnational Chinese immigration. They have written a series of articles after interviewing over 50 Chinese immigrant couples, exploring issues of underemployment of Chinese immigrant professionals, as well as downward career mobility, especially for women. They also attempt to apply human capital theory and institutional theory to account for this new phenomenon. Other researchers further argue that there is inequality and discrimination toward the "visible minority" in terms of career-related issues, such as initially securing a job or later receiving advancement and promotions in the work place (Wu, 2001; Zong, 2004). Still others postulate that traditional Chinese culture, in which these immigrant professionals were raised, may serve as an impediment to their efforts to integrate into Canadian society (Zhang, 1995).

Included in this body of research is a number of master or PhD theses dedicated to the subject of Mainland Chinese immigrant professionals conducted by Chinese scholars (Bai, 2007; Cao, 1995; Li, 1999; Liu, 1995; Shan, 2005; Wang, 2006; Wu, 2001; Zhu, 2005). The

unique aspects of these researchers are: (1) they are immigrant professionals themselves, coming from Mainland China; (2) they have been in Canada for a few years, and have gone through many situations similar to the people they are studying, therefore they can relate in many ways; and (3) they also came to Canada not many years ago; they brought with them a wealth of knowledge of the current Chinese cultural and economic situations. Different from other researchers in this area, they not only focused on barriers faced by this population, but also made contributions to current literature about immigrant professionals. They depict how these immigrant professionals deal with barriers and strive for a successful economic integration in Canada through various strategies in order to utilize their potentials and realize their self-worth as professionals.

Indeed, despite the great preponderance of literature focusing on the problems associated with adjustment and job search of immigrant professionals, there are some who remain positive and seem to do well with the changes that affect their work when moving to a new country. These immigrant professionals appear to stay intact after relocating to a new country, and some report that they tend to use positive ways of coping with relocation, such as tension reduction and information seeking (Zheng & Berry, 1991). Still others have successfully found their ideal jobs, becoming an engineer for example, and made contributions to their community as well as the Canadian economy (Bai, 2007). But it is unfortunate there is not more literature recounting the success stories.

Study Objectives

The study aimed to understand the lived experiences of immigrant professionals from Mainland China who believe that they have done well with changes and seem to be on a path

to success. It drew upon in-depth interviews with immigrant professionals from Mainland China of various ages and professions. Also of interest are the naturally occurring strategies they use to cope with change.

The research questions for this study were: What is the experience of Chinese immigrant professionals who believe that they have made a successful transition? What are the strategies that helped or hindered? Other questions of interest included: Have they always handled changes well? What would have been helpful to do well with the changes?

Rationale for the Study

Many scholars agree that immigrant professionals face post-migration barriers, both individual and structural, after coming to Canada. Despite the urgent need to help them succeed professionally and socially, few studies have explored the untold stories of immigrant professionals from Mainland China who have transitioned from highly successful careers in China to new successes in Canada. This is a gap in the literature that this study will attempt to address.

In addition, the rationale behind studying this group of immigrant professionals who self identified as doing well with changes affecting their life is also grounded in the spirit of positive psychology. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) call for studies focusing on human strength rather than focus on suffering and adversity. To be successful economically and socially, Canada needs a hard-working, adaptive, resilient and flexible workforce. Immigrant professionals from Mainland China constitute a large percentage of new immigrants each year and may be expected to contribute significantly. Hence, it is important

to focus more specifically on this group and to document the range of ways in which they have been able to thrive in a new country. Of particular interest are the coping factors and strategies that helped them succeed.

A rather unique aspect of this study is its focus, through interviews, on immigrant professionals from Mainland China who entered Canada only a couple of years ago. China is undergoing tremendous changes politically and economically, which is inevitably absorbed by, and reflected through, the immigrants. The migration experience and adaptive strategies adopted by recent immigrant professionals from Mainland China are distinctly different from those emigrating from European countries. Further, the migration and employment experiences of these immigrant professionals may parallel those of earlier generations of Chinese immigrants to a certain extent, but because their experience is further molded by their unique cultural, educational and economic background as well as by their reasons for migration, the life courses of these immigrant professionals are often very different from that of earlier Chinese settlers (Salaff et al., 2002; Liu, 1995). For instance, many immigrant professionals applied for immigration in 1989 for political reasons because of the Tiananmen-square incident (Liu, 1995). However, more recent immigrant professionals came for different purposes, primarily for career advancement and a better quality of life. It may well be potentially counterproductive and ineffective for counselling professionals to apply the frame of reference of European immigrants or even earlier Chinese immigrants to the current immigrant professionals without acknowledging the different characteristics of current immigrant professionals' educational and professional backgrounds. This study attempts to assist counselling professionals in gaining current knowledge of factors that

affect immigrant professionals from Mainland China from their own perspectives to deal with changes that affect their work.

It is hoped that the information gathered will be important in contributing to the development of a proactive, preventive and developmental approach to assist new immigrant professionals in addressing the many challenges that accompany cultural dislocation. Furthermore, counselors will benefit from new information about the ways these new immigrants deal with change and can then apply this knowledge to their counseling interventions when dealing with this population. Hopefully this exploratory research will generate more studies in this area and contribute to easing immigrant professionals' integration into the Canadian economy and becoming contributing members. Additionally, more counseling programs for immigrant professionals could be conceived and executed as a consequence of research that focuses on identifying strategies that helped them to do well with change. Finally, it could be helpful for immigrant professionals who anticipate coming to Canada or who just have landed in Canada, to have positive adjustment stories from which they can learn.

Besides a scholarly interest, the researcher's personal and professional experiences give her a unique perspective and served as the direct impetus for this investigation. First, as an immigrant professional, after a period of initial underemployment and employment dislocation, she finally was able to begin her journey of re-establishing herself as a professional. Second, her perspective as an immigration consultant of a large Canadian immigration consulting company in China for 5 years before landing in Canada permitted her to witness how immigrant professionals were looking forward to starting a new life but

poorly informed prior coming to Canada. Mata (1999) points out those overseas immigration offices are unable to provide specific information on certification requirements for the various professions and trades.

Third, while working as a job club facilitator helping immigrant professionals locating employment at SUCCESS, a local organization that facilitates immigrants' integration into Canadian labor market and society, the researcher also observed first-hand their struggles and frustrations when faced with systemic barriers. Last but not least, she has been involved in the Canadian Immigration Integration Program (CIIP) at Vancouver Community College (VCC). With funding from Human Resources and Social Development Canada and in partnership with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the goal of CIIP is to contribute to more successful labor market integration outcomes for skilled workers immigrating to Canada. Through this program, the researcher met with many immigrant professionals from Mainland China and these connections further motivated her to conduct the current study.

Overview of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter One, an overview, sets out the research context, research questions and the rationale of the study. Chapter Two is an extensive review of existing literature. It starts with social and economic significance of immigrant professionals, and then gives a brief history of Chinese immigration to Canada. The current situation of the immigrant professionals and barriers they encountered are reviewed. This chapter concludes with a review of conceptual frameworks.

Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology. This includes the history of Critical Incident Technique, data analysis procedures, data analysis and trustworthiness of the data. Participants' background information is provided. The findings of this study are presented in Chapter Four. It starts with the contextual component results followed by the critical incidents results. The final chapter, Chapter Five, is the conclusion of the study. It includes a comparison of the findings with the literature, practical implications, limitations and future research as well as final summarizing remarks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to provide a broad picture of immigrant professionals' experience, the first part of the literature review addresses the social and economic significance of immigrant professionals, followed by a brief history of Chinese immigration to Canada. With this general understanding as a foundation, the review then transitions to the experience of Chinese immigrant professionals in Canada, including their current situation and its causes. Next, theoretical frameworks will be presented.

In the literature review, the researcher used several terms interchangeably to locate articles about immigrant professionals, such as skilled workers, foreign-trained professionals, internationally trained professionals or highly educated immigrants. Basically, immigrant professionals refer to those who have completed their post-secondary academic training and gained professional work experience outside of Canada.

Social and Economic Significance of the Immigrant Professionals

Demographics and Skilled Labor Shortage

A significant factor shaping current and future labor market needs are demographic realities. In Canada, the average age of the workforce and the overall aging is well reflected in the high attrition rate (Alboim, 2002). In other words, Canada is facing old age and a low birth rate, which creates a high dependency ratio and low population growth (Li, 1996; Salaff & Greve, 2003; Wu, 2001).

It is well recognized that the skilled workers shortage is a serious deterrent to the growth of industries and Canadian global economic competitiveness. Based on a recent

survey of small and medium-sized enterprises by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, two-thirds of the firms who hired new employees last year declared that the skilled labor shortage hampers their long term growth. This finding was consistent across the provinces, industries and all types of firms. Similarly, within the manufacturing and exporting sector, the shortage of skilled labor has been cited as a significant barrier to expansion (Alboim, 2002).

In the new knowledge-based economy, both the majority of new jobs being created and employment opportunities through labor force attrition require a high level of skills and knowledge. However, the training systems in Canada are not producing the numbers of skilled workers needed for the labor force (Alboim, 2002; Bai, 2007; Basarn & Zong, 1998). It is estimated that the labor shortage will intensify and spread widely in the Canadian labour market and that, by the year 2011, 100 percent of Canada's net labor force growth will depend on immigration (Bloom & Grant, 2001).

Blair (2005) posits that the country will depend on continued immigration to support the shrinking population, to grow the labor force, and to maintain economic sustainability. Consequently, policy-makers look increasingly to immigration to enhance the resource base for the Canadian labor force as well as overall population growth. And immigrant professionals are anticipated to fill this labor market gap and are expected to contribute to the Canadian economy immediately after landing with their internationally earned academic credentials and professional experience.

Brain Drain - Brain Gain

On the one hand, Canada is experiencing a skills shortage and lack of workers. On the other, some of the highly educated professionals in Canada are emigrating to the US or other countries for better economic rewards or opportunities. Between 1991 and 1999, about 16,000 to 35,000 Canadian professionals emigrated to the US each year (Wu, 2001; Zhao, et al., 2000).

Canadian professionals moving to the US can be traced to the 1950s. Avery (1995) stated that, between 1950 and 1960, 10 percent of Canadian professionals, most of these newly graduated nurses, engineers, architects, physicians and surgeons, moved south. In fact, about 27 percent of all immigrant professionals moving to the US during that time came from Canada.

Consequently, Canada hoped to attract skilled immigrant professionals from other countries through immigration policies to realize brain-gain. Internationally trained professionals are perceived as assets to the Canadian economy, since they bring post-secondary educations and extensive professional work experience (Avery, 1995).

Remain Competitive in the Global Knowledge-based Economy

With the introduction of technological and economic development, the world has transformed into a global village during the 20th century (Zhu, 2005). Easy access to travel and information hastened the steps of globalization. As a result, talented immigrants who have educational backgrounds and professional experiences can move around searching for better opportunities and life style.

Thus, in this age of globalization and knowledge-based economies, only those countries which can attract high-quality talents will survive and prosper. The knowledge-based economy means an ever-increasing demand for a well-educated and skilled work force in all parts of the economy and in all regions of the country. Therefore, Canada intends to absorb and retain intellectuals and skilled workers to gain its competitive edge and build sustainability through its selection of immigrant professionals with considerable education and years of professional experience (Blair, 2005).

Some scholars (Basran & Zong, 1998; Blair, 2005) also note that the reason to look outside for talent is because the Canadian population cannot supply the skilled labor needed by the knowledge-based economy. Furthermore, Canadian educational institutions do not have time to adapt to the changing needs of information technology and related industries in the new era of globalization, trade alliances and technological expansion. There are shortages in areas such as information technology, medicine, and computer science.

Reitz (2001) believed that in this context of the emerging knowledge economy, Canada continues to be committed to a policy of mass immigration. Bringing in immigrant professionals has been therefore regarded as instrumental in coping with such socioeconomic challenges as low birth rate, talent flowing to the US and the increasing demand for skilled and knowledgeable workers in many industries.

Immigration of Skilled Immigrants

According to Alboim (2002), immigration in Canadian history has always been employed as an instrument to tackle economic problems and played a key role in the growth of the Canadian labor force. Reitz (2005) further details that unskilled laborers were brought

from other countries when agriculture was dominant. Responding to Canadian industrialization, immigrants with skills in manufacturing and construction were sought after. As the Canadian economy has shifted into a knowledge-based economy, immigration policies have begun to favor immigrant professionals, which follows historical government policies in response to economic development.

Today, skilled workers are the largest single group among all the classes of immigrants (skilled worker, business, family and refugee). They make up 70 percent of the current immigrant population. They are selected because of their education and professional experience, and both immigrants themselves and Canada as a country expect them to contribute to the economy soon after arriving in Canada (Alboim, 2002; Brouwer, 1999).

To be more specific, in order to qualify to immigrate to Canada under the skilled worker category, the candidates are assessed for their credentials in a certain field, work experience, and level of training and language capacities. Only after being granted points in these areas and exceeding a minimum number of points do candidates qualify for immigrant visas. This point system, based on the occupational demand model, was established in 1967. At the time of application, Citizenship and Immigration Canada will assess the relative value of their skills and grant them points accordingly. In other words, those applicants with skills and experience in high demand areas will be given many more points than those whose skills are already in high supply (Chan, 2004; Wang, 2006). The current passing mark to come to Canada is 67 out of 100 points (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010).

The changes of the point system in immigration laws have marked a shift in the countries of origin of recent immigrants, who now are more likely to be from Asian rather

than European countries. Since 1998, Mainland China has contributed the largest number of skilled immigrants to Canada. In 2006, 33,080 immigrants came from Mainland China, or 13 percent of the total immigrants that year (Facts and Figures 2006, Immigration Overview: Permanent and Temporary Residents, Citizenship and Immigration Canada).

Evolution of Chinese Immigration

Mainland Chinese immigrant professionals refers to those who received their university education and professional training in China, entered Canada as an immigrant under the skilled worker category, and are residents in Canada at the time of the current study. In order to understand the distinctive characteristics of recent Chinese immigrant professionals, and new challenges and opportunities they face, a brief review of Chinese immigration to Canada is essential.

In the 1800s, it was gold that first lured Chinese immigrants to settle in North America, initially in California and later in British Columbia (Chui, Tran & Flanders, 2005). The second wave of Chinese immigration was inspired by Canadian Pacific Railway construction (Liu, 1995). When gold ran out and later the railway project was completed, they moved on to other occupations in domestic services, agriculture or small businesses run by Chinese merchants. In the beginning, these immigrants were often male and of rural origin (Zhu, 2007). At that time, China was economically poor and politically weak, the immigrants came to North America to avoid poverty and starvation, looking for a place for economic subsistence and survival (Chui, et al., 2005).

Several factors have contributed to the large immigration flow from Mainland China to Canada such as Deng Xiaoping's 1978 reforms and open-door policy in China,

globalization and technological expansion, Canada's post-1967 new point system immigration policy, as well as the impact of the students' protests at Tiananmen Square in 1989 (Wu, 2001).

In truth, the huge increase in Chinese immigration flow to Canada started with the events of 1989. On 15 April, 1989, students from all over China organized a huge demonstration to protest against widespread government corruption and for freedom of speech at Tiananmen-Square in Beijing. In response to this, Canada issued a special policy (OM-IS-399) which granted many scholars and students from China the right to apply for permanent residence in Canada. This marked the beginning of major Chinese Mainland immigration to Canada (Liu, 1995).

Since the 1980s many western companies have made investments in China, opened branch offices or cooperated with Chinese state-run companies. Not only did they bring with them economic capital, they also brought western cultural influence. Additionally, the academic interchange between China and the West was encouraged by the government; therefore, many professors, scholars, and students had opportunities to go abroad, learn new ideas, and take them back to China. The post -1990 period has witnessed thousands of Chinese students and scholars coming to Canada and other Western countries to seek educational and career opportunities (Salaff, et al., 2002; Wu, 2001).

Characteristics of Current Immigrant Professionals

After a short review of the history of Chinese immigration, it is not difficult to conclude that current immigrant professionals from Mainland China are distinctly different from their predecessors. Before coming to Canada, they held elite jobs and enjoyed

successful careers and had high social status in China. In other words, they were held in high esteem in the society as well as in their extended families (Bai, 2007; Mak, 1991; Salaff & Greve, 2003; Zhu, 2005).

Current immigrant professionals consider moving to Canada as a means to advance in their professions. They have, therefore, perceived their lives in Canada differently compared to earlier generations of Chinese immigrants. With the knowledge and skills learned at home, they anticipate being able to transfer skills and contribute to the economy of the host country, expecting their professional experience and education will fit into the structure in Canada (Bai, 2007; Salaff, et al., 2002). They did not come to Canada to escape starvation, disease, or wars; nor were higher wages or better opportunities the sole reasons why they left their home country. They not only expect to have a better life than mere survival, but also aim to boost their careers in their new country. In fact, many wish to explore their own values, pursue self-realization and contribute to the host country (Zhu, 2005).

