CAREER TRANSITION OF IRANIAN IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA:
WHAT HELPS AND WHAT HINDERS

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Abstract

Canada receives thousands of immigrants from different parts of the world every year. Employment and successful career transition is one of the biggest determinants of social and economic integration of immigrants in Canada and can significantly impact their psychological well-being. Given the large and growing number of Iranian immigrants in Canada and the paucity of research on the career transition of Iranian immigrants, the purpose of this research was to explore factors that have helped or hindered Iranian immigrants in their career transition in Canada. 11 Iranian immigrants were interviewed regarding their experience of career transition in Canada. Analysis of interviews using Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) yielded 13 categories, which represent the important factors in the career transition of Iranian immigrants: a) Attitude, (b) Laws and Policies, (c) Networking and Making Connections, (d) Friends, (e) English Language, (f) Educational Background, (g) Professional Guidance, (h) Family, (i) Canadian Experience, (j) Level of Cultural Competence, (k) Finances, (l) Attitudes Towards Newcomers, and (m) Employer’s or Supervisor’s Work Ethics. Implications of findings in counselling and program development for immigrants and directions for future research are discussed.
Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, R. Vojdanijahromi.

This research study was approved by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board on May 26, 2015 (H15-00757).
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of Research Problem

Canada receives thousands of immigrants from different parts of the world every year. From 2006 to 2011 alone, more than 240,000 immigrants entered Canada as permanent residents each year (Chui & Flanders, 2013). In 2011, Canada had the highest proportion of immigrants among the G8 countries (a group of eight highly industrialized nations), with 6,775,800 immigrants comprising 20.6% of the country’s total population (Chui & Flanders, 2013).

Immigrants face many challenges after arrival in the host country, and employment is one of the biggest (Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008). Between 2006 and 2011, 58.6% of immigrants to Canada were between 25 and 54 years old and belonged to the core working age group (Chui & Flanders, 2013), which further indicates the importance of employment for them. Many immigrants leave their home countries hoping for safety, success, and a better future for themselves and their families, but usually face various challenges in their career transition (Elez, 2001). Career transition has been defined as entering a new career while leaving another career role, identity, or orientation (Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey, & Niles, 2013). For many immigrants, the career transition experience is not satisfying. They are permitted to enter Canada because of their education and work experience, but are directed into manual work after entering the country. Deskilling refers to a loss of skills and knowledge resulting from underemployment or unemployment (Bauder, 2003). According to Mojab (1999), one example of deskillling can be seen in the many Chinese immigrant women who work in low-status, low-paid, and part time jobs.
When it comes to the career transition of immigrants, there seem to be three major gaps in the existing body of literature. First, the career development of immigrants has not been well researched. In fact, a study looking at four major career journals found that only 0.01% of articles published between 1990 and 2010 addressed the career development of immigrants (Flores, Hsieh, & Chiao, 2011). The second gap in the literature is that not much research has been done on what helps immigrants in their career transition. There has been a lot of research on factors that hinder the career transition of immigrants in their host country, which has shown that the major obstacles are (a) their lack of Canadian experience and (b) non-recognition of their foreign credentials along with a demand for language proficiency in English or French (Kassan & Nakamura, 2013; Sinacore, Mikhail, Kassan, & Lerner, 2009; Vicente, 1998). However, as mentioned above, only a few studies have looked at what helps immigrant in their career transition. Last but not least, very little research has been done on the career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada.

In the remainder of this section, I highlight the importance of filling the existing gaps in the literature. I start by elaborating on the importance of conducting more research on the career development of immigrants and on factors that help immigrants in their career transition. I conclude by explaining why it is important to explore what factors help or hinder the career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada.

There is a need to develop theories on the career development of immigrants because it is often different from the career development of non-immigrants (Elez, 2001). Immigrants face unique challenges that can affect their career development and career transition. Traditional models of career development, which conceptualize the career development of individuals as linear, do not take into account the unique impact of unpredictable contextual factors in
immigrants’ lives (Elez, 2001). In order to develop career theories for immigrants, it is crucial to conduct studies to gain insight into how immigrants experience career transition and what factors help and hinder their career transition.

Moreover, although it is important to continue exploring hindering factors in the career transition of immigrants, it is equally important to do more research on factors that help immigrants in their career transition to better understand this complex and important issue. In the area of career counselling, knowledge about what helps immigrants in their career transition might enhance the counselling relationship and outcomes by encouraging counsellors to discard some of their assumptions when working with immigrants. Career counsellors’ stereotypes, attitudes, and ethnocentric notions when working with immigrant clients can lead to damaging and unethical service (Yakushko et al., 2008). Counsellors should not make generic assumptions about how immigrants will adjust to the new culture because the process of adjustment is unique for every individual (Lee & Westwood, 1996).

Elez (2001) has suggested that viewing immigrants only through the lens of challenges and barriers can contribute to further stereotyping and discrimination against immigrants. Focusing solely on hindering factors might bias researchers and counsellors to assume that certain factors always act as hindering factors, whereas studies that also focus on helping factors might suggest these factors can be helpful for some clients. For instance, looking at findings from the research on hindering factor might lead to the assumption that foreign experiences and skills are not helpful for finding a job in Canada. However, in a qualitative study on helping factors in the career transition of successful Chinese immigrants, Amundson, Yeung, Sun, Chan, and Cheng (2011) found that more than half of their participants commented on the usefulness of having skills from their home country that were in demand in Canada.
Aside from being helpful in the field of counselling, research on helping and hindering factors in career transition can be valuable in developing employment programs for immigrants and making policies that profit the Canadian economy. Not only can unsuccessful career transition damage the psychological well-being of immigrants (Shuval, 2000), but also it can harm the Canadian economy. For instance, not recognizing foreign education and credentials costs the Canadian economy $15 billion annually, based on 1996 dollars (Reitz, 2001). Skilled labour shortages, or lack of labour with the right skills, are seriously harming different areas of Canadian industry. One of the ways to solve the shortage is to utilize and benefit from immigrants’ skills, which requires the development of policies and programs to facilitate immigrants’ career transition. Although there are currently many programs to integrate immigrants into the Canadian economy, many of these programs are ad hoc (Alboim, 2002). Research on the factors that help and hinder immigrants in their career transition can provide a more solid foundation on which these programs can be built and ultimately increase their efficacy.

As mentioned earlier, the career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada is an area that has not been well researched. According to Statistics Canada’s 2006 census, over 90,000 Iranians lived in Canada in 2006 (Zietsma, 2009). Given the large number of Iranian immigrants in Canada, more research needs to be done to explore what helps and what hinders them in their career transition. Learning about factors that help or hinder their career transition can contribute to the small, yet developing, body of literature in this area.

**Purpose of the Study**

Given the aforementioned importance of research on factors that help and hinder immigrants in their career transition and the paucity of research on Iranian immigrants’ career
transition in Canada, the purpose of the current study was to explore factors that have helped or hindered Iranian immigrants in their career transition in Canada.

**Research Questions**

The main research questions of this study were as follows:

1. What factors have Iranian immigrants found helpful in the process of career transition?
2. What factors have Iranian immigrants found hindering in the process of career transition?
3. What would Iranian immigrants like to see happen with respect to their career transition in Canada?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Immigration in Canada

**Historical perspectives.** Canada is a country with a long history of immigration built on the premises of liberal values and nation-building (Simmons, 2010). A large territory with more than 33 million inhabitants, Canada is host to immigrants from many parts of the world. Nearly one-fifth of the Canadian population was born outside the country and, with the exception of Indigenous peoples, the rest descended from immigrant families (Simmons, 2010). In 2011, 94.8% of foreign-born immigrants lived in four provinces of Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec and Alberta (Zietsma, 2009).

After Confederation in 1867, Canada was no longer seen as a British colony, which led the government to make policies to attract immigrants from Europe, the United States, and Great Britain. This resulted in a massive flow of immigrants that began to build Canada as the multiethnic nation we see today (Simmons, 2010). However, Canada has not been always been welcoming to immigrants. The rise in immigration collapsed in 1914 with World War I and led to the exclusion and deportation of many immigrants. After World War I, Canada established new policies regarding immigration in order to attract immigrants from countries other than “enemy countries.” However, this postwar immigration change was cut short by the Depression in 1930s (Simmons, 2010). During periods of economic hardship, immigrants are viewed as threats to employment, political stability, and even to national values. By 1935, due to a scarcity of jobs and the poor economic situation, more than 28,000 immigrants were deported. World War II, combined with the Depression in 1930, led to the exclusion and deportation of thousands of immigrants from Canada. After World War II, immigration to Canada resumed again but still with the image of Canada as a European nation and within the ethnocentric framework of “White
Canada.” However, with the increasing demand for more skilled and professional workers and the drying up of Europe as an immigration source, Canada abandoned this White Canada policy in 1962 and adopted the multicultural framework still seen today. Within this multicultural framework, Canada now receives immigrants from many parts of the world and is considered an immigrant-friendly nation.

Cameron (2004) has noted that Canadian immigration policy has been greatly influenced by an imagined future. Until 1962, the dominant image of Canada was that of a European nation, which led to a focus on Europe as a source of immigration. After 1962, Canada’s imagined future was to become a leading power on the world stage. This led to an expansion of the labour force through the immigration of skilled workers from many countries, not only Europe. From 1989 onwards, Canada’s imagined future has been that of a competitive niche player in the global economy, which has led to the adoption of immigration policies that are entrepreneurial in nature. These policies are geared towards immigrants who contribute to national productivity and require less support from the government. To achieve these goals, policies emphasize competitive skills to increase the number of immigrants who have higher work skills or capital and also good knowledge of English or French. Furthermore, these policies are designed to increase the proportion of economic immigrants, who are professional or business workers or entrepreneurial immigrants, and decrease the proportion of family class immigrants, who are not chosen based on their skills or capital (Cameron, 2004).

Immigration as a source of labour. Canada’s immigration policies over the past hundred years have been characterized as continuous, changing, and generous (Avery, 1995). According to Avery (1995), Canada’s immigration policies have been continuously directed towards cheap labour, have changed during times of crisis, and have been generous in number of
immigrants received when compared to other countries. Canada has historically used immigration as an important tool to develop the economy and grow the labour force (Alboim, 2002) and is still dependent on immigration for development and nation-building (Kennedy & Chen, 2012). From 2003 to 2012, the highest percentage of immigrants fell into the category of economic immigrants, the majority of which are skilled workers (Government of Canada, 2014).

Although immigration policies are oriented to help Canada achieve national economic goals (Cameron, 2004), the actual statistics on immigrants’ employment and earnings do not seem very promising. The rate of employment for immigrants, some of whom were selected because of their education and higher skills (Alboim, 2002), substantially declined between 1986 and 1996 (Reitz, 2001). Recent immigrants have lower rates of employment and significantly lower initial earnings compared to the previous cohort of immigrants and Canadian-born residents (Alboim, 2002), and over half of recent immigrants are not working in their specialized field (Chen, 2008). Underemployed or unemployed, these immigrants have a limited likelihood of career advancement (Chen, 2008). This is despite the fact that the proportion of principal applicants to an economic class of immigration, such as the skilled worker category, who have a university degree is significantly higher than that found for other immigrant categories and Canadian-born residents.

Although both Canada and immigrants hope that immigration will help the Canadian economy, statistics suggest that neither Canada nor immigrants are benefiting fully from the skills that immigrants bring to this country (Alboim, 2002), which could lead to a further increase in the deskilling of immigrants. A longitudinal survey has shown that between two and four years after arrival, 54% of immigrants are still looking for work, and among people who do work, 60% are in positions for which they are overqualified (Government of Canada, 2007). In
2006, immigrants who were in Canada for five years or less had much higher unemployment rates compared to their Canadian-born counterparts across Canada’s largest census metropolitan areas: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. In Vancouver, the rate of unemployment for these immigrants was three times the rate for Canadian-born people (Government of Canada, 2007).

**Iranian immigrants in Canada.** Over the last 40 years, a large number of Iranians have left Iran to settle in different countries across the world. In Canada, Iran was one of the top 10 source countries for newcomers from 2006 to 2011 (Chui & Flanders, 2013). It rose from eighth place in 2008 to fourth place in 2011 (Chagnon, 2013). The first dramatic rise in the number of Iranian immigrants to Canada since 1981 happened from 1986 to 1991, when the number of Iranian immigrants tripled (Chagnon, 2013) In the period from 2003 to 2012, more than 5,000 Iranians immigrated to Canada every year as permanent residents (Government of Canada, 2012).

Although employment issues are important to consider for all immigrant groups, there are certain factors that make the issue of employment particularly significant for Iranian immigrants. The first factor is the age of the immigrants. The median age for Iranian immigrants to Canada in 2010 was 32.6 years (Chagnon, 2013). This means that half of Iranian immigrants who immigrated to Canada in 2010 were above 32.6 years of age; with the exception of elderly people, people with disabilities, or other special cases, many of these people needed to find employment to support themselves and possibly families as well.

Another fact that highlights the importance of employment for Iranian immigrants is that many of them enter Canada under an economic class category. In 2001, 2010, and 2011, more than half of Iranian immigrants came to Canada under an economic class category (Chagnon, 2013), which includes skilled workers and business immigrants who are allowed to immigrate
with their spouses, partners, and dependents. Although exact statistics are not available, this might mean that many Iranians come to practice professional skills or engage in business, which further indicates the importance of employment for this population. Furthermore, in 2010, 51.4% of all new immigrants to Canada were men (Chagnon, 2013). Given the great emphasis that Iranian culture places on men’s employment as a measure of success, employment can act as a very powerful factor in the lives of Iranian immigrants.

**Immigration and Career Transition**

Immigration is a highly stressful life experience and can affect immigrants’ health and functioning (Yakushko et al., 2008). One aspect of people’s lives that is significantly affected by immigration is their career. In addition to other cross-cultural barriers, many immigrants endure unemployment or underemployment in Canada (Kennedy & Chen, 2012), forcing them to deal with the challenges of moving into a new culture and the challenges of unpredictable employment opportunities (Koert, Borgen, & Amundson, 2011). Immigrant narratives in Canada have also shown that immigrants face two types of barriers when it comes to employment: barriers faced by all people in Canada as well as barriers faced only by immigrants (Hiebert, 2009).

**Psychosocial impacts of unemployment or underemployment.** Occupation is one of the essential factors in the cultural transitioning of immigrants (Sinacore et al., 2009) and an important step in their resettlement because it provides opportunities to integrate socially and culturally (Suto, 2009). Employment can facilitate immigrants’ adjustment and decrease their isolation by providing an opportunity to acquire language skills, make new friends, learn about the culture, and consider their transition successful (Yakushko et al., 2008). Many individuals do
not gain a real sense of resettlement without re-establishing a vocational life or at least being in the process of steadily rebuilding their vocational life (Chen, 2008).

Unemployment or underemployment can cause frustration (Westwood & Ishiyama, 1991) and negatively impact the mental health of immigrants (Dean & Wilson, 2009; Jafari, Baharlou, & Mathias, 2010). Because an individual’s career status is the most important part of personal identity in many cultures (Chen, 2008), the success of a career transition can seriously impact an individual’s hope and motivation (Kennedy & Chen, 2012), sense of identity, and even self-worth (Hiebert, 2009; Lee & Westwood, 1996). Relocation by itself has a significant impact on one’s identity (Ishiyama, 1995); this impact combined with the impact of unemployment can seriously affect the mental health of immigrants.