One thing worth mentioning is that, besides better education and extensive professional experience, many new immigrant professionals have joint venture experience in China. After 1980, China opened the door to western companies in the form of joint venture corporations, or shared investment by the state and foreign companies. Foreign companies afforded immigrant professionals an opportunity to learn performance-based management, as well as the opportunity to go abroad for training or working. This broadened experience in participating in the global economy has paved the way for their entry into professional jobs in Canada (Salaff & Greve, 2003; 2005). In their studies, 20 of 28 participants who have gained professional or semi-professional status in Canada had joint venture or foreign company experience.

According to Wang and Lo (2005), apart from having a much more advanced education, recent Chinese immigrants are also much younger, with nearly half in the group of age 25-44, the most productive years in a person's life. With all these changes, Canada is gaining high quality workers by admitting Chinese immigrants into the country.

Current Situation of Immigrant Professionals from Mainland China

As developed countries are competing for highly educated immigrants to increase work force skills and population, the experience of those highly educated immigrants has received a lot of attention in the last decade. Their situation is not only a personal matter but also has social significance. Only after being employed in jobs relevant to their training and education can they feel a sense of accomplishment and reward for their migration, and only when Canadian society benefits from their contributions can the immigration policy be regarded as successful (Reitz, 2005).

When immigrant professionals from Mainland China are granted a visa to come to Canada, they are not aware there may not be an integrated plan in place to assist them with their transition so that they can utilize their skills and experience, reach their potential and contribute to the economy of the new country (Bai, 2007). In fact, the picture of the current situation of immigrant professionals is far from a rosy one. Difficulties that these immigrant professionals encounter in entering their field of expertise, in entering Canadian labor market and in entering the Canadian society are all well documented (Alboim, 2002; Brouwer, 1999).

A thorough review of the literature confirms the dismal picture of underemployment and unemployment that many immigrant professionals are suffering in the Canadian labor

market. Many studies show that immigrant professionals have very low rates of success, ranging from 5 percent to 24 percent, in locating jobs relevant to their educational and professional background (Basran & Zong, 1998; Calleja & Alnwick, 2000; Fernando & Prasad, 1986). The reasons will be discussed in detail in the Barriers section.

Country Suffers Economically

As mentioned in the previous chapter, when Canada is experiencing a skills shortage and low fertility rate, skilled immigrants with their education and professional skills acquired before coming to Canada are expected to contribute to the economy almost immediately after they land. However, after immigrant professionals enter Canada, the institutional means for assessing their credentials and professional experience is not very effective (Reitz, 2005). Reitz further points out that the advanced skills and professional experiences of these immigrants are underestimated and even wasted in the Canadian labor market.

Consequently, in terms of the economic loss to Canada, there are two estimates of the economic impact of immigrant skills under-utilization (Reitz, 2001a; Watt & Bloom, 2001). Based on quite different methodologies, both figures are in the range of \$2 billion annually. According to both, the economic impact equals the reduced value of the work being done by immigrant professionals when their qualifications and expertise are not recognized in the Canadian labor market. It is therefore not surprising that Reitz (2005) points out that the underlying problem is not the level of skills brought into this country, but rather the degree to which the skills and expertise of these immigrant professionals are effectively employed in Canada.

By the same token, Brouwer (1999) posits that Canada receives a large bonus to its economy of so many educated and fully qualified skilled workers. If immigrant professionals can realize their full potential, Canada has much to gain. Conversely, Canada has a lot to lose if it fails to do so. In order to improve its return on its investment in immigration, Canada should help skilled immigrants deal with their real needs and help solve the practical problems of integrating into the Canadian labor market (Reitz, 2005).

In Worse Economic Situations Compared to Their Counterparts

When some researchers looked at the occupational attainment between Canadian-born and foreign-born workers, their findings showed that the traditional concept of education and professional work experience as important keys to promotion and advancement does not apply to immigrants. They drew the conclusion that Canadian-born workers receive higher returns for their education than those who are foreign-born, as it is difficult for immigrants to transfer their educational skills from one country to another (Badets & Howatson-Leo 1999; Boyd, 1985).

Reitz (2005) also contends the immigrant professionals' highly qualified skills are underestimated and even wasted by the Canadian labor market. Based on Canadian census data, Reitz calculated that immigrants, due to the fact that they were working at occupations below their skill level, earned \$2.4 million less than their native counterparts with comparable skills.

It clearly seems that the economic performance of the immigrant professionals has little to do with their educational background. Based on the data from Statistics Canada, Wang and Lo (2005) found that, despite their generally higher educational background in

comparison to their Canadian-born counterparts, Chinese immigrants earned only half the salary of the general Canadian population.

By looking at LIDS (Landed Immigrant Data System) and tax data of 1980 and 2000, Wang and Lo (2005) obtained shocking findings in terms of the earning discrepancy between recent Chinese immigrants and the general Canadian public. Immigrants have to face tough obstacles to fully transfer their human capital of educational attainment and proficiency in English. These researchers further conclude that it will take 12 or more years of residency in Canada for Chinese immigrants to achieve the same income level as average Canadians. For most immigrant professionals, this transitory period may well seem too long.

Downward Job Mobility

Despite their language ability and high qualifications, many immigrant professionals from Mainland China suffer downward job mobility. Many fail to gain access to their profession and resort to taking professional or occupational jobs not commensurate with their education, training and experience. Such downward mobility of these highly skilled immigrant professionals causes immense social, economic and personal problems. Brower (1999) claims that it is already “a cliché and part of our cultural consciousness” seeing “doctors driving a taxi” and “chemists delivering pizza” (p.3).

Zong (2004) did a study on the employment situation of Mainland Chinese immigrant professionals, based on survey data collected in the cities of Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, Edmonton, Calgary, and Saskatoon. He discovered that 79 percent of 1,150 respondents reported having worked in China as professionals (doctors, engineers, school/university teachers, and other professionals) before immigrating to Canada. However, only 31 percent

said that they worked or had worked as professionals in Canada, 43 percent experienced lower social status in nonprofessional jobs and 22.4 percent had never worked in Canada.

Instead of comparing immigrant professionals from Mainland China with their Canadian counterparts in terms of job attainment, salary, and achievement, Salaff, et al. (2002) took a different approach. They spoke with 32 immigrant professional couples from Mainland China who immigrated to Canada from 1999 to 2001, inquiring about their job search experience. They compared their past and present work status, which they believed gave a much clearer picture of the downward job situation of these immigrant professionals. This also helps to explain what the immigrants went through and how they view their own success. One of the findings: among 32 couples, nearly all (90 percent) were full or semi-professionals in China. One-third attained the same professional levels in Toronto; the rest dropped in professional status. None of them rose higher.

Several scholars observed that some Chinese immigrant women professionals also experienced downward job mobility. In another study using the same data, Salaff and Greve (2003) tried to explore the career-making process of immigrant women professionals from Mainland China. Their qualitative study indicated that many of the immigrant women have experienced the change from accomplished professional careers in their home country to work as housewives in Canada. Man (2004) revealed in her study that, in order to meet the immediate needs of the family, the highly educated and skilled women immigrant professionals are forced to take low-paid and low-status jobs. By the same token, Shan (2005) found the highly educated Chinese immigrant women decided to target clerical bookkeeping/accounting work as an ideal field to enter because it was easier to find such jobs.

Psychological Suffering

When immigrant professionals coming to Canada are unable to match their education and training with an appropriate job, they feel isolated, disempowered and depressed (Maraj, 1996). Unfortunately, the researcher could not find any literature discussing the psychological impacts of underemployment or unemployment specifically focusing on Mainland Chinese immigrant professionals. Most studies focus on their employment situations or the career exploration process. In the following paragraphs, the researcher will discuss two studies showing how immigrant professionals from various countries suffered psychologically. Though not all participants are from Mainland China, at least some are. Therefore, their research should be relevant to the current study.

Maraj (1996) conducted a study demonstrating the psychological impact on immigrant professionals due to the discrepancy between their qualifications and educational backgrounds and their employment situations in Canada. Being a group of successful elites in their home country, they experienced a downward change in their professions, feeling a deep sense of personal failure, frustration and disappointment. They often felt shameful and guilty for not being able to provide the same level of financial stability and social status for their family as they had in their home country. It is disconcerting to them, and many begin to wonder whether immigrating to Canada was the right choice for them. Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness were often found within this group.

Ngo (2001) identified isolation as an all-encompassing barrier for all the participants in her study. They felt they had nowhere to turn for guidance and assistance. The lack of social contacts, friends or any other form of support system deprived them of the capability

to participate fully in Canada. When faced with so many barriers, immigrants experienced frustration. Azuh (1998) reported incidents of emotional trauma caused by employment-related difficulties such as unemployment or underemployment, and the lowering or loss of social status.

Having discussed the current situation of the immigrant professionals in Canada, it is now necessary to examine factors causing their challenges so that a foundation for providing a practical solution may be established. It is necessary to learn: What are the reasons behind this long-term skills underutilization? What are the barriers these highly qualified professional encounter when they are trying to looking for employment in their trained fields?

Barriers Faced by the Immigrant Professionals

There is a large body of literature documenting the barriers faced by immigrant professionals. Basran and Li (1998) pointed out that there are two schools of thought in research and studies trying to account for the occupational disadvantages of immigrant professionals. The first primarily focuses on individual barriers experienced by the immigrant professionals, arguing that immigrant professionals must meet Canadian standards if they want to work in Canada (Basavarajappa & Verma, 1985; Ornstein & Sharma, 1983). The second theme emphasizes structural barriers, suggesting that control of entry to the professions systematically excludes immigrant professionals from their trained areas and thus causes the occupational disadvantages of this population (Beach & Worswick, 1989; Boyd, 1985; McDade, 1988; Trovato & Grindstaff, 1986).

Zong (2004) pointed out that the approach focusing on individual immigrants, although it touches on personal difficulties in terms of occupational attainment of the immigrant professionals, fails to explain how structural factors such as policy, criteria and evaluation of credentials also contribute to these disadvantages. One might tend to blame the immigrant professionals for their own occupational difficulties if individual difficulties were not put into the context of social conditions and the economic environment.

Brouwer (1999) further argued that the personal barriers, as serious as they are, could not be understood without looking into the interests of the broader stakeholders at different levels within the system, such as the interests of the federal or provincial government, occupational regulatory bodies, educational institutions, employers, unions, nongovernmental organizations and, presumably, the public. He concluded that a lack of effort, inconsistency in the system, and competing interests make the problem both persistent and difficult to solve.

Structural Barriers

All appear to agree there is a systemic mechanism that channels these recently immigrated highly skilled people into low-paying jobs (Brouwer, 1999; Callaja & Alnwick, 2000; Mata, 1999). Brouwer (1999) laid out the following major barriers: lack of information specifically compiled for newcomers about accessing certain professions or trades as well as licensing standards and requirements; difficulty in gaining recognition of foreign academic credentials by Canadian academic institutions, occupational regulatory bodies and prospective employers; difficulty in gaining recognition of foreign work experience by occupational regulatory bodies and employers; and lack of access to adequate, occupation-

specific educational and training programs, including professional upgrading and language training and testing. Zong (2004), Richmond (1984) and Bai (2007) also discussed the negative influence of unequal opportunity and racism on the job attainment of immigrant professionals from Mainland China.

Ill-informed Before or After Landing in Canada.

Many immigrant professionals arrive in Canada without an adequate understanding or appreciation of the barriers and challenges they are likely to face. Canadian Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) offices overseas are primarily concerned with attracting desirable immigrants but rarely provide prospective immigrants with an accurate picture of what settlement might involve upon arrival in Canada. Many offices face a huge backlog and shortages of resources and therefore are unable to provide detailed information with regard to designations in the professions or specific certification requirements for the various professions and trades (Mata, 1999).

According to a survey of immigrant professionals conducted in Ontario, only 20 percent of the respondents received a brief introduction on occupational requirements before coming to Canada (Callaja & Alnwick, 2000). Ngo (2001) conducted a grounded theory study exploring professional re-entry of foreign trained professionals by interviewing six immigrant professionals who successfully secured professional employment in Canada. When asked if they obtained any information from Canadian embassies, consulates, immigration offices, information bureaus or anyone they have approached, regarding accreditation in their professions before or after they came to Canada, four of six participants said they received absolutely no information. The study supports the assertion that these

immigrants received little information regarding requirements or procedures to gain accreditation in their profession.

Not surprisingly, apart from the point system itself, and without additional information, immigrant professionals often come to believe that they will be able to utilize and ultimately benefit from the skills and education which originally gained them entry to Canada. They believe that their skills and training are needed in Canada and they can locate jobs soon after coming to this country. There is also a paucity of information about the process of credential recognition and timelines involved in undergoing this process after landing (Brouwer, 1999).

Lack of Recognition of Credentials

Immigrant professionals come with advanced education and skills; however, the literature suggests that their foreign-earned credentials may not be fully recognized by the host country (Basran & Zong 1999; Brouwer, 1999; Salaff, et al, 2002; Salaff & Greve, 2003; Zong 2000). Ironically, immigrant professionals are admitted into Canada because of their paper credentials, but these credentials do not lead to the jobs they seek.

Salaff, et al. (2002) point out that it is the employers who reserve the right to interpret the qualifications of the immigrant professionals. The evaluation includes appropriate schooling and assessment of the professional experience. However, Canadian businesses are not familiar with the foreign credentials, the quality of training, colleges or universities, and other social conditions beside their traditional knowledge (Brouwer, 1999). As a consequence, the employers are more likely to hire people from schools they already know and discount foreign credentials. The immigrant professionals thus were excluded without

even having a chance to successfully persuade an employer that they could perform the work. Ngo (2001) further argues that even credential bureaus and educational institutions are not fully informed about the curriculum, content or grading systems of foreign credentials in order to make rational and informed assessments.

Basran and Zong (1998) explored the issue of devaluation of foreign credentials as experienced by the immigrant professionals. Based on findings among 404 surveyed immigrant professionals, the majority believed the devaluation of their foreign-earned credentials is one of the key factors that prevented them from finding work in their professional occupations as well as prompting downward career mobility. Among them, 79% reported difficulty in getting their credentials recognized in Canada. Almost half of the respondents believe that a foreign education is not equally recognized or compared to Canadian standards by the provincial government agencies, professional organizations and educational institutions.

Zong (2000) conducted a literature review as well as a survey of 722 respondents who identified themselves as foreign-trained immigrant professionals originally from Mainland China whose professional training included medicine, engineering and teaching. His review yielded similar results. Non-recognition or devaluation of foreign credentials was the most important factor contributing to inaccessibility to professional occupations and downward job mobility.

Unequal Opportunity/Racism

Several scholars contend that as a visible minority, non-white foreign-trained professionals have distinct cultural backgrounds and experiences that differ from white

foreign-trained professionals, which puts them at a disadvantage in the Canadian labor market (Bai, 2007; Richmond, 1984; Zong, 2004).

Richmond (1984) believed that visible minority immigrants from developing countries were more vulnerable in the Canadian labor market even though they possessed high levels of education and wide-ranging professional experience. Bai (2007) did a study exploring how Chinese immigrant professionals became engineers in the Greater Vancouver Area. Her findings show that Canadian employers are reluctant to retrain immigrant engineers even though they have foreign-earned credentials and extensive work experience. These immigrants, in their view, lack specific Canadian work experience and qualifications from accredited universities, and they are not familiar with the work culture and language employed in their fields in Canada. The employers claim that to train foreign professionals is time consuming and costly while they would receive little benefit.

In his research, Zong (2000) concludes that 31 to 39 percent of respondents believed that their foreign work experience is not fairly recognized by provincial government agencies, professional organizations, and educational institutions. More than 40 percent of respondents did not believe that their foreign earned educations were fairly recognized. Furthermore, 42 percent of respondents believed that discrimination based on skin color, national or ethnic origin and ability to speak English had influenced the evaluation of their credentials and recognition of their experience.

Individual Barriers

Even though many researchers agree structural barriers play an important role in challenging immigrant professionals in their efforts to integrate into Canadian workforce,

some of the personal barriers have also been widely observed and recorded in the literature. For immigrant professionals from Mainland China, on whom the current study is based, lack of language fluency is the most significant disadvantage in their attempts to find employment commensurate with their educational and professional experience. The last barrier experienced by these immigrants is the influence of their native country's culture.

Lack of Proficiency in English

For immigrant professionals from Mainland China, lack of language competency is a major barrier keeping them from successfully entering the Canadian labor market. According to Zong (2000), for example, in his literature review and survey of 722 respondents who identified themselves as foreign-trained immigrant professionals from Mainland China, linguistic barriers stemming from inadequate command of English is one of the main personal barriers experienced. Some 49.3% of the respondents reported having difficulties in their command of English. Wu (2001) did another study, drawing upon the insights of five participants, to examine factors affecting Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada. She arrived at the conclusion that inadequate command of English was one of the major occupational barriers impeding career development.