Studies on the mental health impacts of unemployment and underemployment among immigrants in Canada have shown that underemployment or unemployment can lead to higher levels of stress (Dean & Wilson, 2009; Jafari et al., 2010). In a study of 22 recent immigrants to Canada, Dean and Wilson (2009) identified three pathways through which underemployment or unemployment affected the mental health of immigrants: lack of income, loss of employment-related skills, and loss of social status. Stress from underemployment or unemployment can also negatively impact other family members due to the anger and frustration expressed by the struggling person, resulting in increased tension in the home environment.

In a study by Jafari et al. (2010), Iranian immigrants in Canada reported employment as one of the factors impacting their mental health and reported occupation as one of the two top priorities in adapting to Canadian culture. The results of this study also showed that Iranian women in Canada were doing better in finding jobs in their field compared to Iranian men. Given the fact that 51.4% of immigrants to Canada in 2010 were men (Chagnon, 2013) and the role of
men as breadwinners is important in Iranian culture, unemployment or underemployment can cause “role shock,” seriously threatening the mental health of Iranian immigrant men. Role shock refers to stress and frustration stemming from the difference between a person’s ideal or expected role and the role that person actually plays in another culture (Byrnes, 1966). It happens when people lose a social role, feel ambiguity regarding their role in society, or accept a role that is inconsistent with their self-concept (Winkelman, 1994).

Given the importance of employment in immigrants’ lives, it is crucial to explore what factors help or hinder immigrants in their career transition. In the following sections, I discuss findings from studies that have explored hindering factors in the career transition of immigrants. I also discuss findings from studies that have explored helping as well as hindering factors in the career transition of immigrants.

**Hindering factors.** A great deal of research has been done on barriers to the career transition of immigrants. According to Aycan and Berry (1996), four factors hinder the integration of immigrants into the Canadian labour force: (a) a lack of recognition of foreign educational and occupational credentials, (b) the requirement that foreign-trained immigrants go through expensive and lengthy professional examinations that are sometimes culturally biased and unfairly administered, (c) the weakness of language programs in preparing immigrants for the workplace, and (d) the unrealistic and challenging demand for Canadian work experience.

Other variables, such as lack of knowledge about the Canadian labour market and available resources, lack of clear career goals (Amundson et al., 2011), and unfamiliarity with the new culture (Chen, 2008), have also been mentioned as barriers. It has also been suggested that the host culture’s view of immigrants might act as a barrier as well as a source of stress and frustration for immigrants (Lee & Westwood, 1996; Yakushko et al., 2008). Lee and Westwood
(1996) suggested that covert racism might arise when people in the host culture view immigrants as competitors to jobs, which might lead to unfriendly behaviour by people in the host country. Furthermore, employers might be reluctant to hire immigrants if they believe that immigrants should not be in positions of power or fear that hiring immigrants will cause resentment among other workers. Lee and Westwood also noted “interaction fatigue” (1996, p. 33) as a challenge. Because immigrants are not familiar with the cultural norms of the new culture, people in the host culture might find interaction with them to be tiring, troublesome, and superficial and avoid it. Some studies that provide further support for the existence of these barriers are discussed below.

Hiebert (1998) conducted a series of focus groups with people who had different perspectives on processes of immigration and resettlement in five districts of greater Vancouver: East Vancouver, Kerrisdale, Richmond, Surrey-Delta, and the Tri-Cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody). The focus groups included service providers such as those working in community centres and schools, members of the host community, young adults who were children of an earlier generation of immigrants, and new immigrants. One focus group was made up of recently immigrated women. The three major themes that emerged from the narratives of immigrants and children of immigrants were changing family relations, the labour market, and engagement with Canadian society. Hiebert described immigrant narratives about employment as “worry that was frequently mixed with anger” (p. 22). Immigrants faced two general types of barriers to employment: those common to all Canadians, such as recession, and those that were only experienced by immigrants. Among the second type of barriers, lack of language skills was especially large. Some participants noted that being fluent in English was not enough because sometimes unaccented English was demanded. Other barriers mentioned by participants were
nonrecognition of their credentials, their lack of Canadian experience, and their lack of knowledge of the “unwritten rules” (Hiebert, 2008, p. 25) of the Canadian labour market, such as how to do well in job interviews, build an attractive resume, and activate networks for jobs that are rarely advertised. Hiebert also found that these barriers can negatively affect immigrants’ sense of self-worth. Several participants in the focus groups stated that they were “nothing” (Hiebert, 2008, p. 26) because they could not find employment. Some participants attributed the nonrecognition of their credentials to racism, believing that credentials obtained in Europe and the United States were more readily accepted than similar credentials obtained in other countries. Finally, many participants felt there was a discrepancy between the Canadian immigration selection system, which gives points to immigrants based on their jobs and skills, and the Canadian labour market, which does not recognize many of these skills.

In another study, Kassan and Nakamura (2013) explored the experiences of individuals 19 years of age or older who had immigrated to Canada with their same-sex partner of a different nationality. In-depth interviews with 17 individuals revealed that 12 of them had experienced career-related challenges after their arrival in Canada. These challenges fell into these three categories: their lack of networks, the nontransferability of their credentials, and the presence of discrimination. The main issue raised by seven participants was their lack of professional networks and connections. These participants reported they did not have any professional relationships because they did not know many people in Canada, which made it harder to secure employment or obtain interviews. Four participants reported that they found transferring their educational and occupational credentials to Canada very complex, costly, and time-consuming. Some participants also reported being discriminated against due to homophobia. Some participants saw employers’ demand for Canadian experience as discrimination. These
participants felt employers were being dishonest and did not want to employ them because they were not Canadian permanent residents or citizens.

In a phenomenological study, Sinacore et al. (2009) examined the educational, occupational, and social integration of 31 Jewish immigrants in Canadian society. The participants came from Argentina, Israel, France, and the former Soviet Union. The results revealed that a lack of educational equivalency, lack of recognition of foreign work experience, language barriers, discrimination, insider-outsider sentiments, and the structure of the community were common impediments to cultural transitioning.

**Helping factors.** As mentioned earlier, there is paucity of research on factors that help immigrants in their career transition. Despite the challenges faced by many immigrants, there are those who successfully deal with the transition (Amundson et al., 2011; Koert et al., 2011; Zheng, 2010). Studies that have explored helping factors in the career transition of immigrants have shown that internal factors and external factors can help individuals (Amundson et al., 2011; Elez, 2001; Koert et al., 2011; Zheng, 2010). In most of these studies, researchers have used the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) to explore helping and hindering factors. Given the fact that ECIT is the method that I used in my research, I discuss the results of these studies here.

For the category of internal helping factors, ECIT studies have indicated that positive personality values and attitudes such as confidence, persistence, and positivity can play a crucial role in successful career transition of immigrants (Amundson et al., 2011; Koert et al., 2011; Zheng, 2010). The importance of attitudes and self-evaluation in the occupational success of immigrants had been previously noted by Lee and Westwood (1996), who claimed threats to positive self-evaluation, unconditional self-acceptance, and self-confidence are deterrents to
successful employment because negative attitudes can be communicated inadvertently to a potential employer. Other helping factors identified by immigrants were retraining, networking, and obtaining local credentials (Amundson et al., 2011; Koert et al., 2011; Zheng, 2010).

Support from family, friends, and colleagues was also mentioned as a helping factor by many participants (Amundson et al., 2011; Koert et al., 2011; Zheng, 2010). Coming to a new country and adjusting to new cultural norms might be overwhelming and threaten immigrants’ sense of comfort and security, which might hinder job searching or job maintenance (Lee & Westwood, 1996). Receiving support from relatives and colleagues can help individuals by providing them with feelings of security and comfort. Having positive relationships can also help individuals restore their lost validation network. According to Ishiyama (1995), a validation network is a set of positively perceived relationships, objects, activities, and places that are significant sources of validation for individuals. It can be threatened by major transitions, such as moving to a new culture. People often try to compensate for a lost validation network. Supportive family, friends, and colleagues might facilitate an individual’s career transition by acting as sources of validation.

Another source of help identified by participants was government and community resources (Koert et al., 2011; Zheng, 2010) such as access to counselling, free community programs, English language study, job-related workshops (Koert et al. 2011), and services offered by agencies focused on immigrants (Zheng, 2010). Lee and Westwood (1996) suggested that government services and settlement agencies can help immigrants by providing practical information about how to meet basic needs.

Another category of helping factors identified in these studies was supportive work environments. Having good relationships with the boss and colleagues, a flexible schedule, on-
job training, and vacation days were reported by participants as helpful (Amundson et al., 2011; Koert et al., 2011; Zheng, 2010). Having a supportive work environment can decrease feelings of isolation and alienation by allowing immigrants to feel accepted and respected (Lee & Westwood, 1996). Participants in two studies also reported that self-care was helpful in dealing with changes that affected their careers (Koert et al., 2011; Zheng, 2010).

**Conclusion**

Given the review of the literature, career transition seems to be a significant aspect of the integration of immigrants in the host country and can have a significant impact on the psychosocial well-being of immigrants. Research suggests that factors such as lack of Canadian experience, lack of language proficiency, and nonrecognition of foreign credentials can hinder the career transition of Iranian immigrants, whereas factors such as positive attitude, family, friends, and government and community resources can help immigrants in their career transition.

A large number of Iranians have immigrated to Canada in recent years. The demographics and the cultural values of Iranian immigrants suggest that career transition might be especially important in this group. Given the very small number of studies on the career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada, my intent was to explore the factors that help or hinder Iranian immigrants in their career transition. It is my hope that my endeavour will provide policy makers, counsellors, and immigrants with a better understanding of the career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada and will ultimately strengthen their approach to this matter.
Chapter 3: Method

Research Paradigm

I believe that a person’s experience of a particular event is significantly influenced by previous experiences, beliefs, biases, and expectations. A researcher is no exception. Despite all efforts at objectivity, researchers bring their own expectations, assumptions, and subjectivity into their research. For these reasons, I believe that in order to achieve a better understanding of a phenomenon, it is crucial for researchers to learn about different participants’ experiences and at the same time be aware of personal perceptions, biases, and prior assumptions and how they might affect the process of a study. In other words, I see different research on a specific phenomenon as snapshots of that phenomenon from different angles and do not believe that any methodology or any angle of looking at a phenomenon is more true or superior to others. Using the same metaphor, I also believe that in order to obtain better snapshots, researchers must pay attention to why they choose to look at a phenomenon from a specific angle and how their personal experiences might influence the lens through which they capture these snapshots. As such, I position myself as what has been described by Ryan (2006) as a postpositivist. In particular, I do not assume that the role of researchers is to always test participants and believe that researchers must take a learning role (Ryan, 2006). In other words, researchers must be aware of the “common humanity” (Ryan, 2006) between themselves and the participants and try to construct a narrative together with the participants instead of conducting tests on the participants. Furthermore, as a postpositivist, I believe that the goal of the research is not to find one overall truth but rather to recognize and explore the complex nature of human experiences and avoid dogmatic or authoritative stances (Ryan, 2006). As a postpositivist, I also believe that
dualistic thinking, with narrow definitions of “correct” techniques cannot capture the complexity of human experiences (Ryan, 2006).

Postpositivism is a research paradigm that emphasizes exploration of meanings to address real-world problems and obtaining a full picture of phenomena through different sources. Furthermore, postpositivism recognizes the influence of the personal experiences of researchers and encourages them to balance personal and professional experiences and theoretical interpretations during research (Henderson, 2011).

I believe that people cannot detach themselves from their lived experiences in the process of research, and researchers must acknowledge this truth by reflecting on how personal motivations, assumptions, and life experiences shape research endeavours. Given my belief in the importance of a researcher’s life story, experiences, and beliefs, I believe it is crucial that I, as a researcher, provide a short description of my life experiences and beliefs in this section. I am originally from Iran and immigrated to Canada with my family in my late teens. Having lived in Canada as an immigrant for more than 10 years, I have witnessed the significant amount of stress that some immigrants experience during their career transition and the enormous resiliency demonstrated by many of them in their journeys. I have witnessed the devastating effects of loss of career identity on my closest relatives, especially male relatives, and their ability to slowly develop flexibility and creativity to find a new career identity. Most Iranian immigrants that I have come across have experienced periods of career identity loss immediately after arrival, followed by a period of gradually recovery of their career identity.

As an immigrant, however, I have noticed that there is often more focus on the struggles of immigrants in their career transition than on their strengths, accomplishments, and ability to set and reach goals. I have also noticed that in telling their stories of career transition, many
immigrants focus on the challenges and the obstacles they have faced without discussing the qualities and factors that helped them overcome those obstacles. As an immigrant, I believe that seeing the career transition of immigrants solely through the lens of challenges will prevent exploration, identification, and investment in factors that help immigrants through their career transition.

As a counsellor trainee, I have learned that focusing exclusively on the problems and the challenges of clients and not paying attention to events and personal characteristics that have helped clients in difficult times can result in disempowerment and hinder therapeutic progress. I believe that not paying attention to helpful factors in the career transition of immigrants can also lead to disempowerment of immigrants and consequently hinder their career transition further. For these reasons, I believe it is crucial to replace the challenge-saturated view of the career transition of immigrants with a more realistic view, which captures challenges as well as helpful events, personal qualities, and societal factors that help many immigrants eventually find a career in Canada. For the benefit of immigrants, some assumptions about the career transition of immigrants must be re-examined, and some long and commonly held views about the careers of immigrants must be replaced by a more realistic view, which captures the complex and multifaceted nature of immigrants’ career transition.

**Research Design**

In order to achieve the aforementioned goals, I chose to conduct a qualitative study to find answer to my research questions. Qualitative research focuses on the meanings that participants hold, instead of focusing on the meaning that the researchers bring to the study (Creswell, 2013). In qualitative research, themes, categories, and patterns are first built inductively (from the bottom up) by organizing findings into “abstract units of information”
(Creswell, 2013, p. 186). In the next stage, using deductive thinking, researchers go back to the data to find out whether more evidence can support each theme or whether there is a need to gather more information. Another characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher tries to obtain a holistic and complex picture of a problem or issue by learning about multiple perspectives, identifying different factors involved in a situation, and drawing a larger picture (Creswell, 2013).

The specific qualitative method that I used for my research was ECIT, which has been built on the foundations of Flanagan’s (1954) Critical Incident Technique (CIT). In this section, I first provide an overview of the origins and evolution of CIT. I then discuss the ECIT method and its appropriateness for this research.

**Origins of CIT.** CIT was developed for use in research on the Aviation Psychology Program in the United State Air Forces during World War II (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005). It was used for the selection and classification of aircrew. Later, psychologists such as Flanagan (1954) developed it further to determine factors contributing to job success in different industries. In his landmark article about CIT, Flanagan highlighted other uses for CIT, such as determination of motivational attitudes, performance measurement, and counselling and psychotherapy. Pointing out to the method’s consistency with the values and skills of counselling psychologists, Woolsey (1986) later advocated for the use of CIT in counselling psychology research. Since then, CIT has been widely used to study psychological constructs and experiences (Butterfield et al., 2005).

According to Butterfield et al. (2005), what distinguishes CIT from other qualitative methods is (a) its focus on critical incidents that help or hinder the effective performance of some activity or experience of a specific event, (b) its roots in organizational psychology, (c) its use of
interviews as the primary tool for data collection, (d) its development of categories based on the data and determination of the generality or specificity of categories, and (e) the narrative form of its categories through self-descriptions or narrative titles.

There are five major steps in conducting CIT (Butterfield et al., 2005): (a) establishing the goals of the activity being studied, (b) establishing plans and specifications, (c) collecting the data, (d) analyze the data, and (e) reporting the findings.

**Evolution of CIT.** Butterfield et al. (2005) have described the evolution of CIT since the 1950s by pointing out four major departures from Flanagan’s (1954) original vision. The first departure is using CIT for studying psychological experiences and constructs despite the initial emphasis on studying behaviours. The second major departure is a stronger emphasis on retrospective self-reports rather than on direct observations of behaviours. Butterfield et al. (2005) have suggested that this change might have occurred to make CIT less labour intensive and expensive. The third departure relates to how the data is analyzed. According to Butterfield et al. (2005), many researchers indicate that they followed Flanagan’s method for data analysis, but do not describe their procedure or describe procedures that are not consistent with Flanagan’s method for data analysis. The fourth departure is the stronger emphasis on using quantitative methods to ensure the credibility of findings. Butterfield et al. (2005) have argued that although this shift might be useful in other fields, it might be more appropriate to step out of this positivist thinking and adopt a more postmodern qualitative approach in counselling psychology and in establishing the credibility of CIT results.

As mentioned above, although CIT was not originally developed for this purpose, it was later used in counselling and psychotherapy. Woolsey (1986) highlighted the characteristics of CIT that make it a valuable tool in counselling and psychotherapy research, including its
usefulness in capturing the qualities and attributes of an incident and exploring turning points. It can be useful in the exploratory stage of research as well as the stage of building models and theories.

**ECIT.** ECIT was developed by adding to and modifying Flanagan’s (1954) original method (Butterfield, Maglio, Borgen, & Amundson, 2009). These enhancements include (a) adding nine credibility checks to provide information about the accuracy of the data, (b) starting the interview with a contextualizing question to gain some background data, and (c) adding wish-list items to gain information about people, programs, and other factors that were not present at the time of a participant’s experience but which the participant believes would have been useful.

ECIT has five steps: (a) establishing the objectives of the study, (b) making plans and setting specifications, (c) collecting data, (d) analyzing the data, and (e) interpreting the results and reporting the findings (Butterfield et al., 2005). The nine credibility checks are part of the last step and are discussed in detail in the data analysis section.

According to Butterfield et al. (2009), ECIT is an exploratory technique that is useful in learning about what helps or hinders in a particular experience. Furthermore, it is useful when the focus of research is on little-understood events and factors. Given the focus of my research, the lack of research in this area, and exploratory nature of research at this stage, ECIT was an appropriate method for this study.

**Ethical considerations.** The purpose and procedures of the study were approved by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board. All the participants in this study voluntarily participated in this research after receiving an email containing the information letter (see Appendix A) and consent form (see Appendix B), which I sent to them after a brief
phone conversation in which I asked some preliminary questions to assess whether they met the participation criteria for this study. They were given 1 week from the date they received the information letter and consent form to contact me to participate in the study.

Because the topic of immigration and career transition can be sensitive, I prepared a comprehensive list of counselling resources for the participants (see Appendix C). Furthermore, I conducted all interviews with the informed consent of the participants. The consent form explained the purpose of the study, the study procedures, steps taken to respect and protect participants’ confidentiality, and how the results might be reported (in the form of a thesis, a conference presentation, or a journal article).

**Participant selection criteria.** The inclusion criteria in the study were that individuals had to have immigrated to Canada within the last 10 years, be over the age of 19 years, have left a career in Iran and started a new career in Canada, be able to communicate in English, and be willing to talk about the experience of career transition in Canada. For the purposes of this study, immigration was defined as moving with the goal of settling and residing in Canada.

**Recruitment procedure.** Recruitment posters (see Appendix D) for the study were placed in multiple locations in British Columbia’s Lower Mainland including different faculties and buildings at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University and Persian restaurants and shops. Furthermore, posters for the study were placed in multicultural agencies such as Mosaic, Options, and Greater Vancouver Counselling and Education Society. An advertisement was also posted in a very popular Persian magazine published in North Vancouver. I also recruited participants through word of mouth and snowballing. I informed my friends and relatives about the study and the participation criteria and asked them to inform their
friends and relatives. I also asked participants to inform other individuals whom they thought would meet the criteria and might be interested.

When contacted by phone by a prospective participant, I discussed the purpose of the study and the participation criteria and asked them some preliminary questions to assess whether they met the criteria. I then sent the information letter to them via email and gave them 1 week to review the material and contact me again if they decided to participate in the study.

**Informed consent.** All participants were sent the information letter and consent form prior to the interview. During the first of two interviews with each participant, I read and explained the consent form fully to ensure the individual understood and accepted the study procedures. I then asked if the participant had any questions or concerns and answered questions to the best of my knowledge. Before starting the interview, I reminded participants that they could ask me to stop recording at any time and could stop participating without any penalties.

**Honoraria.** To show appreciation for their time and participation, I gave each participant a $10 Starbucks gift card and entered the name of each participant into a draw to win $50. One month after the 11th interview (at which point data exhaustiveness was achieved and no future interviews were scheduled), I used Random Picker software to enter a code for each participant (made up of the first letter of each participant’s first name along with a participant number; e.g., M1 or N2) to pick the winner. On the phone I contacted the winner, who opted to receive the money via email bank transfer. I sent $50 to the winner via email bank transfer.

**Participant demographics.** Table 1 shows the participant demographics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant number</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Educational background</th>
<th>Year of immigration to Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Master of Science</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Office administration, counselling Master of Family Therapy</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Program assistant, student BA English, MA (thesis left undefended)</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Martial art instructor</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Business analyst</td>
<td>Master of Science, Master of Business Administration</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>Master of Arts in Psychology</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Design, sales associate Master of Industrial Design</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Psychologist Master of Arts in Psychology</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Software engineer Software engineering</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>Engineer Building Envelope Engineer (Building Science)</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Student Master of Electrical and Computer Engineering</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eleven participants, including five males and six females, participated in the study. They ranged in age from 29 years old to 47 years old. The average age was 35.5 years. The participants had immigrated to Canada between 2007 and 2015. All of the female participants were married, two of the male participants were single, and one male participant was engaged. In other words, eight out of 11 participants (72.7%) were married.

All the participants had at least a bachelor’s degree, which demonstrates that they had all completed university. In fact, eight of the 11 participants (72%) had completed a master’s degree and three of the participants were in the process of completing a second master’s degree in Canada. The participants varied in terms of occupation and worked in different fields. Some were engineers, some worked in administrative jobs, and some identified as students for their primary occupation. The levels of education of the participants in this study demonstrates the value placed on education in the Iranian culture. Educational success is one of the important measures of success in Iranian culture and children are encouraged from an early age to focus on academic achievement. Medicine and engineering are two professions which are highly respected in Iranian culture. Among Iranian males, engineering profession has historically been regarded as a prestigious profession. Interestingly, four out of the five males in my study were engineers. All females in this study had completed university degrees, which demonstrates a trend towards achieving educational success and economic independence among young Iranian females in the past decade.

Data Analysis

In this section, I review the five steps in conducting ECIT as discussed by Butterfield et al. (2009) and explain how I implemented them in my research.
Step 1: Establishing the objective of the study. The first step in ECIT is to establish the objective of the activity being studied (Butterfield et al., 2009). The objective of my study was to learn about the career transitions of Iranian immigrants in Canada. I used interviews to obtain some contextual information, explore the helping and hindering factors in the participants’ career transitions, and learn about the factors that participants wished were available to them when they were going through their career transitions.

Step 2: Making plans and setting specifications. The second step in ECIT is making plans and setting specifications, which includes making an interview guide (Butterfield et al., 2009). My interview guide (see Appendix E) included interview questions, the date and place of the interview, the interview start time and end time, the name of the interviewer, and the name of the interviewee.

In line with the basic principles of ECIT, the interviews had three phases with three types of questions. Contextualization questions included “Can you tell me a little bit about your experience of career transition when you came to Canada?” Questions to explore helping and hindering factors included “Think of a time when a specific factor really helped in your career transition. Tell me in what ways exactly did this factor help you in your career transition? What about that factor made it so helpful?” A similar question was used to ask about hindering factors: “Think of a time when a specific factor really hindered your career transition. Tell me in what ways exactly did that factor hinder your career transition? What about that factor made it so hindering?” Finally, questions to elicit wish-list items included “Could you tell me what other things, if present, would have helped you in your career transition?”
I also gave a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix F) to participants at the beginning of each interview to obtain a richer understanding of the participants’ stories and a better understanding of the generalizability and limitations of this study.

**Step 3: Data collection.** The third step in conducting ECIT is collecting data. Butterfield et al. (2009) have suggested that the most effective method for collecting ECIT data is in-person interviews. I conducted in-person interviews with 10 of the 11 participants and a phone interview with one participant who lived in Ontario. All the audio files from the interviews were given a number to protect the confidentiality of the participants. After removing all of the participants’ identifying information and third-party information, and assigning a code number to each interview, I sent the audio files to a transcription company through a password-protected temporary online link. To take an extra step in ensuring the confidentiality of the participants, the transcription company signed a nondisclosure agreement was.

**Step 4: Data analysis.** The fourth step in conducting ECIT involves data analysis. This step includes (a) determining the frame of reference and how the data will be used, (b) formulating categories, and (c) determining the level of specificity or generality of the findings (Butterfield et al., 2009).

**Determining the frame of reference.** My hope was that the data from my research could be used in counselling psychology and more specifically in career counselling with immigrants. I also hoped that the results could be used in developing and improving career programs for Iranian immigrants and immigrants in general.

**Formulating categories.** After receiving the transcripts from the transcription company, I printed them and placed them in a binder. To start identifying critical incidents, I randomly chose three transcripts. Before reading and listening to an interview, I created a Word document with
three headings: helping incidents, hindering incidents, and wish-list items. When I was going through an interview, I typed verbatim quotes under one of the three headings and wrote the participant number in parentheses. I classified incidents as critical when the participant described them as being important in their career transition or when the participant provided an example of how an incident helped or hindered their career transition. Incidents that were identified by the participants as critical but were not described in terms of their significance or as an example were highlighted in the Word document to be discussed with the participants in the second interview.

Once I had identified incidents from the first interview, I moved to formulating categories by creating a separate document. Starting with incidents from the first transcript, I placed similar incidents from the first interview into categories. I repeated the same procedure for the hindering incidents and wish-list items.

After formulating the categories from the first interview, I repeated the procedure for the second and third interviews. If the extracted incidents from the interview could be meaningfully placed into an existing category, I copied them into the existing category. If the incidents could not be meaningfully placed in any of the existing categories, I created a new category. In some cases, I revised the name of an existing category so that a new incident could be placed in it. I did so only if the name change was meaningful for the purpose of the research and did not diminish the meaningfulness of the previous incidents placed into that category.

Butterfield et al. (2009) suggested that placement of incidents into categories and ongoing revision of categories continue until the incidents and wish-list items from all but 10% of the interviews are placed into categories. I continued the above process of identifying the critical incidents from each interview; typing verbatim quotes for each helping incident,
hindering incident, and wish-list item; and creating new categories, placing identified incidents into existing categories, or revising categories until only one interview was left. At that point, to follow Butterfield et al.’s (2009) recommendation, I finalized the category titles and wrote an operational definition for each one. Butterfield et al. (2009) defined the operational definition as “the various theme found within the broader category” (p. 273). In order to write operational definitions, I listened to the interviews and read the verbatim quotes in the categories to find themes within each category. After finalizing the categories and operational definitions, I placed the incidents from the last interview into the existing categories. There was no need to create a new category or revise the title or operational definitions of the existing categories.

**Determining the level of generality or specificity of the findings.** In order for the findings to be helpful in the fields of counselling and policy change, I reported the data in a manner that was neither too general nor too specific. A high degree of generality might not help counsellors or policy makers in using the results to improve their current practice. On the other hand, a high degree of specificity may prevent the results from being useful on a wider scale and in different contexts.

**Step 5: Interpreting the results and reporting the findings.** The last step in conducting ECIT is interpreting the results and reporting findings. As part of this last step, Butterfield et al. (2009) have outlined nine credibility checks improve the accuracy of the results. Here I list the steps and discuss how I addressed them in the study.

**Recording the interviews.** Butterfield et al. (2009) suggested having records of the interviews to capture the participants’ words and working directly from the audiotape or interview transcript. I audiotaped all of the interviews in the study. In my analysis of the data, I worked from the audiotapes and the transcripts to extract critical incidents.
**Interview fidelity.** Butterfield (2009) recommended that the researcher’s supervisor, another member of the research team, or a third party with knowledge of the CIT method listen to every third or fourth interview. The purpose of the fidelity check is to make sure that the researcher has followed the CIT method and interview guide and no leading questions have been asked. To conduct this credibility check, I consulted my thesis supervisor and obtained contact information for other graduate students with knowledge of ECIT. Another graduate student familiar with ECIT listened to the fourth and eighth interviews, then informed me that my interviews were being conducted in accordance with ECIT principles and kindly made some suggestions for future interviews.

**Independent extraction of critical incidents.** Butterfield et al. (2005) suggested that researchers randomly choose 25% of the transcripts to be given to an independent expert in ECIT to identify critical incidents and wish-list items. Furthermore, they suggested that researchers compare the incidents and wish-list items extracted by the independent judge with those extracted by the researchers and compute the percentage of agreement. The higher the rate of agreement between the judge and the interviewer, the more accurate the identified critical incidents and wish-list items. I gave three (33%) of the transcripts to an independent expert and obtained an agreement rate of 80%.

**Exhaustiveness.** When no new categories for helping and hindering incidents and wish-list items emerge from the interview data, exhaustiveness has been reached and there is no need to gather more data through interviews unless there are other reasons for interviewing more participants (Butterfield et al., 2009). To determine the point at which exhaustiveness was reached, I created Table 2, which shows the number of interviews that I analyzed and the order in which I analyzed them. For example, the first interview I analyzed was the one with the third
participant. The table also shows the number of new categories that emerged after analyzing each interview. For example, analysis of the first interview led to the creation of nine categories, whereas analysis of the second interview led to the emergence of two new categories. No new categories emerged after analysis of the seventh interview, which means exhaustiveness was reached at that point.
Table 2
Table for Tracking the Emergence of New Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview under analysis</th>
<th>Participant #</th>
<th># of new categories emerged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Participation rates.* To establish the credibility of each category and its relative strength, the participation rate is calculated by counting the number of participants who reported an incident under a particular category and dividing that number by the total number of participants (Butterfield et al., 2009). Tables 3,4,5, and 6 in chapter 4 show the participation rates. To follow the guidelines recommended by Borgen and Amundson (1984), only the categories that contained critical incidents from at least 25% of the participants were considered viable and were subject to other validity checks. As can be seen in Tables 6, the participation rate for the categories of Prior Work Experience and Luck were under 25% and so these categories and their incidents were not included in further ECIT credibility checks.
**Placing critical incident into categories by an independent judge.** Butterfield et al. (2009) suggested that a researcher randomly choose 25% of critical incidents along with different category headings to be given to an independent judge. The judge will place critical incidents into different categories. If there is a discrepancy between the researcher’s assignment of incidents and that of an independent judge, a decision needs to be made regarding the placement of incidents. Butterfield et al. (2009) have suggested that one solution is asking the participants to express their opinion about what category their responses belong to. Of the 143 obtained incidents, I gave 25% of them to a research volunteer along with different category headings and asked her to place the incidents into categories. The initial rate of agreement was 81%, which was above the ECIT credibility goal of 80%. A further discussion about the categories, their operational definitions, and some specific incidents led to an even higher match rate of 90%.