There is a strong correlation between high level of competency in English and successful re-entry into the employment market. Upon arriving in Canada, immigrant professionals are offered ESL classes by the Canadian government to improve their English, but they benefit very little from these classes. A Government of Alberta 1992 task force report points out that current English classes offered for the new immigrants are only intended for survival purposes. Foreign-trained professionals have trouble finding training in

English that will enable them to perform in their chosen professions, which requires knowledge of specific technical jargon and technical language competency (Brouwer, 1999).

On the one hand, the classes offered are not sufficient to assist immigrant professionals to look for work. On the other, the standard of English competency is unrealistically high for skilled professionals to retrain and get back into their fields. In British Columbia, for example, the English requirement for short-term career programs at community colleges is to score 26/30 in the speaking part on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), while the admission requirement for this part of TOEFL at universities for undergraduate programs is only 20. With English requirements for training so high, as well as the timelines and cost associated with the training, some immigrant professionals simply give up their pursuit of professional careers and resort to low-paying jobs.

Lack of Canadian Experience

The emphasis on Canadian work experience creates a dilemma for internationally trained professionals who cannot obtain Canadian work experience in their profession when no one will hire them precisely because of their lack of Canadian work experience (Basran & Zong, 1998; Government of Alberta, 1992; Mata, 1999; Ngo, 2001; Zong, 2004). Lack of recognition of their foreign professional work experience disqualifies their entry into professional jobs leaving them no chance to gain Canadian work experience; and the emphasis on Canadian work experience as a requirement for professional employment makes it difficult for them to be qualified for professional jobs. They are trapped in the “catch-22” requirement of the Canadian experience, which makes the economic integration of these immigrant professionals more difficult.

When immigrant professionals are evaluated by the immigration administration, they are not required to have pre-arranged employment to qualify for immigration. And yet, after landing in the new country and starting the job search, lack of Canadian experience is one of the biggest flaws in the estimation of employers. This disconnect between immigration policymakers and employers leaves immigrant professionals confused and frustrated.

Besides lack of recognition of foreign obtained work experience, other factors also contributed to the difficulty in locating jobs in Canada for immigrant professionals. Borgen and Amundson (1985) point out that skilled immigrants may be at a disadvantage due to their lack of cultural know-how when approaching potential employers, preparing resumes and presenting themselves over the phone or during interviews. In her study, Ngo (2001) states that lack of Canadian experience presented an impossible obstacle for all the participants in her study. Basran and Zong (1998) also assert in their research that among 404 respondents in their study, 79 percent of the respondents reported having actually experienced difficulties in obtaining professional work experience in Canada.

Chinese Cultural Influence

Chinese culture continues to profoundly influence the career choice and exploration process of immigrant professionals from Mainland China. Some of the impediments stem from heavily Confucian-influenced traditional Chinese culture.

Wu (2001) posited that parental roles are one of the factors that hinder the career development of immigrant professionals. Specifically, the majority of the participants in her study admitted to being strongly influenced by their parents when making career choices, even when their parents lived far away in China. Due to the collectivistic nature of Chinese

culture, they would choose a career primarily acceptable to their parents, and secondarily to meet the practical needs to support the family and their own interests. It is not difficult to imagine this creates problems, as parents may not be able to fully understand the situation in a foreign country.

Also, Chinese culture emphasizes achievement and excellence. In many cases, the motivation to succeed and achieve has been internalized by many Chinese people. According to Wu (2001), her participants believed that the expectation to be successful internally and externally can be a huge motivation and may account for their career success. But on the other hand, it can also bring a great deal of pressure if they are unable to meet expectations. In her study, many asserted that the Chinese cultural values such as reserve, formality, modesty, restraint, and non-aggression in interpersonal relationships might contradict some Canadian cultural norms, and possibly be disadvantageous to their career development in Canada. Borgen and Amundson (1984) found that some job search strategies adopted by some immigrants may be appropriate in their home country but are self-defeating in their host country.

Adaptive Strategies Employed by the Immigrant Professionals

As mentioned above, immigrant professionals come to Canada and encounter numerous difficulties and challenges. In order to establish themselves in a new country, they develop strategies that help facilitate their adaptation and adjustment and deal with adversities. Several scholars describe the strategies employed by immigrant professionals to overcome difficulties and integrate into Canadian society (Bai, 2007; Shih, 2005; Woo, 1989; Zhu, 2005).

In his qualitative studies, Woo (1989) pointed out that his study participants, who have successfully established themselves in America, seem to share a world view called “adaptor mentality.” There are three tenets: (1) anticipation of potential changes; (2) high level of tolerance and endurance toward difficulties and challenges and (3) willingness to postpone immediate gratification for long-term goals.

Shih (2005) did a narrative study of Chinese female immigrant professionals by interviewing eight women immigrant professionals coming to the US between 1984 and 1992. From the women’s narratives, she identified strategies used by these women when dealing with adversities after immigration: (1) having a helpful attitude; (2) utilizing resources in the larger society; (3) receiving support from extended families; (4) connecting with an ethnic-based network and (5) utilizing family separation as an adaptive strategy.

Zhu (2007) interviewed 39 Chinese immigrant professionals and found that these immigrant professionals took initiatives to meet the needs of the labor market. First, they switched to the profession in demand in the job market. Among her 39 participants, nine became IT professionals. Second, some participants stayed with their profession to follow their hearts, but they increased the chance of success in their chosen professions through self-study, taking courses and performing volunteer work. Another strategy used by some of her participants was to leave Canada for other western countries, while others returned to China.

Theoretical Frameworks

The major conceptual frameworks on which the current study was based are divided into two categories. The first is economic theories that seek to explain the economic integration of immigrant professionals. Under this category, human capital theory and

institutional theory will be presented. The second category is positive psychology theories, which seek to understand why people are happy or successful. The study has included a positive transitional model and chaos theory and the concept of positive uncertainty. The study will discuss these theories briefly, as they apply to the researcher's study of how immigrant professionals successfully deal with change and try to integrate into the Canadian labor market.

Economic Theory

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory has entered the popular lexicon to denote how people translate their skills into employment. According to the theory, a person's skills and work experience are indicators of job performance and will also determine the type of job obtained. In addition, in order to work effectively, interpersonal skills and knowledge of the culture of the business are also essential (Salaff & Greve, 2003). These recourses, or their human capital, are exchangeable in the market (Becker, 1964). Employers will compensate their employees based on their qualifications, skills, and work experience. This theory was developed to increase our understanding of labor markets in a knowledge economy.

However, the validity of this theory is under question by some theorists who show that immigrant professionals, despite their high qualifications, are not rewarded at a satisfactory employment level commensurate with their human capital, for which they were allowed to come to Canada in the first place. (Basran & Zong, 1998; Boyd, 1985; McDade, 1988; Trovato & Grindstaff, 1986). Reitz (2005) speculates that one reason for the weakness of human capital theory as applied to immigrant professionals is that it assumes employers

have effective means to assess the productive value of prospective worker's skills. The underutilization of immigrants' skills suggests that they do not.

Canada's current immigration strategy rests largely on human capital theory. But its weakness when applied to immigrants has become evident. Whereas human capital theory suggests that workers' earnings reflect the productive value of their skills – particularly skills based on formal education and work experience – immigrants' recent employment outcomes contradict those expectations. Immigrant professionals' skills have risen to unprecedented levels, which indicates they should be designated a rewarding job because of their high educational levels and professional expertise (Sorensen, 1995), yet their earnings have fallen in both relative and absolute terms (Reitz, 2001).

In accounting for the difficulties immigrant professionals encounter, supporters of this theory believe that the reason they cannot find jobs must be due to their incompetence in performing the job. Also their foreign-earned credentials may not cover what is required by the Canadian credentials. Lacking local cultural knowledge of the work environment, they have no choice but to turn to low-paying jobs (Salaff & Greve, 2003).

Opponents of the human capital theory cite racism and gender discrimination as factors that also may influence employers' choice of workers. They argue that the match of job and education or training is not a rational process. For instance, Salaff and Greve (2003a; 2003b) studied Chinese immigrant professional women and concluded that these women were disadvantaged in employment situations, not by their lack of human capital, but more the structural barriers faced by Chinese women in Canada.

Some New Ideas of Human Capital Theory

Since human capital theory cannot fully explain downward job mobility of immigrant professionals, some researchers began to challenge the theory in different areas. For example, Salaff & Greve (2005) argue that human capital theory (most importantly, skills transfer) is limited in one cultural setting. They propose that human capital theory constructs inadequately explain why job candidates are shunted away from fields in which their credentials are accepted. They cannot explain the lack of recognition and consequent drop in status of immigrants with Chinese human capital.

Ngo (2001) contends that her study only partially agrees with the human capital theory. All six participants in her study showed impressive professional competency, with extraordinary records of educational training and work experience in their home country. However, her study revealed that these immigrant professionals are not guaranteed a job when they possess only these basic characteristics of human capital. The author challenges the traditional connotation of obtained human capital, which only focuses on professional ability such as education, training and work experience. She indicated that the abilities and strategies employed by the participants to overcome structural barriers suggest a different kind of human capital that goes beyond training at school or at work.

There are also some researchers who propose that human capital is not static, but is always changing. In Bai's (2007) study, immigrants from China have gone through retraining and thus gained a satisfying career. In fact, quite a few immigrant studies have touched upon how post-immigration acquired human capital could possibly determine the economic well being of recent immigrants (Akbari, 1999; Kwon, Zuiker & Bauer, 2004; Wanner, 2003).

Bai (2007) makes a connection between human capital and its influence on the occupational attainment of recent Chinese immigrant engineers by looking at the human capital as an “ongoing developed substance.” Unlike many studies focusing on payoffs of the human capital accumulated in their home country before immigration, this study invites readers to pay attention to the adjustment of human capital after immigration and how this adjustment affects immigrant professionals’ economic integration into the labor market. In other words, this study pays attention to the dynamics of human capital, the actual development of human capital itself. More specifically, she argues that human capital has to make adjustments to cultural expectations and changing job opportunities. Along with the relocation of the immigrants themselves, their human capital also has to be relocated and adapted to specific labor market conditions where it may or may not fully translate.

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory was introduced as a broader approach to understand how the labor market and the workers fit together. It studies the social structure of the labor market that receives workers. Institutional theorists believe that the entire job market, its occupations and professions are socially constructed. In other words, the qualifications of the job holders are closely related to the local context, not entirely to the competency of performing the job itself (Salaff & Greve, 2003). They believe that social structures are preventing immigrant professionals from using their talents and newcomers may never break in. Instead, they need to develop different, locally recognized skills.

Furthermore, according to institutional theory, the career, which shapes the path of the professionals, is also socially constructed. Professionals are expected to conform to

norms of what constitutes a proper career. In the western world, it is expected that a career path begins with education, apprenticeship, and certification, followed by successive jobs with increasing responsibilities and managerial content (Salaff & Greve, 2003). These patterns are recognizable as the way a professional career, if it is advancing as expected, evolves. Institutional theory sees migration as breaking a career path. Careers that deviate are perceived as failing. Immigrant professionals, moving from one country to another, are thus perceived as having broken their career lines.

Based on this theory, it is safe to conclude that if the employers could recognize the valid career paths of potential Chinese employees, it would be easier for them to predict whether they can perform the job. On the other hand, when immigrant professionals are unable to show a familiar career path to potential employers, they will be denied the opportunity even if they can perform the job. This creates huge problems for immigrant professionals from Mainland China, who held senior and managerial positions, but whose career paths were not recognized in Canada, and were forced to start over at the beginning. In a study of Chinese immigrant professionals, Salaff and Greve (2005) have concluded that institutional theory is better at explaining the current situation of immigrant professionals from Mainland China.

This perspective expects that those who grow up in one society cannot move their skill sets effortlessly to another because their foreign credentials and experiences are not taken at face value. In addition, institutional theories are best able to outline the structural barriers to immigrants' employment in established occupations. The institutional environment is a sophisticated system for protecting the established professions and their

local population from outside competition, and is a discriminator against immigrants (Salaff & Greve, 2005).

Positive Psychology Theory

Unlike current counselling and psychology practices, which have primarily been focused on negative events in people's lives and their problems, positive psychology fosters systematic study of people's strengths and virtues. Faller (2001) pointed out that it intends to discover "what works, what is right, and what is improving" (p.9).

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) reviewed the counselling practices now focusing on studying people's coping styles with adversity and reiterated that the fundamental mission of psychology also included assisting people to have a much more fulfilling life and identify and foster those who are gifted. They also asserted that "psychologists will learn how to build the qualities that help the individuals and communities, not just to endure or survive, but also to flourish" (p. 13).

Through the existing literature on immigrant professionals, there now is a much better understanding about how they survive and endure when faced with professional and personal adversity. However, little attention has been paid to what is going right for them as well as their qualities and strengths. In reality, there are some immigrant professionals who have successfully established themselves in Canada and their stories should be heard. It is in this spirit of redirecting the energy to the positive, to exploring the intrinsic strength and perseverance of this population, that the current study was conducted.

Transition Model

In the current study, participants identified themselves as having successfully made the transition from one country to another. Therefore, a theory emphasizing positive outcomes of a transition seems appropriate in analyzing the collected data for this study.

Since 1980 William Bridges has written articles and books concentrating extensively on personal, work and organizational transition, and the transition process. He states that individuals achieve personal growth and development through their transitions. Bridges (1980) considers transition to be an absolute positive experience instead of an experience with good or bad outcomes. He further suggests that the outcome of the transition is not only self-renewal but the realization of a more fulfilled and significant life. He (2001) described transition as:

Transition is the way that we all come to terms with change. Without transition, a change is mechanical, superficial, and empty. If transition does not occur or if it is begun but aborted, people end up (mentally and emotionally) back where they started, and the change does not work. In spite of the new boss (or new house or new baby), nothing is really different (p.3).

In his model, Bridges (1991) proposes that transition is composed of three parts: an ending, a neutral zone and a new beginning. In the phase of ending, the individual may have to depart from old outlooks, assumptions, realities, values or a self-image. One of the characteristics of this phase is that it may involve a disengagement from activities, relationships, familiar places, or roles that have been significant in his/her life. As a result, the individual may experience sadness or even anger while grieving the loss of what is familiar, and may wonder what is happening and why. More often than not, the individual may feel disoriented, vulnerable and, sometimes, unable to move forward.

The second phase is the neutral zone or adjustment period. This is also a period of chaos when the individual is not motivated to move on with life. In between the old and the new reality, the individual ruminates about his/her life and feels a sense of confusion or uncertainty. He/she may try to deny these emotions and long for a return to the old situation. In the meantime, however, with the prospect of a new future, the individual may also feel excitement and creativity.

The final phase of transition is a new beginning. The individual has come to terms with the new reality, new concept and new outlook. Old assumptions and values are replaced and integrated into his/her new life. He/she has also gained a new sense of belonging, purpose and possibility after experiencing the change.

While personal growth is achieved through transitions, Bridges also acknowledges that not everyone encountering change will complete the three-phase transition process. Some may get stuck in the ending or in the middle phase. Others may have experienced an ending and jump into the new beginning phase.

Another model to help analyze human transition is Schlossberg's transition model, which is to present a framework in which all kinds of transitions – positive or negative, dramatic or ordinary – can be analyzed in order for possible intervention to be created. Schlossberg states that, “a transition can be said to occur if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behaviour and relationships” (p.5). She reiterates that all adults go through transitions continually in their lifetimes, although the transitions may not occur in any sequential order, and everyone experiences transitions in a different manner.

In her model, Schlossberg believes that transition is a complicated process, and therefore adaptation to transition is a dynamic process, a movement through various stages of the transition. Three sets of factors affect adaptations of the transition: (1) the characteristics of the transition itself, including role change (gain or loss), affect (positive or negative), source (internal or external), timing (on-time or off-time), duration (permanent, temporary or uncertain), and degree of stress; (2) the characteristics of pre- and post-transition supports, and the physical setting; and (3) the characteristics of the individual, including psychosocial competence, sex (and sex-role identification), age (and life stage), state of health, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, value orientation, and previous experience with transition with similar nature. It should be noted that not all these factors have the same significance in the individual's adaptation to a particular transition.

Chaos and Positive Uncertainty

The concept of chaos and positive uncertainty, often written about under the rubrics of positive psychology (Gelatt, 1989; 1995), may be of significance when analyzing data gathered from the current study. Chaos theory (Gelatt, 1995) posits that everything is totally connected to everything else in the unbroken wholeness. In our mind, chaos is regarded as threatening, as leading to confusion, and therefore we seek ways to avoid it, defeat it and deny it. But in fact, chaos and creativity are like opposite faces of a coin. When we look at chaos in a positive light, then previously neglected aspects of chaos are revealed, such as "excitement of new possibilities, the elimination of boredom, openness to surprises, and the chance for individual creativity" (Wieland-Burston, 1992 as cited in Gelatt, 1995, p.2).