**Cross-checking by participants.** After the initial data analysis, the researcher conducts a second interview with participants via email or telephone, during which the results are discussed to ensure that participants agree with the interpretation of their experiences, that the category titles are representative of their lived experience, and that incidents have been assigned to the correct categories (Butterfield et al., 2009). This step also ensures that participants’ opinions have been honoured and reported. To cross-check the results with the participants, I emailed the categories and related quotes to each participant. I then contacted them by phone to arrange the second interview, which was done by phone. I was able to reach eight of the 11 participants. Two participants did not respond to my emails and phone calls, and one participant cancelled her second interviews three times. In consultation with my thesis supervisor, I was advised to
proceed to the other credibility checks given that I had done cross-checking with more than 50% of the participants.

In my phone interviews with the eight participants, I initially asked them if they had any questions about the document that I had sent them. I then asked them whether they believed the categories made sense, whether they felt their quotes were placed in the right category, and whether they felt their story was well understood. At the end of the interview, I asked them to provide examples or elaborate on the importance of some of the incidents that were not adequately addressed in the first interview.

Overall, in the second interviews, all of the participants showed a very positive response to the results. One participant said, “It is really good to have this summary in front of me. I can see my story in front of me and it makes sense.” Another participant said, “I am applying for a job now, and it helps to go through this again.” All eight participants endorsed the categories and the quotes that had been placed in each category. All of them said that they felt their stories were well heard and understood. They also provided examples for incidents that were not fully discussed in the first interviews. Two participants elaborated on some of the categories and their importance in the second interviews.

**Expert opinion.** After the researcher has finalized the categories and completed cross-checking, the results are submitted to an expert counselor with extensive knowledge in the area to provide an opinion about the usefulness of categories and what might be missing (Butterfield et al., 2009). Following the cross-checking, I submitted the categories along with their operational definitions and some example quotes to the director of Greater Vancouver Counselling and Education Society, who is a registered clinical counsellor and social worker. She has worked with Iranian immigrants as a counsellor and a social worker for more than 15
years. After reviewing the categories, she informed me that she had repeatedly encountered them when working with Iranian immigrants and mentioned that “all of these categories are definitely very relevant and valid” based on her experience.

**Theoretical agreement.** This final step in conducting ECIT is comparing the categories with the relevant literature to find out if they are supported by the literature. Butterfield et al. (2009) provided a reminder that not finding support for a category in the literature does not mean that it is unsound. Given the exploratory nature of ECIT, a new category might mean that something has been revealed in the study that is not yet known to other researchers. The results obtained in this study were in agreement with research in the area of immigrants’ career transition. I discuss the relevance of the categories in relation to the existing literature in depth in chapter 6.
Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter I present the findings from the 11 interviews I conducted for this study. I first provide participants’ stories and then the categories of critical incidents in order of participation rate.

Participants’ Stories

At the beginning of each interview, the participants were presented with a request: “Tell me about the story of your career transition.” In answering this request, most participants discussed their stories by timeline, starting from their careers in Iran and ending with their current careers. They indicated some helping and hindering factors in their career transition, which were explored later in the interview.

I believe providing a summary of the participants’ stories adds to the richness of data and provides information regarding the context in which the helping and hindering incidents have taken place. The remainder of this section includes personal stories from participants during the interviews. To protect the confidentiality of participants, I have addressed each participant by a number and removed all identifying information.

Participant 1. This participant was a married male in his 30s who had been in Canada for almost 4 years and was a student at the time of the interview. He held a master’s degree from Iran and was doing a second master’s degree in Canada. After arrival in Canada, he was told by other Iranian immigrants that his education from Iran was not good enough. After talking to some professionals in his field, he decided to pursue another s degree in Canada. He mentioned that the most difficult part of immigration was feeling like an orphan, which for him meant having nothing in Canada and having to start fresh again. He mentioned the word orphan at four points during the interview, which highlights the importance of this theme for him. This
participant also said that he started a retail job after entering Canada, which was difficult for him as he had more prestigious positions in Iran that involved holding workshops for big companies and for police. Looking back at his retail job, he thought that it was valuable for him because he had learned about Canadian cultural values. He wished he could get more help in writing resumes and finding jobs. He also wished that employers were more open to his degree and did not base their decision to hire on where he had obtained his degree from.

**Participant 2.** This participant was a married female in her late 20s, who had been in Canada for more than 2 years. She held a master’s degree from Iran and was working as an administrator in a health clinic at the time of the interview. She described her journey as complicated. She worked in a mental health clinic for 1 year before coming to Canada to pursue a PhD. She mentioned that she had left her job in Iran to enter a PhD program in Canada and was shocked when she learned that she needed to do another master’s degree to find a job in her field. After trying for 1.5 years, she lowered her expectations and started working as an administrator. During the interview, she mentioned that despite her expectation that she would not get emotional during the interview, talking in the interview was making her very emotional. She mentioned that the reality she faced after coming to Canada was very disappointing but she was hopeful that she could continue her education and work in her field in a few years. She wished she could get help from more knowledgeable people in her field and from programs and organizations to find her way. She also wished there were organizations that regulated the volunteering process and referred individuals to approved organizations for volunteering because she felt that some organizations take advantage of volunteers. She also wished she had taken a step back after arrival in Canada, had lowered her expectations, and had started a certificate or a diploma program instead of pursuing a PhD.
Participant 3. This participant was a married female in her 40s, who had been in Canada for more than 6 years. She had worked at her husband’s company as a businessperson in Iran and was working as a program assistant at a nonprofit organization and attending school as a full-time graduate student at the time of the interview. When telling the story of her career transition, she mentioned the importance of not losing hope and having a positive attitude, and she believed she was offered her current position because of her positive attitude. This participant also mentioned the importance of receiving help from her family and professionals in the field. She wished she had a friend or a mentor who would pat her on the shoulder and have a conversation with her. She wished there were more opportunities for people from different cultures to socialize and learn from each other. She also wished that immigration laws allowed for easier reunification of families and for her parents and in-laws to come to Canada.

Participant 4. This participant was a married female in her late 30s, who had been in Canada for more than 4 years. She had worked as a professional athlete from the age of 6 and was working as an instructor in a fitness centre at the time of the interview. She had critical positions in a sport when she was in Iran and hoped to open her own business in Canada. During the interview, she talked about the challenges she had with the English language and her decision to “run” to reach her goals and push herself to succeed. She mentioned the importance of talking to different people and trying to learn from their experiences. She believed that life was a fight and stated, “You should fight if you want to be successful.” She wished she had more financial resources to be able to order supplies for her business.

Participant 5. This participant was a 31-year-old single male who had been in Canada since 2011. He had a master’s degree and worked in the construction business when he was in Iran. He earned a Master of Business Administration after immigrating to Canada in 2011 and
was working as a business analyst in the information technology industry, which he believed was very different from his work in Iran. During the interview, he discussed the importance of having qualifications such as a Master of Business Administration and English language knowledge in getting his job. He also discussed the importance of being patient and realistic and believed some of his friends view him as a negative person when he is being realistic. This participant believed that being lucky is the biggest factor in finding a job because multiple factors play a role, such as the person conducting the job interview and the timing of when the job posting opens. He wished he could speak better English to perform more strongly in job interviews. He also wished he had more contacts when applying for jobs to get more interviews to show his qualifications.

Participant 6. This participant was a 34-year-old married female, who had been in Canada since 2014. She held a master’s degree from a European country before coming to Canada and was working in her field at the time of the interview. She mentioned that the experience of living independently in Europe had helped her career transition in Canada because she was more comfortable working with people from other cultures. She had come to Canada as a skilled worker, which she had thought meant that her skills were needed in Canada. She found it very disappointing not to find a job. She wished that she had financial aid and there were more programs to help newcomers with English. She also wished the perception of hiring a newcomer in Canada was different and that she was given more opportunity to demonstrate her skills, without even being paid for it. Having a person in the organization with whom she could talk about her problems in the workplace and who could supervise the “psychological nature” of the workplace was also one of her wishes.

Participant 7. This participant was a 37-year-old married female, who had been in Canada for 1 year. She had a master’s degree from Iran and was working in a non-profit
organization at the time of the interview. She mentioned that knowing English, having self-confidence, and being an extrovert helped her in her career transition. She believed being an extrovert allowed her to make connections, which eventually helped her in her career transition. She also believed that lack of Canadian experience hindered her because most employers required at least 1 year of Canadian experience. She said that all her documents, including educational degrees, were assessed during the immigration process but were deemed insufficient by employers. She wished the government helped immigrants in assessment of their degrees and in finding jobs. She also wished that attitudes towards hiring newcomers were better and she could at least find an entry-level position to demonstrate her skills. Despite these difficulties, she was very confident that she could eventually work in her own field.

Participant 8. This participant was a 47-year-old married female, who had been in Canada for 6 years. She had worked in the mental health field in Iran and was able to find a similar job at a non-profit organization in Canada. This participant started her story by describing how one of her relatives, who had lived in Canada for more than 30 years, misled her by telling her that she needed to change her field of work after arrival in Canada. To follow her relative’s advice, she changed her field and started a new degree at a local college but soon realized that she did not like that field and quit the program. She believed that volunteering and doing her best as a volunteer helped her find her job. This participant mentioned that that some of her Iranian colleagues did not accept her because she had obtained her qualifications in Iran, which initially led her to lose her confidence. She said that she regained her confidence after 6 months of working in Canada. She wished non-profit organizations could receive more funding from the government to be able to provide free professional services to more people.
Participant 9. This participant was a 41-year-old married male, who had been in Canada since 2007 and started working as a software developer shortly after arrival. At the beginning of the interview, he talked about the fact that his immigration process took 6 years. He said that after coming to Canada, he realized that knowing English is more important than having money and started to focus on learning the language. He was introduced to a company by his friend only a couple of days after arrival in Canada and was offered a position because of his high performance in the interview. He believed that he was lucky to find a job in his field. He also believed that being in a different culture with a different language is like being given a chance to live twice and thought he could reach the same standards as Canadians if he worked hard. He wished his immigration process did not take 6 years and described those years of waiting as having a question mark over his head because he did not know if he needed to save money or spend his money to enjoy his time in Iran. He wished he had more financial resources to make better decisions such as continuing his education in Canada after gaining his first Canadian experience. He also wished he had a better command of English because he believed this would give him more credit in his workplace.

Participant 10. This participant was a 30-year-old male, who was engaged to be married and had been in Canada since 2009. He had obtained an engineering degree in Iran, where he worked as the supervisor of quality control for a big company. After arrival in Canada, he decided to enter the construction industry by using his family’s financial support. However, his plans failed when he learned his family could not support him financially. Being really passionate to enter the construction industry, he decided to apply for an entry-level positions. However, he soon realized that even entry-level positions required Canadian education. Not giving up on his passion for construction, he started doing labour and received a wage that he believed was below the
minimum wage for construction labourers. He described this experience as disappointing and believed he had been taken advantage of due to his unawareness of his rights. After working at two places as a construction labourer, he decided to continue his education to get a better job and entered a program related to construction. He mentioned that he was being called more frequently by companies for an interview after obtaining a Canadian education. At the time of the interview, he was working in a small, recently established company where he felt his limits were pushed and he was challenged. As a manager, he said he understood the concerns of employees about hiring newcomers and wished the government would encourage employers to hire newcomers by giving incentives such as tax reductions.

**Participant 11.** This participant was a 29-year-old single male, who had been in Canada since 2012. He held a master’s degree from Iran before immigrating to Canada to obtain his PhD. Unable to finish his PhD program in Canada, he applied for another master’s degree and was doing a second master’s degree in a Canadian university at the time of the interview. He believed that having connections and Canadian education were two important factors in finding a job and that employers rely more easily on employees with Canadian education. He mentioned that being on a student visa and not having a work permit were the biggest obstacles in finding a job. He was offered a job in a well-established company but was later denied due to his lack of work permit. He said all international students in Canada are permitted to work for maximum of 20 hours per week and wished he had a work permit. He also wished there were more career fair events at universities because he believed those events were good opportunities to get in touch with industries.
Categories

After the initial analysis of the interviews, I developed 15 categories. Tables 3, 4, 5 represent the helping, hindering and wish-list categories and include the participation rate and the number of incident in each category. Table 6 is a composite table which represents all the obtained categories. Borgen and Amundson (1984) recommended that only categories that contain critical incidents from at least 25% of participants be considered viable. As can be seen in Table 6, two categories (Luck and Prior Work Experience) did not meet the requirements established by Borgen and Amundson and were not included in subsequent validity checks. The final number of categories obtained after data analysis and validity checks was 13. The following is a list of the final 13 categories: (a) Attitude, (b) Laws and Policies, (c) Networking and Making Connections, (d) Friends, (e) English Language, (f) Educational Background, (g) Professional Guidance, (h) Family, (i) Canadian Experience, (j) Level of Cultural Competence, (k) Finances, (l) Attitudes Towards Newcomers, and (m) Employer’s or Supervisor’s Work Ethics.
### Table 3

**Helping Categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Helping incidents</th>
<th>Participation rate (%)</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior Work Experiences</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer’s or Supervisor’s Work Ethics</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4
Hindering Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Hindering incidents</th>
<th>Participation rate (%)</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of Cultural Competence</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canadian Experience</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer’s or Supervisor’s Work Ethics</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Members</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Laws and Policies</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Guidance</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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Table 5
Wish-List Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Wish-list items</th>
<th>Participation rate (%)</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Guidance</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>English Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes Towards Newcomers</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>Attitude</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Background</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6
A Composite Table Representing All Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Helping incidents</th>
<th>Hindering incidents</th>
<th>Wish-list items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation rate (%)</td>
<td># of participants</td>
<td>Participation rate (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking and Making Connections</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language</td>
<td>55</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Background</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Members</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of Cultural Competence</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws and Policies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer’s or Supervisor’s Work Ethics</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canadian Experience</td>
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<td>Luck</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Work Experience</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the following sections, I discuss each category in more detail by elaborating on the hindering and helping aspects and wish-list items. As can be seen in Table 6, some categories did not have wish-list items or hindering and helping incidents. For example, the Family category did not include any wish-list items and the Attitude Towards Newcomers category did not include any helping incidents. In discussing each category, I include some verbatim quotes from the participants to add to the richness of data.

**Attitude.** This category had the highest participation rate. In telling their stories, 72% of the participants mentioned helping aspects, 45% mentioned hindering aspects, and 9% mentioned wish-list items that could be placed in this category. This category encompasses the different ways of thinking about and looking at situations that seemed to be significant in the career transition of immigrants.