Gelatt's positive uncertainty philosophy (1989) also provides a very distinct, new approach for counsellors to look differently at order or security as well as states of chaos and turbulence. This theory attempts to assist individuals to deal with uncertainty, to accept unpredictability and to listen to the heart when making career or personal decisions.

According to Gelatt (1989), decision making is the process of arranging and rearranging information into a choice of action. There are three elements involved: (a) information, (b) the process of arranging and rearranging information, and (c) taking an action. In the current world, he asserts that all three have changed.

First, information is constantly changing and therefore creates more uncertainty; he thus proposes that we should treat information not as static but with imagination. In addition, Gelatt believes that decision-making is as much a process of discovering goals as achieving them. Based on the traditional counselling and decision theory, if you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up going nowhere. Gelatt challenges this concept by saying if you always know where you're going; you may never end up somewhere else. In other words, the rational, objective approach is not always possible or even desirable. Always starting with clear objectives discourages a person from making choices that lead to new experiences. New experiences help develop new information, new values, new goals and new desires. This uncertainty about goals and desires may lead to new discoveries.

Chapter 3: Methodology

To answer the research question, “What helps or hinders the immigrant professional to do well with changes affecting their work life?” the current study used a qualitative method to depict genuine experiences of immigrant professionals from Mainland China who claim to have made a successful transition. The study aimed to address gaps found in the literature with regard to strategies employed by Mainland China immigrant professionals to cope with the challenges of moving to another country and finding employment.

The previous review of the literature on immigrant professionals showed that most researchers concentrated exclusively on identifying barriers that immigrant professionals confront in a new country. They are based on the author’s academic research, survey data analysis, or theoretical framework in attempting to make suggestions how counselling professionals may assist these immigrants. Very few are from the first-person experience perspective. A study based on the experiences of the immigrant professionals and hearing them speak in their own words adds a new and valuable dimension to the literature. Therefore, a qualitative study is a good fit, as Palys (1997) noted that the qualitative method is a way to provide rich and thorough accounts of individual experiences.

The enhanced critical incident technique (ECIT) (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson & Maglio, 2005; Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio & Amundson, 2009) is utilized to explore the self-described successful transition experiences of immigrant professionals from Mainland China. The enhanced critical incident approach starts with contextual open-ended questions followed by the traditional critical incident technique (CIT) developed by Flanagan (1954). These open-ended questions were asked to give the participants an opportunity to describe

their work situations and the types of changes they have experienced as well as the impact of these changes on their lives.

At the beginning, the immigrant professionals were asked to describe their current work situations to provide significant contextual information. This helped build rapport and later assisted the researcher in interpreting the critical incident data. Questions included in this contextual component included: (1) As a way of getting started, perhaps you could tell me a little bit about your work situation? (2) You volunteered to participate in this study and identified yourself as experiencing workplace changes and doing well with them. What does “doing well” mean to you? (3) What are the changes that affected your work life? and (4) How have these changes affected your work life?

Next, the traditional critical incident technique was employed to elicit the helping or hindering factors that immigrant professionals experienced in their transition. According to Alfonso (1997), the CIT questions are “designed to generate descriptive and qualitative data of an experience that is still mostly uncharted in the literature” (p.49). Flanagan (1954) stated that the CIT “assists in collecting representative samples of data that are directly relevant to important problems such as establishing standards, determining requirements, or evaluating results” (p. 355). Given that few studies have been conducted to examine how immigrant professionals handle changes well, this method is an appropriate way to gather information and answer the research question, as it has been proved effective in eliciting helping or hindering factors (Flanagan, 1954; Woolsey, 1986). Further, Woolsey (1986) advocated CIT’s potential wide use as a research method unique to counselling as a discipline, noting that it is consistent with the skills, values and experiences of counselling psychologists.

The following sections will first describe the history of the Critical Incident Technique followed by a detailed account of the current study's data collection procedure, data analysis procedure and trustworthiness checks.

History of Critical Incident Technique

The Critical Incident Technique was originally developed by Flanagan (1954) in industrial and organizational psychology during World War II to collect and classify information regarding effective pilot performance. The pilots reported incidents that helped or hindered their flying performance. Flanagan was able to compile a list of factors that affected task performance based on the descriptions of pilot experiences.

After World War II, the CIT was polished and formalized by Flanagan and made available to other disciplines. Since then, a substantial amount of researchers have demonstrated it to be an effective approach for a number of studies in a variety of fields (Flanagan, 1954; Butterfield, et al., 2005). Some examples include: Amundson & Borgen (1988), Borgen & Amundson (1984) and Alfonso (1997). McCormick (1994) used CIT for a study on healings for First Nation people.

In conducting the current study, five major steps were followed: (1) determining the general purpose of the activity to be studied; (2) making plans and specifications and criteria for the information to be obtained; (3) collecting data; (4) analyzing the data and placing them into categories; and (5) reporting the findings (Flanagan, 1954; Woolsey, 1986).

Data Collection Procedures

Eleven Mainland China immigrant professionals were selected for the current study. All believe they are doing well with changes that affected their work and are successfully adapting. These potential participants were approached through third parties using posters and recruitment advertisements (See Appendix A for recruitment poster and Appendix B for recruitment advertisement), and advertisements were also placed at Vancouver Community College where immigrants are a major part of the student population. In the meantime, immigrant support agencies or societies (e.g., S.U.C.C.E.S.S, Immigrant Services Society of BC, DIVERSEcity and etc) were informed about this study. Other recruiting methods included word of mouth and “snowballing” - in which participants recommend other individuals who may be suitable for the study.

The potential participants were given the researcher’s contact phone number. When contacted, the researcher asked a few screening questions (See Appendix C for screening questions) to determine if they were eligible. The criteria and specifications of the participants for the current study were: They must have (1) immigrated from Mainland China; (2) have come to Canada within the last three years and been working in Canada within the last six months; (3) have had skills/vocational training in their home country; (4) have experienced changes that affected their work since immigrating to Canada; (5) feel they are doing well with the changes, and (6) be willing to talk about their experience of changes that have affected their work in a confidential one to two hour interview. Immigrant professionals who can read, write and speak English were chosen and the interview was conducted in English.

The participants included six women and five men. Their ages ranged from 26 to 42, with the average age 36. All were married with one exception who was divorced. However, six were alone in Canada while their spouses were still working in China. Their length of time in Canada ranged from six months to two and half years, with an average of approximately one year. All received higher education in China before coming to Canada. Three had master degrees in their field and the rest held bachelor degrees. All worked in their professions before coming to Canada except for one participant, who quit her job more than a year before immigrating to Canada. All of them now work in Canada. Among them, four work in sales or food services, which are irrelevant to their education and training. Among those who are working in their field after immigrating to Canada, the average length of time in their profession ranged from five to 22 years with an average of 10 years. All held senior positions in China and after they came to Canada, they all started in entry level positions. In terms of household income, two participants elected not to disclose the information. The rest of participants' annual income ranged from \$15, 000 to \$ 55, 000, with an average of \$28, 000. A summary of the participants' demographic description can be found on Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics

Part. #	Age	Length of time in Canada (year)	Education	Occupation	Length of years in their occupation	Current job level	Income (Thousands)
001	31	2	Bachelor	IT consultant	9	Junior	30
002	40	0.6	Bachelor	Executive assistant	10	Irrelevant	20
003	42	0.6	Bachelor	Researcher	12	Irrelevant	15
004	42	2.5	Bachelor	Civil engineer	22	Junior	55
005	33	1	Bachelor	Software developer	11	Junior	28
006	35	1.5	Masters	Hardware engineer	12	Junior	n/a
007	26	1.5	Bachelor	Estimator	5	Junior	n/a
008	40	0.6	Bachelor	Translator	12	Irrelevant	30
009	40	1	Bachelor	Import coordinator	9	Junior	30
010	40	0.6	Masters	Environmental engineer	15	Irrelevant	10
011	31	0.6	Masters	HR specialist	8	Junior	30

One way of obtaining recorded data in the form of critical incidents is through individual interviews (Flanagan, 1954). The researcher conducted all 11 interviews. Nine interviews were conducted at the participants' home based on their suggestions. Two were conducted at the UBC research team's office.

All interviews were conducted in January-February 2008. The interviews were semi-structured and about 1.5 to 2 hours long. During the interview, participants were asked open-ended questions to ensure they could fully discuss their experiences and reflect on them. After obtaining permission from participants, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed. A paper file for each participant was also created so notes could be recorded during the interviews, which added new information whenever available. A number was assigned to each participant to avoid putting their names on the file.

After a brief introduction to the current study, an informed consent form (see Appendix D for Informed Consent Form) was presented to each participant. The informed consent outlined the purpose of the study and the procedures as well as the confidentiality. It was especially emphasized that the participants could withdraw from participating in the study at any time. All of the participants signed the form with an understanding of the study and showed their willingness to participate.

The interview began with open-ended questions according to the Interview Questions Guide (See Appendix E for Interview Guide). The purpose of these open-ended questions was two-fold. First, these questions may elicit information about each participant's background and work situation. Also, asking questions like, "Can you tell me a bit about

your work situation?” helped build a rapport between the interviewer and the participants and also put the participants at ease.

After these questions, participants were asked what helped them as well as what hindered them from success, which constitutes a major part of the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique. With each helping and hindering factor, the researcher also asked them either to explain the importance of the factor or provide detailed examples. As a part of the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT), they were also asked what they would have hoped to be there to help them as a “Wish list” (Butterfield, 2001).

At the end of the interview, demographic data was collected and again the participants were informed of their right to not disclose any information if they were not comfortable. Also, the researcher asked about their experiences with this interview. None of them showed any signs of distress. In fact, several participants expressed their enthusiasm in participating in this research project and felt very pleased to have an opportunity to talk about their experiences. The researcher explained what she would do with the interview data and the research process. She also sought consent for a second interview.

Participants were contacted for a second interview about 12 months after the first interviews. This lengthy time span occurred for several reasons: (1) transcribing the audiotapes took longer than expected; (2) learning how to use ATLAS/ti 5.0 (a qualitative data analysis software program) was complicated and therefore took some time as well. During this time, the researcher contacted the participants to keep them informed about what was happening.

For the second interview, the researcher called all the participants and asked if they would like to discuss the summary of their analysis of their transcript and provide feedback over the phone or through e-mail. Ten participants preferred to discuss the results and provide feedback over the phone and one requested that the analysis summary be e-mailed to him. She sent him the results along with the guidelines on how to give feedback. Requesting feedback from participants is referred to as participant cross checking (Butterfield et al., 2005). This will be discussed in detail in the trustworthiness checks section.

Data Analysis

Flanagan (1954) and Woolsey (1986) recommended the following three steps to analyze the data: (1) select an appropriate frame of reference; (2) formulate the categories of different themes; and (3) establish the proper level of specificity-generality in reporting the data and the findings. This framework was utilized to analyze the data for the current study. It mainly involves extracting critical incidents from the interviews, placing them into different categories and establishing trustworthiness of these categories.

Before extracting the incidents, the researcher read the entire transcripts carefully and checked their accuracy by listening to the audiotapes and reading the field notes in the paper file created for each participant. When the researcher read the transcript and found an inconsistency, she verified its accuracy against the tape and field notes and made any needed corrections. After completing this process, she imported the transcripts into ATLAS/Ti to code and manage the data.

The batch of the first three transcripts was imported into the ATLAS/Ti. The critical incidents that were helpful, hindering and wish list items were carefully extracted and coded

using the participants' wording. The importance or example of that incident was coded as well. In some cases, the incidents that lacked importance or examples were marked down for checking with participants at the second interview. This step was one part of the credibility check and will be discussed in further detail in the trustworthiness section.

The coding was repeated for two additional batches of three transcripts, leaving 10% of the transcripts, in this case, the last two transcripts left to be coded and placed into the existing categories created using the other 90% of the transcripts.

Woosley (1986) recommended that "the formulation of the categories is done inductively, by sorting the incidents into clusters that seem to group together" (p.249). The difference and similarities of the critical incidents of the first three transcripts was carefully examined. Whenever there was confusion, the researcher would review the transcripts for some clarification or explanation. The critical incidents extracted were placed into similar categories and six tentative categories were created with working titles. While placing the critical incidents into the existing categories, she checked to see if the categories are overlapping or capturing the meaning of the experiences the participants were describing.

Next, the critical incidents of another batch of three transcripts were placed into the existing categories. With the fourth transcript, no new categories emerged, but with the fifth transcript, a new category was created. The critical incidents from the sixth transcript fit well into existing categories. The coding was repeated for another batch of three transcript but no new categories emerged. Therefore the classification of the categories proved satisfactory. As a final step, critical incidents from the last two transcripts (10%) of the transcripts were

placed in the existing categories as a trustworthiness check and no new categories were needed.

During the development of the categories, the description of the categories was also created. Woosley (1986) stated, “The categories and subcategories need to be given self-explanatory titles. Simplicity, brevity and clarity are essential here” (p.251). The definition of the categories serves to differentiate each category from another (Woosley, 1986).

Considering that English is the second language of all the participants, the researcher made sure to name the category in simple and straightforward language to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. As a safety measure, she showed the working titles to a counsellor who works at a college, who is also very familiar with CIT method, and also came from Mainland China as an immigrant professional. The counsellor’s feedback confirmed the titles made sense and were easy to understand.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

Butterfield et al. (2005) outlined the nine credibility checks used by students and faculty at University of British Columbia when conducting a CIT study. The current study followed the nine steps for its credibility check. The first credibility check is referred to as independent extraction of the critical incidents. A PhD student graduated from University of British Columbia and also familiar with the CIT method was given three interviews (30% of the interviews) as suggested by Butterfield et al (2005) and was asked to extract the critical incidents. The agreement reached between the independent coder and the researcher was initially 90%. After some explanation and discussion, the level of agreement reached 100%.

Next, after the data was analyzed and the critical incidents were placed into tentative categories, a summary of the result was sent to the participants for a validation check. This is referred to as participants' cross-checking (Butterfield, et al., 2005). This step of the credibility check was first introduced by Alfonso (1997) and was regarded as an innovation for the CIT. Based on the suggestions listed by Butterfield et al. (2009), the participants were asked to review the list of the critical incidents and see if they were identified correctly. Also, they were asked to look at the categories into which their incidents were placed and comment whether the titles of the categories made sense. All of the participants were reached for a second interview. One participant requested the study delete one incident she mentioned at the first interview. All the other participants agreed with the data analysis without any changes. This validation from the participants proved the soundness of the categories and increased the credibility of the current study's outcome.

A doctoral student from University of British Columbia who is currently working on her PhD dissertation using the critical incident method was asked to do the next credibility check. This independent judge was given a randomly chosen sample of 25% of the total extracted critical incidents. These included helping, hindering and wish list items and a description of the categories. She was asked to place those incidents into the tentatively formed categories. For the helping incident, the initial matching rate was 90%, the hindering incidents 85%, and the wish list items 90%. According to Anderson and Nilsson's (1964) suggestions that an agreement of 75% or higher is sufficient, so the level of agreement between the researcher and the independent judge demonstrated this study was satisfactory.

While categorizing the data, efforts were made to track the point at which exhaustiveness and redundancy is achieved. When new categories stop emerging from the

data, it shows that the domain of the study has been adequately enclosed (Flanagan, 1954; Woolsey, 1986). As mentioned in the data analysis section, six categories with working titles were created after analyzing the critical incidents from the first three transcripts. Another category was added at the fifth transcript. With the sixth interview, no new categories were created. Then the coding was repeated for another batch of three transcripts and no new categories were emerged. The critical incidents of the final two transcripts (10% of the data) were placed into the existing categories and no changes were made. Therefore, exhaustiveness was achieved after the fifth interview.

The fifth credibility check is seeking expert feedback on the categories. Two experts working in the field were sought to review the categories based on their working experiences, thus enhancing the robustness of the categories (Flanagan, 1954). The tentatively named categories and the description were sent to a college counsellor who has over 10 years experience working with immigrant professionals. She found all the categories appropriate. She noticed that a lot of the participants expressed frustration when their work experience and education were not recognized in Canada. She commented that it was common for immigrant professionals to feel discouraged when their education and experiences were not readily recognized immediately after immigrating to Canada. But after some years, she stated, along with some training in Canada, they began to see the value of their education and work experience or, at the very least, could use some transferable skills.

Another expert was an employment counsellor and project manager working on an immigrant service project at a college. He had over 15 years experience working with immigrant professionals, especially from Mainland China. He reviewed the categories and descriptions sent to him and commented that they made sense based on his experience

working with this population. He stressed the importance of taking action, especially seeking help and keeping eyes open in his experiences in helping these immigrant professionals secure employment and integrate into Canadian society. This trustworthiness check demonstrated that the categories created are reflective of experts' experiences, suggesting the soundness of the categories (Butterfield et al., 2009).