**Helping aspects.** Although each participant described a different attitude as helpful, the general theme that came to my mind when reading the quotes was being resilient and strong in the face of barriers. The specific helpful attitudes included being positive, realistic, self-confident, passionate, hopeful, open to challenges, and willing to do one’s best. The following quotes illustrate these helping aspects:

Being realistic is a big point. . . . I think that is the biggest point for someone who moves from another country to Canada or any country. You need to know what is going on, you need to be realistic and see the market. Open your eyes and see what is required to find a job.

I was so nervous because the interview is English, you know. I don’t know what was going to happen but because I had enough confidence about my knowledge so I said maybe at least 50/50 maybe I can answer, solve the question, any question. So and it was, it went pretty well because I answered one of the questions that nobody actually answered during the whole interview process. That’s why the boss asked me to join the team.
I was so happy because I knew that I could show myself later. . . . Attitude is very important because if you believe in yourself you always, you know, tell internally that I can be somebody exactly the same who lived here from childhood.

It may have a long process, but I can be a registered psychologist. I have so many experiences, I’m expert in my job, so now or two years ahead, I can find my career and I will be successful here.

They told me, “Sorry, it is already like the first introduction phase is already half done and we cannot take you.” But then I thought, let us not get disappointed. I called the advisor but the advisor was not there. I talked to the assistant. I kind of sensed that the name is German. I leave a message in German for her and then she calls me and says, “Although the intro part is halfway through but I sense that you are an interested person and you like languages very much. Come. It is okay.

So with that hope, like every day I would go to work and working with people and trying to convince myself that “Okay, working in this place is something good for you,” which it was.

When I came here I want to do the best. . . . I said I can do anything. They said, “Can you work in the office?” I said yes I do, yes I can, and I am thinking it is not counselling but I think okay, I want to do the best, and I went to the office three days on time.

I was like okay, I will have to start doing construction. I started working as a labourer, a construction labourer. I was working with my hands and carrying like, heavy things, shovelling because construction was my passion. I really wanted to do that.

In other companies the wage, the salary was way higher than what these guys [gave] me now and I had lots of benefits with them, but I like the challenge and I wanted to challenge myself.

When I talk to myself and I push myself and then I try, I find the right person to guide me.

I believe life is sometimes is fight. You should fight . . . if you want to be successful.

Starting with a positive attitude, I feel like I have always received positive feedback. . . . The place that I right now interpret and work at—it was the attitude that prompted me to work for them. . . . My impression was it was mostly the way, you know, they see my interaction with clients and that openness and attitude. And they found it, maybe, well this is me assuming that, I could be helpful in their organization. . . . And I ended up getting a job without putting much effort into it.
When I went to three or five interviews, one of the main things that the interviewer told me was is that I am very happy. . . . “You have two things that I like and one of them is a big smile on your face, always, and through the interview, I feel that. And the other one is being a good listener and not interrupting the interviewer.”

**Hindering aspects.** One hindering aspect was having unrealistic expectations. In some cases, these unrealistic expectations were caused by receiving misleading information from other people, including family members, who had lived in Canada for many years. In some cases, coming to Canada as skilled workers led individuals to expect they would find a job in their field soon after arrival. The other hindering attitude was lack of self-confidence. For one participant, loss of self-confidence was caused by comparing herself to other successful people. Another participant believed his lack of self-confidence might be due to the higher work standards in Canada and the fact that English was not his first language. The following quotes illustrate these hindering aspects:

I had different expectations and when I entered here. I faced totally different things. When I was talking to people about my major, about my work experience, they used to tell me, “Psychology is a popular major there, and yoga is so popular. You will be great.” I was shocked, and I was thinking I would continue education right away for PhD degree but everything changed.”

My expectations were wrong. My expectations [were] that “okay, these guys [my family] have been here for almost 20, 25, 20 years and they can provide me with enough resources.” The problem was that I relied on them. I did not do my own research. . . . I was just relying on them and they were giving me information related to themselves and not information related to my field or current position.

When we wanted to come to Canada, because I applied [as] a skilled worker, they gave some list that we want. . . . For example, we want a doctor or we want a nurse and we want a psychologist and so on. And, somehow, it was misunderstood for us, because we apply for being an immigrant in Canada, we think, “Okay, when they said we want this person, as I enter the country the job is already there.” But when we came to Canada, we saw that there is no place for job posting for us and they are not available and you should try so hard to find your desired job.

I was not confident talking with people and making connections.
I was comparing myself to my engineer friends who worked immediately after three to four months or my husband or other friends and family. . . . I was telling myself I am not going to make it. It is not going to happen for me.

I used to work for an oil company. I used to do workshops for 50 people. I used to hold workshops for 50 people. I had police officers, high-ranking security, intelligence. I don’t think I would be able to do that for secure intelligence of police now. First, because it is not my first language. Second, because I feel I need to be more prepared for that. I had the confidence of doing that in my country but when it comes to Canada I feel that I am not confident enough to do that.

**Wish-list.** One participant mentioned that she hoped she had lowered her expectations.

I would study and take a course in a short program, like diploma or certificate instead of waiting a long time for a bigger goal [doing a PhD program]. I mean lowering the expectations and step back.

**Laws and policies.** 27% of participants mentioned hindering aspects and 63% mentioned wish-list items relevant to this category. The laws and policies that were discussed by participants mostly involved immigration and employment opportunities for newcomers. Participants seemed to be frustrated by the fact that they were admitted to Canada as a skilled worker but their skills and education were not accepted in Canada.

**Helping aspects.** This category did not have any helping aspects.

**Hindering aspects.** The hindering aspects of laws and policies ranged from rules and regulations that limited international students to working a certain number of hours per week to confusion experienced by skilled workers who came to Canada with the expectation that their skills were needed. The following quotes illustrate these hindering aspects:

I got the opportunity to work and we managed everything, such as salary and my working time during the weekdays. But they asked me for a valid work permit or permanent residency card and I told them that “Sorry, I don’t have that card or permit.” They told me, “We wanted to hire you from next week but unfortunately we cannot offer that job.” That was terrible. We only have part-time work permit in Canada as an international student. All international students that come to Canada have only 20 hours per week permission to work as a part-time employee.
The other thing that was really disappointing was that I applied to come to Canada as a skilled worker, so it meant that the government of Canada every year gets like people with skills that is needed in Canada. . . . You just encounter something that is not what you expected.

**Wish-list items.** Participants wished they had received more support from the government in concerning employment, work permits, finances, family reunification, and English language skills. The following quotes illustrate these wish-list items:

I was thinking about visa difficulties for our parents. If we had their support, for example my in-laws—they were not granted a visa to come . . . — they are retired and they can easily come here and, for example, spend six months with my kids, give them enough attention and love so that I could more easily do my kind of work.

The government should encourage them [companies], mostly financially, to hire new immigrants. . . . The whole immigration from a higher level, higher position like government should put a bonus [for hiring new immigrants]. They should put a bonus for those employers who employ newcomers.

If we had some funding or grant from government we can do [counselling] services for people as free and most people can use our services.

**Networking and making connections.**

This category had the third-highest participation rate. 63% of participants identified helpful aspects. One participant mentioned a wish-list item that belonged to this category. This category encompasses networking, having contacts, and knowing someone in the company that one wants to work in.

**Helping aspects.** The participants mentioned that having connections helped them in learning about positions when they became available and being recommended for those positions. One participant mentioned that knowing people in other organizations helped her in asking for help from other organizations. The following quotes illustrate these helping aspects:

Right after graduation, because of my connections, I got a job. I called him [a person in the same academic program] and said, “Oh, do you have any advice for me? Do you know any companies that are hiring and stuff like that?” He said, “Our company has
a position available. I can tell my manager and you can come and start working.” As easy as that . . . and then he told the manager. The manager called me.

He [my friend] was working in a small computer company and he talked to his manager about my skills because he was working before in the same company in Iran. So he said that I am very skillful and, you know, he talked about me to his boss. . . . So the first day that I came to Canada, the next day I had an interview.

The most important one was the connection. I am of the view that if you go for a company and someone there knows you, you can definitely guarantee that you will get the job. For example, in my case, because of one of managers in a college, I could join them after the interview and I worked there for about six months.

I volunteered and I met a lot of great people and that helped me create a good network. . . . It is easier to pick up the phone and ask for help or for them to call our office and ask for support.

Hindering aspects. This category did not have any hindering aspects.

Wish-list items. One participant mentioned that he wished he had more contacts when he was applying for jobs.

I wish I had more contacts or I could know more people when I was applying for a job. Because as I mentioned in the first place, I think that is the biggest factor. If someone knows you or takes your resume to give to HR, you have got a big chance for the interview.

Friends. For this category, 55% of the participants mentioned having friends as helpful and one participant mentioned a wish-list item.

Helping aspects. Participants mentioned that friends helped them in their career transition by providing emotional support and practical support. Emotional support included encouragement and help to remain optimistic. Practical support included tips and advice about finding jobs and help with the English language. The following quotes illustrate these helping aspects:

My friend told me, “I know the first two years is going to be very hard but just tolerate and you are going to find a place that you want to be in.” That was the only thing that could help me tolerate the situation.
She [one of my friends] gave me some tips or ideas about like what course of action to take if I am not happy with certain structure what I can do. And gave me some tips.

She [my friend] said something . . . very important in my life at this time, because she said if you like your field, if you love working in your field, you should go to some place working in your field and work there as a volunteer and you should perfect volunteer there and if you do the best they did not lose you anytime. And that was very useful and helpful for me.

**Hindering aspects.** This category did not have any hindering aspects.

**Wish-list items.** One participant wished she could receive emotional support from a Canadian friend.

Like a mentor, you know, a Canadian friend would come and pat you on the shoulder, have a conversation with you. . . . Like for me I read in a magazine about Timbits being something special to Vancouver and it took me a long time to figure out what Timbits are. If I had a friend, like mentor, you know, like a volunteer who would come up, team up with you. . . . I think that would be one of the things that we could still benefit from.

**English language.** This category refers to the participants’ knowledge of English: 45% of the participants mentioned helping aspects, 36% of the participants mentioned hindering aspects, and 27% mentioned wish-list items that belonged to this category.

**Helping aspects.** Participants mentioned that knowing English facilitated their career transition by helping them get their first job in Canada, write resumes, do well in interviews, communicate with employers, and continue their education. The following quotes illustrate these helping aspects:

My English was not really bad before coming to Canada, so I think yes, that helped me because I found that if I did not know English that made it even harder for me to find a job in retail.

I got a job in a bookstore. If I did not know English, I could not work. If I did not know English, I would have to work in some restaurant, Iranian restaurants or somewhere where I did not really like and did not have a chance to learn culture and communicate with Canadians.
So many factors helped me. The most important one is my English is good. . . . When your English is good you can get some help in most of the Canadian workplaces, write resumes, and can communicate with the organization or the centres that they need some person.

Obviously to find a job you need to go to an interview. And then if you are not fluent in English or you can’t really transfer your message, the chances are less for you.

In terms of English, I did not have any problem. It helped me because when I was going to interviews. I could easily say what I like and what I don’t like . . . what I expect and what I don’t expect from employees.

**Hindering aspects.** Hindering aspects involved problems caused by lack of adequate English knowledge. Examples of these problems were not doing well in interviews, not being able to continue with education, not being comfortable in a role that required spoken English, not being able to communicate with people in the workplace, and not being taken seriously despite being knowledgeable. The following quotes illustrate these hindering aspects:

I went on some interviews and I believe I did not do a good job on some of them because of my language limitations.

The most important barrier in my journey was language. I always had this problem because when I first entered here, I felt I could not continue my education because I did not have IELTS [an English proficiency test].

I felt like I did not have the proper language for jobs in my field because you have to be involved with people all the time and you have to communicate with all the people and when you are not confident about that, you can’t start that.

I know what prime number is, but if I don’t know what the prime number meaning [is] in English, if somebody ask me write an algorithm to calculate the prime numbers. So if I don’t know the prime numbers I cannot say what is prime number and for them is going to be funny: “This guy does not even know what the prime number is.” But I know what prime number is. . . . I [just] don’t know the translation in English.

When I was in Iran I [was] talking as a master. I had many meetings with other people. [Now] sometimes in school, at the gym, I am stuck for say just very simple sentence to kids.
**Wish-list items.** One participant wished he had better knowledge of English to do better in interviews, one wished he had better knowledge of English to be considered more professional in his workplace, and another wished there were better English programs for newcomers.

I wish my English was better so I could express myself during those few interviews that I got. Because sometimes you are qualified but if you do not know how to express yourself, how to present yourself, you lose this opportunity.

If you are a software engineer you are always asked to make some report for your boss. . . . I feel like if you have better English command and a better English writing . . . it shows you more reasonable and people give you more credit if you show yourself as somebody professional.

I don’t know if they can put some ways or do something that the people can get English knowledge, academic. I know they have some programs for newcomers.

**Educational background.** Educational background, especially Canadian education, was mentioned by many participants as an important factor in their career transition: 36% of the participants mentioned helping aspects, 45% mentioned hindering aspects, and 9% mentioned wish-list items that were placed in this category.

**Helping aspects.** The helping aspects of having Canadian education that were identified by participants included learning about professional conduct in the workplace, being called for more interviews, making a more eye-catching resume, and being considered more reliable by employers. Overall, it seemed that the participants believed having Canadian education increased their chances of finding a job. The following quotes illustrate these helping aspects:

In terms of professional conduct, the way they trained us, every organization that we went, they always appreciate our professionalism—for example, how to not engage in private conversations, how to always respect both sides, how to always interpret everything. These little things that eventually added up to a degree of professionalism that always opened the way, like opened the door, kept opening the doors.

I did my MBA [Master of Business Administration] here, which is always a recognized degree anywhere. So, I think that was one of the reasons I could at least be accepted for the exam interview.
Whatever job I was applying for, at least they gave me a chance. That really helped me. I think it [Canadian education] made a huge difference. In a period of let’s say two weeks, three weeks, I got like five interviews. Two, three years ago I could not even get one interview.

When you have Canadian education, usually from the employer’s side, they can rely more on you when you have Canadian education.

**Hindering aspects.** Participants mentioned that having a foreign degree was hindering in their career transition. They felt that other Iranians and colleagues in the workplace discarded the knowledge they had gained in Iran. Furthermore, they mentioned that employers and regulating organizations did not recognize their degrees and required them to take extra courses or even get another university degree. The following quotes illustrate these hindering aspects:

Like the Iranians who were here, like they told me that you are not ready since Canada is different and what you have learned in Iran is not good enough.

Some people ignore me and did not accept me because they want to show me you are so new and you don’t know everything and your knowledge from Iran is not good. Every time I should show off to them my knowledge, my experience, my ability. . . .

Every time I think I have a competition, you know?

I brought down my expectation and said okay, since I don’t have Canadian experience, let’s apply for beginner or entry-level jobs related to my field. And then I started applying and then they were asking for Canadian education.

They don’t accept your home country diplomas in bachelor or master or even PhD. You should be a registered psychologist and, being a registered psychologist, they should assess all the things that you had in your home country.

I had this challenge with name of my major, it is considered differently in Canada. When I was talking to UVic [University of Victoria] advisors, they just told me, “You don’t have the psychology bachelor’s. You don’t have clinical or counselling psychology master’s. You will have to start from the scratch.

**Wish-list items.** One participant wished she had studied another major or had studied in Canada.

If I studied here, it was a different story, but [I have] different credentials from my country and then I don’t know if I can be registered [here] or not. I wish I studied another major.
Professional guidance. Professional guidance was given to participants by professionals and employers in their field and from employment counsellors. For this category, 45% of the participants mentioned helping aspects, 18% mentioned hindering aspects, and 27% mentioned wish-list items that fell in this category.

Helping aspects. Professional guidance was mentioned by participants as a helpful factor for different reasons. Professionals provided information about career prospects, the steps needed to take in order to find a job, related volunteer opportunities, and required certificates to work in a professional field. One participant mentioned that her employment counsellor helped her in preparing for a job interview. Participants who considered professional guidance to be helpful seemed to have used it as a compass to navigate through their career transition. The following quotes illustrate these helping aspects:

All the agencies that need interpretation, for example, police force, RCMP, and other agencies came and introduced themselves and told us about requirements. . . . When the course finished we knew exactly where to go, who to contact, we had all the information.

The interview with the guy from university, he was a product designer graduated from university and he told me that getting a job in your program of study is not really easy because you need to have a local education first and you need a certificate locally. That’s why I started taking the course in interior design, which is kind of a little related.

I talked to a Persian lady who was an experienced clinical counsellor and she introduced me to centres that I can volunteer for at first and that helped me a lot.

My [employment] counsellor was an English teacher herself back home so she had an understanding of what was going on and she prepared me for—like we talked about an interview.

Hindering aspects. For some participants, the guidance received from professionals seemed to have made them more confused and frustrated. These participants complained about professionals’ lack of familiarity with the steps involved in getting a job, which sometimes led
them to provide seemingly random advice. One participant mentioned that the advice he received wasted his time and he would never work with such an organization again. The following quotes illustrate these hindering aspects:

They did not have the right and proper information. They did not know. They were asking me about psychology and other resources, so they did not have the knowledge of volunteer job postings and other job postings. They expected me to know all . . . and you are more confused.

What I got from them [a professional organization] was some kind of labels that you should do this, you should do that. It was pretty confusing and not very organized and a waste of time actually.

**Wish-list items.** Participants wished they had received more professional guidance in writing resumes and finding jobs. Some participants wished there were more professional organizations that helped with the career transition of immigrants and some wished there were more career fairs. The following quotes illustrate these wish-list items:

I wish I had more knowledgeable persons in my field that could give me more information about my options and different things or other organizations giving some information about different jobs or different careers in Canada.

Those [career fairs] are really good opportunities to get in touch with the industry part of the society but the problem with those events are . . . rare.

**Family.** For this category, 36% of the participants reported helping aspects and 27% reported hindering aspects.

**Helping aspects.** Some helping aspects described by participants included receiving emotional support such as encouragement, receiving practical support such as help with school work, and receiving financial support. When talking about support from family members, participants got emotional. They seemed to be very appreciative and thankful for the support they received. One of the participants teared up as she talked about the support she had received from her daughter. The following quotes illustrate these helping aspects:
Having my husband like a supportive person with me has been great for me emotionally. He always used to give me hope because of his own difficulties. If I was alone, I might take some courses which were not useful for me.

Because I was not single, I was married, it was very important emotionally because imagine you had lots of challenges and finally you come back home and at least you have somebody to talk to you and talk about your concern, about your feeling. Otherwise it would be much harder for me if I had nobody around.

She helped me check some of my assignments if I had some issue or problems in spelling or something. She would check it and give me some ideas cause she is an English teacher. And also she gave me some tips about working and living in the culture here—what should I do, what I should not do.

The rest of the family was at home taking care of the little one and I would go to school until I came home quite late.

I did not worry about the bills at the end of the month because he [husband] had a good job . . . and that makes me feel more comfortable to find my way and I was not in rush to start anything.

**Hindering aspects.** For some participants, the responsibility towards family members was considered a hindrance to their career transition, whereas for others, family members had hindered their career transition emotionally. The emotional hindrances mentioned by participants were witnessing the challenges of their spouse in career transition, which made their own career transition harder, and being discouraged by their spouse. The following quotes illustrate these hindering aspects:

Having a 10-month-old baby was of course in my way. . . . My son didn’t like my friend because when she came we were studying. And the first thing that he, once he started speaking, the first words he told my friend was go fall into the ocean.

Maybe like emotional hindrance was the fact that my husband was not doing what he was qualified to do. . . . Emotionally, that was very difficult for me. I remember looking at the ocean and just thinking of him and the fact that he was working so hard. It was very difficult for me. That was really, that was a huge challenge. . . . Emotionally, it was burdening the whole time for me.

My husband is my friend and he’s beside me every time. But sometimes he says, “Oh, we have not enough money, we have not very good in English, we have not
somebody here for help us, or we have not somebody to borrow money. It is not possible
to do something.” I say, “No, I can’t believe it.”

**Wish-list items.** This category did not have any wish-list items.

**Canadian experience.** Employers’ requirement that workers have Canadian experience
was hindering, according to 36% of the participants.

**Helping aspects.** This category did not have any helping aspects.

**Hindering aspects.** In talking about employers’ requirement of Canadian experience,
participants seemed confused and frustrated. It seemed that they felt that asking a newcomer to
have Canadian experience was unfair and impossible. One participant mentioned that despite
being an expert in her field, employers did not offer her a job because she did not have Canadian
experience. One participant described this process as an “infinite loop” and another participant
believed this requirement was “unreasonable.” The following quotes illustrate these hindering
aspects:

> In the interviews that I went, after they look at my interview they said,
> “Everything is good, you have a very good experience, but sorry, you should have
> Canadian experience, at least a minimum of one year.”

> The problem I had was that they were all looking for Canadian experience. When
> I came to Canada, I wanted to do the same thing. That did not happen because I did not
> have Canadian experience. Every employer they ask Canadians, “Okay, where is your
> Canadian experience?”

> It’s just like an infinite loop. They ask for Canadian experience but you have to
> build Canadian experience.

> That makes me think what that means, because, you know, how can I get
> Canadian experience without being hired to a company? So how does it work? It is not
> reasonable.

**Wish-list items.** This category did not have any wish-list items.

**Level of cultural competence.** Cultural competence involves the participants’ level of
familiarity and comfort with Canadian culture in general and also with the Canadian norms and
practices related to finding a job. For this category, 36% of the participants identified hindering aspects and 9% mentioned helping aspects.

**Helping aspects.** For one participant, the experience of living independently in another culture before coming to Canada was considered helpful to her career transition. She mentioned that interacting with non-Iranians in another country helped her be more comfortable in her interaction with people from other cultures in her new workplace. The following quotes illustrate this helping aspect:

That experience really helped me to have the kind of feeling of living in another culture and like other people and working with other people. . . . That was a good experience that helped me, you know, to feel myself more comfortable in my workplace and working with like Canadians or even persons like, I don’t know, other people.

**Hindering aspects.** Some participants mentioned that not being familiar with Canadian culture resulted in misunderstandings in their professional relationships such as that with their supervisor. The other hindering aspects of cultural competence were not knowing about the professional terminology used in the workplace, not being familiar with what situations are considered problematic in Canadian culture, and not being familiar with job-finding strategies. One participant mentioned that learning the “cultural language” has been an ongoing journey for her. Another participant described leaving his high-status job in Iran and coming to Canada to start from the beginning as culture shock. The following quotes illustrate these hindering aspects:

My supervisor, in her notes, said that I sometimes can be very insisting, which means that I am using “should”: “you should do that, you should not do that.” It is pretty much in our culture that anyone recommends someone of doing something [and] says, “I think you should do that, you should not do that.” It is very common in our culture, but [here] it can be considered very rude. What do you call it? Impolite or imposing if you talk to someone. So that could be a hindering factor because people might find you bossy.

Some things are different. For example, in our culture we have some [situations that are considered] problem but here . . . [there are] ethical things. And we have these in Iran, but here some of those are different. And when you started working you were not familiar. . . . You did not know about these problems.
I think not knowing the job market when I first started looking for jobs was hindering. Because I had no idea how I should apply for jobs, what kind of jobs I had to look for.

I learned a lot but still there were things that you had a hard time. Like simple things. Like what is a director? What is an officer? What is a company structure? Like accounting terminologies? Profit and loss? There are like simple stuff that we had no idea about when we first moved to Canada, but if you grew up here you learn those.

To learn the new cultural language that is spoken here—that was something that I needed to focus on and learn and I am still learning. I think it is an ongoing journey.

I had experience of teaching in university, holding workshops, and working for oil company. And now I am just working in a bookstore. . . . That was a big difference. All of them lead to culture shock, yes. . . . Leaving your country, you have lots of attachments to your country, your city, your friends. I had lost them all. And I was in a land where I did not know if I could be successful or not.

Wish-list aspects. This category did not have any wish-list items.

Finances. This category refers to the financial resources available to immigrants when they were in career transition: 36% of the participants mentioned wish-list items, 27% mentioned hindering aspects, and 9% mentioned a hindering aspect that was placed in this category.

Helping aspect. One participant mentioned that attending a program that helped her pay for her tuition and for the transcription of her certificate aided her career transition because it allowed her to take a course that later helped her in finding a job.

They would pay for your transcript, anything like that, like your transcript being translated or a course that you wanted to help you transition. They tried to help immigrants find a job as close to what they were doing back home. The most important thing was they paid two-thirds of my tuition of CVV course.

Hindering aspects. Two participants mentioned that a hindering aspect was a sudden drop in the value of the Iranian currency, which impacted day-to-day life. One participant discussed how financial problems prevented her from continuing her education and getting the
certificate she needed for her career transition. The following quotes illustrate these hindering aspects:

When I came to Canada, our currency dropped like three times. So, before like 1,000 [tomans], you could have $1. Now you need to have 4,000 [tomans] for $1. I mean, at that time it was a huge shock. If I just wanted to have a coffee, $2 would be equal to 8,000 [tomans].

There is a big gap of currency exchange, you always when you try to even buy a—like when you do grocery shopping, you always calculate from the beginning because your money is still something that you brought from Iran and then you say, “I going to pay that much money for bread, a loaf of bread.” I can live like ten days with this price in my home country. So it is really hard. That’s why you freak out and try to make money, Canadian money, not something that you brought.

For me it was kind of impossible to spend money on education and getting the certificate after like two or three years in interior design, or even doing industrial design, and spending time, spending money.

**Wish-list items.** Three participants wished they had been able to access more financial resources during their career transition. One participant wished she had more money to be able to order materials she needed to start her own business. One participant believed that if he had had more money, he would have been able to make better decisions and continue his education. Another participant wished for funding that would allow her and other professionals to work and offer services for free to people. The following quotes illustrate these wish-list items:

If I had more money I could order my gloves because in kickboxing they have glove, shin pad for cover skin and hands and head and uniform.

I wish I had more money because bringing more money helps you to make a better decision. For example, you know, I, instead of being in that small company for six years, maybe I could after just making it my first Canadian experience, if I had enough money maybe I could continue my education.

I think the most important is financial. Financial is very important because counselling is expensive and every people need [it] but they cannot pay. If we had some funding or grant from government, we can do services for people as free and most people can use our services.
**Attitudes towards newcomers.** This category refers to the attitudes of employees, colleagues, and other Iranians towards newcomers to Canada. For this category, 18% of the participants described hindering aspects and 27% described wish-list items.

**Helping aspects.** This category did not have any helping aspects.

**Hindering aspects.** Hindering aspects included being treated in a biased manner by other Iranians, being treated as unequal by employers, and being ridiculed and bullied in the workplace because of being a newcomer. Participants seemed to feel discriminated against for being a newcomer, and some of their experiences seemed to have been humiliating. The following quotes illustrate these hindering aspects:

So what I was being bullied for was so funny, like the funniest thing in the world, things that does not have a big value or, you know. But I was being bullied. That made me feel like I am a fool, I am not as smart, and it was like, you know, like the girl had education only from high school and I was a person that had a degree.

I kind of had a second, what do you call it, Iranian racism as well. Like they feel themselves superior because they have been here longer than you. And they are afraid because if they feel threatened that you might know something or your knowledge is higher and they want to prevent that happening. They want to keep positions. They don’t want to give you enough opportunities for growth.

**Wish-list items.** Three participants mentioned wish-list items related to this category. These participants wished that the perception of hiring a newcomer was better in Canada and that they would gain more opportunities to demonstrate their skills as newcomers. They hoped that employers were more open to people with foreign degrees and provided opportunities, such as a temporary unpaid position, to prove their skills. The following quotes illustrate these wish-list items:

I wish there was different, like you felt the perception of hiring a newcomer in Canada is going to be changed, and that makes it easier that the companies could accept a person from another country, it does not matter [from] where. And [if you have] the degree, [you have] the education, [it would be helpful to have an opportunity to work for] like four months or like three months, even without the payment, you know. That is more
helpful to go and show yourself that okay, I have this and that, so if I am eligible I can work for you. And if I am not, you can just . . . fire me.

I wish there were opportunities just to assess your skills and then they could accept them . . . not just to superficially say, “Yeah, [you need] Canadian experience and work here.” . . . I mean if they could not trust, at least they could assess.

I wish for myself, too, that I can use my skills as soon as possible, not these long periods of time. And the other thing is about the Canadian experience. . . . Even [if] I can’t work in any places [like I used to], there could be some entry-level job for people like us.

**Employer’s or supervisor’s work ethics.** This category encompasses the amount of support and ethical behaviour shown by one’s employer or supervisor. For this category, 27% of the participants described hindering aspects and 9% reported helping aspects.

**Helping aspects.** One participant mentioned that her supervisor helped her in her career transition by being professional, supportive, and not bossy. She appreciated the fact that her supervisor respected the knowledge she had from Iran while suggesting the best ways to practice in Canada.

She is so professional, and she has good relationship with other people, especially with volunteer or someone else, and this relationship is so friendly. All the time she said [to me], “Yeah, this is good, but here [in Canada] we should do this.

**Hindering aspects.** The hindering aspects of this category included being taken advantage of because of not knowing one’s rights and not being compensated and paid fairly by employers. Participants mentioned that employers sometimes took advantage of the fact that newcomers did not know about their rights as employees and did not support them when they experienced bullying. They also felt that employers are aware of the fact that newcomers are looking for Canadian experience and they take advantage of this by underpaying them. The following quotes illustrate these hindering aspects:

One of the girls was bullying, and because she was a good friend of the manager and she was a very good friend of the district manager, we could not complain. We could
not complain about her and because we were newcomers and we did not know the regulations here, and because we don’t know these rules, they just leave it.

I was hired as a senior developer with like, you know, 10 years’ experience, with like $14 an hour. So, $14 an hour is like—like [for] $12 I could work like in a McDonald or something, right? But I was so happy because, you know, I knew that I can show myself later and that moment my big concern was I don’t want to spend my saving because the whole thing was that actually I sold [everything] in my home country and coming here only was $19,000. You feel like you are taken advantage of because you will say yeah, you are good, but your salary is $14 an hour.

I was working minimum wage, even less than what construction labourers get, because I did not know my rights and like my new employer, let’s say he was taking advantage of this, which was really disappointing.