Participation rates were calculated for each category. This was accomplished by determining how many participants talked about items in a particular category and then dividing that number by the total number of the participants (Butterfield et al., 2005). Borgen and Amundson (1984) established that the participation rate had to be 25% for the categories to be considered viable. In the current study, the participation rate of each category was above 25% in one or more of the helping, hindering and wish list sections. This proved the validation of the categories. In the following results chapter, the participation rate of each category will be detailed in depth.

The next credibility check is theoretical validity of the categories, also known as theoretical agreement (Butterfield et al., 2005). This step was achieved by comparing the established categories to the current literature (Maxwell, 1992; McCormick, 1994). It is also important to keep in mind that a new category unable to find a match in literature may mean the researcher has uncovered something new due to the exploratory nature of the CIT method (Butterfield et al., 2005). Support from literature was found for all seven categories. Some categories reiterate the previous research while other categories may shed new light in the area. Chapter 5: Discussion will provide a detailed in more depth discussion of the comparison of the categories with current literature.

According to Maxwell (1992), descriptive validity is mainly concerned with the accuracy of the participants' account. Therefore, to ensure that the critical incidents, elicited themes and interpretations accurately reflect the truth of the immigrant professionals' life experience, the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Field notes were taken while conducting the interview. When extracting the critical incidents as well as creating the themes, the researcher frequently resorted to these notes for contextual information.

The last credibility check is called interview fidelity (Butterfield et al., 2005). This entails asking an expert in the CIT method to listen to some samples of the interviews to make sure the researcher is following the CIT method. The third, seventh and tenth interviews were sent to a professor at the University of British Columbia. He commented that the researcher was following the CIT method, asked open-ended questions and did not tend to lead the participants during the interview.

Chapter 4: Results

Contextual Components Results

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher asked contextual questions. These questions served several purposes: (1) to put participants at ease, as English is the second language for them and an interview conducted in English could be intimidating; (2) to give participants an opportunity to describe what “doing well” means to them, to explain the changes in their current situations, how these changes affected their work lives; and (3) to provide background information and context for critical incidents. As the researcher listened to the answers to these contextual questions, she also noted possible critical incidents that may have helped or hindered them in dealing with changes and checked back later in the interview. Before moving on to the next question, the researcher summarized what participants said to determine if they agreed with the researcher’s perceptions. Participants were also reminded they could return to a previous question any time to add further comments.

What Does Doing Well Mean to You?

In order to participate in the current study, one criterion participants needed to claim was they are doing well with changes affecting their lives. At the beginning of the interview, they were asked to share what ‘doing well’ meant to them. The total responses were 39 items, which were grouped into 8 themes listed in Table 2. Participation rate and frequency were also calculated and included in the table. The top five themes, with a participation rate over 25%, are discussed immediately following the table.

Table 2: Themes from the Question: “What Does Doing Well Mean to You?”

Themes	Part. rate (%)	Fre- quency (#)
Feeling comfortable, satisfied and self-confident	55	11
To be happy, confident and competent at work, work in my field	45	10
Always learn new things and improve myself, learn from others	36	4
Make money, help, support and spend more time with family	28	4
To be successful, feel a sense of accomplishment	28	4
To be healthy, a better quality of life	18	2
Get along well with other people , help others	18	2
Not too disappointed	9	2

The most frequently mentioned theme, with 11 items and a participation rate of 55% (6/11), was “Feeling comfortable, satisfied and self-confident.” Participants equated being comfortable with doing well. A sense of ease with themselves or their current situations was cited by multiple participants as a factor that makes them happy. Satisfaction was also mentioned as another measure of doing well. Not only were they satisfied with themselves, but also they were satisfied with their relationships. They all had in common an inner sense of comfort and peace either with themselves or the new environment.

The second most-cited theme, with a participation rate of 45% (5/11), was “Feeling happy, confident, and competent at work/work in my field”. This theme differs from the previous one in that it is exclusively associated with work. Participants identified job performance as the means by which they determined if they were thriving or successful. Competency at work was highly regarded and competency originated from, as one participant pointed out, professional education and credentials plus many years of work experience before coming to Canada. Not surprisingly, being able to work in their field in the new country provided participants with new identity and a sense of accomplishment, which was cited as an example of doing well. It is worth mentioning that two participants worked at the branch office of the same company in China where they worked before coming to Canada. One of them received a job offer prior to landing in Canada.

The third most oft-mentioned theme was “Always learn new things and improving myself, and learn from others”, with participation rate 36% (4/11) and 4 items. Participants mentioned items related to learning new skills, learning new ways of doing the same thing they had done before and obtaining new credentials and certification after immigrating to Canada. Continual learning helped them to stay current in their fields and competent in their

work. Challenges were viewed as an opportunity to learn new things and to challenge themselves to a higher level of job performance or competency. One participant stated that she started her certification process while still in her home country through information obtained online. Learning from others was also cited as an indicator of doing well. Participants were open to new ideas from colleagues at work and also reached out to professional associations in their fields to receive information, upgrade their skills, expand their professional repertoires and build professional connections.

The fourth most frequently mentioned theme was “Make money, help, support and spend more time with family” with a participation rate of 28% (3/11) and 4 items. Participants remarked that doing well meant being able to spend quality time with family members, especially children who needed help in their studies or integration into the new environment. Also, one participant was proud that he could find job right after landing in Canada, thus making it possible for him to sponsor his wife to come to Canada and start a family. Fulfilling their responsibilities to their families is clearly seen as a sign of success and doing well.

The fifth most popular theme was “To be successful, feel a sense of accomplishment” with participation rate of 28% (3/11) and 4 items. The majority of participants citing items in this theme reported they would feel that they were doing well when they felt very effective and efficient at work, highly productive and able to accomplish things. One participant mentioned that she always felt proud while passing by buildings to which she contributed as an estimator and a team member.

There were three other themes: (1) To be healthy and better quality of life; (2) To get along well with others and help others; and (3) To not be too disappointed. As these themes had a less than 25% participation rate, they are not discussed in detail.

What Are the Changes That Have Affected Your Work Life?

After checking with the participants to make sure they have fully answered the question: “What does doing well mean to you?” and reminding them that they could come back and add anything they wished, the researcher proceeded to the next contextual question: “What are the changes that have affected your work life?” They were also asked to include changes in any part of their lives, personal or professional as long as it affected their work lives. A total of 54 changes were cited by the participants. The themes and a break-down of the themes are presented in Table 3 with participation rate and frequency. The themes with a participation rate of 25% or more are discussed immediately following the table.

Table 3: Summary of Changes Experienced

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Part. Rate (%)	Fre- quency (#)
Work		100	27
	Work role/responsibility	64	9
	Change in company culture	55	9
	Change in work routine	46	6
	Job hunting	27	3
Personal Life		90	18
	Moving to Canada	64	8
	Have to do everything at home	36	4
	Different life style	27	4
	Attitude	18	2
Professional Life		36	6
	Return to school/re-training	36	5
	Less training at work	9	1

The most popular theme was Work, with a participation rate of 100% and 27 items. Within the work theme, changes in work role and responsibility were mentioned by 64% of the participants with 9 change items. Notably, the participants spoke of changes from managerial positions in their home country to entry level positions after coming to Canada. They expressed a tremendous challenge in adjusting to this change. Items in this theme also included changes from working for government to working for a private employer. Constant pressure from the employers was also cited by participants as a change. The second sub-theme, “Change in company culture” was mentioned by 55% of participants including 9 total changes. Changes in this sub-theme were related to changes to work in a multicultural company, changes in how things got done, and how colleagues related to each other. Participants expressed the frustration of not being able to communicate well with colleagues because they each come from different cultures. The third sub-theme mentioned by 46% of participants with 6 changes was titled “Changes in work routine.” Items in this sub-theme included more freedom at work, less travel and no overtime work. Participants said they enjoyed the new, stable and predictable work schedule. The fourth sub-theme, “Job hunting” had a participation rate of 27% with 3 changes. Participants spoke of learning new ways of finding work in Canada. All the participants mentioning this change also claimed that they never had experience in job-hunting in China as they were assigned jobs by the government after graduating from college and stayed at that job until coming to Canada.

The second most often-cited theme of changes was that of “Personal Life” with 90% participation rate and 18 changes. The largest sub-theme within the “Personal life” theme was “Moving to Canada” with a participation rate of 64% and 8 changes associated with moving to a new country. Participants highlighted a new environment, a new language and a

new way of life style as factors that affected their work life. One of the biggest challenges, according to one participant, was that he had to speak English all the time, which was very challenging and had a negative impact on his work life. The second largest sub-theme was “Having to do everything at home” with a participation rate of 36% and 4 changes. Items included having to cook by themselves, having to take care of the baby themselves, and having to take care of the household by themselves. Participants talked about having people at home in China all the time to help with the house work and child care. After coming to Canada, completely depending on themselves had an impact on their work lives as they worried about shopping or wanting to hurry home to make dinner. The next largest sub-theme was “A different life style” with a participation rate of 27% and 4 changes. One example within this sub-theme was spending more time with their families. Participants mentioned making less money in Canada than they did in their home country. Another participant welcomed this new way of living, as she wanted to have a labour job; in China a labour job was considered inappropriate for a university graduate and was not supported by her parents or society at large. The last sub-theme “Attitude” was not highlighted as it had a less than 25% participation rate.

The final overall theme was “Professional Life” with a participation rate of 36% and 6 changes. These changes include going back to school, getting local credentials or being certified in Canada. One participant experienced a change from extensive job training in his home country to far less job training in Canada.

How Have These Changes Impacted Your Work Life?

The last contextual question was: “How have these changes impacted your work life?” This question was intended to capture the extent to which changes experienced by the participants affected their work life. A total of 39 impacts were mentioned by the participants. The impacts have been placed into groups with themes and the participation rate and frequency were calculated in Table 4. The themes with participation rate of 25% were discussed in more detail following the table.

Table 4: Impacts on Work

<i>Major Theme</i>	<i>Sub-theme</i>	<i>Part. Rate (%)</i>	<i>Fre- quency (#)</i>
Psychological Impacts		82	19
	Negative (e.g., experienced chaos; have to be ready all the time; feeling isolated)	55	10
	Positive (e.g., more responsible; able to face anything; more relaxed; flexible)	27	6
	Neutral (e.g., everything is the same; nothing has changed)	18	3
Professional/Work Impacts		72	16
	New Job/New Skills (e.g., have to learn new skills, new way of doing things, change to a new profession)	36	6
	Change to adapt to new work environment (e.g., expand social network, willing to change to adapt, learn to talk to co-workers from different culture)	27	3
	Impact on relationships with colleagues (e.g., hard to work as part of a team; fear of not being able to communicate with colleagues)	27	3
Emotional Impacts		55	12
	Negative (e.g., more pressured, frustrated, scared and stressed out; uncomfortable starting at the entry level)	46	5
	Positive (e.g., always have a good mood)	9	1
Personal/ Family Life Impacts		27	5
	Positive (e.g., better quality of life; opportunity to do labour job)	18	3
	Negative (e.g., no time to do anything else besides work; no time for overwork or travel for work)	18	2

The most-cited impact was “Psychological Impact” with 19 impacts and a participation rate of 82% (9/11). This theme was grouped into positive, negative and neutral sub-themes. The number of negative impacts outnumbered the number of positive impacts. This was unexpected, as the data came from participants who claimed they were doing well with changes affecting their work. Regarding negative impacts, participants spoke of experiencing chaos, having to be on guard all the time and feeling isolated. Positive impacts mentioned by the participants included becoming more responsible, more relaxed and more flexible. One participant expressed fearlessness, stating that she was able to face anything after going through the change. What is worth noting in this category is the last subtheme “Neutral” where participants spoke of feeling neutral and stated that coming to a new country did not have any psychological impact. This presents a significant contrast with other participants who reported intense psychological impacts. One participant got a job in his field even before coming to Canada and another one found a position three months after immigrating, identical to the job she held in her home country.

The second major theme was that of “Professional/Work Impacts” with 16 items and a participation rate of 72% (8/11). This theme was broken down into the sub-themes: “New job/New skills,” “Change to adapt to new work environment” and “Impact on relationships with colleagues”. Although participants did not distinguish positive or negative impact in this theme, more participants reported that changes, for the most part, negatively impacted their professional lives. They were uncomfortable with downward mobility in their professions, which was a change from high managerial positions to entry level positions. One participant found it difficult to work as a team due to the different cultural backgrounds of colleagues.

However, multiple participants also expressed positive impacts such as learning new skills, entering new professions and becoming more willing to compromise with work colleagues.

The third most popular impact was “Emotional Impact” with a participation rate of 55% (6/11) and 12 items. Emotions experienced in this theme were both positive and negative in nature. The number of negative emotional impacts outnumbered the positive emotional impacts. This was, again, an interesting result as participants identified themselves as doing well with changes that affected their lives. Among negative emotional impacts, participants experienced frustration, uneasiness, loneliness and a sense of loss. Participants also spoke of positive emotional impacts such as being happy all the time, a sense of excitement and feeling free.

The last impact theme was “Personal/Family Life Impacts” with 5 items and a 27% (3/11) participation rate. These impacts were positive. Participants talked about spending more time with their family and friends, especially quality time with their children who were also going through changes in their lives and needed more attention and support. One participant expressed her joy at being able to connect more with her husband and children now that her husband did not have to work overtime as much as in their home country.

Critical Incident Results

After the contextual questions at the beginning of the interview, during which the participants had the opportunity to talk about changes in their lives and how those changes impacted their lives, the researcher proceeded to the critical incident questions: What helped or hindered immigrant professionals to do well with changes that affected their work lives? What would have been helpful to do well with changes? The first interview yielded a total of

192 helping or hindering critical incidents and wish list items. The responses broke down as 116 helping incidents, 43 hindering incidents and 33 wish list items. After the researcher cross checked with participants at a second interview, one participant removed one wish list item. Therefore, the wish list items totalled 32 in the final data analysis and the total number of incidents including helping incidents, hindering incidents and wish list items was 191.

This current study yielded a total of 7 categories, which included helping, hindering and wish list items. Participation rate was calculated by dividing the number of the participants who mentioned the critical incidents in one category by the total number of the participants (11). Borgen and Amundson (1984) suggested that a category can be considered viable and reasonable when the participation rate was 25%. In the current study, each of the 7 categories met the 25% participation rate in one or more helping, hindering and wish list items. Table 5 provides a summary of the categories, the total number of the items in each category and participation rate. The categories with a participation rate of 25% or higher are in bold type. Following the table, a detailed discussion for each category will be presented as following: (1) The name of the category; (2) Total number of the incidents within that category along with the participation rate; and (3) A breakdown of the incidents in each of the helping, hindering and wish list items with the participation rate; (4) Definitions of the categories and some representative quotations from the participants pertaining to each category.

Table 5: Critical Incident and Wish List Categories

	Helping Critical Incidents (N= 116)			Hindering Critical Incidents (N= 43)			Wish list items (N=32)		
	Participants (N=11)		Incidents	Participants (N=11)		Incidents	Participants (N=11)		Incidents
Category	n	%	N	n	%	N	n	%	n
Personality/ Traits/Attitude	11	100	62	1	9	1	4	36	7
Support from Family/Friends	8	72	9	3	27	6	3	27	3
Taking Actions	6	55	15	1	9	1	4	36	6
Education/Credentia l/Work Experience	5	46	9	10	91	21	4	36	5
Government/Comm unity/Professional Organization Resources	4	36	7	3	27	9	4	36	7
Work Environment	4	36	7	4	36	5	4	36	4
Self-care	4	36	7	0	0	0	0	0	0

Notes: Numbers are in bold when they have a participation rate of 25% or higher.

Category 1: Personality/Traits/Attitude

The “Personality/Traits/Attitude” category was the largest with 70 incidents, broken down as follows: 62 helping incidents with a participation rate of 100% contributed by all 11 participants; 7 wish list items with a participation rate of 36% cited by 4 participants and 1 hindering incident with a participation rate of 9% by one participant. The helping category included incidents where participants emphasized the importance of personality traits and attitudes that helped them do well with change. Multiple participants mentioned these intrinsic characteristics as helping factors. Examples of these incidents were being optimistic and positive, having self-confidence, being persistent, setting realistic goals, self-motivation, preparedness, honesty and ambition. One participant remarked that he would shine wherever he was, showing confidence in himself and his future. The positive impacts of possessing these personality traits and attitudes included helping participants continually learn new skills and stay on top of their professions, becoming more tolerant of other cultures, willing to accept entry level jobs to pursue a longer-term goal, being able to reach out for help, having an ability to see past challenges and difficulties, and having faith and hope in their future.