Wish-list items. This category did not have any wish-list items.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The results of this study, which are based on semistructured interviews with 11 Iranian immigrants in Canada, yielded 13 categories that helped or hindered participants’ career transitions. The helping, hindering, and wish-list items associated with each category and the participants’ quotes have been discussed in length in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I discuss the categories in relation to existing research and theory and explore the implications of these results in counselling and program development for immigrants. I conclude this chapter by providing a summary, addressing the limitations of the research, and proposing ideas for future research.

Categories

Attitude. Attitude was the most endorsed category and was mentioned as important by many participants. Their attitudes towards obstacles faced during their career transition seemed to play a role in the extent to which they were willing to tolerate challenging circumstances and also in the level of distress they experienced. The importance of immigrants’ attitudes in their career transition has been found in similar research. Self-esteem, flexibility, and persistence were found to be helping factors in the career transition of immigrant women workers in Canada (Koert et al., 2011). Having a positive attitude and personality that includes adaptability, flexibility, risk-taking, and respect for diversity were also identified as important factor in the career transitions of successful Chinese immigrants (Amundson et al., 2010; Amundson et al., 2011; Zheng, 2010).

Although the importance of a positive attitude has been demonstrated in previous research, the findings of this study can contribute to the literature by shedding light on how negative attitudes can hinder the career transitions of immigrants. For example, having
unrealistically high expectations was a hindering aspect for many participants, and the long distance between their current situation and their expectations led to frustration. Another hindering attitude in this category was low self-confidence as a result of comparing oneself with others and the higher work standards in Canada.

**Laws and policies.** This category included laws and policies related to immigration, such as limitations on the number of working hours permitted for international students, visa difficulties for family reunification, difficulties due to challenges getting visas, and acceptance of immigrants to Canada as skilled workers without provision of job opportunities.

Some participants believed there was a gap between immigration policy, which encouraged skilled workers to immigrate to Canada, and the actual labour market. Unfortunately, research on immigrants who are selected to come to Canada based on their skills and their actual integration into the labour market is scarce. One study on the immigration policies and the economic integration of immigrants in more than 20 countries, including Canada and the United States, showed that selecting immigrants based on their skills does not have an important effect on their actual occupational status, unemployment rate, and household income (Wanner, 2011). This suggests that solely admitting immigrants into a country based on their skills does not guarantee that they can find employment in which to use those skills. One participant in this study mentioned wanting an easier family reunification policy, believing that family reunification would provide her children with more emotional support and allow her to focus more on her work.

Research on the effects of laws and policies on the career transitions of immigrants is scarce and inconclusive. The results of this study contribute to the literature by highlighting the importance of these policies and encourages further research in this area.
**Networking and making connections.** Many participants believed that knowing someone in an organization or in a company helped them find their current job. The importance of networking for career success is well established in the literature (Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Jokisaari & Vuori, 2011; Lambert, Eby, Reeves, 2006; Spurk, Kauffeld, Barthauer, & Heinemann, 2015; Wolf & Moser, 2009). Research focused on immigrants has also shown that networking and connections are important in the career success of immigrants in Canada (Amundson et al., 2011; Koert et al., 2011; Zheng, 2010). Lack of networks, on the other hand, was identified as a hindrance in the career transition of immigrants in Canada who were in same-sex binational relationships (Kassan & Nakamura, 2013). Networking has been identified in the literature as a form of “social capital” that can facilitate career advancement by offering individuals the right connections and informing them about opportunities (Shinnar, 2007).

The emergence of networking as a category in this study confirms previous research and adds to the literature by showing how Iranian immigrants in Canada benefit from networking in their career transition.

**Friends.** More than half of the participants in the study mentioned that having friends helped them in their career transition. Friends helped participants by offering practical support such as help learning English and emotional support such as encouragement. Previous research has also shown that friends can be helpful in the career transition of educated immigrant workers in Canada (Koert et al., 2011) and successful Chinese immigrants in Canada (Zheng, 2010). The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada has also revealed the importance of friendship in the employment of immigrants. Surveying more than 7,000 immigrants at 6 months, 2 years, and 4 years after arrival in Canada to explore the effects of social capital on the employment of
immigrants, Xue (2008) found that the friendship network was the single most important network relating to labour market entry for the immigrant population.

**English language.** Having a good knowledge of the English language seemed to help participants in different aspects of career transition such as applying for jobs and doing well in interviews. Lack of English language knowledge, however, seemed to have hindered their career transition by influencing factors such as confidence and their decision whether to continue their education. The negative effects of low English proficiency on the career transition of immigrants has been well documented in the literature (Amundson et al., 2011; Aycan & Berry, 1996, Hiebert, 2009; Koert et al., 2011; Kossoudji, 1988; Shinnar, 2007; Sinacore et al., 2009).

Although hindering aspects related to lack of language proficiency were previously found in other studies, this study adds to the literature by providing the narratives of individuals who viewed language proficiency as helpful and revealing insight into what aspects of English language knowledge were helpful. Communicating with employers about one’s needs, writing resumes, and continuing education were examples of the mechanisms through which participants had benefited from language proficiency.

**Educational background.** The lack of recognition of immigrants’ foreign credential has been found to be a barrier in the career transition of immigrants in Canada (Kassan & Nakamura, 2013; Koert et al., 2011; Sinacore et al., 2009; Zheng, 2010). Participants in this study believed that having Canadian education increased their employment opportunities and that not having Canadian education decreased them. Participants who had degrees from Iran believed that their abilities were not taken seriously by employers and by other Iranians who had a Canadian education, whereas participants with a Canadian education believed their resumes were more
eye-catching and they were considered more reliable by employees. Some participants expressed frustration and confusion over the process of transferring their credentials.

**Professional guidance.** Receiving guidance from other professionals in the field was mentioned as hindering by some participants and as helping by others.

Professional guidance that provided participants with clear information about the steps they needed to take to advance their careers was helpful. However, professional guidance that was not structured and informed seemed to have confused the participants.

Receiving help from professionals has been found to be helpful in the career transition of immigrants Chinese immigrants (Zheng, 2010), while a lack of professional networks (Kassan & Nakamura, 2013) has been identified as a barrier to the successful transition of immigrants in Canada.

This study illustrates the importance of well-informed professional guidance and the potential negative impacts of random or ill-informed advice on the career transition of Iranian immigrants.

**Family.** Family helped participants in their career transition by providing emotional, practical, and financial support. Witnessing the career challenges of another family member and dealing with family responsibilities, however, hindered the career transition of some participants. Similar results can be found in the literature regarding the effects of family on the career transition of immigrants. Some studies have shown that relationships with family members are helpful in the career transition of immigrants (Hiebert, 2009; Koert et al., 2011; Zheng, 2010). Some research has also shown that family members’ inability to resettle in the new country can cause distress (Aroian, Spitzer, & Bell, 1996) and family responsibilities can hinder the career transition of immigrants (Shinnar, 2007). Research has also shown that work-family strain for
new immigrants is associated with more perceived anxiety, strain, and stress (Grzywacz, Quandt, Arcury, & Marín, 2005).

**Canadian experience.** This category included only hindering incidents. Employers’ requirement of Canadian experience seemed to have made some participants confused and frustrated because they believed it was impossible for a newcomer to Canada to have Canadian experience. Lack of Canadian experience has also been found to be a hindering factor in the career transition of Jewish immigrants in Canada (Sinacore et al., 2009), Chinese immigrants in Canada (Zheng, 2010), and new immigrants in Metro Vancouver (Hiebert, 2009). Lack of Canadian experience has been also found to be one of the major hurdles in the career development of foreign-trained immigrants from regulated professions, who are required to be licensed before working in their field in Canada (Novak & Chen, 2013).

The foreign experiences of professionals puts them in a double bind; they are not able to find employment and get licensed due to lack of Canadian experience, and they cannot get Canadian experience because they cannot secure employment with their foreign work experience (Novak & Chen, 2013). Skilled immigrants and who are admitted to Canada based on their education, work experience, and language abilities usually encounter the same problem (Wilson-Forsberg & Sethi, 2015). As Wilson-Forsberg and Sethi (2015) pointed out, requiring new immigrants to have Canadian experience and not providing them with the opportunity to gain that experience is one of the most “punishing paradoxes” experienced by skilled immigrants in Canada.

The results of this study confirm and contribute to the existing literature on the hindering effects of lack of Canadian experience on the career transition of immigrants.
**Level of cultural competence.** Comfort with Canadian culture, knowledge about unwritten norms and rules related to finding and maintaining a job in Canada, and understanding of the “cultural language” were mentioned by some participants as important factors in their career transition. Immigrants’ level of success in transferring and developing their career in a new country depends on their level of sociocultural competence. Cultural competence can impact immigrants’ interpersonal communication, social presentation of self, and social networks, which are factors that are favoured by employers (Mak, Westwood, Ishiyama, & Barker, 1999). Cultural knowledge has also been found to be positively correlated with job search efficacy (job seekers’ confidence in their ability to perform activities related to the job search) and job search clarity (knowledge of the job market and personal career goals) among skilled worker immigrants in Canada (Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012).

Participants who had experience with other cultures before coming to Canada felt more comfortable working with people from other cultures. A similar finding was obtained in research exploring the career transition of successful Chinese immigrants in Canada (Zheng, 2010), where immigrants who had experience working in a multicultural company believed that this experience helped them in finding a job in Canada.

This study adds to the literature on the career transition of immigrants by illustrating the effects of lack of cultural competence, which include misunderstandings in the relationship between individuals and their supervisors and the need to independently acquire job-related information that most Canadians acquire by growing up in Canada.

**Finances.** Some participants mentioned that the financial resources available when they were going through career transition impacted their stress level or opportunity to continue their education in Canada. Other studies on the career transition of immigrants in Canada have also
highlighted the importance of finances in the career transition of immigrants. For example, the obligation to provide for one’s family has been found to be a hindering factor in the career transition of educated immigrant workers in Canada (Koert et al., 2011) and successful Chinese immigrants (Amundson et al., 2011). Another study on the career transition of Jewish immigrants showed that lack of financial resources prevents immigrants from pursuing educational equivalency, which is financially prohibitive (Sinacore et al., 2009). Financial stressors have also been found to impact the career development of Mexican immigrants in the United States by limiting their ability to obtain education (Shinnar, 2007).

The results of this study confirm the results obtained in other studies and adds to the literature by demonstrating the influence of financial challenges on the career transition of Iranian immigrants.

**Attitudes towards newcomers.** Some participants felt that they were bullied in their workplace because of being an immigrant, and some felt their experiences and educations were discounted by other Iranians who had been in Canada longer. Discrimination has been cited as a hindrance for other groups of immigrants in Canada such as Jewish immigrants (Sinacore et al., 2009) and individuals in same-sex binational relationships (Kassan & Nakamura, 2013). A study in Europe also showed that negative perceptions and attitudes towards newcomers were “the single most persistent and significant non-institutional barrier to labor market participation” (Kahanec, Kim, & Zimmermann, 2013).

Discussing the experience of bullying and discrimination was very upsetting for some participants. One participant believed that being bullied at work as an immigrant had damaged her psychologically and she needed to see a counsellor to deal with her emotional pain. Many studies have provided evidence for the negative effects of discrimination on the psychological
well-being of immigrants such as increased levels of anxiety or depression (Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2006).

The results of this study add to the literature by providing information regarding the strong and lasting impacts of bullying and discrimination on the psychological well-being of some Iranian immigrants in Canada. Furthermore, this study shows that bullying and discrimination do not necessarily come from people from other ethnicities. Immigrants can sometimes be bullied by other immigrants from their home country who have been in the host country for a longer period and thus feel superior.

**Employer’s or supervisor’s work ethics.** Being supported by one’s supervisor was mentioned as helpful whereas the feeling of being treated or compensated unfairly was mentioned as hindering by participants.

Some participants believed employers or supervisors take advantage of immigrants who are unaware of their rights in Canada and usually under pressure to find a job. The perception of being treated unfairly by managers and supervisors has been found within other minority groups such as Mexican immigrants in the United States (Shinnar, 2007). Objective measures of unfair treatment, such as wage discrimination, have also been found in relation to immigrant and native-born minorities such as Blacks and Southeast Asians in Canada (Howland & Sakellariou, 1993).

Negative perceptions of fairness in the workplace are associated with lower job satisfaction, poor mental health, lower commitment to work, and lower levels of social integration (Cross & Turner, 2013). On the other hand, being supported by managers and supervisors at the workplace increases the feeling of being accepted and included at the workplace and facilitates the acculturation of immigrants (Lu, Samaratunge, & Härtel, 2016).
This study illustrates how a lack of knowledge about their work and their rights in Canada can result in some Iranian immigrants being compensated unfairly.

**Implications**

The categories obtained in this study provide an in-depth understanding of the helping and hindering factors in the career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada and can have implications in the field of counselling and program development for Iranian immigrants. In this section, some potential implications of these findings are discussed.

The results of this study highlight the importance of unrealistic expectations and lack of self-confidence on the career transition of Iranian immigrants and suggest that exploring clients’ attitudes and beliefs about career transition and helping them develop more helpful attitudes can be useful in counselling immigrants. Furthermore, the results of this study suggest that the process of immigration and career transition can decrease the level of self-confidence in immigrants. Counsellors must pay attention to how the process of career transition has impacted their clients’ self-confidence and use interventions that will increase their clients’ self-confidence by directing their attention to their strengths and accomplishments and engaging in activities that would help clients feel competent.

The results of this study also demonstrate the influence of immigration laws and policies on the career transition of immigrants. Counsellors who work with immigrants can benefit from familiarizing themselves with these laws and policies, which will help them gain a better understanding of the real struggles of immigrants.

Given the results of this study, career counsellors who work with immigrants might find it beneficial to explore their clients’ networking abilities and offer them resources or exercises to help them improve this skill. Considering networking a critical competency for career success,
de Janasz and Forret (2007) have outlined many practical exercises that can be used to help individuals in developing networks.

The friendship network can also be an important area to explore with immigrants who are going through a career transition. Counsellors might be able to help immigrant clients in their career transition by supporting them to explore, broaden, and strengthen their friendship networks.

Given the effect of English language proficiency on career transition, career programs for newcomers should focus more on helping them improve their English language abilities. The helpful aspects of language proficiency found in this study suggest that English programs that prepare individuals for job interviews and communication with their prospective employers can be helpful. Career counsellors can also help immigrant clients by learning about and referring clients to available language resources in the community.

Many participants experienced a sense of loss and gried when they felt their credentials, on which they had spent much time and energy, were not accepted by employers. Counsellors who work with immigrants must be aware of the deep psychological impact of the nonrecognition of credentials when working with immigrants who are going through career transition and help clients by empathizing with their sense of loss.

Lack of Canadian experience was mentioned by some participants as a factor that hindered their career transition. These participants felt requiring newcomers to have Canadian experience was unfair and unreasonable. Career counsellors who work with immigrants must understand the frustration and helplessness experienced by many immigrants, many of whom are highly educated, when they fail to get jobs due to lack of Canadian experience.
Although the helpful aspects of receiving help from professionals have been discussed in similar research (Zheng, 2010), this study adds to the literature by providing narratives of immigrants who experienced frustration and confusion when they did not receive proper information or received unwanted and ill-informed advice from professionals. There are currently some programs in Canada that connect newcomers with a more experienced immigrant in the same field. Although these mentoring programs can be very beneficial, immigrants must be advised beforehand that they must try to seek information from other sources before making decisions about their career.