The following quotes illustrate a few of these perspectives:

And so after I come here I found out it looks like I have no major. I have none, I have nothing to fear, that I have this kind of experience, no nothing at all, no skills at all. So I have to find a new way to, here is an opportunity, cause back in China if you are forty years old there is no way for you to go back to University or go back to College to start a new major. (Participant 002)

Yeah, that’s another reason. And my goal is very clear, you know that I come to Canada, I give myself half a year, I said that if I can find a professional job in half a year I will find a job exactly, if not, if not be able to find a job I will try to continue my studies. (Participant 011)

The wish list category included incidents where the participants wished they had possessed some personality traits to help them deal with the changes. Specifically, these included being more ambitious, having self-confidence, being more communicative and being more adaptive to changes. The main outcome of possessing these personality traits would have been a greater ability to deal with challenges at the beginning of moving to a new country, as illustrated by one participant's comment:

Even more. Say for example, (if better prepared), maybe I have a friend to help me rent or find a daycare so that I feel very prepared at the beginning after I get settled first. (Participant 011)

Category 2: Support from Family/Friends

The next category is "Support from Family/Friends" with 18 items in total, detailed as follows: nine helping incidents with a participation rate of 72% contributed by eight participants, six hindering incidents with a participation rate of 27% contributed by three participants and three wish list incidents with a participation rate of 27% contributed by three participants.

The helping incidents in this category included incidents where participants spoke of their family and friends providing support and encouragement to help them to do well with change. Examples of such incidents were receiving encouragement from spouses and friends, having someone to listen to their stories and getting advice and practical support. The positive impacts of these relationships were creating positive influences in their lives, decreasing feelings of loneliness and isolation, relieving stress due to transition and going through changes and expanding their networks to increase employment opportunities.

Following are some examples of positive outcomes from participants:

'cause they, if your friends, if your family are positive, you could be positive. If your friends, but some of my friends they always said I support them, I give them support to learn things, to work and to, not to just stay at home, but I think friends, so I think you have to choose friends. If you make some friends they are feel bad, always complain, I prefer to get away from them, no, I don't want to communicate with them, I don't want to touch them so often. They will make me feel bad. "Oh we're not good and so less money", uh no I don't want to, I want to leave them, I want to go to another group of friends. So I think friends and family also give you some influence on that. (Participant 002)

So we with faith of family support or we never find something really out of low or something no. You've got to take it easy, yes so you can meet some difficulties you have to take it easy. Okay should be there and should know, so the family support always safe, always there. (Participant 008)

The hindering critical incidents in this category were those in which participants expressed frustrations due to lack of support from family and friends. Some specific examples were being all alone in the new country, lacking a support network and not getting help from spouses in taking care of young children. The negative impacts of these instances were loneliness, depression and emotional ups and downs which negatively affected their work lives and the transition process. Here are some examples of the negative impacts from participants:

...hard for me maybe not seeing those other people because I don't have family here and think other people they do have family .. when they have hard time ... being depressed they can always find support form their relatives or wife or husband or family members but for me no, nobody can help me, I have to support myself all the time so that's very difficult, sometimes I feel very lonely to making friends, ... and have no relatives, no family members here, that's very, very hard. (Participant 001)

(Having a baby) Yeah it kind of interrupted my plan and you know what if I don't have this baby, because I applied for several jobs, I mean I didn't have a chance to compare what job is good for me, well this time is only a contract position and I may be able to find a permanent position, if I'm not rushed to have a job. (Participant 011)

The wish list items in this category were incidents where participants expressed the desire of wanting more babies. Participants expressed a desire to start or expand their families. The main outcome of this desire would have been increased motivation to make money, better performance at work and a sense of having a big family as illustrated by this participant's remark:

Yeah I just think about my health position, is that good enough to another baby and, 'cause my daughter is already twelve years old, if I had another one, they could not play together, that is very sad, and I have to reconsider about my career and about my future. If I don't have a baby, maybe several years later we could travel everywhere, yeah but if I have a baby, maybe we have to re-plan it, but I do wish I could have a baby. (Participant 002)

Category 3: Taking Actions

The "Taking Actions" category is made of 22 items, broken down as follows: 15 helping critical incidents with a participation rate of 55% contributed by six participants, six wish list items with a participation rate of 36% cited by four participants and only one hindering incident with a participation rate of 9% contributed by one participant.

The majority of incidents in "Taking Actions" category fell into the helping critical incidents section. The helping critical incidents were those where the participants took initiatives such as retraining, networking or taking volunteer jobs to help them do well with change. More specifically, the helping critical incidents included trying to adapt to Canadian culture, obtaining local credentials, volunteering at local community agencies, conducting market research for job prospects, enrolling in courses and training and networking with people working in the same field. It was evident that participants took initiatives consciously with an intention to enhance their professional profiles and increase their chances of employment. The positive result of taking action and taking initiatives included feeling a

sense of greater control, exploring how to situate themselves in the new country, building self-confidence, understanding the work culture of the new country and setting realistic goals. The following quotes demonstrate the positive outcomes of taking initiatives and taking actions for them to do well with change:

(By taking up a volunteer job) we can do something there to express our self clearly, and to communicate with other people clearly, I think that's good. We can't, can't be expected one day you could be perfect, it could be the times, so I feel that's good, that's better yeah. (Participant 002)

I work in very small business and income is very low but the one thing good for that company you have to go out to meet your customers to fix something for other people for the customers and during this procedure you know people and the more people you know you have to think of a way to how to, you know, expand your relationship with them so that is when you are dealing with one customer you need to know, of course, you must do a very good job of customer service. You're not working for yourself, you're working for your employer, but at the same time you have to think of a way how to boot up your own relationship networking definitely help you to go further about your career so that means you have to work smart and being smart in you know working on a way which can help you to go further not of just working hard and no help, I know some people they've ... the same position for either ten years, twenty years because they are not thinking about change, you have to think about change, you have to think about a way you can work that can help you, push your goal forward. (Participant 001)

Incidents within the wish list item were those in which participants pointed out actions they could have taken to help them do well with the change. Specifically, the incidents mentioned by participants were to improve their English, actively communicate with people working in their fields to develop professional connections, earn a degree, receive re-training and establish close contacts with their communities. Participants believed that taking these actions would result in becoming part of the community, decreasing feelings of isolation, receiving information and increasing employment opportunities. One participant highlighted some of the probable positive outcomes:

Yeah cause you know networking is really important for you to find a job. If you know someone you can have an opportunity, which never open to the market, and if you have networking they will give you the interview opportunities

Sometimes if you only apply on-line or on some Internet, they may make the opportunity to review your resume but some qualified candidate, they think is qualified candidate, before

they receive your application. So networking is really important for job interview. I don't have networking opportunity. But I have a really good networking in China, so that is good. So that is a factor that I wish I have. (Participant 011)

Category 4: Education/Credential/Work Experience

The "Education/Credential/Work experience" category had a total of 35 items grouped as follows: 21 hindering incidents with a participation rate of 91% contributed by 10 participants, 9 helping incidents with a participation rate of 46% mentioned by 5 participants, and 5 wish list items with a participation rate 36% cited by 4 participants.

Hindering critical incidents made up the majority of incidents in this category.

Examples of the hindering critical incidents included incidents where participants cited their lack of local credentials and experiences as a major challenge when seeking employment.

Multiple participants expressed frustration and disappointment when their education and work experience was not recognized in Canada. The impact of this included feelings of being disabled, incompetent and mistreated. Further, participants experienced feelings of loss, a sense of being outsiders, and even anger and resentment. When employers did not recognize their education and professional experience, participants needed to accept entry level positions and then felt this downward shift in their profession was a waste, both of their talents and to the Canada economy. Some of the negative impacts to participants were expressed in the following quotes:

Most employers they need you to have a local experience, the reason is my education background and my work experience in China they were not considered by employer, considered to be just nothing, that's something bad, really bad. (Participant 001)

The reason is that we applied for the immigration and we sent all our education, work experience to the Embassy and they recognized that. Have us to assess by the Chinese independent organization have that, and then they said they recognized that. Then one night, cross the border from here, we should reassess it, yet they really take some time. And we are lucky to have a job very soon but we don't have a job within a week and that's a lot from our previous savings, thinking about it can be some money. (Participant 008)

The helping critical incidents in this category included incidents such as speaking English fluently, having many years of work experience, being able to use transferrable skills and knowledge, and having multicultural company experience. The impacts of having educational background and work experience included having increased confidence in dealing with change and adapting quickly to the work role in Canada. However, most importantly, multiple participants cited the experience of working in international companies in China as helping them in many aspects in their work lives, primarily in securing employment soon after landing in Canada. Participants felt confident, less fearful, hopeful and optimistic and proud. Some of the positive influences highlighted by the participants included:

‘Cause I was in the multicultural company back in China for several years, we have meetings and we have e-mail and for the different countries people, so I know actually there is no big difference. So what if you are not qualified, I'm not competent for that job, ‘cause actually there's no difference. So...I can do it in China, why I can't I do it here? (Participant 002)

So I've got more confidence. I'm not a new student, freshman just out of university that knows nothing, but for me I've got a lots of experience, that's my seller, yeah that's my advantage. (Participant 004)

Yeah, that's my advantage. So I'm finding for the work, for the best work not too difficult job, the job is okay and yeah. Now I have to start, have to go...yeah.
(Participant 004)

Yeah I think the working experience with this large American company really gives me a lot of background to find this job in Canada. (Participant 011)

The wish list in this category included incidents in which participants articulated a desire to have access to more training either in their professional fields, English language or job search skills. Not surprisingly, participants also spoke of their wishes to have education and professional experience recognized, especially by employers. One participant mentioned he would prefer more on-the-job training which would reduce pressure at work. Another participant wished the cost for re-evaluation of international credentials would be borne by the government to lessen a job seeker's financial burdens. The anticipated outcome of having education and experiences recognized (as well as pursuing further education) in Canada included: being able to return to their fields faster, facing fewer financial challenges for their families, having the opportunity to advance in their careers, and most importantly, being able to utilize their skills to contribute to the Canadian economy sooner so that Canada would benefit as well. Excerpted quotes from participants illustrate some of the outcomes:

I'd say like I know a company who's like in my field that's called ... and I know ... very good company for doing the networking ... software, they are doing very good business which is the you know, in Vancouver, I know there are also people who is doing computer things in Canada and Vancouver .. for me if I can get a chance to work in the okay fine and I just get to know the product and maybe you know more people .. work there, I mean one week, two week, one month I think that's a very good chance for my future, for people know me, they may hire me right and because I think I'm good enough to be hired. (Participant 001)

Because for that it would save time and it would save cost for the government, yes And make the new immigrants contribute more sooner, sooner, And make whatever the best contribution to the society. (Participant 008)

Category 5: Government/Community/Professional Organization Resources

The “Government/Community/Professional Associations Resources” category had a total of 23 items, broken down as follows: seven helping critical incidents with a participation rate of 36% contributed by four participants; nine hindering critical incidents with a participation rate of 27% mentioned by three participants; and seven wish list items with a participation rate of 36% contributed by four participants. The helping critical incidents were those in which support and encouragement offered by government, community and professional organizations helped participants do well with change. Specifically, these incidents were building networks with professionals working in the same field, attending network meetings organized by professional associations, and receiving assistance from immigrant service agencies, government agencies and society at large. The positive outcome of utilizing the resources from professionals, communities and governments were an informed and sound career decision-making process, learning job search skills and strategy, securing employment, receiving acknowledgement and encouragement, learning professional jargon, feeling welcomed and connected, and feeling increased energy to deal with their transitions. The following quotes illustrate these outcomes:

They, they say, "Well yeah", they gave you some sort of, I mean encouragement, they say, "well you should be prepared for the difficulties ahead of you because yeah everybody, well when I came here three years ago I, at that time the situation was worse, was you know worse than, than what you have now so everything will change if you keep up with your efforts." They give me a lot of encouragement yeah.
(Participant 009)

Yeah because sometimes one is working in the job search program the teacher told us you should find (who) make decisions, decision maker and you can talk to him that's very important. (Participant 005)

The wish list items in this category were those incidents in which participants expressed a desire to have had access to resources from professional associations, community groups and government agencies. Examples of these wish list items were professional mentor programs, opportunities to meet potential employers, more communication with people working in their fields and closer contact with local communities and government that serve as a bridge between new immigrants and the employers. The expected positive outcome would be increased prospects to enter their fields, an opportunity to prove their competency at work and a sense of belonging. One participant who expressed how he would gain from having the opportunity to meet potential employers stated:

because I do not have to get paid, I just want to do some volunteer and in the company, I want to know about this industry and also I want to get a chance to prove myself which I can do better job, I can do higher level job, a higher level position so the company here in Canada they can provide people who can do the volunteer ... program I think that would be really helpful for new immigrants because they don't have to, they don't have to pay a lot money and go to immigrant to me like and I think they need to provide is a chance to work with them and maybe a chance to go to talk to the local people, chance to know the way the local company works and also very important chance to improve themselves to learn to prove their ability and they're also give a chance to employer as well to know these people, I think that would be very good to both employer and their employee. (Participant 001)

Category 6: Work Environment

The “Work Environment” category had a total of 16 incidents grouped as follows: seven helping incidents with a participation rate of 36% cited by four participants, five hindering incidents and four wish list items, both contributed by four participants (and both with participation rates of 36%). Helping incidents in this category were those in which participants expressed appreciation for having supportive work environments that enabled them to do well with change. In particular, supportive environments referred to friendly

colleagues who were always willing to help, a relaxed boss that allowed employees to have a lot of flexibility in terms of schedule and holiday time and on-the-job training. A helpful working environment is crucial for the participants to develop a sense of trust, foster the spirit of team work and deliver high job performances. The following quotes demonstrated the positive impacts of a supportive work environment:

I think my colleagues helped me a lot after I found my job. Because even I do a great job in my field but actually there are differences between Canada and China.
(Participant 007)

...and they really like to help you. In this way you can improve yourself for the present job and they feel that you are, really, really good, and they will say, "Oh you're really good, you are amazing, you can pick up everything so quickly compared with the others and so we try to train you to learn more as a full-time, uh as a full-time employee here." And so they, they all give your all. Whatever you do they all know, they all can, they can find the way you serve the customer and the customer said, "fine", and they will take from the feedback and they can know that whatever you do. (Participant 002)

The hindering incidents within this category were those related to work that made it difficult for them to do well. More specifically, participants cited more pressure from management than in their home country, a very different work environment with people from different cultures and a lack of job training. The negative impacts arising from lack of a supportive work environment included frustration, exhaustion, self-doubt and being less productive. Some of these negative impacts are captured in the following quotes by participants:

I can't understand what I think everyone in all place if you want communicate with if you want .. from others you should communicate with others as well, also we have, I have a professional knowledge I can handle my work as they can but sometimes boss ah ... your life or ... your others study maybe you can sometimes make you feel bad. that's how one factor affect my do well. (Participant 005)

He is very, very protective of his position. Maybe I say well, well you try, you really show my issues that have been my passion and my efforts, because I've always worked overtime and I leave later, later than him...So probably I have sort of concern he is not so happy because probably, well probably I would say, " well eventually this guy will take a hike.", probably, this, this is an assumption right. (Participant 009)

The wish list items in this category were those where participants expressed a desire for a better working environment to assist them in dealing with change. Specific wish list items referred to by participants included friendlier colleagues at work, more help from management, better communication between employees and management and more company-provided training opportunities. In this environment, participants expected to be happier, feel less lonely, have a sense of inclusion and be more productive. The following quotes captured some of the positive outcomes:

I understand overall structure of the company, understand my position at the company better. That will also give me a sense of belonging and work harder. (Participant 002)

I can improve my English, also I will not feel lonely as I am here all by myself. I want to feel like a part of a big family. Also, if we can go out together after work and do things together, it is better to build team work, too, I think. (Participant 001)

Category 7: Self-care

The "Self-care" Category had a total of seven items, all helping incidents, with a participation rate of 36% contributed by four participants. The participants cited how these self-care actions helped them do well with changes that affected work. The incidents mentioned by participants included going to see movies, having dinner with friends, cheering themselves up continually and exercising outdoors. The anticipated outcomes arising from these activities included creating a diversion from thinking too much about work, maintaining a more balanced work and life style, keeping their spirits high and having a safe

refuge whenever they need emotional and practical support. The following quotes highlight the positive outcomes of taking care of themselves while going through changes:

Well that, every day I end up very, I feel very tired everyday so in order to release this is to do some physical ex... uh outdoor, I mean outdoor activities... Yeah so... well those activities can, can distract me, I mean can distract me from thinking about, "Oh what happened during, at work," because my brain was constantly working for nine hours, so should take a break. (Participant 009)

If you know I'm depressed you must find a way how to cheer you up because right now here you don't know anybody you have to help yourself because nobody can help you have to help yourself and also another way to be positive is making friends I mean making some really good friends who will always be positive. (Participant 001)

Chapter 5: Discussion

In the previous chapter, data results were presented consistent with the questions outlined in the interview guide. This chapter aims to establish relationships, where applicable, between the current study's findings and other scholars' results as described earlier in the literature review section. This study's observations based on the data will be compared to previous research to determine where current results coincide with, or diverge from, those studies. Results unique to this study will also be identified. Finally, future research and limitations of the study will be discussed.

Comparison with Literature

As stated in the literature review, present-day Mainland Chinese immigrant professionals are very different from their predecessors in several aspects. For one, they are selected for immigration because of their education and experience. All participants in the current study received college/university education before coming to Canada; in fact, three earned master's degrees and all held bachelor's degree in various fields. All had worked in their trained professions; most had more than 10 years of work experience. In addition to advanced education and training, noted by Wang and Lo (2005), recent Chinese immigrants are also much younger, nearly half of them in the age group of 25-44, the most dynamic years of life. Participants' ages in the current study ranged from 26 to 42 years with an average of 36, which coincides with Wang and Lo's study. The specific educational backgrounds and ages were not criteria for participating in the current study, but the result was consistent with the parameters cited in the literature.

Another distinction from earlier Chinese immigrants is this group's reasons for immigration, and also how they perceived their lives in Canada. Mainland immigrant professionals come to Canada hoping to advance their careers in their professions. In answering the question, "What does doing well mean to you?", 45% of participants said doing well in a new country means feeling happy, confident and competent to work in their trained professions; 36% of participants believed that always learning new things and improving themselves equates to happiness. This finding agrees with Zhu (2007), who asserted that new Chinese immigrants did not emigrate because of hunger, ailments or avoiding wars. Furthermore, improved opportunities and higher economic returns are not the only reasons to immigrate. Participants expect a better life style in addition to advancement in their careers. In fact, Zhu (2007) observed that many immigrants wish to explore their own values, pursue self-realization and contribute to their host country. Multiple participants in the current study expressed a desire to contribute to the Canadian economy. Within the "Support from Government and Community Agency" category, one participant expressed a desire for a professional mentor program, not only to help him to gain access to employers, but to address his urgent need to contribute to Canadian society.

In truth, both immigrant professionals and Canada as a country have expectations for the immigrants to utilize their skills and education immediately upon arrival in Canada (Alboim, 2002; Brower 1999). Within the "Taking Action" category, participants spoke of taking initiatives such as re-training, taking courses, working at volunteer jobs and networking, anticipating that they would be able to transfer learned skills and educations and contribute to the new society. Their experiences are consistent with Salaff et al., (2002) and

Bai (2007) who asserted that immigrant professionals from Mainland China are trying everything they know to contribute to the Canadian economy.

Having joint venture work experience is another factor in making current Chinese immigrant professionals different from previous generations of Chinese immigrants. As mentioned in the literature review, China welcomed western companies to participate in joint investments in state-owned or foreign companies. Many young Chinese who have good educations and speak English well have had an opportunity to work in these companies (Salaff & Greve, 2003; 2005). In the current study, five of the 11 participants had joint venture experience before coming to Canada. One participant spoke of working in a similar work environment, using the same work vocabularies and feeling not much of a change working in the new country. This finding echoed Salaff & Greve (2003) who discovered 20 of 28 participants working in Mainland Chinese professional or semi-professional jobs already had joint venture experience prior to immigrating to Canada.

These immigrant professionals came to Canada with higher levels of education and more extensive professional work experience, some even having experience with international companies. Yet the current study also verifies, unfortunately, a sometimes-disheartening picture of their current situations.

The downward job mobility experienced by the Mainland Chinese immigrant professionals was highlighted in the literature (e.g. Salaff, et al., 2002; Zong, 2004). Zong's (2004) study found that only 31% of the mainland Chinese immigrant professionals found work in their professions in Canada, 43% worked in non-professional jobs and 22.4% never found appropriate work in Canada. Previously, among all 1,150 study participants, 79% worked in professional jobs in their home country. Salaff et al., (2002) conducted another

study with 32 couples from Mainland China. Ninety percent of these worked as professionals or semi-professionals in China. After coming to Canada, only one-third obtained professional jobs commensurate with their education and experience. None advanced higher in their professions. The current study's results are consistent with earlier findings while providing a more detailed picture of immigrant professionals' response to changes in their job status and responsibilities. Participants in the current study averaged 10 years of professional work experience and held senior positions before coming Canada. Among those who found jobs related to their fields within two years, all started from entry level positions. When answering the question, "What are the changes that affected your work life?" 64% of the participants mentioned changes in work role and responsibility. In particular, participants reported that a change from a managerial position to an entry level position was a very hard adjustment. Within the category of "Professional/Work Impacts," participants expressed negative effects of this downward job mobility, including feelings of uneasiness and a sense of failure.

The current study departs from the findings in the literature in one important regard: the time length for immigrant professionals to find jobs related to their professions. Studies showed a very low rate of success, ranging from 5% to 24% (Basaran & Zong, 1998; Calleja & Alnwick, 2000; Fernando & Prasad, 1986). In the current study, however, 64% of the participants (7/11) found jobs related to their fields within two years, a much higher percentage than in previous studies. It could be argued that better preparation helped them to achieve their goals sooner. Within the "Personality/Traits/Attitude" category, participants spoke of being well-prepared, including labour market research before coming to Canada, sending out resumes online or commencing virtual-networking in Canada while still in China. Several participants also said they were not only mentally prepared to deal with the

challenges of moving to a new country, but also set aside enough financial resources to look for professional jobs instead of quickly accepting labour jobs for short-term survival. This preparedness improved their chances for finding work related to their field because it gave them adequate time to conduct market research and network or attend job search clubs.

Due to the discrepancy between their qualifications and initial employment in Canada, previous researchers identified negative psychological impacts on immigrant professionals (Azuh, 1998; Maraj, 1996; Ngo, 2001). Being an elite group in their country, their downward professional movement made them feel personal failure, frustration and disappointment. A sense of hopelessness and helplessness was also mentioned. Consistent with the findings, a number of participants in this study described negative emotions related to changes in their work situations in the study's "Emotional Impact" category. For example, one participant spoke of feeling pressured for not meeting his own career goals, being uncomfortable starting at an entry level position and feeling stressed out. Ngo (2001) in her study recognized isolation as a barrier for immigrant professionals. Participants in the current study also identified isolated feelings in the "Psychological Impact" category regarding their work lives. As Azuh (1998) noted and was validated by the current study's data, challenges resulting from unemployment, underemployment and lowering of social status causes some emotional distress to immigrant professionals.

The current study drew attention to, and provided a deeper understanding of, the barriers and challenges faced by the Chinese immigrant professionals when moving to a new country. In the literature, there are two schools of thought regarding challenges faced by immigrant professionals (Basran & Li, 1998). One concentrates on individual barriers, asserting that the cause of unemployment or underemployment was mainly the

disqualification of the individuals (e.g. Basavarajappa & Verma 1985; Ornstein & Sharma, 1983). The other focuses on structural barriers, believing the situation is caused by factors beyond one's personal control, such as restrictions by professional associations and cultural differences in the work place (e.g. Beach & Worswick, 1989; Boyd, 1985; McDade, 1988; Trovato & Grindstaff, 1986). The current study lends further credence to each theory, as difficulties experienced by the immigrant professionals can be explained by both models.

The individual barrier of lack of English language proficiency is the most oft-cited factor in the literature. Zong's (2000) research showed that, among 722 surveyed respondents, 49.3% reported having difficulties in their command of English. After a thorough interview with five participants, Wu (2001) concluded that the major impeding factor affecting these Chinese educators' career development was inadequate language competency. In the current study, participants reported a major challenge was the need to speak English all the time. Within the "Professional/Work Impact," the difficulty in communicating in English created gaps between colleagues, making teamwork more challenging. Within the "Education/Credential/Work Experience" category, participants described not being able to express themselves eloquently in English and feeling frustrated. Within the "Government/Community/professional Organization Resources" category, one of the wish list items mentioned was a desire for government to provide English training appropriate to the participant's level and profession to enable them to integrate better into the Canadian labour market.

Ngo (2001) and Basran and Zong (1998) previously underscored the frustration and disappointment experienced by immigrant professionals when they were denied job opportunities because they lacked Canadian work experience. Indeed, this emphasis on

Canadian experience caused a significant “catch-22” dilemma for immigrant professionals who could not work in Canada due to lack of Canadian work experience (Fernando & Prasad, 1986). The “Education/credential/Work Experience” provided a snapshot of this challenge. Ninety-one percent of the participants mentioned their disappointment when a lack of Canadian experience was the only factor preventing them from gaining employment. One participant said, “they just do not believe that I can do the job because I do not have local experience, but I have been doing this for years in China. But they won’t listen”. Within the “Government/Community/Professional Organization resources” category, participants articulated a wish for additional opportunities to gain Canadian work experience, such as working free for employers or volunteering.

Another significant challenge faced by immigrant professionals is non-recognition of foreign-earned credentials. Basran and Zong (1998) surveyed 407 immigrant professionals; their findings indicated the majority acknowledged the devaluation of their credentials was a key reason for their inability to find work related to their field and the resulting professional downward mobility. The current study yielded a similar result. Within the “Education/Credential/Work Experience” category, participants spoke of feeling a sense of uselessness or loss, even anger and resentment when employers did not recognize their credentials. For instance, one participant questioned why she was accepted as an immigrant professional under immigration rules, but was then denied work opportunities with the same credentials.

In spite of these challenges and hardships, the immigrant professionals in the current study reported themselves doing well with changes. Woo (1989) drew the conclusion in his research that a world view and “adaptive mentality” helped his participants to deal with the

challenges of moving to a new country. In short, the “adaptive mentality” includes being prepared for change, being ready to tolerate hardships and focusing on long-term goals. Shih (2005) also underscored the importance of a helpful attitude as a strategy that aided participants in her study. Consistent with Woo’s and Shih’s findings, participants in the current study stressed attitude as an important factor to help them deal with challenges. Within the “Personality/Traits/Attitude” category, 100% of participants mentioned being positive, being prepared for changes and having a long term goal helped them do well. Also in the current study, participants identified a couple of other factors not mentioned in Woo’s and Shih’s research. Several participants spoke of being self confident as an important helping factor. Possessing advanced degrees and professional experience, the participants demonstrated a high level of confidence in themselves and their futures.

Research has stressed the importance of accessing resources and receiving support from family and friends to enable immigrant professionals to deal with challenges (Shih, 2005; Zhu, 2007). Similarly, participants in the current study cited the use of community resources to help them get started. Within the “Government/Community/Professional Associations Resources” category, 36% of participants believed it was important to access to these resources. In particular, they took initiatives to build connections with professionals working in their fields and attended meetings of professional organizations. Several subjects participated in job search clubs to learn techniques of finding work in Canada. Within the “Taking Actions” category, participants mentioned networking and a proactive approach. Within the “Support from Family/Friends” category, participants emphasized supportive relationships with family members and friends. Without doubt, the importance of social

networking cannot be stressed enough in helping immigrant professionals in their transitions (Ngo, 2001).

Institutional theory attempts to ascertain whether immigrant professional are able to achieve economic integration. It is not only based on qualifications but also whether immigrants can fit into the social structure and labour markets. The current study's finding supports this theory. When the participants were unable to show employers a clear career path, local credentials and increasing job responsibilities familiar to potential employers, they were denied job opportunities. Multiple participants responding in the "Education/Credential/Work Experience" category wished they could be given a chance to demonstrate their competence.

The most-cited theory trying to explain the relationship between immigrant professionals and their economic integration is human capital theory, which states that an individual's skills and work experiences can be reflected by his/her job performance and will also determine the kind of job they will secure (Salaff & Greve, 2003; Sorenson, 1995). The current study only partially supports this theory. All the participants in this study possess skills, educations and experiences in their home country. After coming to Canada, they made concerted efforts to upgrade their skills and seek help searching for work. As a result, 50% of the participants found jobs in their fields within two years of arrival. It can be strongly argued that in the long run, all would be able to obtain jobs commensurate with their professional backgrounds.

The current study's participants also demonstrated a very clear understanding of what they needed to do in order to succeed in a new country. Bai (2007) stated that the abilities and strategies used by the immigrant professionals bring attention to a different kind of

human capital. Similarly, this study provides further information about the personal qualities and strategies that facilitate successful economic integration. Personal qualities and strategies conducive to doing well with change have been highlighted in the current study. Possessing human capital will not automatically place an individual into a good job. The driving force and the attitude to fit the capital into the existing social structure helps determine whether the participants succeed in a new environment. The personal factors and strategies that helped them include the critical incidents within the “Personality/Attitude” and “Taking Actions” categories.

One of the most oft-mentioned factors that helped participants in the current study succeed is the type of attitude within the “Personality/Traits/Attitude” category. All the participants mentioned that having a positive attitude is crucial. As stated by Gelatt (1989), “the attitude - feeling uncertain about the future and feeling positive about the uncertainty is important in directing individual’s behaviour” (p.255) in his concept of positive uncertainty. One participant who took a survival job spoke of being confident in her future, saying “I know I am gold, I will shine no matter where I go. I will work hard on obtaining local certificate and then one day I will be able to do what I have done in China”. When invited to speak about changes they experienced, multiple participants mentioned feelings of chaos. And yet, participants self identified as doing well with changes and included being confident and positive about the future as indicators of doing well. Apparently, the current study’s participants are going through a chaotic period in their lives, but they are positive with their uncertain future and this attitude helps them do well with changes.

The findings in the current study can also be interpreted with the assistance of positive psychology theories such as Bridges’ transition model (Bridges, 1991). This model

asserted that people go through three stages – an ending zone, a neutral zone and new beginning zone – to complete the transition process. In the ending zone, individuals experience a departure from old reality, familiar activities or old roles. When discussing changes in their lives, participants in the current study mentioned they had to give up old assumptions, values and self perceptions. Within the “Psychological Impact” category, participants spoke of feeling frustrated with a new environment and missing the old times, showing that they are in the ending zone. Some participants appeared to be in the neutral zone where they struggled between old and new realities. Several participants worked in survival jobs not related to their fields and therefore felt confused and uncertain about the future. On the other hand, they were also excited about the future. One participant was working as a department store cashier, but at the same time was taking accounting courses. She felt confident she would become a professional in Canada. When entering a new beginning stage, an individual develops a sense of belonging. Even though all the participants claimed they are doing well with change, most did not say they felt settled and therefore it can be inferred not all are in the new beginning stage.

One interesting note was that two participants spoke of feeling a sense of belonging and were ready to start a new family. However, they did not seem to go through all three stages proposed by Bridges (1991). When talking about changes and their impacts, both said they felt neutral, that everything was the same. One of them found a job before moving to Canada and another found a job several months after arriving and both now hold the same exact job as before. It can be argued that with the rise of the Internet, individuals can make much better preparations for a transition. In this case, they have a more complete understanding of what their new lives would be like, and they are ready to give up the old life

style and embrace the new one. As a result, they did not feel sad or angry. Once landed in Canada, they began working in a job familiar; therefore, they did not feel confused and uncertain, avoiding altogether the second stage.

In reviewing the findings of the current study, it is apparent that, as suggested by Schlossberg (1981), transition is a complex process and it is hard to understand immigrant professionals' experiences with the transition without carefully studying the characteristics of the individual and external occurrences. In the current study, participants talked about their own personality traits and outside services as very important factors to help them with successful transition. In the "Personality/Traits/Attitude" category, 100% of the participants spoke of personal attitude such as being confident, optimistic and well-prepared as essential in helping them deal with challenges in moving to a new country. Besides great attitudes, the participants also showed positive behaviours in dealing with their transitions. Long before they came to Canada, the majority of them sought information online about the new environment in order to help prepare themselves for adaption to their transitions. In the "Government/Community/Professional resources" category, the participants confirmed the significance of "institutional support" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 11), offered by professional associations, immigrant service agencies and government, in helping them with successful transitions.

Practical Counselling Implications

The current study yielded examples of immigrant professionals handling changes well and therefore offers important practical implications. First, the majority of participants mentioned that being prepared helped them to do well, especially starting their preparations

before coming to Canada. In light of this finding, immigrant professionals may benefit from counselling and advising services while still in their home country. These counselling and advising services could be offered in a field office in their country or even through online courses. They can include labour market information workshops and individual counselling sessions to help them navigate the Canadian labour market or educational/training online information to create an individualized economic integration plan. Should the Canadian government serve this role and take responsibility in setting up these services, it not only would help immigrant professionals secure their desired jobs more rapidly, but also would facilitate the retention of the talents of immigrants and help Canada remain competitive in a global, knowledge-based economy (Blair, 2005).

The current study's results also may shed light on the training programs that can help immigrant professionals in their settlement and career exploration. In the current study, personal attitude was the most-cited factor in helping them to deal with the discomfort of professional downgrades and the challenges of moving to a new country. To recognize the importance of personality traits, in addition to resume writing and interview skills, it should be a priority to set up job search clubs and offer career exploration workshops. Counsellors working with the immigrant professionals can also help identify these positive personality traits and utilize them effectively in order help immigrants successfully deal with life and career changes.

The current study's participants self-identified as successfully dealing with changes, yet in the category of "psychological impact", negative emotions outnumbered positive ones. This suggested a need for counselling support for these individuals. Counsellors can suggest ways to normalize negative feelings such as isolation, homesickness and depression. Support

groups can also be formed to foster a sense of community and help immigrants know that they are not alone in their feelings. Such counselling services and support groups could be crucial in helping immigrant professionals focus on career development and hasten the process of economic integration. Interventions and strategies also need to be developed to market these types of services and groups to attract this population.

The participants in the current study mentioned a desire to have more contact with their local communities. Programs in the community can be set up to help foster closer interactions between local people and immigrant professionals. Even initiating a home-stay may be an effective starting point. Also, several participants mentioned they found it very hard to manage their households while working or seeking employment. Many found it difficult even to learn how to cook. Classes offering practical help in such areas as cooking, household management and even shopping would be beneficial.

Canada is a multi-cultural society and British Columbia is no exception. Participants mentioned one major change is that work colleagues come from all over the world. As a result, team work can be challenging. Counsellors at work could help facilitate work place communication to help immigrant professionals better support and connect with co-workers.

Last, but by no means a minor detail, would be to set up language programs that would not just teach basic English skills but also provide instruction in the professional jargon and effective communication skills while job seeking. These programs would help ensure immigrant professionals improve their English while boosting their chances to find work in their fields.

Future Research

The current study has increased the understanding of factors that help immigrant professionals to succeed and those that hinder success. Notably, some participants were successful in finding jobs directly relevant to their profession in just a few months, while others were taking courses to obtain local credentials and still others were working at survival jobs. What made the difference in the length of time, as their ultimate goal is to secure jobs in their profession? It raises a question as to why some people can successfully integrate into the Canadian labour market in a relatively short period of time while others take much longer – even though they all self identify as successfully dealing with changes. What helps or hinders the process? The current study's results can be utilized as a starting point for discussion in focus groups to determine if these categories depict a true picture of their experiences, and therefore could be representative of a larger population. A longitudinal study also could more exhaustively examine the factors that help or hinder immigrants to integrate into the economy over time. More importantly, it could document more comprehensively the “normal” length of time it takes for an immigrant professional to secure jobs commensurate with his/her educational background and professional experiences. This information is of crucial importance to assist immigrant professionals who are awaiting immigration to Canada. It can help them have more realistic expectations and to plan accordingly. Also, further study would better inform the development of new programs and services in such areas.

Multiple participants said they took part in a job search club and utilized other settlement programs. Future research could examine the effectiveness of these programs and determine which of the services helped most and what aspects may be unnecessary. As these

immigrant professionals are highly motivated and success-driven, they may have specific needs that differ from immigrants or refugees who arrive without skills or training.

Qualitative and quantitative methods are necessary to conduct this research so that a large population can be studied and the results can be more applicable. The current study offers insights and suggestions that could be used by policy makers to develop programs and services or improve current programs catering to the needs of this group to promote successful economic integration.

Future studies could also examine and compare two groups of immigrant professionals, the first claiming to have done well with change and having faith in their futures, the second saying they have not done well with change and are reconsidering whether immigration was a good decision. The current study found that personal attitude is the most frequently mentioned helping factor that aids participants to succeed in a new country. Future research could provide a closer examination of whether it made a major difference. Is it solely because of personality differences? Would this relate to extrovert or introvert tendencies? Or might it be due to the lack of family or social support?

Lastly, future studies might explore the fact that some immigrant professionals experience little or no change and therefore perceive little or no psychological impact after immigrating. Although this sample is too small to draw any reasonable conclusions, the result could hint that - with increasing globalization, information sharing, and convenient transportation - talented, highly educated professionals may freely choose to immigrate for better opportunities and self-actualization without going through the significant psychological adjustment faced by virtually all immigrants 50 years ago. Further research is needed to test this hypothesis.

Limitations

As is always the case, this study has its limitations. First, the researcher is an immigrant professional from Mainland China. She may have assumed an innate understanding of the immigration experience of the study's participants. After losing her mother at a young age and going through an unhappy marriage, she was very pleased to come to Canada and start a new life. Therefore, her perception of immigration and employment challenges may affect how she conducted the research. However, she did her best to acknowledge this subjectivity and be cognizant of its existence while interviewing the participants as well as when conducting the subsequent data analysis and its reporting.

The current study relied on memories and recollections of participants which is self-reporting instead of observation. Flanagan (1954) pointed out the potential limitation of this method and offered the following advice: "if full and precise details are given, it can be usually assumed that this information is accurate. Vague reports suggest that the incident is not well remembered" (p. 340). In the current study, the participants were asked to provide detailed information such as the importance or an example whenever an incident was cited as a helping or hindering factor. Incidents lacking importance or examples were marked down for re-checking with participants at the second interview. Thus issues of vague reports were appropriately addressed by the researcher and presumably resolved.

It is generally recognized that the data generated by CIT method can be overwhelmingly complex and difficult to manage. Also, this large volume of data can be interpreted in many different ways and involves a degree of judgment. ATLAS/Ti was a valuable tool in managing the data. A series of credibility checks was incorporated into the current study to ensure results were sound. First, a second interview was conducted with

participants to review their critical incidents and wish lists. Participants were shown the categories used to classify their responses and shown where incidents were placed. They were asked to comment whether their statements were categorized correctly. Second, an independent PhD student familiar with the CIT method was given 25% of the interviews to extract incidents. And lastly, another experienced, independent judge was asked to place 25% of the incidents into the tentatively formulated categories. Her judgments validated this study's categorical assumptions.

This was an exploratory and descriptive study about little-known experiences of a visible group of minority immigrant professionals as they underwent economic integration into Canada; it is intended to raise issues and questions for future researchers. Therefore the results cannot be generalized to other populations. Its purpose was to expand existing knowledge on the economic integration of immigrant professionals from Mainland China, especially to determine which strategies help or hinder the process among those who claim they are doing well with the change.

The last limitation stems from the use of the English language for conducting interviews. English is not the first language for all the participants, and they have been in Canada for a very short period. Their abilities to describe their experiences in English may preclude them from articulating a full and complete picture of their experiences.

Conclusion

The current study is of value because the Canadian economy is facing a skills shortage and the lack of information that may help immigrant professionals integrate into the Canadian labour market is an issue of key concern. Additionally, the study also responded to

a need for further understanding a highly visible minority population's economic integration into Canada (Zong, 2004).

This study highlighted barriers and strategies that immigrant professionals from Mainland China employ to overcome individual and structural challenges, provided enlightening information on the personality traits and attitudes that facilitate successful economic integration and underscored the importance of networking and preparation by individuals dealing with change. Similarly, these new immigrant professionals from Mainland China are very different from their predecessors, and may not have to go through as significant psychological adjustments when moving to a new country.

The current study's participants are highly motivated and have a strong desire for success. Their personal strengths and perseverance helped them to handle changes well. They also demonstrated very positive attitudes. When they had to accept entry level positions, they possessed confidence in themselves and always looked forward to learning new things and improving themselves. They take initiatives, reach out for help and are willing to take on anything in order to be successful. However, there are also challenges beyond their control. Many hindering factors stem from external sources, such as the lack of recognition of their foreign credentials, lack of Canadian work experience and unsupportive communities. This may spark debate about Canadian immigration policy, which ostensibly aims to attract highly educated people from other countries, yet lacks a comprehensive plan and a system to evaluate credentials and offer practical economic integration opportunities. The result also challenges Canadian society to better understand the challenges faced by immigrant professionals and to offer a more supportive and welcoming environment to help them successfully adapt to their new homeland.

The researcher entered the process of this study with a sense of urgency to give voice to immigrant professionals from Mainland China. She was motivated by stories of successful immigrant professionals who have not only survived in a new land, but also thrived and are embarking on a new and fulfilling chapter in their lives. This study attempts to understand their experiences from a strength-based perspective. These stories offer hope and inspiration to those who are struggling, as personality can be strengthened, and critical needs such as foreign credentials evaluations have become a higher priority in government and related institutions. Also, enhanced pre-arrival services, assessments that are fair, transparent, consistent and timely across Canada, and improved workforce participation services for new immigrants are either under consideration or under discussion. It is with profound gratitude that the researcher thanks the participants who shared their stories. It clearly demonstrated that both researchers and practitioners can, indeed, learn from the inspiring success stories of those with whom they work.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Advertisement

Lulin Zheng is conducting a research to fulfill her requirement for master of arts degree in counselling psychology program at University of British Columbia under a large-scale study led by Dr. Norm Amundson and Dr. William Borgen funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

This study is investigating people who have experienced changes affecting their work and who feel they are **doing well** with these changes. Lulin is seeking immigrant professionals from Mainland China who are willing to talk about the changes and what factors have helped them do well in dealing with those changes, and what factors have made it more difficult for them to do well. The other criteria for participating in the study is you have been in Canada less than 3 years and have been working in the last 6 months.

For more information about this research or to volunteer to participate, please contact Lulin Zheng at zslulin@yahoo.com or at (604) 326-5882.

Appendix B: Recruitment Poster

A Study Exploring

People Who Are Doing Well With Change

The purpose of this research project is to give immigrants from Mainland China who have experienced change(s) that affect their work, and who are handling these changes well, an opportunity to describe their experiences. It also provides individuals with an opportunity to discuss what has helped or hindered them in doing well when facing these changes.

The principal investigators and supervisors for this study are Dr. Norm Amundson, 604-822-6757, and Dr. Bill Borgen, 604-822-5261, Professors in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia.

We would be interested in hearing your experience of changes affecting your work IF:

- You have immigrated to Canada within the past three years and have been working in Canada within the last six months
- You had skills / vocational training in your home country
- You have experienced changes that have affected your work since you immigrated to Canada and you feel that you are doing well with these changes
- You are willing to talk about your experience of changes that have affected your work in a confidential one- to two-hour interview.

If you would like to participate, or would like further information about this study, please contact Lulin Zheng, at (604) 326-5882, or by email at zslulin@yahoo.com.

Appendix C: Screening Interviewing Questions

I am doing a research trying to find out how immigrant professionals from Mainland China are doing well with changes, thank you for your interests. I am going to ask you some simple questions to see if you qualify for the study.

1. Have you been in Canada less than 3 years?
2. Have you been working in the last 6 months?
3. Do you have a post-secondary education and professional training in China?
4. Are you able to read and speak English?
5. have you experienced some changes since coming to Canada?
6. Would you identify yourself as doing well with the changes?
7. Would you be willing to talk about these changes in a 1-1.5 hour face-to-face interview and 10 minutes follow-up interview?
8. Are you comfortable that the interviews will be taped and transcribed?

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

Toward a Flexible Workforce: Workers and Their Ability to Meet the Challenges of Ongoing Change (Immigrant Population)

Principle Investigator:

Dr. Norman Amundson, Professor and Faculty Advisor

Department of Educational & Counseling Psychology and Special Education

University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC

Tel: 604-822-6757

Co-Investigator:

Lulin Zheng, B.A. (English language and literature), M.A. Candidate.

Department of Educational & Counseling Psychology and Special Education

University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC

Tel: 604-326-5882

Information and Purpose: The research you are being asked to participate is a requirement for Lulin Zheng's Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. The result of the research will be included in a thesis which will become a public document stored at the university's library. The larger research study of which Lulin's research is a part is being funded through a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The purpose of the research study is to allow the immigrant professionals from Mainland China who have experienced change(s) that affect their work and who identify themselves as doing well with these changes to describe what helped and hindered them in doing well.

Procedures: This research will involve the first interview, which will last approximately an hour or more, followed by a second 30 minutes interview via telephone or e-mail. The interview will be conducted at a setting that is mutually agreeable to the interviewee and the interviewer. During the interview, participants will be asked to describe their work situation and their experiences of changes affecting their work. Then participants will be asked to describe strategies that helped or hindered them in dealing well with changes. Participants will be required to provide demographic information.

The summary of the interview, the incidents extracted and categories developed will be sent to the participants before the second interview. Participants will be asked whether or not they agree with the categories and if they have anything else to add.

Both interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed. Each participant will be given a code number to protect confidentiality. After analysis is completed, the tapes will be erased. Your total time will be approximately 2.5 hours within a three to six month period of time.

While there is no obvious risk involved in this research, it is possible that information discussed in the interview might be too personal. If you feel any question is too personal, or you feel distressed during the interview, you are free to refrain from answering.

Records, Confidentiality, and Publication of Results: Should you choose to participate in the research, you have the right to withdraw your participation and / or any data that has been collected from you at any point during this process. Any information gathered will be kept confidential. Only the research team, Dr. Norman Amundson and the co-investigators will have access to the data.

Upon signing the consent form, you will be given a code number to ensure that your identity will remain completely anonymous and for no reason will it ever be shared with any person other than my supervisor Dr. Amundson. The result of the research may be published in appropriate professional and academic journals.

If you have any questions or concerns or would like more information about this research study, you may contact Dr. Norman Amundson (Principal Investigator) at 604-822-6757 or Lulin Zheng (Co-Investigator) at 604-326-5882.

Consent: Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw this participation at any time without any negative consequences. Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this research and have received a copy of this consent form.

Participant Signature:

Date:

Printed Name of the Participant

Appendix E: Interview Guide

SSHRC 2005 – 2008 Research Project
Interview Guide: Phase 1 CIT – New Immigrants
“Doing Well” Strategies Being Used

Participant #: _____ Date: _____

Interview Start Time: _____

1. Contextual Component

Preamble: As you know, I am investigating the ways in which working women and men have successfully handled change(s) that affect their work. This is the first of two interviews, and its purpose is to collect information about the changes you have experienced and the ways in which you are dealing well with them.

As a way of getting started, perhaps you could tell me a little bit about your work situation.

- a. You volunteered to participate in this study because you identified yourself as experiencing workplace change and doing well with it. What does “doing well” mean to you?
- b. On a scale of 0 – 10, where 0 is doing very poorly, 5 is OK, and 10 is doing very well, where would you place yourself?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Doing Poorly										OK	

- c. What are the changes that have affected your work life?
- d. How have these changes affected your work life? (Probe, as needed: Are there any other impacts on your work?)

2. Critical Incident Component

Transition to Critical Incident questions: You said that even with all these changes, you rated yourself as a 5-6 (or whatever the participant rated him- or herself in question 1 (b) above).

- a. What has helped you in doing well with the changes that have affected your work? (Probes: What was the incident/factor? How did it impact you? – e.g.: “Persistence is helping. How is it helping?” Can you give me a specific example where persistence helped? How did that help you to do well in handling the changes affecting your work?)
- b. Are there things that have made it more difficult for you to do well? (Alternate question: What kinds of things have happened that made it harder for you to do well?)
- c. Summarize what has been discussed up to this point with the participant as a transition to the next question:

We’ve talked about what’s helped you to do well (name them), and some things that have made it more difficult for you to do well (name them). Are there other things that would help you to continue doing well? (Alternate question: I wonder what else might be helpful to you that you haven’t had access to?)

- d. Now that you’ve had a chance to reflect back on what’s helped and hindered, where would you place yourself on the same scale we discussed earlier? The scale is from 0 – 10, where 0 is doing very poorly, 5 is OK, and 10 is doing very well.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
										OK
Doing Poorly										

e. What's made the difference? (To be asked only if there is a difference in the first and second scaling question ratings.)

f. Have you always handled change well?

(Circle one) Yes No

g. If not, when did this change for you?

h. What happened that caused you to begin handling change well?

3. Demographics Component

- i. Occupation
- ii. Number of years in this occupation
- iii. Occupation/job level
- iv. Length of time in current job
- v. Industry in which the person works
- vi. Number of years in this industry
- vii. Length of service in this company
- viii. Age
- ix. Sex
- x. Income level (household)
- xi. Country of birth
 - If not Canada, (a) length of time in Canada; and (b) 1st language
- xii. Marital status
- xiii. Family status/parental status
- xiv. Education level

Interview End Time: _____ Length of interview: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____

Appendix F: Certificate of Approval



The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services and Administration
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Amundson, N.E.	DEPARTMENT Educ & Couns Psych & Spec Educ	NUMBER B06-0332
INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT UBC Campus ,		
CO-INVESTIGATORS: Borgen, Bill, Educ & Couns Psych & Spec Educ; Butterfield, Lee, Educ & Couns Psych & Spec Educ; Erlebach, Anne C., Education; Harrison, Richard, Educ & Couns Psych & Spec Educ; Koert, Emily, Educ & Couns Psych & Spec Educ		
SPONSORING AGENCIES Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council		
TITLE: Towards a Flexible Workforce: Workers and Their Ability to Meet the Challenges of Ongoing Change		
APPROVAL DATE MAY - 3 2006	TERM (YEARS) 1	DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL: Apr. 5, 2006, Advertisement / Contact letter / Consent form
CERTIFICATION: <p style="text-align: center;">The application for ethical review of the above-named project has been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.</p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: auto;"/> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Approved on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board by one of the following:</i> Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair, Dr. Susan Rowley, Associate Chair Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair Dr. Arminee Kazanjian, Associate Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures</p>		