The results of this study also highlight the fact that having family members while going through career transition should not always be considered as a helpful factor. Counsellors must explore with clients how their family is helping or hindering their career transition and help them explore their emotions and possibly develop strategies to deal with their family situation.

The findings of this study also suggest that career counsellors and program developers or facilitators for immigrants can help them by providing a nonjudgmental and non-discriminatory environment, in which they can have positive experiences with members of the host country.

A study exploring the mediators between the perceived discrimination and psychological well-being of immigrants in Finland found that social interaction with host networks was an important mediator. More specifically, having interaction with nondiscriminating members of the host country had a protective effect for immigrants who had experienced discrimination.

It also emphasizes the importance of educating organizations, employers, and supervisors about the long-term consequences of unfair treatment on the productivity of new immigrants and highlights the important role of career counsellors and program developers in helping immigrants learn their rights as employees in Canada.
Although having sociocultural competence does not guarantee career success, career counsellors can help immigrants in their career transition by educating them about cultural norms and values or by engaging in behaviour rehearsal with clients to help them learn culturally appropriate ways of communication. Career programs designed for new immigrants can also help immigrants by providing opportunities for them to improve their cultural competence, such as mentoring programs and educational groups.

**Conclusion**

Given the paucity of research on the career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada, I conducted this research with the intention of shedding light on factors that help or hinder the career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada. I was motivated by my desire to look at the career transition of Iranian immigrants from a more holistic perspective that would take into account both the hindering and helpful factors in their journeys and inquire about their hopes and wishes.

This study yielded 13 categories that represent the personal and external factors that Iranian immigrant found helpful or hindering in their career transition: (a) Attitude, (b) Laws and Policies, (c) Networking and Making Connections, (d) Friends, (e) English Language, (f) Educational Background, (g) Professional Guidance, (h) Family, (i) Canadian Experience, (j) Level of Cultural Competence, (k) Finances, (l) Attitudes Towards Newcomers, and (m) Employer’s or Supervisor’s Work Ethics.

This study is of value to counsellors, non-profit organizations assisting immigrants, policy makers, and all individuals who work with immigrants because it provides information
regarding the real experiences of immigrants who have been through career transitions and can give them a better understanding of the challenges, strengths, and supports.

This study is also of value to immigrants who expect to go through career transitions because it helps them prepare for their journey, take some steps to mitigate the effects of foreseeable challenges, and develop strategies to receive more support. Immigrants who are currently going through career transitions can also benefit from this research because it provides them an opportunity to feel less alone and to try strategies that have been helpful for others. Research has shown that monitoring and learning from other immigrants who are going through career transitions is positively correlated with a successful career transition and reduces the ambiguity inherent in cross-cultural transitions by providing information about the demands of the new culture (Carnabuci & Wezel, 2011).

The number of categories obtained from the data and the fact that many of them included both hindering and helping incidents provides a reminder of the complex nature of factors influencing the career transition of immigrants and a warning not to assume certain factors are always helpful or hindering and to remain curious when working with immigrants. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the role of external factors, such as an employer’s or supervisor’s work ethics and attitudes towards newcomers, and highlights the need to make more systemic environmental changes and to raise society’s understanding of immigrants. Helping immigrants develop skills and receive support through their career transition without educating employers and non-immigrants and without improving existing immigration policies is not an optimal use of resources. In order to help immigrants in their career transition, new programs and policies should be developed to inform the public about the challenges and strengths of immigrants,
provide thorough and unbiased assessments of immigrants’ credentials, and discourage unethical behaviour in the workplace.

**Limitations and Future Research**

There is a paucity of research in the area of the career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada, despite their large and growing number. This study contributes to the existing literature by shedding light on helping and hindering factors in the career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada. However, like any other study, this study is not without its limitations.

First and foremost, the small number of participants in the study and the specific criteria for participation makes generalizability of the findings to other immigrant groups extremely hard. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to other ethnic minorities from other countries because all of the participants had emigrated from Iran. Given the fact that all the Iranians interviewed in this study were relatively educated, had university degrees, and were able to communicate in English, the findings also cannot be generalized to other Iranian immigrants with lower levels of education or language proficiency.

I chose to conduct qualitative research because I believe it is important to hear each participant’s unique story and experiences. However, I am aware that my presence as a researcher and especially as a fellow Iranian might have influenced the type and the amount of information participants disclosed during data collection.

ECIT is a great method and allowed me to explore helping and hindering factors in the career transition of Iranian immigrants. However, the steps involved in ECIT data analysis require the discarding of categories that do not meet the minimum participation rate criteria.
Therefore, some valuable information from participants might have been lost during the process of forming categories.

A suggestion for future research is to conduct this study in a manner that would allow the results to be more generalizable. For example, conducting this research with a larger group of Iranian immigrants, who can not necessarily communicate in English, will probably yield results that are more representative and more generalizable. Furthermore, it would be interesting to conduct the same study with Iranians in Canadian provinces other than British Columbia to explore how their experiences differ or resemble the experiences of the participants in this study.
References


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Appendix A

Information Letter for Prospective Participants

Career Transition of Iranian Immigrants in Canada: What Helps and What Hinders

Dear Prospective Participant:

My name is Roya Vojdani Jahromi and I am investigating the helping and hindering factors in career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada. This research is part of my MA (Master of Arts) work in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. Upon completion it will result in a master’s thesis that will be housed in the UBC library and available to public upon request.

Despite the growing number of Iranian immigrants in Canada, there is very little research on the career transition of Iranian immigrants in Canada. I am conducting this research to investigate what Iranian immigrants who have experienced career transition found useful and what they found hindering. Furthermore, I am interested to learn what Iranian immigrants wish was available to them when they were experiencing career transition. The results of this research can contribute to the research on career transition by adding to the small body of literature on career transition of Iranian immigrants. Furthermore, the results of this research can be used to enhance the settlement and employment programs designed for Iranian immigrants.

You are receiving this letter because you have emailed or called me and kindly showed your interest in my study. For the purposes of this research, I am seeking adult volunteers (over the age of 19) who have immigrated to Canada from Iran within the last ten years and are able to speak English. Since the topic of this study is career transition, participants must have experienced career transition after arrival in Canada. In other words, participants must have left their career in Iran to immigrate to Canada AND must have started a new career after coming to Canada. Furthermore, participants must be willing to talk about their experience of career transition in Canada.

The total time commitment for this study is 2 to 3 hours within a three to six month period. This study will involve one in-person (face to face) interview and another interview which can be done in-person or over the phone. Both interviews will take about 60 to 90 minutes. During the first interview, I will ask questions to learn about your experience of career transition in Canada and what you have found helpful or hindering. For example, I will ask you to think of a time when a factor really helped you during your career transition. I will also ask you “what exactly about that factor helped you in your career transition?” Some biographical questions will be asked. The answer to all these questions is optional and all information provided will be kept strictly confidential.
The second interview will be done within 3 to 6 months following the first interview. I will send you a summary of the themes and findings and would meet with you in-person or talk to you over the phone to conduct the second interview. During the second interview, you will be asked whether or not the themes represent your experience as well as what you would like added or edited from the report. This is to ensure that you are comfortable with the findings and the way they are presented. You will also be able to get a copy of the study when it is completed.

The interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed. To ensure anonymity of participants, each participant will be given a code number and will not be identified by the use of names or initials. Any and all the information gathered during the research process will be kept strictly confidential. All audio files will be saved in a password-protected file and will be saved on a secure computer on UBC campus. Furthermore, all paper documents related to this research will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at a staff office at UBC. The only people who will have access to research documents will be my supervisor, Dr Amundson and myself (Roya Vojdanijahromi).

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in any section of the study and/or withdraw from the research at anytime without prejudice of any kind. As a token of appreciation to you, you will receive a 10 dollar Starbucks and gift card. Furthermore, your will be entered to win a 50 dollar prize.

Thank you so much for your interest in the study.

Yours sincerely,

Roya Vojdanijahromi

MA student

University of British Columbia

Counselling Psychology Program

Department of Education and Counselling Psychology and Special Education
Appendix B

Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

“Career Transition of Iranian Immigrants in Canada: What Helps and What Hinders”

*Principal Investigator:* Dr. Norman Amundson, Professor

University of British Columbia

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education

*Co-Investigator:* Roya Vojdanjahromi, Masters of Arts Candidate

University of British Columbia

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education

This research is being conducted as part of the requirement for Roya Vojdanjahromi for the Master of Arts (MA) degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia (UBC). The results of this research will be included in a thesis that will become a public document in the University Library once completed. The results may also be published in appropriate academic and/or professional journals.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this research project is to explore the experiences of Iranian immigrants who have been through career transition in Canada. We would like to understand what factors helped you or hindered you in the process of career transition in Canada as well as what you wish was available to you when you were going through career transition.

**Procedures**

This study will involve one in-person interview and a follow up interview, which can be done either in-person or on the phone. Each of the interviews will take 60 to 90 minutes and the total time commitment for this study would be 2 to 3 hours.
During the first interview, participants will be asked to talk about their experience of career transition in Canada. Following this, participants will be asked what factors helped them when they were going through career transition in Canada and what factors hindered them in this process. Finally, participants will be asked what they wish was available to them when they were going through career transition in Canada. Some demographic information will be asked including your age, gender, marital status and the date of arrival in Canada. All questions are optional to answer. The first interview will be audio recorded. Each audio file will be assigned a code number to ensure your identity remains anonymous.

Within 3 to 6 months following the first interview a summary of the themes and findings from the first interview will be mailed/emailed to each participant. Subsequently, the second interview will be conducted either in-person or over the phone. During the second interview, each participant will be asked whether or not the themes represent their experience well and if they would like anything edited or added.

Confidentiality

Any and all information that is gathered during the research process will be kept strictly confidential. All paper copies of research documents will be kept in locked filing cabinet and only I (Roya Vojdanijahromi) and Dr Amundson will have access to the interviews. All digital files will be secured with a password which is known only to me and Dr Amundson and will be saved on a secure computer on UBC campus.

Participants will not be identified by the use of names or initials, only by a code number assigned to each interview.

The final report will use pseudonyms and avoid any details or information that could potentially identify an individual. All questions in the interview are optional to answer. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

Potential Benefits:

This study can potentially benefit Iranian immigrants in Canada by providing a better understanding of the career transition for Iranian immigrants in Canada.

Potential Risks:

Talking about the experience of career transition in Canada might cause emotional/psychological distress for some participants. In order to make sure each participant has the necessary resources to seek further help, a list of available counselling services and crisis lines would be given to each participant.

Compensation:
To show my appreciation for their participation, each participant will receive a 10 dollar Starbucks gift card. The name of each participant will also be entered to win a 50 dollar prize.

Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about the study?

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Consent

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in any section of the study and/or withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice of any kind.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Participant Name  Date

Printed name of the participant signing above:

The signature of a Witness is not required for behavioural research.
Appendix C
Counselling and Community Support Resources

**Individual and Family Counselling**

DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society 604-547-1202

Immigrant Services Society of BC 604-684-2561

Family Services of Greater Vancouver 604-525-9144

GV Counselling and Education Society for Families 778-883-0591

New Westminster Counselling Center 604-525-6651

Share Counselling Center (Port Moody) 604-937-6969

Cameray Center (Burnaby) 604-436-9449

PACS Counselling Program (White Rock) 604-538-2522

Deltassist Family and Community Services 604-594-3455

Surrey/Delta Immigrant Services Society 604-597-0205

Options Community Services 604-596-4321

Surrey Community Services 604-584-5811

**Crisis Services**

Vancouver 604-872-3311

Tri-cities/Surrey/White Rock/Langley 604-951-8855

1-800-suicide 1-800-784-2433
Appendix D

Recruitment Poster

A Study Exploring What Iranian Immigrants Have Found Helpful or Hindering in their Career Transition in Canada

We would love to hear your experience as an Iranian immigrant if

- You have immigrated to Canada from Iran within the last 10 years
- You are over 19 years of age
- You have left your career in Iran and have started a new career in Canada
- You are able to communicate in English
- You are willing to talk about your experience of career transition in Canada

The purpose of this research project is to explore what Iranian immigrants in Canada have found helpful or hindering in their career transition in Canada and what they wish was available to them when they were going through their career transition. Very little is known about the process of career transition for Iranian immigrants in Canada. You will have the opportunity to share your experience of career transition in Canada and contribute to the research in this area and potentially help the Iranian community.

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Roya is conducting this study as her master’s thesis in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia (UBC). The principal investigator and supervisor of this research project is Dr. Norman Amundson, Professor in the department of Counselling Psychology at UBC.
Appendix E

Interview Guide

Date of Interview: 
Place of Interview: 
Interviewee Name: 
Interviewer Name: 

*Overarching Research Question:*

What factors help/hinder Iranian immigrants during their career transition in Canada?

**Interview Phases**

Phase 1: Contextualization

Interview Question: Tell me a little bit about your experience of career transition after you arrived in Canada?

Phase 2: Helping and hindering factors:

Interview Questions: What factors helped you when you were going through career transition in Canada? What about those factors made them helpful? What factors hindered you when you were going through career transition in Canada? What about those factors made them hindering?

Phase 3: Wish List

Interview question: Looking back at your experience, what you wish was available to you when you were going through career transition?

**Interview Introduction:**

Thank you for meeting with me. The reason we are meeting today is to talk about your experience of career transition as an Iranian immigrant in Canada. I believe you can help me gain a better understanding of what it is like to go through career transition as an immigrant. I will be asking you some questions and respectfully request that you answer them in a way that you feel comfortable and open. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your experience which belongs to you and therefore cannot be right or wrong. Some of the things we discuss today might bring up some emotions for you. If, at anytime and for any reason, you wish to take a break or stop the interview, please let me know.
Our interview will have three sections. The first section will be concerned about your experience of career transition in Canada. The second section will be centered around what factors have helped you and what factors have hindered you in the process of career transition. The final section will be about what you wish was available to you when you were going through career transition.

If at anytime during the interview you wish to take a break or stop the interview, please let me know. If you have any question during the interview, please feel free to ask me.

Does this sound alright to you? Any questions before we begin?

Phase 1

I am really interested in your experience of career transition in Canada. Please tell me a little bit about your experience. Tell me the story of your career transition as an Iranian immigrant in Canada.

Phase 2

A. Helping Focus

Think of a time when a factor really helped you during your career transition (example)

Tell me exactly what about that factor helped you in your career transition? In what ways did it help you?

B. Hindering Focus

Think of a time when a factor really hindered you during your career transition.
Tell me exactly what about that factor hindered you in your career transition? In what ways did it hinder you?

Phase 3

As you know, I am interested in what kinds of things or experiences may help people during their career transition. Could you share with me perhaps, a wish-list of what other things would have helped you during your career transition?

Final Question

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of career transition in Canada?

Closing

Thank you so much for your time and your interest in the study. Within a few months, I will send you a copy of the initial results of the study that came from this interview and ask for your feedback. It will be important that you agree on how what you have said today is reported and described. It is really important that you feel it reflects your experience as much as possible, so nothing would be published without your consent.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to being in touch with you again. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.
Appendix F

Demographics and Biographical Information

ALL QUESTIONS ARE OPTIONAL

Age:

Gender:

Marital Status:

Occupation:

Educational Background:

Year of Immigration to Canada: