

**THE IMPACT OF TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AS A HEALTH CARE AIDE  
ON IMMIGRANTS' LIVES**

by

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of training and employment as a health care aide on the personal and public lives of nine immigrants, eight of whom were women. These individuals had successfully completed a combined skills and ESL training program for Home Support or Home Support/Resident Care Attendant at an immigrant settlement agency on the west coast of Canada approximately one to two years prior to the study. The program trained the individuals to work as care aides in private homes or long term care facilities as well as provided training in English skills. A qualitative approach was chosen in order to explore the issues and themes that were relevant to the participants, from their own perspectives, with regard to the impact of training and employment as a health care aide on their lives.

The findings revealed that participation in a training program had a significant impact on the individuals' lives. Acquiring an occupational skill for the health professions gave some of the individuals an occupational identity as well as personal fulfillment. For others, this training helped them to find meaningful employment and facilitated their integration into Canadian society. However, finding full-time employment proved to be a challenge for most of the participants. They encountered many barriers to employment, for example, the need to work on-call and the resultant lack of a stable income; conflicts between domestic responsibilities and work outside the home; transportation limitations; and personal barriers, such as age, work experience, and education. On the positive side, participation in the training program helped the individuals to improve their English skills which increased their confidence, independence,

autonomy, and self-esteem. Improvement in English skills also facilitated the individuals' settlement and integration into Canadian society. In addition, knowledge of health care had a positive impact on the individuals' ability to care for their family members. Overall, participation in a skills and language training program had a significant impact on the individuals' identity, family life, and settlement in Canada.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.0 Overview**

The purpose of this chapter is to give some background information on the factors which led to the proposal for this qualitative study. My own family's settlement experience in the past and my recent participation in a larger study about immigrant women were major reasons for my interest in exploring the impact of a training program on immigrants' lives. In this chapter, I will also discuss the rationale and the research questions which frame the study.

#### **1.1 A Personal Journey**

Being from a first generation immigrant family myself, I have always had an interest in immigrant settlement issues. In 1984, I answered an ad in a local Toronto newspaper put out by the United Way Agency, seeking volunteer ESL tutors for adult immigrants. I thought that it would be a way for me to contribute and help immigrants in their settlement process, which I knew, from my family's experience, could be difficult and challenging. Much to my surprise, I was told that the response to the ad had been so great that they no longer needed any more tutors. But because my interest had already been sparked, I asked how else I could help. It was suggested that I contact a local elementary school which was situated in an ethnic Chinese neighbourhood. I was told that the teachers always needed some extra help with the immigrant children. My volunteer work there lasted one school

year and led to me complete a Bachelor of Education degree at the University of Toronto a few years later.

However, my interest in immigrants and their settlement process had its beginning long before the event described above. Through my family members' struggles to adapt to life in Canada, I had realized fairly early on how important official language skills were to the economic and emotional well-being of immigrants. I was only two years old when my family immigrated to Canada from mainland China, and have often been told, even to this day by some of my adult ESL students, how lucky I was to have come at an early age. I always had the feeling that I was privileged to be able to complete my schooling without any major barriers and struggles. My older siblings were already teenagers when we first came, and all of them faced significant barriers to educational attainment. Of my seven older siblings, only two graduated from high school in Canada.

My mother and my eldest two sisters never had the chance to have language training in Canada in the early years. They all had to start working soon after our arrival in order to help support our large family. My family's settlement experience was in some ways typical of many immigrants. My father received some English language training in Canada and therefore had some contact with the English speaking society. My mother and older sisters did work for which little or no English was required; for example, my sisters both worked in factories. They could not afford to take the time off work to learn English. Interestingly enough, after living in Canada for over thirty years, both my mother and my eldest sister were finally able to learn English in recent years. Both are now enrolled in ESL classes. For my mother, who never had any schooling, this is a particularly special experience because

literacy has opened a whole new world to her. Whenever I visited her in Toronto, she would show me proudly what she had learned and was able to do. For me, this was a poignant example of the importance attached to language and literacy, not only for society but for individuals whose opportunities have been limited by a lack of language and literacy.

When I talk to immigrant women about their lives, I see my mother's and sisters' experiences in their stories. Although I did not personally experience the same struggles, I am very familiar with these struggles because I have witnessed them in those who are closest to me. Thus, I feel a personal connection to and understanding of the experiences of many immigrants in Canada.

## **1.2 Involvement in the Larger Study**

Since 1993, upon relocating to Vancouver, I have specialized in teaching English as a second language (ESL) to adult immigrants and have taught in a variety of programs in different contexts. I decided to specialize in teaching adult immigrants because of my desire to help immigrants in their settlement process, which I knew was complex and filled with challenges. My interest in the field of adult education lead me to further my own studies, and in January 1997, I began my Master of Arts in the Department of Language Education at UBC. I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to work as a research assistant on a study which closely related to my own interests. This study<sup>1</sup>, funded by a Hampton grant, sought to explore the experiences of immigrant women entering the health professions in

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<sup>1</sup> Duff, Early, and Mohan (1997).

Canada. As I had been teaching with the Immigrant Settlement Agency (ISA)<sup>2</sup> for a number of years and was familiar with the organization and its programs, the Home Support/Resident Care Attendant Program offered by ISA was a practical choice for the site of this research project. My involvement in this research project and my own personal interest in immigrant settlement issues led me to pursue an extension of this research project for the present study.

### **1.3 Rationale**

The rationale for the present study is related to the research conducted by Duff and Early (forthcoming). In the proposal for their study, entitled *Socializing Language and Sociocultural Identity from the Margins: A Study of Immigrant Women Learning English as a Second Language for Health Professions*, which explores the experiences of immigrants training to be care aides, an entry level position in the health professions, Duff, Early and Mohan (1997) identified the importance of Workplace English as a Second Language training for immigrants in recent years, and also that relatively little research has examined the impact of English for the Workplace programs on the lives of immigrants. The literature review in Chapter Two confirms the relative paucity of research in this important area of study.

The present study focusses on nine individuals who graduated either from a Home Support Attendant Program in June 1996 or a Home Support/Resident Care Attendant Program in June 1997, both of which were delivered by ISA. The Home Support Program

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<sup>2</sup> ISA is a pseudonym for a not-for-profit immigrant and refugee settlement organization on the west coast of Canada.

prepares participants to work in private homes or group homes, helping elderly or mentally and/or physically disabled people in daily routines. The combined Home Support/Resident Care Attendant Program prepares participants to work in long term care facilities, for example, nursing homes or hospitals, in addition to home support work. The programs teach the participants health care work skills such as home maintenance and nutrition; lifts, transfers, and body mechanics; and personal care skills. The programs also focus on acquiring knowledge of health and healing, anatomy and physiology, and emergency first aid and CPR. In addition to the skills training, these programs include instruction in ESL, personal management skills such as stress management and problem-solving skills, and job search skills. The nine individuals were interviewed in April 1998, approximately one to two years after graduation from their programs. The rationale for this study was to explore the impact of a skills/language training program on these individuals' public and personal lives. Because eight of the nine individuals are women, this study emphasizes issues facing immigrant women in particular.

There are several reasons why research in this area is important. First, it is well known that immigrant women are significant contributors to the Canadian labour market, and at the same time, have great limitations in terms of employment prospects. Second, many researchers have acknowledged the importance of vocational and language training programs for immigrants' settlement process, and it is also well known that immigrant women face more barriers than many other groups in society in accessing such programs. Furthermore, their experiences in such programs have largely been ignored in the literature. Third, immigrant women play a special role in the adaptation of immigrant families to life in



Canada, as they are primary caregivers as well as essential contributors to the economic well-being of their family. These reasons warrant research into the impact of training programs on the lives of immigrants and specifically immigrant women.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the complex issues in the settlement process of immigrants, especially with regards to language and employment needs, and to understand these issues from the perspectives of the immigrants themselves. Because this study seeks to better understand the perspectives and experiences of a small number of participants, as revealed through their interview narratives, a qualitative approach was chosen. Burnaby (1992), in her overview of official language training programs, describes the need for such a study:

... research into the interests and perspectives of the immigrants themselves is rare and scattered in public documentation. ... we need a great deal more qualitative information about their perceptions about the kinds of training that have helped them or would help them accomplish their specific goals. ... We need to hear the immigrants' perspectives. (p. 27)

This study contributes to this important topic by exploring immigrants' experiences in training programs and following such programs.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The preceding section outlines the general focus of this study. The overarching question is: What is the impact of training and employment as a care aide on immigrants' lives and settlement in Canada? In this study, impact is determined from the participants' oral accounts of their experiences before, during and after the training program. More specific research questions are:

1. How has completing this skills and language training program affected the individuals' employment opportunities?
2. How has completing this program affected the individuals' language ability in terms of the participants' own perceived change in language ability?
3. Related to the above question, how has any change in language ability affected the individuals' interaction with people in the public and private spheres? By public sphere, I refer to the outer circle of workplace, public institutions, and service encounters, and by private sphere, I refer to the inner circle of family, friends, and social community.
4. Also, because of the specialized nature of this training with its focus on health care, how has training and employment as a care aide affected the private and public lives of these individuals?
5. Lastly, how has training and employment as a care aide affected the individuals' identity and settlement in Canada?

## **1.5 Organization of Thesis**

This thesis consists of six chapters. In this chapter, I have discussed the factors which led to the proposal for the present study, that is, my personal interest in the topic of immigrant settlement issues and my involvement in the larger study on immigrant women entering the health professions. I have also presented the rationale and the research questions for this study. In Chapter Two, I present a review of the literature that is related to this study and which helps to frame the study. This review focusses on four major areas of research which I felt were relevant to the present study: immigrant women and

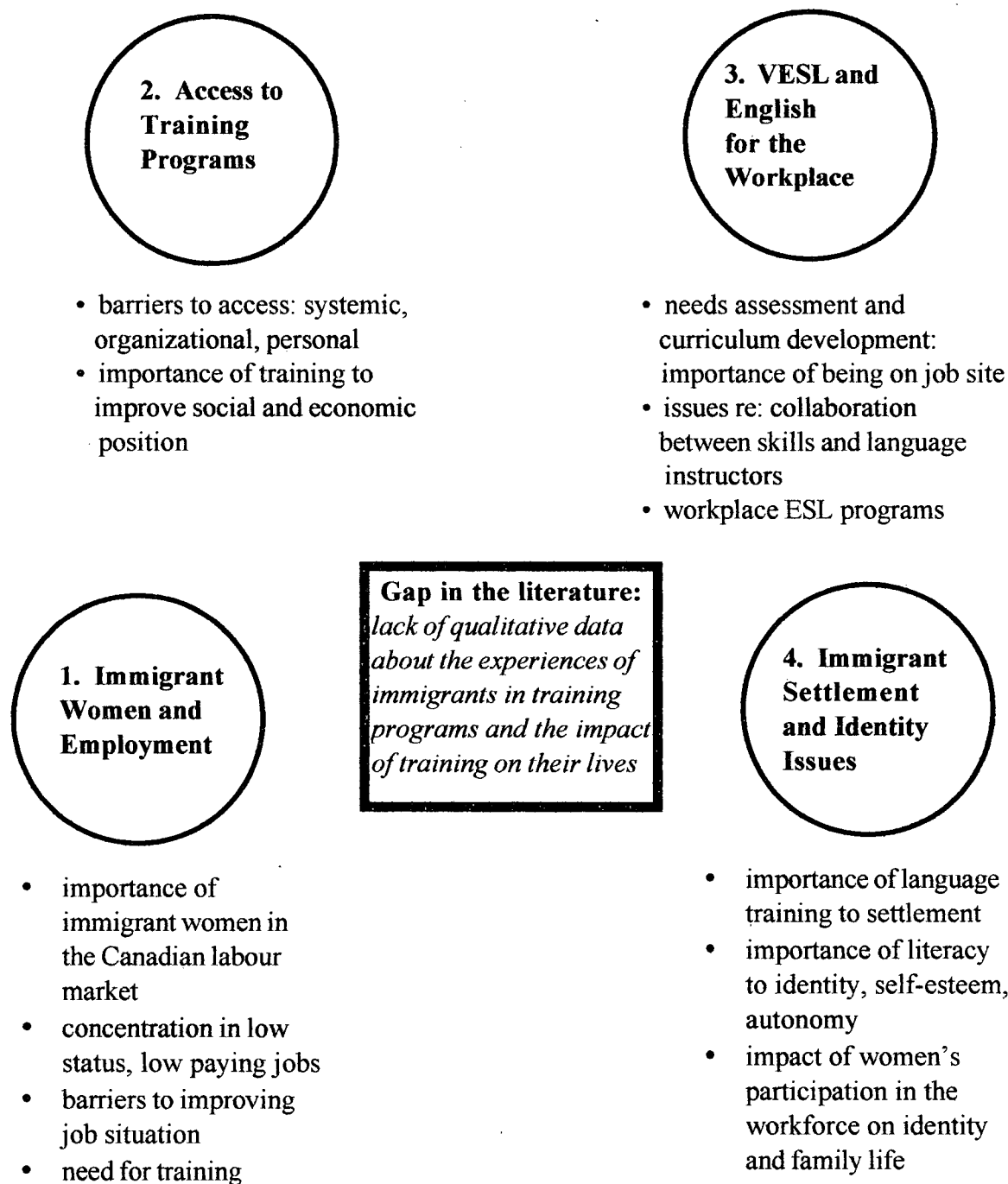
employment, access to training programs, vocational ESL (VESL) and English for the workplace, and immigrant settlement and identity issues. In Chapter Three, I discuss the context of the study and the methodology used. In this chapter, I describe the institutional context, the training programs which the participants completed, and the data collection and analysis. As the purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of immigrants in training programs from their perspectives, I felt that it was necessary to provide some background information about the participants. In Chapter Four, I describe the demographic characteristics and the educational and occupational backgrounds of each participant. In Chapter Five, I report on the findings from the study. The findings can be grouped in three categories: employment issues, training program issues, and personal issues. In this chapter I also discuss and compare the findings with previous research. Finally, in Chapter Six, I conclude with a summary of the main findings and discuss the implications of this study for program delivery and further research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **2.0 Overview**

The present study relates to several different topics because of the complex nature of settlement issues. Hence, the literature reviewed below comes from a number of different fields, including language education, economics, sociology, psychology, and women's studies. The literature reviewed here focusses on immigrant women's experiences since gender is a significant factor in this study, drawing as it does on interview data from eight women and one man. This literature review is divided into four categories which I believe are especially pertinent to the present study: immigrant women and employment, access to vocational and language training programs, teaching VESL and English for the workplace, and immigrant settlement and identity issues. Figure 2 highlights the main findings from previous research in these areas. Many of these topics are, of course, interrelated and some of the articles deal with more than one of the above topics. The purpose of this review is to gain an understanding of the findings and issues that relate to the present study, and which helped frame the present research questions and analysis of data. Appendix 1 summarizes the major studies reviewed here.



**Figure 2. Overview of the Literature**

## **2.1 Immigrant Women and Employment**

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of immigrant women in the Canadian labour force. A number of articles and studies have focussed on immigrant women and employment issues (Beach and Worswick, 1993; Boyd, 1992; Cohen, 1987; De Troy, 1987; Neal and Neale, 1987; Ng and Estable, 1987; Payne, 1991; Sensi, 1992). Some have used quantitative data and methodology, while others have used a qualitative approach. Regardless of approach and methodology, one central issue emerges from the literature: the disadvantaged position of immigrant women in the Canadian labour force.

### **2.1.1 The Position of Immigrant Women in the Canadian Labour Market**

An article by Ng and Estable (1987) highlights the importance of immigrant women in the Canadian labour market and their position in this labour market. Ng and Estable used statistical data to show that immigrant women's participation rate in the paid labour force has been consistently higher than that of Canadian-born women, thus, signifying the essential contribution that immigrant women make to the Canadian economy. Ng and Estable also discuss the downward mobility that immigrant women experience after immigration, regardless of educational level and previous work experience. In addition to these observations, the authors also point out that many immigrant women work a "double day" as they bear primary responsibility for household work and childcare, and that many do shift or night work so that they can juggle household and childcare responsibilities. Local women face similar challenges regarding this double duty, but immigrant women face additional challenges because of language barriers. Ng and Estable identify the need to study

the effect of women's labour force participation on power relations within the household and how childcare responsibilities affect labour force participation. The connection between domestic responsibilities and employment is a theme which recurs throughout the literature and also emerges in the present study.

The disadvantaged position of immigrant women is also the topic of other studies. Using census data, Boyd (1992) shows that immigrant women, particularly those from Asian and Southern European countries, are characterized by lower education, concentration in the lower echelons of service and processing occupations, and lower incomes. Boyd explicitly documents the link between official language knowledge and socio-economic status, and concludes that language training, education and literacy programs, skill retraining programs, and childcare services are all necessary for improving the status of immigrant women.

### **2.1.2 The Gendered Nature of Employment for Immigrant Women**

Articles by Cohen (1987) and Neal and Neale (1987) both explicitly discuss the gendered nature of employment for immigrant women mentioned by the authors above. Both of these articles, as with a number of others cited in this literature review, are from a special edition of the journal *Resources for Feminist Research*, which focussed on the experiences of immigrant women in Canada. This edition sought to address issues, from a feminist perspective, which were particularly important for this group in Canadian society. Cohen's study on the work conditions of immigrant women live-in domestics was based on a set of interviews with fifty non-white immigrant women who have worked in private households for more than four years. Cohen found that the women had to deal with racism,

sexual abuse, lack of privacy and 'invisibility,' which refers to the expectation that domestic workers are supposed to be silent, deaf to gossip and household conversations, and blind to their employers' faults (p. 38). This article reveals the difficulties and sometimes dangers that women with little power and status in society must face.

Neal and Neale examine another occupation in which many immigrant women find themselves: the office cleaning industry. The authors used a case study of one young woman, who was second-generation Canadian, to analyze the relationship between Canadian immigration practices, the cleaning industry and women cleaners, and the politics of private contracting in the industry and its consequences for cleaners. The authors also discuss the gender relations and division of labour at work, and conclude that "patriarchal norms and relations evident in housework, office cleaning, and immigration practices coexist and buttress the patriarchal and capitalist labour relations" in society (p. 41).

### **2.1.3 Income Patterns of Immigrant Women**

Beach and Worswick (1993) used regression analysis to examine the income patterns of immigrant women in Canada. Empirical results revealed a number of inequities. First, immigrant earnings differentials were far more permanent for women than for men. The authors suggest that this is a result of government language and retraining programs being directed more towards husbands and men rather than wives and women. This supports the findings of other authors, for example, Burnaby (1992), Doherty (1992), and Giles (1987), which focus on barriers to access to language training programs. This theme will be discussed further in the following section. From their data analysis, Beach and Worswick propose a "family investment strategy hypothesis" which states that immigrant wives



initially subsidize their husbands' investment in long-term Canadian job skills. This is an important point which relates to immigrant women's ghettoization in poorly paid, low status jobs. In addition, the earning short-fall for highly educated workers suggests the problem of recognition of credentials in the labour market obtained elsewhere, and possibly a greater degree of discrimination against immigrant women in access to skilled jobs (p. 47).

Beach and Worswick also acknowledge the severe burdens on immigrant wives who are expected to juggle the dual roles of mother and breadwinner, while adjusting to new economic and social environments. These burdens are further compounded by the lack of social services available and accessible to these women. Beach and Worswick conclude that language and "integration strategy" programs need to make greater efforts to address the employment needs of immigrant women.

The above articles examine the disadvantaged position of immigrant women and employment in Canada. Furthermore, Neal and Neale and Payne discuss how employment patterns persist beyond the first generation of immigrant women. For example, in the case study by Neal and Neale, the subject, Marian, was a second-generation Portuguese-Canadian, who followed in her mother's footsteps in order to contribute to the family income. Research in Britain and Europe (De Troy, 1987; Payne, 1991; Sensi, 1992) also revealed similar findings regarding immigrant women and employment. Buijs (1993), for example, also discusses the occupational restrictions of second-generation immigrant women in Europe.

Several themes emerge from the above review: the importance of immigrant women to the labour market and to their family income, the disadvantaged position of immigrant

women in terms of job status and income, the immense difficulties faced by immigrant women in the workplace, and the lack of opportunity for higher skills training. Many of the above sources advocate for increased training for immigrant women, and especially training that meets the special needs of this group. But as the next section will illustrate, access to language and skills training programs is highly problematic for many immigrant women.

## **2.2 Access to Vocational and Language Training Programs**

In recent years, a number of studies have focussed on the issue of immigrant women's access to language and occupational training programs (Burnaby, 1992; Cumming & Gill, 1992; De Troy, 1987; Doherty, 1992; Giles, 1987; Hayes, 1989; Kouritzin, 1997; Paredes, 1987; Payne, 1991; Rockhill and Tomic, 1994; Sensi, 1992; Tisza, 1997; Wilson, 1998). This section will review the findings and discussions about the issue of access and the importance of language and occupational training programs.

Ramkhalwansingh (1981) makes two important points regarding language skills and employment. First, employment opportunities for non-English speaking immigrants tend to be such that they have limited contact with English-speaking people; thus, few immigrants learn English on the job as a result. Second, the lack of language proficiency and Canadian work experience are two main factors that limit immigrants' employment prospects. Taken together, it is evident that language training is necessary for immigrants, as most do not learn English on the job, as is assumed by some people.

### **2.2.1 Barriers to Access to Training**

The government publication *Rethinking Training* (1994) identifies numerous barriers faced by women. According to this source, foundation barriers include the lack of a training culture, the trainee seen as deficient, the assumption of client homogeneity, and the lack of a comprehensive economic strategy. Other barriers include financial barriers, lack of support services, lack of access to information, barriers to learning once in programs, and personal barriers, for example, low self-confidence (p. 8).

Paredes (1987) examines immigrant women's access to government second language programs and defines two levels of access: "sheer" access and "problematic" access. The argument made by Paredes is that immigrant women face two levels of barriers. First, there is the problem of finding programs that they qualify for, as eligibility requirements often discriminate against immigrant women. For example, several authors noted that immigrant women often come to Canada as a sponsored family member and this status disqualified them from some language training programs. Other programs were inaccessible to immigrant women because the programs were only available to immigrants who needed English skills for full-time employment. Another example of this first level barrier is the organization of programs. The full-time structure of many programs as well as the time and place of programs often excluded women's participation, given their domestic responsibilities and also transportation limitations. As if these barriers were not daunting enough, even if immigrant women were able to access programs, internal barriers often prevented the successful completion of programs. Examples of second level barriers include the lack of financial and social support, the cultural insensitivity of programs and/or curriculum, and

also the lack of understanding on the part of program deliverers and facilitators of personal barriers such as low self-confidence among potential students.

Doherty (1992) also identifies two levels of barriers and calls them external and internal barriers to access. According to Doherty's definition, external barriers refer to inadequate information and referral to programs which prevent immigrants from getting into programs, and internal barriers refer to factors such as long waiting lists, few seats, and restrictive eligibility requirements. Doherty's study focussed on systemic secondary sexism in the entrance criteria of the National Language Training Program which indirectly discriminates against women. For example, the ineligibility of sponsored family class and persons not "destined for employment" prevents immigrant women from joining the program. Because many women belong to these two categories, especially upon arrival to Canada, Doherty argues that such criteria are sexist and discriminatory.

Burnaby (1992) and Boyd (1992) also discuss the numerous systemic barriers to training programs faced by immigrant women and offer some recommendations. Burnaby points out the need for a comprehensive resource of information for immigrants on language training, vocational training, and settlement services. Burnaby also discusses the conflict immigrant women face between accepting available, low-level employment, which is much needed given the financial constraints faced by many immigrants, and participating in learning opportunities for a better job. As discussed by Beach and Worswick above, it is the immigrant woman who often takes low-level employment so that her husband can invest in long-term training for the future. Boyd states that the extensive provision of language training services is a major requirement for improving the status of immigrant women, but

that equally important are education and literacy programs, skill retraining programs, and childcare services.

Cumming and Gill (1992) use an action research approach to explore the socio-cultural factors that appeared to facilitate and constrain participation in an ESL and literacy program. What I found particularly interesting about this study was that despite the efforts made to help participants complete the program, for example, by providing childcare, bilingual instruction, and an accessible location and time, in the end, only six out of the 13 participants completed the program. Attrition was due to a number of unanticipated factors: three families moved out of the region, three took full-time employment, and one suffered a severe illness. One can argue that if finding full-time employment was one of the goals of the program, then success need not necessarily be equated with completion of the program. Cumming and Gill found that the decision to participate in classes was related to a complex set of factors: length of residence in Canada, economic position of the family, family roles and support, future employment prospects, desire for English literacy and contact with the majority society, and program supports. What is especially relevant to the present study is the participants' views concerning the importance of acquiring English in order to better participate in Canadian society, to gain greater independence, to obtain meaningful employment, and to further their education through job training programs (p. 246).

Giles (1987) raises similar issues regarding the importance of official language skills. Giles discusses the isolation of immigrant women because of a lack of English language skills and draws attention to how the lack of proficiency in English affects a woman's relationship with her children and their educational system, with the medical system, and with the wider

bureaucracy. Thus, not only are official language skills crucial to employment prospects, they are vital to the settlement of immigrants' families. Giles contributes to the literature by her focus on the private sphere of immigrant women's lives.

Kouritzin (1997) also focusses on the personal aspects of access and motivation, and used a life history perspective in her study of five immigrant mothers to further elucidate the complexity of access by exploring the private sphere of women's lives and the role that social identity plays in the learning of an additional language. Kouritzin shows how the immigrant mothers in her study had two distinct and contradictory roles, that is, as guardians of the first language and culture and as primary caregivers in the new society, and how these roles resulted in ambivalence and contradiction which complicated access and motivation to learn English. This theme of the dual role of immigrant women, especially those who are mothers, has arisen in other studies as well, and will be further discussed in the section regarding settlement and identity issues.

### **2.2.2 Barriers to Access in Hispanic Communities**

The studies by Rockhill and Tomic (1994) and Hayes (1989) both discuss barriers to access in Hispanic communities in Canada and the U. S. , respectively. Rockhill and Tomic conducted a qualitative study of ESL and Latin American immigrant women in Toronto. The informants, who worked in community centres, had themselves been refugees and/or immigrants; thus, they were able to report on the obstacles faced by this group of women from two different perspectives. These informants stressed that "institutionalized sexism and racism work in concert with patriarchal family relations to place immigrant women at the bottom of the social scale" (p. 91). Rockhill and Tomic point out that the handful of

programs geared specifically for immigrant women are accompanied by long waiting lists and hundreds of applicants for the few available positions. Another important point, already noted above by Beach and Worswick (1993), is that immigrant women's income is too vital to the family for them to be able to afford to go to school full-time, and the irony is that English is even more important to women than to men in order to get a job that pays more than minimum wage. For example, men can work in the trades, which are generally well-paid and less demanding in terms of English language proficiency, whereas women are more limited in terms of occupational choices without higher English proficiency. Another barrier faced by immigrants is the lack of Canadian work experience. This issue also arises in the present study.

Hayes (1989) identifies four deterrent factors in her quantitative study of Hispanic adults in the U.S.: self-school incongruence in terms of perceived student needs, low self-confidence, lack of access to classes, and situational constraints. External barriers to access have been discussed in other studies. Hayes contributes to the literature by increasing awareness of the impact of internal, personal barriers on second language learning. Other sources have mentioned the existence of internal barriers; Hayes provides data to support this observation. Hayes' data were based on 207 respondents who completed a survey. Factor analysis produced the deterrent factors listed above. The factor of self/school incongruence referred to a perceived discrepancy between individual needs, preferences, and self-concept as compared with the educational environment. For example, the two highest loading items were "I felt I was too old to learn" and "I didn't want to answer questions in class" (p. 55). Other items suggested a perceived lack of compatibility with other students

and teachers in the program, and conflicts between roles as spouse, parent, relative, or friend and the role of a student. The factor of low self-confidence consisted of items that reflected doubts about one's ability to be successful in educational activities and that the learning process would be difficult or unpleasant. These are important factors to be aware of when discussing access and motivation regarding language training programs.

### **2.2.3 Recent Studies in Western Canada**

The recent studies by Tisza (1997) and Wilson (1998) give further evidence for the existences of barriers to accessing training programs. Tisza focusses on an ESL program in an urban centre on the west coast of Canada while Wilson focusses on a combined occupational skills and ESL training program in the same municipality. Both examine the experiences and training needs of immigrant women. Tisza's case study of one ESL program focussed on its enabling aspects. Her findings supported previous research by Cumming and Gill, cited above, by identifying the importance of considering gender as a factor in program planning and delivery. Tisza found that enabling aspects of the program included the provision of childcare, convenient class locations and times, bilingual outreach workers, a supportive classroom environment, and relevant curriculum. Wilson's study focussed on the evaluation of a long term care aide program, a program very similar to the one examined in the present study. The women participants in this study identified the need to overcome barriers to successfully complete training and find employment. As in other studies, the participants reported conflicts between work and family responsibilities, among other challenges that were specific to work in the health care industry, such as the difficulties of on-call and shift work.



#### **2.2.4 Evaluation of Training Programs in Britain and the European Community**

The studies by De Troy (1987), Payne (1991), and Sensi (1992) examine women and training issues in Britain and Europe. De Troy's work focusses on immigrant women while the other two authors examine women in general. According to De Troy, training programs for immigrant women in Europe have emphasized language and socio-cultural activities and do not provide skills that would improve employment prospects. Although immigrant women are important in the European labour market, De Troy states that this group has been largely ignored by researchers, public policy makers and women's organizations. De Troy also acknowledges the importance of training for immigrant women and the lack of suitable training programs for immigrant women who face many more barriers than other members of the labour force because of ethnicity, gender and their status as foreigners. These findings corroborate North American reports.

Sensi (1992) and Payne (1991) examine the impact of training programs on women in Europe and Britain, respectively. These studies focus more on the evaluation of programs and discuss the importance of such programs. The study conducted by Sensi examined the effectiveness of in-company training programs in a number of European countries. Sensi found that training had a powerful impact on the social practices and perceptions of company members. One major issue was reconciling training time with family life. The number of women with dependent children was very low, not only in the long-term training schemes, but also in the short-term personal development courses. Sensi attributed the low participation rate to the existence of barriers. In general, vocational training was

accompanied by mobility towards more highly skilled jobs and advancement in the classification grids and salary.

Sensi also reported on the impact of training on changes in trainees' mentality and personal development, which is relevant to the present study. Training had considerable impact in terms of increasing self-confidence, autonomy and independence. However, Sensi also noted that self-confidence might have been a prerequisite for selection to training. Also noteworthy was the support received by the majority of the women from their spouses and extended families (p. 71), which reinforces the finding of Cumming and Gill about the importance of support from the family. Another interesting point was that apart from short-term changes to family life because of participation in training, the training did not seem to have left any significant impact on previous roles and responsibilities in the family.

Payne's study also evaluates the effectiveness of adult skills programs, but the context is quite different. First, Payne's study, which examined government training programs in Britain, was a large scale national study which used quantitative analyses supported by qualitative data collected through interviews, whereas Sensi's study consisted of a small number of case studies of company training programs in various countries in the European Community. The study focussed on the Training Opportunities Programme (TOPS), later renamed Old Job Training Scheme (OJTS). Second, Payne examined programs which were specifically "off-the-job," that is, they were not workplace-sponsored programs and one of Payne's main arguments was the need for government-sponsored programs as she found that employer sponsored programs were less accessible and beneficial to women. She argued that employers were often reluctant to train women for higher skilled positions

because of the belief that women were not as committed to their jobs as men, that is, that there was a greater probability that women would leave their jobs.

In this thorough study, Payne examines the impact of TOPS/OJTS on women's employment opportunities, income, and personal gains. This study paid special attention to the experiences of women who were returning to the workforce after a period of absence, and also of women who had taken low skill jobs because of domestic constraints. She also included a section which looked specifically at ethnic minority women and racial segregation in industry. As with Canadian reports cited above, ethnic minority women in Britain were concentrated in low skilled, low paid work, even more than women from the dominant white culture. Payne found that ethnic minority women were over-represented in the "making and processing" and non-supervisory hotel and catering courses. Payne offered two explanations for this pattern: discrimination in the labour market; and lack of recognition of qualifications gained abroad which makes it difficult for the women to enter higher skills training courses. Thus, training is especially important for ethnic minority women.

In general, TOPS/OJTS courses had very positive effects for the women in terms of finding employment, increasing earnings, and increasing job opportunities. Also important but less quantifiable were personal gains such as greater job satisfaction, increase in confidence, and for women who did not have training when they were younger, training also offered a second chance for achieving personal fulfillment.

I would like to further highlight two points which I think are of particular importance to the present study. First, Payne discussed the importance of providing a supportive training environment for women, which gave them the necessary confidence to go back to

work, and to have courses run by people who understood their needs and had the skill to help them rebuild their faith in their own abilities, as many women who return to work move down the occupational ladder. Second, Payne discussed the importance of getting recognized qualifications which helped to reduce the disadvantage in the labour market experienced by older workers and members of ethnic minorities. Payne makes strong arguments for the provision of government-sponsored training programs for women.

To summarize, numerous studies in different contexts have all provided evidence for the existence of barriers for immigrant women in accessing language and occupational training programs. This group, because of gender, ethnicity, and immigration status, face more barriers than other groups in Canadian society. At the same time, a number of authors have shown how important such programs are not only to the social and economic well-being of this group but also for society. Furthermore, because of the role of women as primary caregivers, their access or lack of access to programs also affects their family members and their social and economic well-being. The issue of access is complex and multifaceted, and relates to issues of settlement and identity as well, as some of the authors have alluded to. Before discussing the topic of settlement and identity, the next section will deal more specifically with the language and training programs themselves and issues related to the teaching of English for the workplace.

### **2.3 VESL and English for the Workplace**

Another topic that is related to the present study involves the teaching of English as a second language and in particular, the teaching of English for the workplace, also referred to

as vocational English as a second language (VESL) , a branch of English for specific purposes (ESP). Because of my background in teaching ESL, this was an area that I was also interested in exploring in this study. One of the central questions in this field is: How can we best help ESL students learn the language they need in their jobs? In VESL research, this question is addressed by literature that deals with needs assessment (Holliday, 1995; Prince, 1984; Svendsen and Krebs, 1984; and West, 1984) and literature that deals with program delivery (Furnborough & Munns, 1984; Stapp, 1998; and Vivian, 1984). Another important topic in VESL is collaboration between vocational and VESL instructors (Platt, 1993; Yogman & Kaylani, 1996). Wilson's study (1998) discussed in the previous section also deals with issues regarding teaching VESL, from a program evaluation perspective. A number of the above articles are from a special edition of *The ESP Journal* (1984) which focussed on adult ESL and vocational ESL. Crandall (1984), in her introduction to the special issue, called adult ESL "the other ESP" because, traditionally, ESP has focussed on English language needs for professionals or for academic settings. Only in recent years, has adult vocational ESL received increasing attention. In the 1990's, the examination of workplace ESL programs from a critical perspective has emerged as an important topic in VESL (Goldstein, 1994; Peirce, Harper & Burnaby, 1996). This section will review various articles that relate to teaching English for the workplace, several of which (Svendsen & Krebs, Vivian, Wilson) deal specifically with the health care context..

### **2.3.1 Needs Assessment in VESL**

In the literature on English for the workplace, a dominant theme is needs assessment. The articles by West (1984) and Svendsen and Krebs (1984) hold a similar perspective

regarding the importance of the VESL instructor as curriculum developer and the related responsibility of assessing language needs. West discusses VESL needs assessment in general, and Svendsen and Krebs used two health care occupations, hospital central supply technician and transporter, to illustrate how to identify what to teach. The articles are also similar in their findings and recommendations, which emphasize the importance of VESL instructors being at the job site. Both articles recommend providing instructors with a tour of the workplace in order to get an overview, having them observe communication patterns, and having them ask various industry personnel specific questions about the jobs and the language needed. West also mentions the importance of spending time observing the vocational instruction, both in-class and on the work site. In terms of language requirements, West identifies four main areas: vocabulary development, language functions, structures, and register. Svendsen and Krebs have a different typology: language for immediate job duties and routine interactions; language for greater flexibility and increased responsibility, especially important when routines are interrupted; and social language, which is important in establishing rapport with co-workers and increases the likelihood of getting help from others if needed.

Holliday (1995) also focusses on the job site in needs assessment but with a different emphasis. He describes the use of ethnography, in particular, to assess the language needs of a large oil company in the Middle East. According to Holliday, the language needs of this company had to be seen in terms of wider institutional needs, curriculum implementation factors, and wider social factors. More specifically, the personnel structure of this company was such that expatriate English speakers held management positions and local non-English

speakers held labour positions. In terms of wider social factors, Holliday pointed out that it was necessary to be aware of the politics of English language program delivery and the interest of various stakeholders both within and outside the company. For example, the British Council and local establishments were likely candidates to deliver the program; related to this is the question of whether to use foreign or national English specialists and how that would affect the program delivery. Another contextual dynamic was the goal of the company to nationalize its staff. Thus, ethnography was used to carry out a holistic assessment of needs, and ethnography was a necessary tool to understand the culture of the institute, to interpret the internal realities of this culture, and to understand how insiders perceived the issues surrounding the role of English and training. Holliday also comments on the impact of a language training program on language use in the institution and the resultant social change. The study found that there was a need for precise oral communication skills, technical or commercial terms, precise written communication, and basic “general” English. Holliday makes a strong case for the use of ethnography as a needs assessment tool, and aptly concludes with the statement: “Language needs cannot be separated from the social context in which they play a role” (p. 126).

Holliday’s use of ethnography recalls work by Roberts, Davies, and Jupp (1992) who used ethnography in an extensive study carried out by the Industrial Language Training Service in the UK to examine the linguistic dimension of racial discrimination at the workplace. The rationale for using ethnography is to better understand the cultural and social patterns affecting linguistic interaction and the recognition of the impact of values, beliefs, and assumptions on these interactions. This holistic approach has gained favour in second

language research in recent years. However, it has not been used sufficiently to examine training programs and workplaces for immigrant populations in Canada.

Finally, Prince (1984) discusses four stages that a VESL planner must consider: goal analysis, job analysis, language analysis, and measuring results. Goal analysis refers to the results that the company (client) expects, and job and language analyses are interrelated. Prince identifies two approaches to workplace language needs assessment: work-oriented analysis, which describes work activities in terms of processes and procedures and is more goal-oriented; and worker-oriented analysis, which describes work in terms of specific human behaviours and is more process-oriented. Prince also discusses the importance of program evaluation and the various means by which this could be accomplished. He concludes by recommending that ESP planners look to the sponsoring organization for guidelines to proceed.

### **2.3.2 Program Delivery and Curriculum Development in VESL**

Another important topic in this specialized field of ESL is how best to teach the vocational language. This section will discuss articles by Furnborough and Munns (1984), Vivian (1984), and Stapp (1998). Furnborough and Munns describe retraining and employment skills programs developed by Lancashire Industrial Training Unit in response to the needs of adult South Asian textile workers who had become unemployed because of economic recession. The authors discuss the course contents which included practical skills training, knowledge of the industry, and communication skills training. What is interesting in this article is their awareness of cross-cultural issues in program delivery. The authors identified special problems of ESL trainees because of cultural differences in learning styles



and instructor-learner relationships. The authors conclude with several training implications: first, successful training demands a flexible and sensitive response from all parties; second, training instructors need to recognize the cross-cultural factors which can affect learning, for example, the reluctance of many trainees to ask questions for fear of being identified as poor trainees<sup>1</sup>; third, language instructors need to participate in the skills training sessions in order to obtain data on which to base their communications training course; and lastly, instructors must be aware of the special needs and aspirations of the ethnic minority groups.

Vivian (1984) deals more specifically with the mechanics of program delivery and instructional strategies. Vivian describes two different types of VESL courses: a preparatory course which provided general medical concepts and English for health paraprofessionals, for example, nursing assistants and home health workers, and a language support course which was part of a vocational training course for nursing assistants or home health workers. The goal of the preparatory course was to provide basic competence in technical vocabulary and job-related dialogue so that learners could pass the entrance exam for the vocational training course. The language support course was to develop competence in the vocational course content, develop listening proficiency and to have enough understanding of language and content to pass a written final exam. Vivian describes the procedure she used in developing the curriculum and the strategies she used in teaching. The important point made is that instructional strategies depend on learners' needs. She used a teacher-centred approach in the preparatory course because of the more limited language

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<sup>1</sup> This may also be exacerbated by their low status and relative expendability within the institutional context.

abilities of the learners in that course and a student-centred approach in the second course, although not much information is given about the latter, other than the fact that she followed the principle of an Interactive Learning Program (ILP).

Stapp (1998) describes a very interesting English for the Workplace program which involves collaboration between the language instructor and the employer of a small printing company. In agreement with the authors in the preceding section, Stapp states that the career potential of immigrants can be undermined by limited English skills. Stapp also discusses the need for specialized language instruction, especially for many technical jobs, and acknowledges that English instructors feel unqualified to teach unfamiliar technical information. Hence, Stapp proposes that language instructors enlist the employer as collaborator in the technical workplace English course. Stapp describes six different techniques, which could be adapted in other workplace settings, used to teach five immigrant workers the language needed in a technical workplace in a short period of time. Examples of techniques transferable to other settings include using question-answer tapes, where the students record questions and the employer records the answers, utilizing the employer as lecturer, and showing videotapes of certain processes at the workplace. The techniques all required collaboration with the employer but in most cases, demanded a minimal amount of time, thus making such collaboration practicable. The employer's enthusiastic participation and cooperation were instrumental to the success of the program. Not only did he provide the necessary technical expertise, but his interest in the employees' learning was highly motivating and affirming.

These studies of VESL programs are relevant to the present study as one of the research questions examines the impact of the training program on the participants' language skills. However, these studies do not focus on the impact of the various models of program delivery and curriculum development on the students' vocational language skills.

### **2.3.3 Collaboration Between Vocational and VESL Instructors**

Collaboration between vocational (skills) teachers and vocational ESL teachers appears to be a very important aspect of VESL, as a number of the above articles have recommended some degree of collaboration. However, collaboration can be problematic. Platt (1993) and Yogman and Kaylani (1996) examine the issues related to such collaboration and their impact on vocational instruction.

Platt found that there were a number of barriers to productive working relationships, including differences in philosophical and professional orientation, attitudes held by the teachers towards each other and toward the students, power and authority issues in the school, and the integration of knowledge by the teachers, which refers to the integration of content and language expertise in the curriculum. One main unexpected finding was that the most effective vocational instruction came about not as a result of vocational/VESL teacher collaboration, but from the vocational teachers' participation in language-oriented staff development. Platt concludes that in order for productive collaboration to take place, there must be respect for the contributions of the vocational language instructor.

Yogman and Kaylani discuss the process of developing and delivering a short-term business language course for small groups of foreign students in an ESL setting. The study was based on three cycles of an annual short-term program, which began as an adjunct to the

business program curriculum and over the course of the three years became an independent concurrent program. The theoretical background for this study is that of content-based instruction and experiential learning. As with Platt, the authors found that collaboration with content-area faculty can be problematic. The authors discuss the importance of communication and shared planning and also mention that in a university setting, obstacles to such cooperation are time and “territory,” which refers to the feeling of content-area teachers that “too much” teaching through content-area materials infringes on their domain of expertise (p. 315). The authors report that proper coordination of content and language areas requires the willing cooperation of both parties, and that such cooperation is not easy to achieve. For this reason, the authors suggest alternative ways in which language teachers can develop activities relevant to students’ career goals independent of content curriculum. The authors also offer observations about the success of the use of projects and communicative activities for these students.

In Wilson’s (1998) evaluative study of a combined skills and ESL program, the need for more connection between the ESL and the skills component also arose as a curricular issue. The participants suggested that the ESL class could be improved by being more content specific and providing more oral communication practice related to work. The participants also discussed the importance of the ESL teacher to understand the nursing content. Thus, this study also reveals the need for collaboration between the skills/content and language teachers.

### **2.3.4 Workplace ESL Programs**

The studies by Goldstein (1994) and Peirce et al. (1993) are interesting because they problematize workplace English programs and raise awareness of the complexities of issues involved. Goldstein's study examined the English language training program in a manufacturing company where most of the line workers communicated in Portuguese. While some immigrant women might not have access to English language training, others did but chose not to use the English they had learnt. Why would this be so? Goldstein found that in this one company, use of Portuguese functioned as a symbol of solidarity and group membership, and making friends on the line was essential to the social and economic well-being of workers. This reinforces the observation made by Svendsen and Krebs regarding the need to establish rapport with co-workers. However, Goldstein points out that English may be associated with costs rather than benefits, and thus, we need to question assumptions that learning and using English automatically provides access to economic power. These are issues that program deliverers and instructors need to be aware of in order to provide training that is useful and beneficial.

Peirce, Harper and Burnaby (1993) examined the workplace ESL program at three plants of Levi Strauss. In this evaluation study, commissioned by the company, the authors examined why many workers who qualified, did not participate in company-sponsored ESL training. The authors found that some of the barriers included supervisor resistance, concerns regarding the negative impact of participation on production level and hence income, and domestic and social pressure, rather than program limitations per se. This study also found that use of the first language was the most acceptable medium among coworkers

who shared the same language, and that social interaction in the canteen was often segregated along ethnic lines.

In a subsequent article (Harper, Peirce, & Burnaby, 1996), the authors reviewed the English-in-the-workplace (EWP) programs from a critical perspective, and explored why the language training did not result in greater participation of individual workers in company decision-making processes and in teamwork, as was hoped by management. The authors found that the curriculum at all three plants focussed on oral language and social conversation. In addition, in order to create a safe, supportive and comfortable environment in the classes, much of the content was student-centred and the students' personal experiences and interests became the basis of the language lessons. It was apparent to the authors that the well-intentioned actions of the teachers resulted in promoting private and personal forms of language practices over public practices, such as discussing work policies and participating in union activities. The authors contend that such language training did not empower the workers in the workplace; for example, the workers did not learn how to improve their communication with their supervisors, and classes did not promote the autonomy of the women outside of the workplace. The authors make a case for a more critical examination of EWP programs.

This section has focussed the delivery of English for the workplace programs and issues such as needs assessment, useful techniques for promoting language for occupational purposes, collaboration between content and language instructors, and has also delved into the complexities of teaching vocational English. These topics have been selected for review because of their relevance to the present study. It is apparent from the above review that

the delivery of a “successful” vocational language training program is highly challenging, and involves the consideration of many variables and needs. These variables, needs, perceptions, and choices, in turn, are important aspects of how individual programs will impact the work and lives of the immigrant men and women who participate in them.

## **2.4 Immigrant Settlement and Identity Issues**

This final section of the literature review deals with articles and books related to immigrant settlement and identity issues. Although these two topics can be examined separately, I have found interrelationships between them, as settlement often affects identity, and in turn, identity issues affect settlement and integration in the dominant society. Tollefson (1985) offers a general overview of settlement issues, especially those pertaining to language skills; the articles by Beach and Worswick (1993), Stier (1991) and Romero-Cachinero (1987), all discuss the importance of immigrant women’s roles in their settlement; Wittebrood and Robertson (1991) examine settlement and identity issues from a counselling perspective; Rockhill (1991), Peirce (1995a), Buijs (1993), Eastmond (1993), and Bhachu (1993) all focus on identity issues faced by immigrant and ethnic minority women in North America, Britain, and Europe.

### **2.4.1 The Importance of Language Training for Settlement**

Tollefson (1985) summarizes important research on the resettlement of refugees in the U.S. Findings emphasize the importance of ESL classes to the settlement process, as discussed by other authors in previous sections. More specifically, it was found that employment alone did not lead to increased language proficiency, which concurs with

Ramkhalawansingh's (1981) observation, and that ESL classes were necessary for improving competence as many refugees did not have the opportunity to speak English outside of the class. This particular point is relevant to the present study as the participants also reported on limited extracurricular English use. In addition, English proficiency was linked to getting any job other than an entry-level one, keeping a job, and advancing to a better job. English was also necessary for coping with settlement problems, for example, health concerns. As with the other studies discussed above, this one reiterates the importance of providing pre-employment training that takes into account the specialized needs of women, and acknowledges the important role of women in providing economic support for the family.

Romero-Cachinero (1987) identifies four areas that are problematic regarding immigrant settlement for Hispanic women: language and educational barriers which hinder settlement; family changes, including the loss of support of the extended family and the need to seek employment because of financial constraints; employment in low-status, low-paying jobs; and linguistic and cultural barriers which prevent women from accessing mainstream social services. Beach and Worswick (1993) also mention the role of wives in the initial settlement period and how many work to support the family in order for the husband to receive language and skills training. Stier (1991) comes to a similar conclusion in a quantitative study conducted in the U. S. Stier notes the importance of women's role in the socioeconomic adjustment of immigrants and adaptive strategies at the household level, in which women's contributions can be substantial.

Wittebrood and Robertson (1991) present a review of the literature from a different perspective, that of counselling psychology. The focus of their paper is on the barriers



immigrant women encounter in their efforts to adapt to their new homeland, and the coping strategies they use to deal with these barriers. They discuss how race, language, and roles as wives, mothers, and labourers make immigrant women a “high-risk” group. Their conclusion that immigrant women frequently struggle with their self-worth, dignity, and a new sense of self, is similar to Peirce’s discussion of social identity issues. Wittebrood and Robertson also discuss parenting problems resulting from an acculturation and generation gap between children and immigrant mothers, a theme that has arisen in other studies, such as the one by Kouritzin (1997) and Klassen and Burnaby (1993). Wittebrood and Robertson mention Naidoo’s concept of “dual demand of identification” (after Naidoo, 1985): the need for social acceptance within the host culture *and* the maintenance of those facets of the ancestral culture which are perceived as essential for one’s identity and self-concept.

#### **2.4.2 Language and Identity**

Rockhill (1991) and Peirce (1995a) focus on identity issues from a critical perspective. Rockhill’s study of Hispanic women in Los Angeles looks at two sides of education for women: literacy as threat/fear and literacy as desire/hope. That study is important in its exploration of the conflicts faced by second language learners when attempting to further their education. Rockhill discusses the barriers to education faced by women because of their roles as wife and mother, and by the cultural norm they may subscribe to that women need not be educated. Also significant was the symbolic power of education for the women interviewed. As one participant reflected: “I would like to be somebody, ... to do something interesting, to help somebody ...” (p. 342). This theme is

also important in the present study as a number of the participants also discussed the importance of doing meaningful work outside the home and being able to help others.

Peirce (1995a) explores how relations of power affect language learners and their use of a second language. The focus of this study is how and under what conditions the immigrant women participants created, responded to, and sometimes resisted opportunities to speak English. Central ideas in this work include the post-structuralist notion that social identity is not a unitary construct but is multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change. Peirce argues that the concept of investment, rather than motivation, better captures the affective factors which influence language learning. For example, motivation is seen as a static concept, which, if present in language learners, facilitates second language learning. Thus, the relationship between motivation and learning has been seen as simple and unidirectional. On the other hand, the concept of investment accounts for the complexities and contradictions regarding language learning. For example, learners might have the desire to speak the second language in some situations whereas in other situations they might feel ambivalent about speaking it. Peirce accounts for this seemingly contradictory behaviour by conceiving of language learners as having a complex social history and multiple desires.

#### **2.4.3 Immigrant Women and Changing Identities**

Buijs (1993), Eastmond (1993), and Bhachu (1993) also examine the idea of changing identities. Related to the present study, the above authors raise questions regarding the issues of whether migration leads to a loss or gain in the status of women and the impact of changes in the distribution of power with the family. Of course, being a heterogeneous group, the answers vary according to the immigrant context and cultural background. In

some situations, new economic and social responsibilities contributed to women's increasing importance in the family, whereas in others, a woman's role in the family may be undermined, especially for non-working women who find themselves dependent on their children. Buijs quotes Colson (1991, p. 9) as saying that "women refugees and other women migrants appear to show greater resilience and adaptability than do men" (cited in Buijs, 1993, p. 4) and it has been suggested that this may be because women have the responsibility for maintaining household routines which provide them with occupation and that they are less conscious of loss of status associated with the failure to find positions comparable to those they had.

Eastmond's (1993) study of Chilean refugees in California confirms the above observation. Eastmond found that the Chilean women acquired new skills, for example, work skills, new language skills, the ability to drive and to earn an income, which increased their self-confidence and domestic authority. "Employment brought not only their own income and a necessary contribution to the family economy, but also an occupational identity, together with greater self-reliance and confidence" (p. 48). This affected gender relations and roles, and in this community, lives and identities became more individualized.

Bhachu (1993) discusses the formation of identity, which depends very much on the local culture, and points out that identity is not fixed but is a fluid structure that changes over time and space; identities are contextualized and not stable, despite a common core of key fundamental cultural values. Bhachu points out that stereotypical representations of Asian women as politically inactive, shy and powerless are common and persistent: "Their 'ethnic' cultural values are represented as repressive -- traits they must accept -- rather than

as values they continuously adapt, choose to accept, reproduce, modify, recreate and elaborate according to the circumstances in which they are situated. ” (p. 100). Related to this point, Buijs states the importance of understanding cultural constructs, such as status and roles, from the perspective of the ethnic minority woman herself.

This section on settlement and identity issues touches on themes that are pertinent to the present study. These issues show how the private and public spheres of working immigrant women are often interrelated. For example, women’s participation in the workforce may affect their roles and relationships at home. Although there are common themes, the literature acknowledges that individuals are unique in their experiences and perceptions and that these are not static, but rather subject to change depending on local contexts and circumstances. Thus, it is important to try to understand the processes as they are understood by the individuals themselves. This study, therefore, asks individuals to reflect on their experiences and, specifically, to consider the impact of their health care aide/ESL programs on their lives.

## **2.5 Identifying a Gap in the Literature**

The above review of the literature reveals a number of topics and issues that are central to the present study. Some of the main issues include: the importance of immigrant women’s contribution to the Canadian labour market and to their family’s economic well-being; the many barriers that immigrant women face in accessing language and occupational training programs and the importance of these programs for immigrant women in particular; the complexity of teaching VESL; and issues surrounding settlement and identity. What

appears to be lacking, however, is qualitative research and ethnographic studies on the actual impact of combined skills and language training programs on the lives of immigrants who take part in such programs, particularly over time. The purpose of this study is to explore in greater depth how such programs affect immigrants' employment situation, settlement process, and private lives, including their personal relationships and identities.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Context and Methodology**

#### **3.0 Overview**

This chapter will describe the background and context of the present study, and the methodological approach and procedures. I will discuss the position of this study in relation to the larger study, my role in the study, the institution that hosted the care aide programs and the nature of the programs. I will also describe the process of recruitment of research participants for this study, and the interviewing and analytical procedures that were used. Finally, I note some of the factors involved in the decisions I made throughout.

#### **3.1 Position of the Present Study in the Context of the Larger Study**

In the introduction to the thesis, I briefly mentioned that the present study is a part of a larger study. In this section, I will describe my involvement in this larger study to set the context for the present study.

In September 1997, I was hired as a research assistant to work on a study of immigrant women training for the health professions. The research team I was a part of received permission from ISA, an immigrant settlement organization on the west coast of Canada, to use one of their skills and language training programs as the site of this exploratory, qualitative study which examined the experiences of immigrant women in a training program and the impact of taking such a program on their lives and sociocultural identities (Duff & Early, forthcoming). Eleven students in the Home Support / Resident

Care Attendant Training Program volunteered to take part in that longitudinal study. My role in the research project was to collect document data on the program and students, to take part in interviews with the staff and students, which for the latter involved three sets of interviews: initial individual interviews, focus groups which took place during the students' first practicum, and final individual interviews which took place one month after graduation from the program. Because of my interest in this program, and because of the program manager's interest in doing a follow-up study with former students, it was proposed that I conduct a related study of former graduates for my M.A. thesis. For the present study, therefore, ISA contacted former students from two previous programs, seeking volunteers to participate in this study. I then followed up the initial introductory letter with a phone call to answer questions and to make arrangements to interview the former students on another occasion. The former students were informed that they were under no obligation to take part in this study, however. Of a total of 25 former students to whom letters were sent, nine individuals agreed to be interviewed about their experiences before, during and after the program.<sup>1</sup> The data from these interviews as well as document data of the students form the basis of this descriptive and interpretive qualitative study. In addition, data from interviews with the current project manager and ESL instructor provided essential background information. More information will be given below regarding the programs, recruitment and participants.

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<sup>1</sup> The other former students either could not be contacted or declined because of work and family responsibilities. Only two former students in the Home Support Program participated in this study as many could not be contacted; over half had moved since the program ended in June 1996.

### **3.2 The Institutional Context: Immigrant Settlement Agency (ISA)**

In this section, I will give some background information about the organization, Immigrant Settlement Agency (ISA). ISA is a not-for-profit immigrant settlement agency, one of several such agencies in the Lower Mainland. The organization was founded by several individuals in 1972 and since then has grown to be one of the largest immigrant serving agencies in Western Canada. The mission of this organization is to identify the needs of immigrants and refugees and to develop and deliver effective programs and services to meet those needs. ISA supports the settlement, training and integration of immigrants and refugees through counselling services, employment services, and a variety of language training and combined skills and language training programs (see Figure 3.1 for a diagrammatic overview of the organization). The organization is divided into two branches, a training institute and a settlement house. The training institute is the location for most of the language, occupational training, and employment skills programs. It is also the location of the employment counselling services. In the literature review, Burnaby (1992) identified the need for a comprehensive resource of information for immigrants on language training, vocational training, and settlement services. The mission of ISA is to provide such services to the immigrant and refugee population. For example, immigrants who go to ISA to seek information first talk to a counsellor in the case management unit who helps the clients to identify their needs and gives them the necessary information to pursue their goals. In the settlement house, accommodation and settlement support is provided for incoming refugees. Support consists of various forms of counselling and the provision of relevant information.



| Settlement House  | Training Institute  |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Accommodation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contract with federal government for federally sponsored refugees</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Settlement Counselling</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offered in different languages: Arabic, Burmese, Farsi, Hindi, Kurdish, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese</li> <li>• information</li> <li>• orientation</li> <li>• translation</li> <li>• family counselling</li> <li>• referrals, e.g. employment training</li> <li>• help with documents, application forms</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Host Program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• matches local volunteers with newcomers</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. Youth Programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e.g., Vietnamese Youth Program</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>5. Training Programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e.g., Resident Care Attendant Program</li> </ul> </li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Employment Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual or group counselling in different languages, e.g., Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Hindi, Korean, Spanish</li> <li>• career planning and job search programs: 3-4 weeks long, F/T</li> <li>• Case Management Unit: funded by HRDC and Citizenship &amp; Immigration: information for all ESL clients, newcomers and unemployed</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Language Training</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LINC: Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada; federally funded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus on orientation language skills</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Adult Education Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offers courses in general English, TOEFL Prep, TOIEC Prep, Business English</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Skills Training</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• federally and provincially funded</li> <li>• programs combining skills and language training</li> <li>• full-time, 4 to 7 months</li> <li>• includes job search skills</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. Work Resource Centre</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provides current and past program participants with support in job search, e.g., library resources, use of computer, fax</li> </ul> </li> </ol> |

**Figure 3.1. Overview of ISA services.**

In the training institute, there are three main types of training programs: LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), Adult Education English language programs, for which students pay fees, and occupational training programs. Occupational training programs include general pre-employment training and occupation-specific training. Both the LINC and occupational training programs are entirely government funded. At present, LINC receives federal funding which is renewed annually, and the occupational training programs are funded by federal and provincial sources, namely, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and the British Columbia Ministry of Skills and Training. Application for funding for these skills programs through submission of proposals must be completed by each program for each cycle. A cycle refers to the length of a complete program which varies from four to seven months. Thus, it is possible to have more than one cycle of a program per year.

My personal involvement with the organization began in 1994 when I started teaching in the LINC Program, which offers classes from literacy to LINC 3.<sup>2</sup> LINC is available free of charge to landed immigrants only. The purpose is to provide language skills and orientation to living in Canada. One of the problems of this program is that funding is only available to LINC 3, which is equivalent to a lower intermediate level, and upon graduation from LINC, many immigrants still do not have enough language skills to enter a skills training program. Most skills programs require at least an intermediate level and some require an upper-intermediate level. English proficiency for entry into the skills training

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<sup>2</sup> In the LINC Program, Literacy is equivalent to a pre-beginner level and is for students who are not functionally literate in their first language. LINC 1, 2, and 3 are equivalent to lower beginner, beginner, and lower intermediate levels, respectively, and correspond to Canadian Language Benchmarks 1, 2, and 3.

programs is usually assessed by a written test which covers grammar, reading comprehension and writing skills, and an interview to assess oral language skills. In order to fill this gap, ISA began a fee-charging ESL program which aimed to give additional language instruction for immigrants at an affordable cost. The fee paying program is open to all students who can afford to pay for the course. Some subsidy is available to immigrants and refugees in need.

Over the years, I have taught in all three types of programs and, thus, have an understanding of the programs from an ESL instructor's perspective as well as from my more recent researcher's perspective. For the past two years, I taught a part-time upper-intermediate conversational English class in the Adult Education Program. I have also taught the ESL/VESL component in several skills and language training programs: Painting and Decorating, Hospitality, and Employment Skills for Mature Workers. Below, I will describe in greater detail the program relevant to the present study.

### **3.3 The Programs: Home Support and Resident Care Attendant Programs**

#### **3.3.1 Overview of Skills Training Programs**

At present, ISA offers eight different skills/pre-employment programs: training programs for the hospitality, transport, construction and health care industries, and office administration. All are federally or provincially funded and the courses change from year to year depending on whether funding is approved. There are also two pre-employment programs which help clients settle and find work or further training. See Figure 3.2 for an overview of the various skills training programs.

| Occupational Training Programs  |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Hospitality Program</b><br><br>A 6-month training program to provide immigrant men and women who have English as Second Language with the skills required to find employment in the accommodation and food and beverage service sectors. Provides training and practical skills in Hotel Housekeeping, Entry-Level Cooking, and Entry-Level Food and Beverage Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>For EI<sup>3</sup> Recipients, EI Exhaustees and Income Assistance Recipients</b></li> </ul> | <b>Cook Training</b><br><br>A full-time, 5-month program with 16 weeks classroom instruction and 4 weeks of work experience in a restaurant or hotel kitchen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>For EI Recipients and EI Exhaustees</b></li> </ul>  |
| <b>Warehousing Program</b><br><br>A 5-month training program to provide immigrants who have English as a Second Language with the skills needed to operate warehousing equipment, computers, etc., and successfully find employment as warehouse workers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>For EI Recipients and EI Exhaustees</b></li> </ul>   | <b>Painting and Decorating</b><br><br>A 5-month training program to assist immigrant men and women who have English as a Second Language to enter the Canadian workforce as Painters and Decorators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>For EI Recipients, EI Exhaustees and Income Assistance Recipients</b></li> </ul> |
| <b>Office Skills Program</b><br><br>A full-time, 4-month program with 13 weeks classroom instruction and 3 weeks of work experience in the office. This program includes ESL and personal management, job search and computer skills training <b>For EI Recipients and EI Exhaustees</b>  | <b>Resident Care Attendant</b><br><br>A 7-month, full-time training program to assist immigrants who have English as a Second Language with the skills required to find and keep employment in the Health Care field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>For EI Recipients and EI Exhaustees</b></li> </ul>              |
| Pre-Employment Programs   |  |
| <b>Multi-Ethnic Pre-Employment Program</b><br><br>A program to help clients settle and find work or further training. This program includes 11 weeks of classroom training and 2 weeks of training with an employer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>For Income Assistance Recipients</b></li> </ul>   | <b>New Start Program for Immigrant Women</b><br><br>A 5-month pre-employment program for immigrant women who have English as a Second Language, are on income assistance, and are survivors of abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>For Income Assistance Recipients</b></li> </ul>                                 |

**Figure 3.2. Overview of skills training programs in ISA.**

<sup>3</sup> EI, an abbreviation for Employment Insurance, is financial support given to people who have lost their jobs; formerly referred to as UIC, Unemployment Insurance Compensation.

A unique aspect of the skills training programs at ISA is that they are offered in conjunction with language skills training, thus, clients are able to upgrade their English skills at the same time as they are acquiring skills for future employment. This is one of the major strengths of the ISA skills training programs. Eligibility criteria for the programs vary depending on the source of the funding. This will be discussed further below. Some financial support in terms of a training allowance and transportation allowance is available.

### **3.3.2 Skills Training Programs for the Health Professions**

In this section, I will give more detailed information about the skills training program in this study. For the past ten years, ISA has delivered skills training programs for Long Term Care Aide (LTCA) and Home Support (HS) careers. This is the longest-running skills training program in ISA, and according to Janet<sup>4</sup>, the project manager, it is also one of the most demanding in terms of the language skills needed to learn medical terminology and processes, as well as in terms of the nature of health care occupations in general. In the early years, one program of each type was offered every year. Programs were seven to nine months in length. In 1996, due to funding cutbacks, the two programs were combined and renamed Resident Care/Home Support Attendant Training Program (hereafter referred to as the RCA program).

In the present study, two of the participants were in the last Home Support Program offered by ISA in 1995-96, and seven of the participants were in the combined program

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<sup>4</sup> Note that ISA, Janet, and the names of all of the participants are pseudonyms, used for ethical reasons to honour the anonymity and confidentiality of volunteers.

which took place in 1996-97. The two programs also differed in the funding source and hence, eligibility criteria. The Home Support program was funded by the BC government which has traditionally targeted income assistance recipients as clients, and the RCA program was funded by the federal government which has traditionally targeted people who are on Employment Insurance (EI). EI is income support given to individuals for a limited period of time following loss of employment. I have chosen to include participants from both programs in the present study because common themes arose despite the differences in programs and client characteristics.

The programs offered skills training for four hours in the morning and ESL instruction for two and a half hours in the afternoon, five days a week. Clients received in-class instruction for approximately 17 weeks and on-the-job training for about nine weeks. In the occupational skills class, the students receive training in home maintenance and nutrition; lifts, transfers, and body mechanics; personal care skills; caring for mentally fragile elderly; working with mentally and/or physically disabled people. In the ESL class, the students learn English for working in health care, and English for job interviews and for finding a job.

The nine-week practica take place at two different sites. For example, in the combined HS/RCA Program, the students spend half the time in an extensive long term care facility and the other half of the time in an intermediate care facility. The skills instructor as well as an assistant skills instructor are on-site with the students to provide instruction and support. There is a debriefing session at the end of each practicum work day. In addition to the skills and language training, clients also received special workshops in personal and

professional development. Personal development workshops include topics such as self-esteem, and stress and time management; professional workshops include job search skills training as well as training which leads to certification in First Aid / CPR and Foodsafe.<sup>5</sup>

In order to receive a HS/RCA certificate, the students must pass a written exam on the health care skills and knowledge and must also successfully complete the practica. The practica is assessed by the skills instructor on-site. As far as I know, there is no exit requirement for the English skills component.

### **3.4 Recruitment**

As I mentioned above, the present study is a part of a larger research project involving the same program area. Janet, the project manager for the 1997-98 RCA program which was the focus of the larger, ongoing study, was also the project manager for the previous two programs, the Home Support program and the previous RCA program. She generously sent out recruitment letters on my behalf to 12 of the former students in the Home Support program which had finished in June, 1996, and to 13 of the former students in the RCA program which had finished in June, 1997. A copy of the recruitment letter is included as Appendix 2. No doubt, the fact that Janet had personally addressed the letters and introduced the research project had an effect on the positive response, as she was fondly and highly regarded by the former students. Also, for ethical reasons, it is also a

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<sup>5</sup> Foodsafe courses teach food handling skills for workers.

recommended recruitment strategy for parties other than the researcher to initially contact individuals to participate in a study.

The letters were sent out in early February, 1998 and I followed the letters with phone calls two weeks later. In the initial phone call, I introduced myself, explained the research project and asked the former students whether they were interested in participating. It was much more difficult to get in contact with the Home Support graduates as many had moved. In the end, after many attempts to reach all former graduates, two graduates from the Home Support program and seven graduates from the RCA program agreed to participate. After the initial contact in mid-February, I called the participants again in late March, 1998 to arrange the time and place for the interviews. Because the data collection for the larger study was also happening at this time, the interviews for the present study did not take place until late April, 1998.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods and Impact on Data**

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of the impact of training and employment as a health care aide on immigrants' lives, and to try to understand the issues from the perspectives of the immigrants themselves. In terms of methodology, this qualitative study has elements of case study research as the focus is on one particular type of training program at an immigrant settlement organization and its impact on individuals who completed the program. This study also has elements of descriptive and interpretative research, as the main source of data is based on my descriptions and interpretations of the participants' perspectives.



As mentioned above, data were collected from documents and interviews with the former students as well as two staff members. Again, with the kind help of Janet, I was able to get some background information on the participants in the present study from their initial application forms and in-person interviews for the program. This offered another source of information about the participants' background and experiences; this is an important aspect of the triangulation process in qualitative research which stresses the collection of data from multiple perspectives and sources in order to provide a better understanding of a phenomenon. This document data was collected in February, 1998 at the ISA settlement house where the RCA programs were located.

The main data consisted of individual interviews with each participant, following my initial telephone contact with them. Four interviews were conducted on the telephone on a subsequent occasion and five were conducted in person, according to the volunteers' preference. Telephone interviews were chosen mainly because of limitations of time and the irregular work schedules of many of the participants which made it difficult for them to do an in-person interview. I was told by a number of participants that they were on-call and therefore had to be available to go to work at any time; thus, it was difficult for them to make appointments. The format of the interviews was semi-structured; an interview schedule was used (see Appendix 3) but I also tried to follow up on topics that seemed important to the participants. The basic procedure for the interviews was similar. After the initial greetings, I told the participants about myself and the research project, and then explained the procedures necessary to obtain their informed consent, for ethical reasons (see Appendix 4). Then we proceeded with the interview questions. At the end of the

interviews, I asked for permission to contact the participants again if I needed to clarify any information given. There were differences in how the interviews proceeded depending on the medium (telephone or in-person) and site of the interviews, which I will discuss below. Finally, several weeks after the completion of all interviews, each participant was sent an honorarium (gift certificate) and a thank you card as an expression of appreciation and gratitude for their contributions.

### **3.5.1 Effect of Medium and Site on Interviews**

The medium through which the interview was conducted and the place of the interview may naturally have affected the data to some degree. Telephone interviews were done in order to make it easier for the former graduates to participate. In general, the telephone interviews lasted 30 to 60 minutes and were shorter than the in-person interviews which lasted on average 40 to 75 minutes. This was in part due to the fact that those who chose the telephone interview were busier, and some may have been more reticent to discuss their personal experiences at length over the phone as they had never met me, so I was a stranger to them. All interviews were conducted at a time (and place, for in-person interviews) that was convenient for the participants. Four of the five in-person interviews took place in the classroom at ISA where the participants had taken their program. The reason this location was chosen was because it was thought that it would provide a safe, familiar, and quiet place for an interview to take place. It is also located in the centre of town. In retrospect, the location may have affected the participants to some degree, especially regarding questions of an evaluative nature of the program. Perhaps this is just

my perception; had I been a participant, I might have been a little more cautious about what I said about the program, if the interview took place in the classroom where I was taught as opposed to in a more neutral place that was not associated with the program. On the other hand, perhaps being in the classroom was helpful in stimulating the participants' memories of the program. Thus, there were advantages and disadvantages associated with conducting the interviews at ISA.

One in-person interview was conducted in the home of the participant. This also influenced the interview. I sensed that the participant felt more at ease as she was in her own home. The interview had more of a conversational tone and there was a greater exchange of information between the two of us. I felt less distance to the participant; my role as researcher was less prominent. Perhaps not being in the classroom also affected how we perceived our roles. In contrast, the interviews at ISA felt more formal and our roles were clearly defined: I was the researcher and they were the informants, the former students. In one case, the participant's four-year-old son was also in the classroom during the interview; this may also have affected the information the participant was comfortable imparting in the presence of her son. In addition, she could not completely focus on the interview at times as she needed to attend to her son, who was tired after a long day out of the house and just wanted to go home. Appendix 5 gives a brief summary of the conditions surrounding each interview in order to provide a context for the interviews.

I had anticipated that it might be more difficult for participants to give personal information over the phone, especially to a person whom they have never met in person. I was therefore quite surprised at how forthcoming most of the participants were in sharing

their personal experiences. I think that my position of ESL teacher at ISA may have been helpful in the establishment of trust. Most of the participants at the end of the interview asked me about my work. One of the participants, by coincidence, had actually taken an ESL course that I taught at ISA in 1996. It made me feel more at ease knowing that she knew who I was, that I was not just some stranger on the phone.

### **3.6 Position of Researcher and Impact on Data**

Critical research rejects the view that any research can claim to be objective or unbiased. ... the researcher has to understand her own subjective experience and knowledge as well as that of the women she studies. ... the production of knowledge cannot be understood apart from the personal histories of the researchers and the larger institutional context in which researchers work. (Peirce, 1995, p. 570)

Although this study is not based on critical theory and itself is not critical research, in this qualitative study, it is important for me to identify my personal history and to acknowledge how I perceive my position and its impact on the data collected. Being an ethnic Chinese woman from a working class immigrant family helped me to identify with the participants. As I had mentioned in the introduction, even though my experiences have been quite different because I came to Canada as a young child, through my witnessing of my family members' experiences, I felt that I had an understanding of an immigrant's position in Canada, and could appreciate the challenges that they faced.

I felt that my ethnicity, age, and gender may have made some of the participants more at ease. First, I was a woman of colour<sup>6</sup>, so perhaps I was perceived more as a peer. For example, if I had been white or had a more traditional Anglo-Saxon name, I might have been perceived quite differently. Second, being in my early 30s, my age might also have affected my interactions with the participants, and the fact that although I was in the role of researcher, I was still a student. In addition, I am small in stature and have a casual manner, which might have made the interviews less intimidating for some participants. In the context of the interviews, perhaps this was a helpful point in reducing the distance between us, more specifically, in reducing the power differential. Third, my gender may have been a definite aid in establishing rapport and trust as most of the participants were women, and in my experience, women tend to be more open when talking to other women, especially about their personal lives and careers, I would think.

However, my position as an ESL teacher and researcher did set me apart from the participants, posing an undeniable power differential. As I mentioned above, my role as a researcher was more defined in the interviews that took place in the classroom. Also, the audiotape recorder was a more central component in that case. In addition, my professional affiliation with ISA may also have influenced the participants to a certain degree; it might have inhibited some participants in their comments about the program and the institution, for example, they might have perceived me as representing the institution and thus, might have been a bit guarded in their comments. On the positive side, my experience in teaching

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<sup>6</sup> In the telephone interviews, the participants of course did not see me in person, but might have guessed my ethnicity from my name in the initial letter of contact.

immigrants and in particular my experience in teaching in a similar type of program at ISA might have helped me to understand the context better. By the same token, my experience also means that I may have some preconceived notions of the strengths and weaknesses of the program which may have affected my interpretation of the data.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

All of the interviews were audio recorded in order to accurately represent the words of the participants. In her study of immigrant women, Tisza (1997) chose not to tape record as she thought that the presence of a tape recorder would inhibit or intimidate the beginner-level ESL students that she interviewed. In the present study, all of the participants were at the upper intermediate or advanced level, and were quite fluent speakers. As this qualitative study hoped to present the perspectives of immigrants themselves in their own words, I felt that recording the interviews was important to maintain a degree of accuracy and to free me from taking notes while speaking with the participants. In my past experience with interviewing, I have found that taking notes during an interview distracted me from focussing on the participants and caused some participants to feel uncomfortable. In the interviews for this study, I tried to create a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere. In the in-person interviews, I sat across from the participants beside a desk on which the tape recorder was placed. The in-person interviews took place in the morning or afternoon; the telephone interviews were throughout the day and evening, at a convenient time for the participants.

Data analysis, as is the case in qualitative studies, was mainly inductive. However, categories were formed by the research questions and the interview schedule which was closely connected to the research questions. That is, I followed an interview schedule and asked similar questions of all the participants, for example, questions about their present employment situation, English language skills, family life, and feelings about themselves. These questions structured the content of the interviews and, thus, the data.

There were different stages in the data analysis. First, soon after the completion of all of the interviews, which took place over a period of eight days, I listened to all of the tapes and summarized each interview separately. I then read through the summaries and formed a number of categories, which as I mentioned above, were closely related to the research questions. I then grouped the data according to these categories. This first stage of analysis was mainly descriptive and gave me a broad overview of the findings before I delved into the intricacies of the data.

The next stage involved transcribing the data. This was an interesting experience in raising my awareness of the issues of voice and representation. I realized that no matter how accurately I feel that I had transcribed the data, the data were still being filtered through my interpretive lens. For this reason, it was important for me to acknowledge my position in the previous section in order for the reader to make her own judgment about my interpretations. One solution to this dilemma, which was unfortunately not possible because of time constraints, would have been to meet with the participants after the completion of the transcripts, to verify meanings and interpretations I had arrived at. This being not possible resulted in a shortcoming in this data set and analysis. In past experiences

with transcribing taped interviews, I have had the opportunity to compare my transcripts with another person's transcript of the same recording. That revealed to me the subjectivity of interpretations, and thus, I am well aware that this data presents my particular interpretation. To try to compensate for this, in transcribing and analyzing the transcripts, I have made efforts to maintain an openness to different interpretations, which is essential to rigorous qualitative analysis in any case.

The third stage involved examining the transcripts and highlighting and coding the data according to subject key words, for example, *transportation barrier to employment*. The data was then organized in categories, broad topic areas, for example, *barriers to employment*, and within the categories, I searched for common themes and patterns as well as exceptions. The primary goals of the data analysis were to gain an understanding of the data from the participants' perspectives (emic approach), to identify common patterns, and variations, and to try to understand the patterns which emerged from an etic perspective. I then related these findings back to those that have been reported in other research and made recommendations for future research.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter has described the context and data collection methods for this qualitative study. I have described the larger study of which this study is a part, the institute which hosted the program examined, and the program itself. I have also systematically described the data collection methods and the data analysis. In social research, it is important to identify the position of the researcher as the researcher is the main "tool" for collecting and



analyzing the data. I have discussed how my personal and professional characteristics might have affected my interviews with the participants, and thus, the main source of data for this study. Because of the focus of this study on the participants' experiences and their perceptions of the impact of a training program on their lives, I believe that it is important to provide some background information on these individuals in order to better understand and interpret the data from the interviews. The following chapter will describe the participants themselves.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Participants**

#### **4.0 Overview**

This chapter gives some background information about the participants in order to better contextualize the analysis of the interview data. The information that follows is from the document as well as the interview data. In many instances, the participants confirmed the document information during the interviews and elaborated on this information. Some of the topics mentioned here emerged as themes and will be discussed in greater detail in the analysis in Chapter 5.

#### **4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

As mentioned earlier, the participants consisted of eight women and one man. I decided to include the one male participant rather than to focus only on immigrant women in order to not exclude the experiences of immigrant men in training programs. However, this is not to claim that any generalizations could be made based on an interview with one male participant or even with eight women. In general, enrollment in this training course consists mainly of women; thus, accounting for the high number of women participants. Only one male student was enrolled in each of the programs examined in this study. The age of the participants ranged from early 30's to late 40's. The participants came from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Three of the women were Chinese. Two were Cantonese speakers from Hong Kong and one was a Mandarin speaker from Beijing. Two of the women were

from the Philippines. There were also participants from each of the following countries: El Salvador, Ethiopia, Poland, and Sri Lanka. The one male participant was from El Salvador.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 summarize the participants' demographic characteristics.

**Table 4.1. Summary of Participants' Country of Origin, Status and Length of Residence in Canada**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Country of Origin</b> | <b>Status in Canada</b> | <b>Length of Residence in Canada</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Alberto            | El Salvador              | Canadian citizen        | 20 years                             |
| Anna               | Hong Kong                | Canadian citizen        | 22 years                             |
| Fatima             | Ethiopia                 | Canadian citizen        | 8 years                              |
| Karen              | Hong Kong                | Landed immigrant        | 4 years                              |
| Karina             | Sri Lanka                | Landed immigrant        | 7 years                              |
| Magda              | The Philippines          | Landed immigrant        | 2 years                              |
| Rita               | The Philippines          | Landed immigrant        | 5 years                              |
| Sofia              | Poland                   | Landed immigrant        | 9 years                              |
| Yin                | China                    | Landed immigrant        | 3 years                              |

**Table 4.2. Participants' Age, Marital Status, and Number of Children**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Marital Status</b> | <b>Children</b> |
|--------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Alberto            | late 40s   | Married               | 2: ages 1, 3    |
| Anna               | late 40s   | Married               | 1 son: age 26   |
| Fatima             | early 30s  | Single                | 1 son: age 4    |
| Karen              | 40s        | Married               | 1 son: age 18   |
| Karina             | 30s        | Married               | 3: ages 1.5 - 7 |
| Magda              | 40s        | Married               | 1 son: age 10   |
| Rita               | late 40s   | Single                | 4: ages 15 - 22 |
| Sofia              | 30s        | Married               | 2: ages 12, 14  |
| Yin                | early 30s  | Single                | none            |

Because of the range of cultural backgrounds, one possible contribution of this study is to understand the perspectives of immigrants from different countries, compared to many previous studies which have focussed on immigrants from one culture. For example, Rockhill (1991) examined the experiences of women in Hispanic communities and Cumming and Gill (1992) focussed on Indo-Canadian women.

Three of the participants were Canadian citizens and the remaining six were landed immigrants. Their length of residency in Canada ranged from 2 years to 22 years (at time of application to program). Regarding marital status, three were single. One of these was a

single parent and one lived as a single person in Canada but was a widow and had grown children in her country of origin. The other six participants were married with children; the age of the children ranged from toddlers to adults. Based on findings from previous research which reported on the conflicts between family responsibilities and working outside the home, I thought that the age and number of children of the participants might be significant in the present study.

## **4.2 Education and Work History**

In terms of educational background and work history, there was also a wide range of experiences among the nine participants. At the two extremes, one participant had a grade ten education and no experience in the health care field, and another had a university degree in nursing and eighteen years of nursing experience. Most of the participants finished grade twelve in their country of origin and had some post-secondary training. In terms of previous employment, two of the participants were registered nurses, five had some experience in the health care field -- either schooling or employment as home support workers -- and two had no direct employment experience in the health care field but had related experience; that is, one took care of her mother-in-law at home and the other worked as an administrator in a hospital. The English language proficiency of the participants at time of entry into program ranged from lower intermediate to advanced, according to the ESL assessment tests.<sup>1</sup> Most had taken some ESL classes in Canada, ranging from several months on a full-time basis to

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<sup>1</sup> English assessment for ISA training program consists of a written test of reading comprehension, writing, and grammar, as well as an interview to assess oral proficiency.

several years on a part-time basis. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 summarize the information regarding the participants' education and work history.

**Table 4.3. Summary of Education, Training, and English Proficiency**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Secondary</b>   | <b>Post-secondary/<br/>Training</b>  | <b>ESL Training</b>  | <b>English Level<br/>upon entry<br/>into program</b>                                    |
|--------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Alberto            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• completed high school</li> <li>• Quebec</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College, first year</li> <li>• El Salvador</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 months</li> <li>• full-time</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no level specified</li> </ul>                  |
| Anna               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gr. 10</li> <li>• Hong Kong</li> </ul>                |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.5 years</li> <li>• part-time</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intermediate/<br/>high intermediate</li> </ul> |
| Fatima             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gr. 12</li> <li>• Ethiopia</li> </ul>                 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 months</li> <li>• full-time</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low intermediate</li> </ul>                    |
| Karen              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form 7</li> <li>• Hong Kong</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polytechnic, one year</li> <li>• Secretary</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• none</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low advanced</li> </ul>                        |
| Karina             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• completed high school</li> <li>• Sri Lanka</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursing assistant</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• none</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mid-intermediate</li> </ul>                    |
| Magda              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4th year</li> <li>• Philippines</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University:</li> <li>• 2 years, nursing prep</li> <li>• 4 years, nursing, B. Sc.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TOEFL Prep</li> <li>• part-time</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advanced</li> </ul>                            |
| Rita               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gr. 10</li> <li>• Philippines</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nanny training</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 years</li> <li>• part-time</li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high intermediate/<br/>advanced</li> </ul>     |
| Sofia              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gr. 12</li> <li>• Poland</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursing, first year</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 months</li> <li>• part-time</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mid-intermediate</li> </ul>                    |
| Yin                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gr. 12</li> <li>• China</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursing College</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at least 1 year part-time (estimate)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high intermediate</li> </ul>                   |

**Table 4.4. Occupation in First Country and in Canada**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Occupation in First Country</b>  | <b>Occupation in Canada<br/>(prior to joining program)</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Alberto            | Student                             | Machine operator<br>Home support worker                    |
| Anna               |                                     | Plastics factory worker                                    |
| Fatima             | Home support worker,<br>Rome, Italy | Cashier  |
| Karen              | Clerical officer                    | Office clerk   |
| Karina             | Nursing assistant                   | Stocking factory worker                                    |
| Magda              | Registered nurse                    | Flyer stuffer  |
| Rita               | Elderly caregiver,<br>Hong Kong     | Nanny  |
| Sofia              | Secretary                           | Cleaner  |
| Yin                | Registered nurse                    | Babysitter   |

#### **4.3 Motivation for Joining Program**

According to the document and interview data, most of the participants had some previous experience in the health care field and this was the primary reason for their enrollment in this program. Those who were registered nurses were working towards certification in Canada. Through their previous work experience, the participants expressed an interest in working with the elderly and believed that resident care attendants fulfilled an important need in society.

#### **4.4 A Description of the Individuals**

A brief description of each participant is given here in order to provide a context for the findings. Because one of the aims of this study is to present the data from an emic perspective as well as from my analytical perspective, it is important to have a profile of each individual in order for the reader to better understand the participants and their viewpoints. I have decided to group the participants in three categories which relate to previous employment experience in the health care field, as this appears to be an important factor in relation to their perspectives, experiences, expectations, and goals. Pseudonyms have been used in order to respect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.

##### **4.4.1 Foreign Nurses**

Two of the participants, Magdalena (Magda) and Yin, were both trained as nurses in their countries of origin. Magda completed three years of preparatory training for nursing and four years of nursing in two universities in the Philippines, graduating with a B.Sc. in Nursing in the mid 1970s. Magda worked for about four years as a hospital nurse in the Philippines before going to Saudi Arabia, where she lived and worked as a nurse for twelve years. Before coming to Canada, she returned to the Philippines and worked there for another two years. For Magda, her occupation as a nurse was a major part of her identity, and it was very difficult to arrive in Canada and to find out that her qualifications were not recognized, especially since she had so many years of experience. She had been in Canada since 1995, and before enrolling in the RCA program, was very discouraged about



employment prospects. Magda was living in Canada with her husband and her ten year old son. For Magda, it was very important to be a registered nurse again.

Yin attended a three year nursing program in Beijing and worked for six years as an operating room nurse in a Beijing hospital. Unlike Magda, Yin immigrated to Canada on her own and had been here for about four years. Upon coming to Canada, Yin enrolled in ESL courses to upgrade her English skills in order to apply for a training program. She was the student who had been in one of my ESL classes at ISA in 1996. At the time of our interview, in addition to working full-time hours in a long-term care facility, Yin was upgrading her nursing skills by taking a course in dementia care at a local community college. Her goal was also to be a registered nurse in Canada.

#### **4.4.2 Work Experience in Health Care**

A number of the participants had some past work experience in the health care field, although not as extensive as that of Magda and Yin. This experience was instrumental in the participants' desire to receive training and find employment in this field.

Sofia and Karina were both in the Home Support program, whereas the others were all in the RCA program. Both had schooling in health care in their countries of origin, and Karina had work experience as a nursing assistant in Sri Lanka, but neither had any health care work experience in Canada. Sofia was from Poland and had taken one year of a psychiatric nursing program there. However, she did not complete this education as she had to start working; she worked as a secretary. Later, she got married and then stayed home. She had lived in Canada with her husband and two teenaged children, a son and a daughter,

for nine years. In Canada, she had mainly worked as a cleaner, and at the time of the interview, had not been able to find employment as a health care worker. She faced many barriers when looking for employment as a home support worker, for example, transportation limitations and conflicts between family responsibilities and on-call work. However, she did not regret taking the program as it gave her a lot of personal satisfaction to complete the program and helped her to develop skills which were useful outside of the work context, especially regarding her improvement in English skills.

Karina completed training to be a nursing aide in Sri Lanka and worked there for seven years as a nursing aide before immigrating to Canada. She has been in Canada for seven years, and just before taking the program, had relocated to Vancouver from Montreal, where she worked in a factory as an assembler. One dominant theme in Karina's life was her role as the mother of three young children. During the home support program, she became pregnant with her third child and, thus, had not been able to look for work after the program. At the time of our interview, Karina was in the process of getting her driving licence and was hopeful about finding a job as a home support worker. She was also attending an advanced level ESL class and hoped to some day get her grade twelve equivalency. Karina talked about the difficulties accompanying their relocation to Vancouver, especially regarding finding employment because of the need for certification and because of a number of other factors which will be discussed in Chapter 5. She and her husband have found it much more difficult to find work here than in Montreal because of the need for certification and local work experience.

Fatima, Rita, and Alberto had all worked in home support. Fatima and Rita worked overseas, while Alberto worked in Montreal. Originally from Ethiopia, Fatima was a live-in home support worker in Rome, Italy before coming to Canada. She had been in Canada for about 9 years. She first lived and worked for about four years in Toronto before relocating to Vancouver because of domestic problems. She was the single-parent of a four-year-old son. Fatima had participated in the New Start Program, one of ISA's pre-employment programs, and after the completion of this program was referred to the RCA training program. At the time of our interview, Fatima had not been able to find work, despite doing many months of volunteer work to get Canadian work experience. This was very discouraging for Fatima; finding employment was especially vital for her as a single parent.

Rita was a soft-spoken, mature woman from the Philippines. Before coming to Canada in the early 90's, she worked as a domestic helper and companion to an elderly lady in Hong Kong. She really enjoyed this work, and therefore applied for the program upon receiving her landed immigrant status. In Canada, she worked as a nanny and housekeeper. She was a widow and had four children, ages 15 to 22, back in the Philippines. At the time of our meeting, Rita was working part-time for a home support agency. She expressed a desire to have more work, but said that it was difficult to find.

Like Karina, Alberto also relocated to Vancouver from Montreal in recent years. Alberto was one of three participants who were Canadian citizens. He had lived in Canada twenty years and presently lived with his wife and two pre-school aged children. It was in Montreal that Alberto started doing some work in home support on weekends, in addition to his full-time job as a machine operator in a factory. Upon moving to Vancouver, Alberto

decided that he wanted to change occupations and to find work as a health care worker. He no longer wanted to do factory work. Unfortunately, it was not as easy to find work here as it was in Montreal, and certification was important here. Alberto took some ESL courses to upgrade his English as he had completed high school in French in Montreal and had spoken mainly French. Alberto was successful in finding work, and just a few months before our meeting had been offered a permanent part-time position at a facility.

#### **4.4.3 A New Occupation**

For both Karen and Anna, taking the RCA program represented a complete change in occupation. Neither had worked in the health care field before, that is, as caregivers. Karen was an administrator in a hospital for two years in Hong Kong, so she was familiar with the work environment. When asked why she decided to pursue an occupation in the health care field, she explained that she had always had an interest in nursing, but after high school had decided on a different career path. However, she now wanted to pursue her earlier interest. Karen appeared to be a confident, assertive individual. I got this impression through our telephone interview by her openness in expressing her opinions and her confident tone of voice. She had been in Canada for four years and had worked as an office clerk in two Chinese companies before enrolling in the RCA program. Although only in Canada for a few years, I got the impression that Karen was comfortable living in Canada. It had not been difficult for her to find work and she expressed satisfaction with her work situation. She lived with her husband and eighteen-year-old son and appeared to have a strong social network consisting of family, friends, and religious community.

Anna, like Alberto, had been living in Canada for over 20 years. She lived with her husband and had a 26-year-old son. She started working soon after immigrating to Canada and was employed by one plastics company for fifteen years before being laid off due to the company's move to Montreal. For Anna, taking and completing the course was a major challenge, as she was almost fifty years old and had last been in school when she was in grade ten. Completing the course was a major accomplishment for Anna and she surprised herself and others by finishing the program successfully. Anna was energetic and outgoing, and also courageous in taking retraining. She had helped to take care of her mother-in-law, but had no other previous experience in the health care field. At the time of the interview, however, Anna was a bit frustrated about the difficulties of finding a job. She worked on-call but was not getting very many hours. She attributed her difficulties of finding work to her age.

#### **4.5 Summary**

The above descriptions of the participants offer a brief glimpse into the lives of these individuals. Although I have grouped them according to past health care work experience, it is clear that they are all unique in their backgrounds and experiences. These profiles provide some background information for the next chapter which discusses the findings of this study.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Results and Discussion:**

#### **The Impact of Training and Employment as a Care Aide on Immigrants' Lives**

##### **5.0 Overview**

This chapter will report on the findings of this study and discuss the issues and themes that arose as well as compare the results from the present study with previous work on this topic. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of participation in a language and skills training program on immigrants' lives. What became immediately clear upon analysis of the data was the effect of employment as a care aide on the lives of the participants. Taking and finishing the program had a significant impact on the participants, especially in terms of improvement in language ability and the resultant increase in independence and self-confidence, but it appeared that employment issues were even more central in the participants' lives. For this reason, the analysis begins with employment issues and how these issues affected the individuals.

The first four sections focus on employment and occupational issues. Section 5.1 deals with the participants' motivation for becoming a care aide. I chose to begin the analysis with this section as it became apparent that the decision to become a care aide had personal significance for the participants. Working in the health care field has special requirements and the participants also had very specific reasons for entering the health professions. Section 5.2 describes the current employment situation of the participants. Finding employment was a central issue for all of the participants, and I believe that was

their main reason for joining this program. Related to finding employment was the topic of barriers to employment in this line of work. This topic emerged as a major theme, and thus, section 5.3 focusses on the various barriers to employment. Continuing with work issues, section 5.4 deals with working conditions and workplace issues of care aides.

The next three sections focus on the training program issues and the impact of participation in a training program on the participants' lives. Section 5.5 discusses issues related to barriers to accessing training program, a topic that has appeared often in the literature about immigrant women. Section 5.6 discusses the positive outcomes of the program in three main areas: language skills, occupational skills, and employment skills. Although most of the participants mentioned how the program helped them to improve their English skills, some of the participants discussed how the ESL component could have been more useful, especially with regard to their occupation. For this reason, section 5.7 focusses on issues regarding the teaching of ESL and VESL.

The last two sections, 5.8 and 5.9, deal with issues in the private sphere and focus on the impact of both training and employment as care aides on family, self, and settlement. Although I have separated the discussion of the impact of the training program on English language skills from the impact of the program on family and self, there is an overlap as improvement in English skills affected the participants' interactions with their family, their feelings about themselves, and their settlement process.

## **5.1 Motivation for Becoming a Care Aide**

In Chapter 4, I described briefly what motivated the participants to join a training program for the health care professions. In this section, I will discuss in greater detail the significance of their decision to become care aides. There are three themes related to a desire to work in the health professions: occupational identity, importance of integration into Canadian society, and personal fulfillment.

For those participants who had a background in health care in their first countries, taking this training program was a means to get back into their field. This was particularly clear in the case of Magda, a registered nurse from the Philippines: "I was so desperate when I came here that I cannot practise my profession with, I mean, the length of experience that I had before. ... I was really thankful when Janet had given me a chance to join the program, that I was able to go back again to the hospital." Before joining the program, Magda explained that she had to take any job "just for us to survive here" and how difficult that was: "I was working out of line of my profession and it's really frustrating. I was surely desperate those days. Yeah, I'm even depressed before. I was really thinking how could I go back again to my profession." When I asked Magda how she felt about working as a care aide, which is an entry level position, given that she has had extensive experience as a nurse, she answered: "At least I know I'm working in that place, the place where I have to be. Even if I'm working now as a care aide, it's already on line of my profession. ... Nursing has been my life already. I mean, I've been working as a nurse for more than eighteen years, so it's really my life now." It was apparent that for Magda, her profession was an important part of her identity and working in this field was vital for her emotional and psychological



well-being. Magda's goal was to get her nursing licence in Canada: "I won't stop till I get my licence," she vowed.

Yin was also a nurse in her first country, China. Like Magda, she too would like to get her nursing licence here and to work as a nurse. For Yin, her current position as a care aide was also a means to an end: "At least until now they gave me full-time hour. I can make money, save money. Means I want to get my next goal. ... Maybe to learn English or improve my English and maybe get a nursing licence." Yin was also presently upgrading her qualifications by taking a course in dementia care at a local community college. Another important theme for Yin was to improve her English and to integrate into Canadian society: "If you want to stay in Canada, you must learn English. Otherwise you won't find a job, you won't survive." In addition to her work at a Chinese care home, she was also on call at a "Western" facility. She said that she liked working there because she could speak English with the elderly people: "If I work at the western facility most I'm interested speak English with the elderly people. Use my English. Because they're alone, if you talk to them, they're really very happy." Yin mentioned a number of times the importance of improving her English in order to facilitate her settlement in Canada. Language issues will also be discussed further in the sections that follow.

Integration into Canadian society was also important for Karen, and one of the reasons she chose to enter the health care field was to get into the mainstream Canadian society: "I just try to take this course because I try to get into the mainstream. ... For the past two jobs, the boss are all Chinese. ... I think for me, it's not too difficult to get back the office job, but I don't want to stay there again." Karen's employment background was in

administration; for Karen, entering the health care field as a care aide was a way to work outside the Chinese community as she believed that it would be more difficult to get an office job in the mainstream: "I also find that it's quite difficult for us, especially for the new immigration. We- you just work in an office, you try to get into the mainstream, it's quite difficult because ... they need you to speak very fluent English." But this was just one of the reasons for Karen's decision to change occupations. Before entering the program, she also looked at employment trends and found that the demand for health care workers was on the rise and was likely to remain so in the future. In addition, Karen already had a desire to work in nursing when she was in high school but had decided to work in administration instead. She remarked that she thought it was interesting how she has returned to the health professions after many years of working in another field. Taking the RCA training program and entering the health care field fulfilled a personal interest for Karen. Thus, taking this program satisfied a number of Karen's wishes.

For many of the participants, working in the health care field was personally fulfilling. Anna emphasized the importance of working as a care aide not just for the money but to help someone in need: "For me, I feel is like, now the time that I work is not the money. I find out we get the relationship. ... And actually for my feeling say, for our job, even you don't have a certificate, if you care, you will do it. If you got a certificate, if you don't care about some people, it's nothing. They just do their job. They just want the money." For Sofia, work in health care was also more than just earning a living: "I can be helpful, not only for my family, financially, ... other, different people who needs me."

Anna's entry into this field was also a major change in occupation. Instrumental in her decision to become a care aide was her experience with her mother-in-law and her own personal experience during a hospital stay which made her aware of the importance of caregiving: "Because of my mother-in-law. That time I'm working in a factory. I got good pay, good benefits. And my mother-in-law's sick. And I had to take turn, with my sister-in-law to help her, so I go down her house three times a week, help her clean up, help her cooking, clean up everything. And I found out like, old people need help." Later on, Anna herself was in hospital and this experience also made her realize the important work of caregivers: "... in the hospital, you can feel that way, when it's painful, when you need somebody. Oh my god, you get mad, nobody there. But sometime you can see some nurse come to help you. Even if it's embarrassing, they still do it. And I think, Why not? I need somebody help, somebody need my help."

Several other participants also discussed the personal fulfillment derived from caring for others. Fatima talked about how she had always gotten along with the residents and elderly people in general: "The patient, they used to like me, even Chinese people. I don't speak (their language), even though, they like me. I do for them because I like helping them. Because even when I was little, when my mom send me to buy something like that, if I saw elderly carrying something, I used to help them. And that's why I like elderly people. So when I do this, they used to like me. Even they used to call me, 'Come, come.'" Alberto started working in home support in Montreal for some extra income, but found that he enjoyed the work: "I used to see my coworkers, ladies, and they didn't complain. They liked the job. So I say, maybe I change orientation. I don't want to work in machine shop."

It's too heavy, too danger for my health. I don't want to do that no more. I like working with the elderly." Rita had worked for an elderly lady in Hong Kong for five years. In Canada she had worked as a nanny, but decided that she would like to go back to looking after elderly: "I did thought that financially, it would be better because I'd seen so many people working the same course, that they make money. And also, not only that, I get along with elderly too. I get along with the lady that I worked with before. And actually now, with my job, I'm enjoying it."

What I wanted to illustrate in this section was that working in the health professions was significant for the participants on a personal level. A dominant theme was the interest in helping others and the fulfillment derived from doing this kind of work. Entering this particular profession was a conscious, deliberate choice. Working in this field was more than a means of earning income; choosing to be a care aide reflects the importance of occupational identity and the individuals' interest in the health care field and in helping others.

In the literature regarding immigrant women and employment, the emphasis has been on the disadvantaged position of immigrant women in the labour force and how these women are often restricted to the lower echelons of the service and manufacturing industries (Beach and Worswick, 1993; Boyd, 1992; Buijs, 1993). Not much has been written about the occupational aspirations of immigrant women, although the study by Cumming and Gill (1992) did examine the motivation of a group of women to join an ESL program. Their findings support the findings in the present study. For example, the decision to participate in ESL classes included the importance of acquiring English in order to better participate in Canadian society, which this relates to the theme of integration, and to obtain meaningful

employment, which relates to the themes of occupational identity and personal fulfilment in the present study. Table 5.1 summarizes the main factors that motivated the participants to join a health care aide training program.

**Table 5.1. Motivation for Becoming a Care Aide**

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| <b>1. Occupational identity</b>                                | Magda, Yin                |
| <b>2. Integration into Canadian society</b>                    | Karen, Yin                |
| <b>3. Personal fulfillment</b>                                 | Anna, Fatima, Rita, Sofia |
| <b>4. Desire for change in occupation</b>                      | Anna, Alberto, Karen      |
| <b>5. Previous experience in health care:<br/>nursing</b>      | Karina, Magda, Yin        |
| <b>6. Previous experience in health care:<br/>Home support</b> | Alberto, Fatima, Rita     |

It is noteworthy that students in the RCA program were predominantly women. In a class of 16 to 20 students, there is normally one or two men. Other authors such as Cohen (1987) and Neal and Neale (1987) have discussed the gendered nature of employment for immigrant women. In general, women in the workforce have concentrated in “helping” professions such as teaching, health care, and clerical work. The above authors’ analyses examine the negative aspects of gendered employment. From a critical perspective, training to work as a care aide, which is an entry level position in the health professions, may be seen

as reinforcing the employment of immigrant women in low status occupations. In addition, working as a care aide reinforces the traditional caregiving role of women in society, which may be seen as perpetuating the gendered nature of employment for women. However, in the present study, the findings concerning the participants' motivation for wanting to be a care aide have shown a more positive perspective regarding work as a care aide. Also, it is not necessarily a terminal position, but a stage in their ongoing professional socialization, apprenticeship and certification.

## **5.2 Present Employment Status**

In this section, I would like to describe the present employment status of the participants. It is important to mention again that the participants were from two different programs and this affected their employment possibilities. Sofia and Karina both graduated from the Home Support Attendant (HS) Program in June 1996, just under two years before our interviews. The other participants graduated from the combined Home Support/Resident Care Attendant (RCA) Program in June 1997, less than one year before our interview. Janet, who was the project manager for both programs, anticipated that it would be more difficult for the Home Support participants to find work as their certificate limited them to work in home support or group homes, whereas the participants who were in the combined RCA program had more options, i.e., they were able to work in care homes and hospitals in addition to home support. Furthermore, the two programs were funded by different sources and the eligibility criteria differed. This might also have affected the differential rates of success in finding employment. The HS program was funded by the

provincial government which traditionally targets people on income assistance, and the RCA program was funded by the federal government which traditionally targets people on employment insurance. According to Janet, the participants from the HS program might also face additional barriers to employment because of the nature of their employment history, that is, being out of the workforce for a significant period of time. Indeed, at the time of the interviews, both HS participants were unfortunately still not employed, whereas, of the seven graduates from the RCA program, only one had not found employment. This section will describe the employment situations of the participants; in the next section, I will deal with the related theme of barriers to employment in greater detail.

As mentioned above, three of the participants were without paid employment in the field at the time of the interviews. Karina became pregnant during the program and, thus, was not able to look for work immediately after the program. As her son was now one year and five months old, she had been actively looking for work in the field. She was hopeful that she would find work as a home support worker. Sofia had tried to look for work after graduation but encountered numerous barriers. She went back to doing cleaning for a year, but recently quit that position because it was too strenuous. However, she said that she helped out her neighbour, an elderly lady, and thus, was using the skills that she learned. She did not mention whether or not she was paid for this work. It didn't appear that Sofia was still looking for work in home support. Fatima was quite discouraged about her employment situation at the time of our interview. She worked as a volunteer twice a week for six months in the extended care ward at the university hospital, but did not get any offers of

longer term employment. Recently she left that volunteer position and started another one at a facility that was closer to home.

Of the participants who were currently employed in the health care field, most were working on-call, as a "casual" employee. Alberto, Yin, Magda and Karen all seemed to be satisfied with their present employment situations, although most of the participants said that they would be happier if they had full-time positions and regular hours. Alberto was the only one who had a permanent part-time position. He worked 22 regular hours per week but also worked on-call. Altogether, he worked up to 40 hours a week. Yin had regular full-time hours at a Chinese care home, but was considered a part-time casual, which usually means that the position does not include job benefits or job security. Also, she had to work an overnight shift. Magda and Karen were both working on-call and felt that they had enough hours. Magda was working for two hospitals and Karen was working for two facilities. Magda worked on average 40 hours a week and Karen worked over 25 hours. Both said that they were satisfied with the number of hours that they were working. Both found work relatively easily, compared to some of the other participants. Anna and Rita, on the other hand, would have liked to have more hours. Anna was on-call at a facility and was working in a private home as well. She had worked for a home support agency, but quit because of problematic working conditions such as frequent cancellations and not being paid on time. She was debating whether or not to work for an agency again, as she really wanted to have more work. Rita was a casual worker for a home support agency, and sometimes worked overnight shifts. Altogether she got about 25 hours of work a week, on average.



I asked Anna<sup>1</sup> how much care aides were paid. She said that it depended on the work context and the kind of work done. For example, some home support agencies only pay \$8 to \$10 per hour if the care aide is mainly expected to provide companionship for an elderly person. For personal care work, which is more demanding, the rate is \$12.80 to \$14.50 per hour, the higher rate paid by unionized agencies. In general, work in facilities is better paid. Unionized facilities pay \$16 to \$17 per hour, while non-unionized facilities pay \$13.50 to \$15 per hour. From this information, it is understandable that 25 hours of home support work may not provide sufficient income for some of the individuals.

I had anticipated that the participants with health care work experience would have had an easier time finding work, but that was not always the case. For example, Alberto, who had less experience than some of the other participants, was the only one who got a permanent position. He was able to build his hours and increase his seniority at one facility, and this led to a permanent position. Karen, who had no experience as a health care worker, did not seem to have any difficulties finding work, whereas some of the others who had work experience in the field had more difficulties. Clearly, factors other than work experience were important in finding employment, for example, having a means of transportation, and being able to work all shifts. I think that the participants' satisfaction with their current employment situation also depended on the individuals' standards and

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<sup>1</sup> I received this information during a follow-up phone call conversation with Anna about six months after our initial interview. I contacted five participants again, (Anna, Karen, Karina, Magda, Sofia) and spoke briefly with each individual. I was not able to reach the other participants. Their employment status remained as it was at the time of our initial interviews.

needs regarding working conditions and hours. Table 5.2 summarizes the employment status of the participants.

**Table 5.2. Employment Status**

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| <b>1. Permanent position</b>  | Alberto                          |
| <b>2. On-call: 25-40 hours of work per week<br/>"enough hours"</b>        | Karen, Magda, Yin                |
| <b>3. On-call: less than 25 hours per week<br/>"would like more work"</b> | Anna, Rita                       |
| <b>4. Unemployed</b>  | Fatima, Sofia, Karina            |
| <b>5. Working in a facility</b>   | Alberto, Anna, Karen, Magda, Yin |
| <b>6. Working in home support</b>   | Anna, Rita                       |
| <b>7. Volunteer work</b>  | Fatima                           |

Regarding working conditions, Ng and Estable (1987) reported the immigrant women must be available on a short-term, temporary basis, and that their working hours tend to be irregular because of the need to do on-call work, shift and night work. The authors did not specify the types of occupation which required such working hours, but this observation concurs with the findings of the present study regarding the working hours of the participants.

One of the purpose of exploratory studies is to allow themes to emerge from the data and what emerged in this study was the topic of barriers to employment. My research questions did not ask specifically about employment barriers, but this topic was central to the participants and was very much related to discussions about their employment status. Because of the significant impact of barriers to employment on the participants' job status, the next section focusses on this topic.

### **5.3 Barriers to Employment**

Barriers to employment emerged as a major theme for these participants. For some of the participants, the barriers were present before they took the training program. For example, Magda spoke of how she was not able to work in her field, despite her experience and qualifications from overseas. She needed to have local certification. Karina faced the same barrier regarding this lack of recognition of overseas training and experience: "I don't have nothing to put on my resume! I can put only my background, my country's experience. ... That experience is not accepting here. ... You have to have BC experience, BC certificate." Completing the program gave Karina more confidence in finding work in the home support field because she now had the officially recognized knowledge and the certificate. Alberto also mentioned the need for certification: "I came to British Columbia and I didn't have no diploma to work like a home support, so I have problem getting a job." Thus, completing the training program and getting a RCA or HS certificate helped to overcome this barrier, but the participants encountered numerous other barriers to finding work upon graduation from the program. Some of the other barriers that the participants

discussed included the need for local experience, the importance of contacts, the requirements of on-call and shift work, domestic responsibilities, transportation limitations, and barriers regarding age, education and other personal characteristics.

For most of the participants, finding work was difficult. A number of them said that they had applied to many places and did not get a response. It was hard just to get an interview. Karina said, "After baby born, I have been looking for job. I send lot of resumes, and then they send back a letter that they will keep the resume in the file and when they get vacant, they will call us. That's the letters I am getting still." Fatima had also applied to many places: "The job is not there. I did all the place, my application, but nobody call me." Alberto started looking for work one month before the course ended and also mentioned that it was difficult to get an interview. He applied to many places, especially in Surrey where he lived with his wife and children, but didn't get many responses. This difficulty in finding work puzzled several of the participants who didn't understand why they weren't getting any responses.

The difficulty of finding work was compounded by the participants' expectation that upon completion of the program, they would have full-time jobs. Most of the participants were used to working full-time in one place as that was the norm in their previous jobs. Karina, Alberto and Fatima, who had all relocated to Vancouver shortly before taking the training program, noted that it was much more difficult to find work in BC than in Montreal or Toronto. Fatima described how it easy it was to find work in Toronto: "When I came to Toronto, at that time was, everybody, if you need a job and you apply, they will take

because everybody need employee.” Karina supported this observation:

There are a lot of jobs available for us. Without any course you can do some factory job like sewing, making stockings, like that. It’s, for us, it’s okay, we are immigrant, you know, to live, to continue the family. Here, ... first you have to study something and get the certificate and get reference, get experience, and then go to the job. ... It’s a lot harder than there. Montreal, they don’t ask anything. If we are fit for the job, they will hire you. ... Here in BC, every job, even dish washing, asking for experience. My husband went through this problem. Experience, bring your certificate and experience. For everything, every job, every labour job.

Karina described her contact with one agency, in which she realized the importance of work experience. She said that she had applied to one agency twice. The first time she had just filled out an application form. She did not hear from the agency. One month later, she saw an ad from the same agency seeking home support workers, so she went to apply again. This time they asked for references and a medical exam, and Karina was told that she would be put on their on-call list. But again, she did not hear from the agency. “I called the reception and asked. She said, ‘If you don’t have experience, I don’t think- she’s not going to call you.’ That was the problem.” Thus, Karina became aware of how the lack of work experience was a major barrier.

Another issue that arose was the importance of connections in order to find work. Fatima gave the example of her cousin: “You have to know somebody to get a job too. ... My cousin came after me from Toronto. He knows friends here ... he apply the place his friend is working. ... This friend is talk to the place where they working and he got a job just like that.” Contacts were also important for Alberto in two different contexts. Alberto got into home support in Montreal through friends who introduced him to clients. In Vancouver, he found work in a facility that was referred to him by a French-speaking nun.

Karina said that most of the students got jobs at the places where they did their practicum. She too was offered work by the place where she did her practicum but because of her pregnancy, she was not able to take the position at that time. Later when she was available for work, they no longer needed aides. Karina also added, "Some place when I phone to and ask the coordinator, she said, she quickly asked me, 'Did you know someone working here?'" Anna got her on-call job at a facility where she did one of her practicum placements. She reported that three of her classmates were also working there. These examples show the importance of having contacts in order to get work. In my personal experience, I have also found it helpful to know someone at a workplace in order to get a job interview. My perception is that contacts and connections facilitate finding employment in this region of Canada. I was once told by a job finding club facilitator that employers in this municipality were more conservative than elsewhere in Canada and many tend to hire people they know or have been referred by someone they know.

The need to work on-call in order to enter into this occupation was also a major barrier to employment for many participants. As Alberto stated: "I didn't know that I was going to be on-call. What I was thinking is that if I go to apply, they gonna call me, and then they gonna give me a job for forty hours, like I was used to before." Alberto said that the project manager and skills instructor had explained the necessity to build hours: "They call me any shift, yeah? So me, I was ready to go because the teacher ... she told us we have to build hours to have seniority. So I was ready to do any shift. So I said to my wife, 'You give me a chance, don't ask me to do nothing, because I need to sleep. I sleeping all the time.'" The ability to work whenever a facility or agency called could be quite demanding.

What made it even more strenuous in this occupation was the need to work different shifts as well, including overnight shifts. I believe this was why Alberto emphasized the importance of being able to sleep whenever he needed to. Alberto was able to deal with on-call work, with the support of his wife, and was able to successfully build his hours which eventually led to a permanent position for Alberto. Although one cannot generalize the impact of gender differences on finding employment based on just one male participant, it is interesting to note that the only participant who managed to get a permanent position was the male participant, who had less health care experience and training than many of the other participants..

But for many of the other participants being on-call was problematic. Some equated being on-call with wasting time. Sofia said, "They not promise me, not stable job. Just for some phone call. But I don't understand why. If they need it, some workers, some part-times or some two days maybe. Something. No I need to wait everyday for this." Sofia also spoke about how being on-call conflicted with her planning her day and doing what she needed to do at home. Another problem with on-call work was the lack of a steady income. Alberto said that one place where he was on-call called him only once a month: "I cannot do my life like that." Alberto pointed out that an important consideration for someone who was thinking about entering this field was whether they could manage financially: "Do I going to be able to build my hours economically because if they only call you once in one month, how you're going to do it?" Sofia also talked about the difficulty of managing financially given the irregularity of on-call work: "If I even decide to wait for the phone

calls, I still need some money to live. And what? I need to stay at home and wait? No way. I can't."

A number of the participants discussed the irregularity of the number of working hours. Magda said, "There are times when there are really lots of calls, and there are times that it's quite slow." Anna also had the same experience with the facility she works for; she was very busy around Christmas and then it slowed down. It was so slow in the springtime that she was debating whether to go back to an agency in order to get more work. Karen also said, "Sometimes we got many hours in one week, but sometimes you don't. But for me, average is quite good." Karen was fortunate in getting enough hours. This was not always the case.

Another issue involves shift work and the need to do overnight shifts, as mentioned above. Magda was used to doing shift work so that wasn't a problem for her. Karen also said it wasn't a problem to adapt to shift work because "I don't need to worry about any babysit for anything else." For Karina, who had three young children, it was a major problem: "They asking, 'Do you like to live-in or do you like to stay during the night hours?' ... But after ten o'clock I cannot. I cannot do because my children wants me. ... They are three of them under seven years old. ... 'Don't go, Mummy, don't go,' they say. 'Stay with us.'"

As has been discussed in the literature, family responsibilities form barriers for women and employment. As with Karina, mothers with young children are limited as to when they are able to work. For Fatima, being a single parent, lack of childcare was an even greater barrier than for mothers who could share childcare responsibilities with another



family member: "Before I used to look all over but now I can't do it because my baby with me. Before he was in daycare. Now he's with me. So if I get somebody to watch for me I go to drop my application. Otherwise I can't go whole day because I have him." Sofia also voiced the conflicts between domestic responsibilities and on-call work: "What happen if I take some appointment to the doctor with my daughter or something, and they call me go to work? Which is more important?" In the literature, the focus has been on the need for childcare and how that poses barriers for women. But as Sofia pointed out, even mothers with older children are needed at home: "I have two children. They are now, I think, old enough, but still, they need me. They 12 and 14. Especially maybe this age, teenagers. I need to be at home."

Another barrier involved transportation requirements. This was especially crucial in home support, where the care aides needed to travel from home to home. Alberto said, "We need a car. Like in Coquitlam, if I don't have a car, I have to spend one hour fifteen minutes to go to my work." Karina found this to be a major requirement of many home support agencies: "One of the place they ask me, 'If you have car and the driving licence, come quickly.' That time I didn't have that." Karina believed that having a car and licence would help her find a job. For this reason, she was determined to get her driver's licence. Sofia was also limited by not having a car: "You need to go to many houses. ... I know I need a driving licence, but I am still scared to drive in Vancouver, ... so I have some limitations."

Finally, I wish to discuss various barriers regarding age, education and other personal variables. Anna discussed a number of barriers which she faced: "Some people they ask me, 'Which one you coming from? The college, right?' I say, 'No, I come from ISA. They never

heard of that! And so, even I get the resume, I never get interview. I don't know if it's my age or my school or my education, because I only grade ten, my English is not that good."

Anna mentioned a number of times the barriers she faced because of her age; she is 48 years old. She said that employers prefer younger workers: "When you go to the interview for the job, they don't hire you cause your age. ... I have to fight with the young girls, young people right now. So when I take the resume to apply the job, oh my god, I hardly get interview."

Anna and Karen both mentioned that some employers have a preference for graduates from college programs. Karen said that when she showed the employers her resume and they see ISA, they asked: "Where's ISA? What's ISA mean?" They don't know anything about the agency and wonders why this agency is offering RCA training. "So I think it's best to let them know ... this kind of the agent, they also have this kind of the program."

Fatima described how some employers don't like to hire women with children: "I didn't know employer they don't like kids or something like that. If they saw you with a kid, they didn't want you because they say that. I learn from that. You don't have to take your kids when you apply or you asking for a job. At first time, I didn't know that. I used to carry him." Fatima also mentioned that the lack of a third language and maybe the colour of her skin were barriers to finding employment. Language issues will be discussed further in the following sections.

In the literature regarding immigrant women and employment, a number of authors have written about the disadvantaged position of immigrant women in the labour force, and one of the central issues discussed is the necessity of language and skills training programs

for immigrant women to improve their employment situations. The literature has also focussed on barriers to accessing training programs, which will be discussed in section 5.5, but there appears to be a lack of information regarding barriers to employment after participation in a training program.

Some of the barriers to employment discussed by the participants in this study are similar to those discussed in the literature regarding access to training programs, for example, transportation limitations and domestic responsibilities. Other barriers are specific to employment, for example, the need for contacts and work experience. Lastly, another group of barriers are perhaps specific to work as a care aide; for example, the need to do on-call and shift work, and in the case of home support, the need to commute from client to client and the difficulties of getting enough hours of work. It would be interesting to examine how employment as a care aide compares with other occupations, for example, to find out how common on-call work is in other occupations.

This section has described the numerous barriers that the participants faced when searching for employment. There appears to be an assumption in the literature that training programs lead to better employment for immigrants, and thus, the focus has been the problem of access to these programs. For the participants in this study, all of whom had overcome barriers to access and have successfully completed a demanding training program, there existed another set of barriers that they must overcome in order to get employment. For all of the participants, finding satisfying and sufficient employment was a central issue. Fatima said, "Sometime I hate it, sitting home." Anna also mentioned the need to keep busy: "I want to keep busy. I don't want to sit at home." Many of the participants hoped to get

more hours and more regular work. Rita mentioned a number of times her hopes: "I'll be happier if I have a better job, more jobs. ... I'm just always hoping that I could have better jobs." Thus, employment and barriers to employment were central issues for these participants. Table 5.3 summarizes the barriers to employment discussed by the participants.

**Table 5.3. Barriers to Employment**

|  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <b>1. Lack of certification</b>  | Alberto, Karina, Magda            |
| <b>2. Difficulties in finding work compared to past experience in Canada</b>                   | Alberto, Anna, Fatima, Karina     |
| <b>3. Need for contacts/connections</b>  | Alberto, Anna, Fatima, Karina     |
| <b>4. Need to work on-call and shift</b>   | Alberto, Anna, Karina, Sofia      |
| <b>5. Irregularity in number of work hours/ unstable income</b>                                | Alberto, Anna, Karen, Magda, Rita |
| <b>6. Family responsibilities: childcare</b>   | Fatima, Karina, Sofia             |
| <b>7. Transportation limitations</b>   | Anna, Karina, Sofia               |
| <b>8. Lack of recognition of ISA certificate/ preference for college care aide certificate</b> | Anna, Karen                       |
| <b>9. Personal characteristics: age, education, level of English, race</b>                     | Anna, Fatima                      |

This section has dealt with some of the difficulties associated with work as a care aide. Some of the barriers to employment reported here concur with Wilson's (1998) study of graduates from a similar type of program. The participants in her study also discussed the challenges of finding enough work to provide a stable income and the difficulties associated with being on-call, for example, conflicts between work and childcare. In the next section, I wish to further explore the nature of work as a home support or resident care attendant, as this theme arose often during the interviews.

#### **5.4 Working as a Care Aide: Work Conditions and Language Issues**

I have discussed the participants' motivation for entering the health care field and have reported on their employment situation and barriers to employment. During the interviews, an important topic that arose was the working conditions of a care aide. A number of the participants compared work in a facility with work in home support, and also spoke about the challenges of working for agencies and working as a casual. Some of these themes relate closely to the barriers discussed above. In addition, some of the participants spoke about language issues at the workplace.

It was clear that work in a facility was preferred to work in home support. The need to commute from home to home was mentioned by a number of participants as being a disadvantage of the job. Anna described this problem clearly: "I worked in home support, and I don't like the way they did that, is they send you wherever they feel like it. They tell me go down to the Burnaby Mountain. And then only for three hours a day. And when you're driving, it's like, come back, go down there, at least one hour and twenty minutes."

Thus, commuting was a problem even for those who drive and have cars. As mentioned in the previous section, those without a car and licence faced even greater difficulties. Most preferred to work in a facility because they were in one place and did not have to constantly commute from one client to another. But some of the participants also mentioned that it was much harder to get work in a facility compared to home support.

Another major difficulty with working in home support was getting enough hours, as mentioned in the previous section. Magda had worked in home support for four to six months before joining the training program but was not getting enough work to continue: “As home support worker, I’m not having enough hours that time, so I tried to look for another job. Yeah, because otherwise, we cannot work it out ... if we just depend on my job as a home support worker.” Anna also spoke of the problem of getting enough hours: “One of the lady ... she working there for two years. And she even doesn’t get thirty-five hours a week. ... Even sometimes only twenty hours a week. ... And I said, ‘How can you live like that?’ She said, ‘I don’t know. It’s really hard for me.’ And she think about change agency.”

Another disadvantage of home support was the frequent change of clients. Being a casual worker with low seniority exacerbates this problem. Rita described the lack of constancy in clients: “I had a good, good client before that I know they like me, but I had to let it go because they said that the regular workers, if their client, like pass away or go to nursing home, ... then of course they have to take our client. And so that’s the bad thing about it.” This can have a detrimental impact on job satisfaction as development of rapport and relationship with clients was what made the job rewarding, as Anna pointed out. Karen had also talked about the satisfaction derived from seeing improvement in clients. Thus,

with frequent changes of clients, some of the personal satisfaction from doing the job was diminished.

Working for agencies brought other challenges as well. Anna spoke about the importance of good relations with the supervisor: "Home support depends on how you get along with the people, or did they like you. Otherwise supervisor won't give you too much order. Some is nice. They arrange you in the same area, so even you run two hours or four hours, you can get about eight hours a day. But sometimes it's bad. They cancel you out, or when you first start it, they only give you two hours or four hours a day." This issue was also discussed by Harper et al. (1996) regarding workers at the Levi Strauss plants. The authors reported that the immediate supervisor had the most influence over the working conditions of an employee; thus, it was important for the workers to develop good relations with their supervisor.

Other participants also discussed general working conditions. What I found interesting was that Karen quit a full-time position at a Chinese care home and opted for on-call work at two other facilities. She had worked in other care homes before being hired in the Chinese care home and was able to compare the working conditions. Karen felt that the working conditions were better in the other care homes: "For the environment, it's better. For the pay, is better. For the Chinese one, they don't have any union. For the other one, they have union. And also for the environment, the working environment, it's quite good." This example also shows that the participants had different criteria regarding employment. For Karen, good working conditions were more important than full-time hours.

Another interesting issue that arose was that of language at the workplace. Both Yin and Karen, who had worked in Chinese care homes, commented on the difficulties encountered because the residents spoke a dialect that they didn't understand. Yin, a Mandarin speaker, said she had to learn Cantonese before she got the job. However, she learned standard Cantonese and many of the residents spoke Toisin, another dialect from a small region in southern China.<sup>2</sup> Karen stated: "It's hard for me to work in a Chinese nursing home because most of the people, the eldest people, in that nursing home, they come from the Toisin. ... For me is very hard to communicate with them because I do not know that kind of dialect. ... It's easier for me to speak English than for me to speak the other dialect."

I believe that this language issue is related to the participants' desire for integration. Both Yin and Karen had mentioned the importance of integrating into Canadian society. For both Yin and Karen, speaking English was an important step to integration. Yin spoke of her frustration at her workplace because of the lack of English spoken: "The staff, it's 99 percent they talk, use Cantonese. Even the supervisor, nurse. No one use English. I'm so upset. If you talk to the patient, you use Cantonese. Staff to staff, or nurse we're reporting, they should use English because we live in Canada. We don't live in China. But they never. I think when I work here, my English level is going down." Yin mentioned a number of times how important it was for her to improve her English and to speak English. In section 5.1, I discussed the importance of integration into Canadian society for Karen.

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<sup>2</sup> In the past, Chinese immigrants in Canada were predominantly from the Toisin region of China. Many of them are now in their 70s and 80s, thus, accounting for the large numbers of Toisin speakers in Chinese care homes.



Therefore, it was understandable that she chose to work outside her ethnic community because one of the factors that motivated her to enter the health professions was to get into the mainstream society.

Karen also commented on cultural differences at the workplace. Karen explained that many of the coworkers at the Chinese facility were from mainland China: "The working attitude is different from the one they come from Hong Kong. So I think that I don't feel comfortable to work in this kind of a place. So I just quit it." Karen also observed tensions between workers from different cultures at the facilities where she worked. The workers were from different countries, like India and the Philippines, and some were "white." She said that sometimes it was very difficult to cooperate and that there was some discrimination, not so much for casual workers, but for the regulars.

The issue of language at the workplace also arose for other participants. Alberto got his present position because of his knowledge of French. As mentioned earlier, he was referred to a facility by a French-speaking nun. More than half of the residents at this facility spoke French, so Alberto's ability to speak French helped him to get work at this facility. Fatima also mentioned the importance of speaking a third language:

What I am thinking because I didn't get the job because my language, because only I talk English. Most of them they talk different, three or four languages. So then, in the facility and some place they need the people who talk Spanish or French or Chinese, Punjabi, and something like that. That help a lot, but I don't have that. I have just English and my home country's language. They don't need it here. So I have only English. That's why I thought I don't get a job.

These language issues at the workplace supported the findings of Goldstein (1994) and Harper et al. (1996). First of all, English was not always the language needed for

employment opportunities. Second, workers tended to use a common first language amongst themselves, as described by Yin about her workplace. As reported by the authors above, use of a common first language served as a symbol of solidarity and was used to develop rapport and social support among coworkers. It upset Yin that English was not used at work, perhaps especially since she was not a part of the dominant group of Cantonese speakers and also because learning English and integrating into Canadian society were such important issues for her. Both Yin and Karen raised other interesting issues regarding language and cultural differences at work. For an outsider, it may appear that Yin and Karen were from the same language and cultural background, that is, Chinese. But they have revealed that this was not the case. Karen spoke about differences in attitudes that people from mainland China and Hong Kong have towards work and how that was problematic for her. Both Karen and Yin also mentioned that the Toisin dialect was predominant amongst the residents and how this was difficult for them as this dialect was quite different from Cantonese and Mandarin. The same issue arose regarding language at the workplace in the study by Duff and Early (forthcoming). The participants in their study did one of their practicums at a care home where the residents were predominantly from the Toisin region, thus, the participants who spoke Cantonese or Mandarin had no advantages in communicating with the residents over the participants who were non-Chinese. Many of the participants in their study reported that body language was useful in communicating with the residents. Thus, the issue of language and cultural differences appear to be important in work at facilities.

From the above discussion, it was evident that working as a care aide can be quite challenging. In addition to numerous barriers to finding full-time employment in this field, the working conditions could also be problematic at times. Working in home support could be particularly difficult, given the irregular and short hours and the need to commute. Also, it was not easy to work as a casual because of the low seniority which resulted in instability in working hours and clients. In addition, there were language and cultural differences at the workplace that the participants had to deal with.

### **5.5 Barriers to Accessing Training Programs**

In this section, the focus of the analysis shifts from employment to issues which are central to the training program. This section will deal with issues related to accessing training programs. In the literature review, barriers to access to language and training programs were discussed by a number of authors and represented a central theme in the literature on immigrant women. This theme also surfaced in the present study. A number of the participants spoke about the difficulties of accessing a training program. Some of the prominent issues included the need for a certain level of English proficiency, long waiting lists, and high costs.

When Alberto first moved to BC, he realized that he needed to get training and a certificate in order to work as a care aide. But first, he had to improve his English before he could join a skills training program. He was in an ESL class for nine months before he entered the RCA program at ISA: "As soon as I came here I went to look for the school, English... I thought I spoke English, but then when I came here, ohhh. And writing, because

in my job we have to do small report in English.” Sofia also commented on how she thought her English level would be a barrier: “I came and decide to do the test, English test. It was disgusting. I still didn’t know English. ... When we came (to the orientation session) ... I realized that I understand everything. And hey, maybe I can do this course. And I tried.” From my own personal experience at ISA, I know that not having a high enough English proficiency level was a major barrier for many immigrants who wanted to enter training programs. In Chapter 3, I discussed how ISA tried to reduce this barrier by offering additional language courses through their fee paying program in order to help immigrants and refugees reach the intermediate level that was necessary for entry into most training programs. In addition, the training programs offered by ISA combine skills and language training in one program, which helped the clients to improve their English at the same time as receiving occupational training. In these ways, ISA has attempted to address the language barrier to accessing training programs.

Another major barrier to access was the cost of programs. A number of the participants mentioned how expensive the courses were, especially in private institutions where a program could cost \$4000 to \$6000, according to Anna. Magda and Rita spoke about the barrier of cost as well. Magda also pointed out the importance of program providers who understand the special needs of immigrants: “I was trying to look for a school where I can upgrade, and the one I’m looking for is that I will not spend much money that time. We don’t have money that time for me to study. ... At last I found Janet, ... she’s really a great help. She helped me a lot because she knows my problem.” A number of sources, for example the government publication *Rethinking Training* (1994) and Payne

(1991), have also discussed the importance of meeting the special training needs of immigrant women and having program facilitators who know how to meet these needs.

In the literature, the barriers of long waiting lists and few places have also been discussed (Burnaby, 1992; Rockhill and Tomic, 1994). Anna mentioned that at some community colleges, you have to wait for a year: "I need my living because I have to send money to my mom. So I don't think I can wait. ... That time I give up, to tell you the truth, until ISA they phone me." Such investment of time and money is often not possible for immigrants. As reported in the literature, financial pressures often limit immigrants' ability to participate in training programs. Burnaby discussed the conflict between accepting available, low-level employment and participation in training in the hopes of getting better employment. What makes it even harder to invest in training is not knowing whether there will be a job when one graduates. As Anna said, "Holy cow, even I got it, I don't think I can get a job." High costs and long waiting lists pose a dilemma for those seeking programs. Private institutes may have places available but are very expensive. Public institutes such as community colleges are less expensive but have long waiting lists. Several of the participants mentioned how fortunate they were to find the ISA training program, which enabled them to get the training that they may not otherwise have been able to access.

Karina talked about the importance of support during the program in order for immigrants to successfully complete the program:

We complete that program without difficulties. They help us, like, they give us benefit for the bus pass and some people gets moneys. It help us. We don't want to stop. We continued. ... Childcare benefit. It's good. ... There is no problem to stop, break the program for us. We can finish the course and get the certificate. It's helpful. And if there are any problems, there's the counsellors. We go and see them.

If we have any family problem or any kind of problem with the program, they will give us advice.

Karina discussed a number of areas that could be problematic for immigrants to participate in programs, such as transportation, income, child care, and domestic problems, and how ISA helped the students overcome these barriers. These barriers have also been previously identified in the literature. Cumming and Gill (1992) and Tisza (1997) have also discussed similar variables, such as provision of childcare, that facilitate participation in training. Table 5.4 gives an overview of the barriers to access to training discussed in this section.

**Table 5.4: Barriers to Accessing Programs**

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| <b>1. Level of English not high enough</b> | Alberto, Sofia            |
| <b>2. Long waiting lists</b>               | Anna                      |
| <b>3. High costs</b>                       | Anna, Karina, Magda, Rita |
| <b>4. Need for childcare</b>               | Fatima, Karina            |

In summary, the participants in this training program confirm the existence of barriers to access to training programs discussed by other authors in the literature regarding immigrants and training programs. It appears that the efforts made by ISA to reduce barriers and to facilitate access have helped these participants join and successfully complete a training program. However, we do not know of the many applicants who were not successful in accessing training programs. Janet had mentioned that for 16 places in a

program, they usually get about 50 to 60 applicants. So even with efforts to reduce barriers, it is apparent that there is still not enough places in training programs for immigrants, as previous research has also reported.

## **5.6 Positive Outcomes of the Training Program**

This section will examine the positive outcomes of participation in a training, namely, how the program helped the participants. Benefits from the program will be discussed in relation to three areas: English language skills, occupational skills, and employment/job search skills.

Many of the participants spoke of their improvement in English and how this increased their independence. For Sofia, this was the most important result of participation in the program:

The most important is improve English. I am able to speak. Sometimes I got some problems but I forgot some word. I don't use that much English, but I can speak. ... I can go to interview find some job, or in the store. ... In the bus, when somebody ask me something ... I can help somebody who don't know English.

Thus, Sofia was empowered by her increased ability in English. She could now help others as well as do more things for herself. A number of the participants spoke about their improvement in English, for example, Fatima: "I can write, I can understand everything more than before. I know a lot of words but before I didn't knew."

Karina said that her English level went from lower intermediate to upper intermediate: "I can answer better than before. Before I don't understand if you ask

something how to give full answer ... now answering is better than before.” Karina also talked about how learning English has increased her independence:

I know how to search job, because before I don't go. I need somebody. If I go somewhere, I call someone, one of my friend or my husband: 'Come with me, come with me, help me.' Because I was backward, I don't have forward by myself. I don't have strongness. ... Like nervous. Now I don't have that. I, by myself, I go and ask. I did that every agency last time. Personally I went and talk to the boss, or reception. So, it's kind of improvement.

The participants' experiences with learning English speaks to the theory of language socialization theory which states that learning a new language is related to the learning of cultural values and norms (see Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, for an introduction to the theory and Duff, 1995, 1996, for examples of language socialization in second language learning). The above example shows how learning English for job search is not merely just learning the language. Karina also learned about the importance of self-confidence and being able to approach prospective employers on her own when seeking employment. In the previous section, Fatima spoke about learning not to bring her child with her when applying for a job. That example also shows the importance of understanding the cultural expectations concerning job search in Canada in addition to learning the language, skills, and connections needed to look for work.

Karina also described how helpful the ESL course was for the job:

In our working place we have to write reports for the other person, what happened with this client. Everything explain to the other person so other person won't have any problem to continue her work. So we write what we gave to him for eat, what had happened, how he was normal or abnormal or he is restless or something like that. Yeah, he slept or not slept, he took medicine or not. So we have to write in



order to understand. So we learned. Before that I don't very well, but I learned in this ESL.

This is also an important example of language requirements for this job. Not only is oral communication important in work as a care aide; written communication is equally important in this job.

Karen commented about the need for more speaking practice and a number of the other participants said that their English use outside of work and training was limited. Rita was the only one who said that she had English speaking friends. For most of the other participants, use of English was limited to the workplace or with former classmates. Anna talked about how difficult it was to keep up her English skills when she was not in a course or working. Alberto also talked about how his use of English is limited: "Only I have contact with English people when I go to work. Only. So I need more practice. I go to school but it's not enough. I need to have English from British Columbian, to learn the dialect from here." This confirms other authors' findings, such as Tollefson (1985) and Ramkhalwansingh (1981) regarding the importance of training programs for immigrant workers to improve their English language skills because of limited opportunities to use English at the workplace or outside the workplace. This observation was also confirmed by several participants, such as Yin, Karen, Alberto, and Fatima, who commented on the predominance of a language other than English at some workplaces.

The above examples show how improving English helped the participants to become more independent and autonomous in Canadian society. This theme has also appeared in the literature. Giles (1987) describes how immigrant women are often isolated because of lack of

official language knowledge. The examples given by the participants show how their English skills help to reduce isolation and dependence. Improving English also helped the participants seek employment on their own and helped them at the workplace.

The participants also spoke of the importance of the occupational training, especially the nine-week practicum. Karen found the skills component most helpful and emphasized the importance of the practicum and how it should be extended: "The job, the actual things is different from the things you just for the theory. ... If you take more time for the practicum, you must make yourself prepare better for the job." Karina explained that some schools did not organize the practicum for the students, but at ISA, "they choose the practicum place and train us, ... so it's more convenient at ISA." Yin spoke about the importance of learning how to deal with residents who have dementia or Alzheimer's: "It's useful because many elderly people have dementia or Alzheimer's or confused. Sometimes it's hard to deal with them. If you learn this course, the teacher of this course give you more idea how to deal, how to cope with the people. When you work, it's easy to going on."

Another area that was mentioned by a number of the participants was the importance of learning employment skills, such as resume writing and job search. This has also been discussed in the literature as an important area for training, for example, Furnborough and Munns (1984). Wilson (1998) also found that job finding skills and support in finding employment were considered very important by the participants in her study. In the section on barriers to employment, Fatima spoke of how she had brought her child with her when she went to apply for work: "So when I get the course and when we talk about how we can find a job or something like that, I hear that you don't have to take your baby with

you when you apply.” Fatima found the employment skills component especially important as she had not had much experience in job search:

Even I didn’t know how to make the resume. ... Before I come to here, I don’t know because just I apply one place, even I didn’t put application in Toronto. ... My cousin bring me there. Agency said, ‘Okay, go immediately to work [in] the place.’ When I go, the owner like me when he see my job. And as soon as I go there, they hire me. I didn’t put applicaton or nothing like that. But I learn from ISA.

Magda also spoke of the helpfulness of learning job search skills: “We were taught how to make resumes, how to go for an interview. ... It’s really a great help.”

In summary, the participants benefitted from the language and skills training program by improving their English which helped them in and outside of work, and acquiring the skills to do their job. I thought it was interesting how the participants also spoke of the importance of learning employment skills. This was a small component of the whole program, but was mentioned as being very helpful by a number of the participants. Upon reflection, this makes sense given the difficulty of finding employment in this field and in this municipality, as described in Section 5.3 on the many barriers to employment. Sections 5.8 and 5.9 will deal with more issues about the impact of participation in the program, some of which are very much related to language and skills learning. But first, I wish to discuss some issues related to the teaching of ESL and VESL.

## **5.7 Teaching and Learning ESL/VESL**

Another important topic that arose regarding the program involves the teaching of the ESL/VESL component. This program, which combined skills and language training, aimed to help the participants to improve their English as well as acquire occupational skills. In

general, the program was beneficial to the participants as it helped to improve their English skills, occupational skills, and employment skills, as discussed above. However, a number of the participants commented on how the English class could have been even more helpful to their skills training. For some participants, their needs could have been met even better if the ESL class had been more connected to the skills component. Karen mentioned that there was not enough time to learn the skills and thus, thought that it would have been more effective and efficient to integrate the two. This relates to comments made in the VESL literature about immigrants not having the luxury of time to focus just on language and their need to learn as quickly as possible what they need in order to do their jobs (Crandall, 1984).

Alberto, Karen and Rita all discussed the need for more connection between the English class with the skills class. This may seem to contradict the example given by Karina previously, who illustrated the connection of the ESL class to the skills training in terms of report writing, but it should be noted that Karina was in a different program from these three participants and thus, program delivery may have differed. Alberto suggested that a caregiver or nurse teach the language component of the course because “a regular teacher he [sic] doesn’t know what we do. She doesn’t feel it.” Alternatively, Alberto suggested that a regular teacher take the skills course or do some volunteering at a facility in order to have a better understanding of the work of a care aide. This concurs with the recommendations made by a number of authors who wrote about needs assessment in VESL. For example, West (1984) and Svendsen and Krebs (1984) emphasized the importance of the VESL instructor’s familiarity with the worksite in order to assess the requisite language needs.

Karen thought that the ESL component would be more useful if it focussed on medical terms and the language related to the occupation: "Why don't you use the ESL course to take this kind of the training? Teach this kind of vocab, or teach this kind of the new things to the students instead of teach you the grammar." Karen thought that a grammar focus was more appropriate in a regular ESL class and commented on the language needs of the learners in this program: "I know that for most of the people they take this kind of a course is a immigrant. Why don't they just have more chance to speak the English instead of the writing the grammar, learn the grammar." Rita reiterated this point: "The ESL is, it's better if it's the medical term. ... We need some more, some more that connect to this course."

Here, I can offer an ESL instructor's perspective on this issue regarding the teaching of ESL and VESL, as I have taught in such training programs. One of the strengths of the ISA training programs is their desire to meet the language and occupational training needs of clients. However, I agree with the comments made by the participants above about the need for more integration between the skills and the language component. The challenge faced by VESL instructors has been discussed in the literature review. How does a language instructor learn the unfamiliar technical terms of a particular occupation? One way is to collaborate with the vocational instructor, but collaboration can also be problematic, as discussed by Platt (1993) and Yogman and Kaylani (1996). There are many good suggestions on how to assess language needs, but the crucial factor is time and support for such activities. Janet pointed out that one of the major weaknesses of such training programs lies in the fact that the funding must be applied for per cycle. In addition, there was normally a break of several

months between cycles. From an instructor's perspective, it is difficult to teach in the program over several cycles given the long unpaid breaks between cycles. This results in a high turnover of both skills and language instructors in the training programs, which makes it difficult for instructors to collaborate and to develop a more integrated program.

In summary, the comments made by some of the participants in this study support the view in the literature about the challenges of teaching VESL. A central issue involves the difficulties of the language instructor in becoming familiar with specialized occupational language in order to teach this language to the students. In this particular program, the high turnover of both language and skills instructors result in even greater difficulties in integrating the curriculum as collaboration requires a significant investment of time. From my personal experience, a language instructor who is new to the program often has enough to do in assessing the students' language needs and developing or adapting the curriculum which is necessary in these programs as the language curriculum is often needs-based. Taking the time to develop a VESL curriculum is often not feasible, given that ESL positions in these programs are part-time only, and most instructors work in other programs at other sites. As mentioned above, I believe that the underlying basis for these problems related to program delivery and curriculum development is the lack of long term funding for the training programs. If funding were available for a longer term and on a continuous basis, this would facilitate the development of an integrated skills and language program as instructors would have more time to become familiar with the program and curriculum. In addition, longer terms of employment for instructors may also facilitate program and curriculum development.

## **5.8 The Impact of Training and Employment as a Care Aide on Family Life**

One of the research questions was on the impact of participation in a training program on the home life of individuals. This section will discuss how training and working as a care aide affects relationships with family members and home life. Some of the related issues have already been discussed in previous sections, for example the conflicts between family and childcare responsibilities with employment and particularly with on-call work. This section will discuss the impact of medical and English knowledge on family interactions and the impact of employment as a care aide on family and social life.

Anna and Karina both discussed the significance of their knowledge of health care in their ability to help or advise their family members. Anna said, "I tell my boy, always tell him to go see the doctor. ... You have to keep yourself healthier, build up your body so when you're getting old, you don't have to worry about too much disease." Karina voiced a similar perspective about her health care knowledge:

It's help for us to know the health knowledge. And we can advise our family, don't do this, it's not good for your health, like kind of smoking or eating some unwanted food. And some they stay with the sick for a long time. They don't go to hospitals. They don't go to doctors. So we can advise them: Soon you go to hospital and get it clear, or otherwise you will get worse and worse. Some of our parents or grandparents they never go to hospital. They stay with the sick, like diabetic, or like, y'know, kind of pains. They suffer with that, but they don't like to go to the doctors. They don't believe them. Yeah, so we can advise them. It's better to go to the doctor and get medication and get well. ... So it's a good knowledge for us.

Thus, this knowledge can have a positive impact on the individual's family members' physical health. This description of Karina's also revealed that she was a bridge between the home culture and the mainstream culture, for example, regarding doctors and hospitals, and treatment of illnesses.

Increased health care knowledge and ability in English also had direct effects on some of the participants' ability to care for their children in the public sphere. Sofia gave an example related to her ability to access medical services: "I am able to go with my children to the doctors, to the opthamologist, to the dentist, to the different kinds of doctors. And I understand what they saying." Karina gave an example of how she was able to help her son adjust at school: "It's helping me to talk, to communicate with the teachers and the parents. ... My second son, he doesn't talk much, he's so shy, y'know. Until six months he didn't talk to the teachers. He didn't talk to the other children. So teacher called me, and she asked me to come for one hour, to stay in class. After, then he start to talk."

Fatima gave another interesting example of how her participation in training has benefitted her son. During the New Start Program, a pre-employment program offered by ISA for immigrant women who are survivors of abuse, and for nine months afterwards, she received daycare subsidy. Her son was in daycare for about two years and there, he learned to speak English. "Now he can talk my language and English too. ... If I didn't go that course, even my baby can't talk English." In addition, Fatima has taught her son to write in English. Sofia also talked about how her knowledge of English has affected her relations with her children: "At home, I can understand what my children saying between them because they doesn't want so much to speak Polish." This is a very interesting point in light of discussions Kouritzin (1997), Wittebrood and Robertson (1991), and Wong Fillmore (1991) concerning the relationship between immigrant mothers and their children and how divisive it can be when the mother cannot speak English and the children do not want to or cannot speak the home language. The literature has also discussed the difficulties mothers face



when they become dependent on their children to translate for them, and the gap that develops between the mother and children. For these individuals, participation in this skills and language training program had a beneficial impact on their caretaking roles at home.

The above examples show the positive effects of participation in the training program. Some of these effects have also been discussed in the literature. Giles (1987) discussed how the lack of English proficiency affects a women's relationship with her children and the educational system and with the medical system. The examples given here show the positive outcome of improved English and health care knowledge on the women's ability to take care of her family. I have discussed in previous sections the difficulties of working as a care aide, but there are also good aspects. For example, being a caregiver has affected Alberto in a positive way at home. "I am feeding them, the old people. So when I go home, my children sometime they don't want to eat. So I say, if I feed the old people, how come I don't feed my children? ... Then I feed them too. ... Sometime I cook for all of them. ... I cook for all of them and then feed them." For Alberto, his caregiving role at work has carried over to the domestic sphere, with his wife and two infants.

The other area of impact is the effect of shift work on family and social life. Karen discussed the change in her social life because of shift and on-call work:

Before the job is different, is a lot of change because in the past I worked in the office, for the weekday. But now I need to work, even I need to work on the standard holiday and also, the casual, mostly they work on the weekend. ... Yeah, I work for a lot for the weekend. ... So it even did affect your family life a little bit. ... In the past, whenever at the weekend will be go out. Yeah, you would take a trip to the States or to other place, but now it's hard for you to do that.

Alberto also discussed how shift and on-call work has affected his family and social life, especially on weekends:

We are Catholic so we used to go to church on Sundays. So now it's a little bit change. We only go on Sunday when I'm not working. ... And I have to work in the weekends, so that is change my life. I may have day off in the middle of the week. But I find it not difficult because I can spend time with my family. And it's more relaxed, less traffic or wherever we go not too much people.

Thus, working as a care aide and on-call impacts family and social life in different ways.

Shift work can require some adjustment in family and social life, but it's interesting that

Alberto also mentioned a positive result of shift work, that is, how having a day off in the middle of the week can be more relaxed.

This section has focussed on the impact of language and skills training and employment as a care aide on the participants' family life. The impact of improved language skills has been discussed in section 5.6, but this section has focussed on the impact on the participants' interactions with their family. Not much in the literature has been written about the positive impact of training on family life, and what has been written looks at the topic from a negative perspective, that is, how the lack of English skills is detrimental to home life. Thus, this section offers some examples from a positive perspective, that is, how the acquisition of skills helps and improves life at home. In the literature, there has been a greater focus on the individuals' feelings about oneself, which is the topic of the next section.

## **5.9 The Impact of Training and Employment on Identity and Settlement**

The last section of the data analysis focusses on the impact of training and employment on the individuals personally and their settlement. In section 5.1, I have

already discussed some identity issues related to the desire to become a care aide and the personal satisfaction derived from being a caregiver. This section will deal with a broader range of topics related to the well-being of the individuals, including the impact of training on self-confidence, and the effect of work as a care aide on self-development and settlement.

A number of the participants discussed how taking the course and completing it successfully increased their confidence and self-esteem. This supports findings of Payne (1991) and Sensi (1992) about the increase in confidence of women who participate in training programs. Although Sofia had not found work in the field, she said that taking the course itself was very important to her:

It was the decision very important in my life, to go to school. ... I was feeling at that time I need to do something with me. I can't clean all the time, especially if I had some ability to care, from Poland and basically all my life. ... It remind me that knowledge, what I had before, from Poland, about medical care. ... I feel good about my achievement. ... My self-esteem, it was going up. So I'm happy I finished.

The need to do something meaningful, to make some kind of contribution to society, and to be "somebody" is a theme that Rockhill (1991) explored in her study of Hispanic women in Los Angeles. Taking part in and successfully completing the program was a very significant achievement for Sofia, and contributed to her positive feelings of self-worth and identity. I believe that this may also be important to the settlement process of immigrants; that is, having a meaningful occupation can give immigrants a greater sense of autonomy and confidence in their ability contribute to the wider society, which may help them to feel more a part of that society. In previous sections, I have discussed how Sofia's increased knowledge of English has affected her interactions at home and in the public sphere. She was able to interact with people in the medical system and was even able to help others who did

not have the English skills she now had. These examples show how English skills aid in immigrants' integration into Canadian society and empower them. For Sofia, just taking the course itself was worthwhile, that is, independent of whether it improved employment prospects, because it gave her a sense of capability: "If somebody wants to improve English, improve his knowledge about this field, and they need to do something, like me, just like me, why not? It's very helpful."

The ability to complete the program was an important achievement for a number of the other participants, especially those who faced some barriers. For example, both Anna and Rita had felt a bit disadvantaged because of their age and lack of post-secondary training. These barriers have been discussed by Hayes (1989), i.e., self-school incongruence and low self-confidence. For both, successful completion of the program significantly increased their confidence and self-esteem. Anna described her ability to overcome barriers: "Everyday when I come home, I study two hours. ... My husband said, 'I don't believe.' Nobody believe I can pass. And that time is hard for me, but I think after that, when I get the certificate, I'm happy because I can get it."

Rita also described a similar sense of accomplishment and increased confidence: "As I am old, I can tell you I am old. I have four children and I didn't go to college or universities, and when I took this course, I didn't think that I could do it. But during the course, I developed confidence and the teachers are very nice, instructors, ESL teacher, the project manager, they're very good, gives you more confidence in yourself." This comment also reinforces the importance of program instructors and administrators to be aware of the special needs of immigrant women who are retraining, as discussed by Payne (1991).

In the case of Karen, finding out that she was capable of doing the job was very important for her as she was making a major change in occupation by entering the health care field. "Before I get this job, even for me when I studied, when I still studying this course, I just have question: Can I adapt this kind of the job? But after I get the job, I find that I can do it. So now I'm quite happy."

Other participants also spoke of their increased confidence and self-esteem. Magda gained confidence in her professional abilities: "After the program I'm confident, confident to do the job. ... Nursing in the Philippines, nursing in Saudi Arabia, and nursing in here, have some differences, so the course really helped me because in that course, I have learned how is nursing in BC which is also different what I did as a nurse in Saudi Arabia and in the Philippines." Having confidence in her ability to work as a nurse was especially important to Magda as her profession was a major part of her identity, as discussed previously. Magda's statement also draws attention to the importance of understanding local occupational practices, even for those who are experienced in the field.

Alberto also talked about his increased self-esteem and well-being. He saw gradual improvement in his life and in his ability to take care of his family.

The change now is that I feel happy because I have a job. I don't have a full-time job officially. Almost. But I think that my mind still is functioning good. ... First of all I was in unemployment insurance ... then I went to welfare, but now I am working. Welfare is only a guarantee. In the meantime we can find something to feel the self-esteem, you know, that we have power. We can do the things we want in order to pay my rent by myself.

Having a job increased independence and autonomy, and for a number of participants, this was an important issue. Rita also spoke about having her own place and being able to

manage financially on her own: "I have my own place now. Even though I have a roommate, still consider, you know, if you have your own room and stuff like that. And financially, I can provide or you have to budget yourself, ... to pay the bills."

I think that it is important to note that increased confidence was in many cases connected to the ability to find and keep a job. Sofia was a special case in that she gained much from the course alone, but for most participants, having a job was also vital to self-esteem and confidence. Even Sofia said that it would be even better if she could find a job. The importance of employment was particularly evident in the case of Fatima, who had not been able to find work, despite having done many months of volunteer work. "My education is better, but my life is no change. Maybe when I get a job, I feel confident."

Taking the training program also facilitated settlement and integration into Canadian society for some of the participants, as mentioned above in the case of Sofia. A central theme for Yin was the importance of learning English in her settlement process: "It's getting easier to live here, and also if you improve your English. ... Most of the time, I feel confident. ... Before I was scared because I didn't speak English." Other participants also spoke about the importance of learning English and having contact with English speakers for settlement and integration into Canadian society. For Karen, entering the health care field was a way to get into the mainstream and to integrate. She spoke about how she did not want to be limited to her own ethnic community: "I stick in my- our own culture, so it's difficult for you to expose yourself. Expose yourself that means to integrate to the Canadian people. ... The place I work is with white people or also with the different kinds of people, so I got many change to speak the English. So I think it's better."

A recurring theme was the importance of speaking English at the workplace as a way to integrate into Canadian society. As discussed previously, the workplace is the main place that immigrants have contact with English speakers and have the opportunity to speak English. Karen had turned down a full-time position at a Chinese care home and opted for casual work at two "Western" facilities because of the importance integration. Yin was upset with her coworkers because they made little effort to speak English as most of them had a common first language. Anna also spoke of the importance of speaking English at work: "I think I'm lucky because I work with Canadian people. I speak English. I have to."

In section 5.1, I discussed the personal satisfaction derived from being a care aide. A number of the participants described how rewarding it was to help and care for others. Anna mentioned a number of times the rewards of working as a care aide: "When I feel somebody when they holding me, they thank me, oh, I think I am useful. ... I'm really glad."

Related to this theme was the personal growth that resulted from working as a care aide. Anna described her increased understanding and compassion poignantly:

Before you never know how much kind, those kind of sickness in the old people. You know they are old and they mumble all the time. When you know them, it's okay, but if you don't know them, oh my god, too much noisy, right? And it's, oh my god, how come they bother me all the time, right? But now you know it's because they are lonely. And the sickness. They need you, even you keep her company. You don't have to do anything. You just sit down to talk to them, holding their hands, they feel great. And I feel that way when I was lonely sometime. When I'm sick, I want somebody to keep me company. And I found out like, nowadays, it's like, you have to think about that's your future. Like before, you never think about that. I'm still young. I don't have to think about that. So nowadays, when I see any kind of people, I will love them."

In summary, taking the language and skills training program and working as a care aide had a significant impact on the individuals on a personal level. Completing the training successfully and the increased autonomy that came with becoming more proficient in English increased the participants' self-esteem and confidence. Equally important was the ability to find employment and be able to provide for oneself and one's family. Participation in the training program and finding employment also facilitated the settlement and integration process for some individuals. Authors such as Giles (1987) and Tollefson (1985) have both discussed the importance of acquiring official language skills for settlement, and the present study provides support for this observation. Lastly, working as a care aide also gave participants personal satisfaction and an important sense of their contribution to society. Table 5.5 summarizes the main findings regarding the beneficial impact that the training program and employment as a care aide had on the participants.

**Table 5.5. Benefits from Training Program and Employment as a Care Aide**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Improvement in English skills: increased confidence, autonomy, and independence</b> | Anna, Fatima, Karina, Sofia, Rita, Yin           |
| <b>2. Acquired occupational skills</b>  | Karen, Magda, Yin                                |
| <b>3. Acquired employment skills</b>  | Fatima, Karina, Magda                            |
| <b>4. Increased knowledge of health care: positive effect on family life</b>              | Anna, Alberto, Karina, Sofia                     |
| <b>5. Facilitate settlement/integration into Canadian society</b>                         | Alberto, Karen, Karina, Sofia, Yin               |
| <b>6. Increased self-esteem</b>   | Alberto, Anna, Karen, Karina, Magda, Rita, Sofia |



## **5.10 Summary**

This chapter has reported on the main findings from this qualitative study. The findings can be grouped into three broad areas: employment issues, training program issues, and personal issues. Completing the program and working as care aides had a significant positive impact on the individuals' English language ability, which increased their independence and confidence and facilitated settlement in Canada. However, finding employment was problematic for many of the participants, who identified a number of barriers to employment as a health care aide. Some of the themes which arose concur with previous studies on immigrant women and training, while other themes that emerged have not been discussed in the literature in depth and, thus, need to be further explored. The next chapter will deal with implications of the findings for further research and program delivery.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion and Implications**

#### **6.1 Recurring Themes**

In this multiple-case qualitative study, a number of themes which have been discussed in previous research regarding immigrant women and employment and training emerged. Barriers to access to training and barriers to employment were central themes. While the literature has focussed on barriers to access, in the present study, barriers to employment were of greater importance as all of the participants had been fortunate in overcoming barriers to access and all had successfully completed the program. Nevertheless, a number of them reported on their difficulties finding a program which was accessible to them. Among the dominant barriers were high costs, long waiting lists, and the need for a certain level of proficiency. As the training programs at ISA were government funded, this reduced the barrier of cost. In addition, depending on the funding criteria, some financial support was offered, for example, transportation and training allowance. ISA also tried to facilitate participation by offering combined skills and language training programs; thus, the language requirements for their programs were not as high as college programs. As ISA offered the RCA program only once a year, some participants did have a long wait, whereas others seem to have applied at the right time and did not have to wait for a long time for the program to begin. In addition to these main barriers to access, some of the participants also spoke about internal barriers to successful completion of the program, such as self-school incongruence and low self-confidence, as discussed by Hayes (1989). Several of the

participants attributed their success in the program to the support of the instructors and project manager.

Another major theme was barriers to employment as a care aide. In the literature, there has been a focus on barriers to accessing language and skills training programs. There appears to be an assumption that training programs will lead to better employment opportunities, among other benefits. Although taking the program did facilitate finding employment in the health care field, participants in this study spoke at length about the barriers to finding *satisfactory* employment as a care aide. Only one of the participants had a permanent position. Most of the participants were still working on-call one year after finishing the program; some were satisfied with the number of hours they were working, while others were hoping to get more work. Three of the participants had not yet been successful in finding employment as a care aide. Some of the barriers to employment were similar to the barriers to access reported in the literature, for example, childcare and other domestic responsibilities and transportation. Other barriers are specific to finding employment, for example, lack of local experience and need for contacts. Others may be industry specific, for example, the need to work on-call in order to build hours and develop seniority. Given the difficulty of finding work, a number of the participants spoke of the helpfulness of employment training, for example, learning job search skills.

Other themes that arose in this study which support previous findings include the positive impact of participation in a training program on occupational and language skills. For most of the participants, getting training and a certificate was very important to enter the health professions. Both participants who had overseas qualifications and participants

who were pursuing a new occupation spoke of the importance of certification that was recognized in BC. The skills training also gave the participants confidence in their ability to do the job in the Canadian context. Also important, as discussed by Eastmond (1993), is the development of an occupational identity. Another important topic in this study was the impact of improved English skills on the participants' independence, self-confidence, and integration into the dominant society. As reported in the literature, improvement in English helped the participants in both the public and private spheres. In the public sphere, the participants were able to look for employment on their own and deal with the medical and educational system. This newfound ability enabled the participants to take care of family members better. Improvement of English also affected the private sphere, for example, by increasing the individuals' self-confidence and autonomy.

Another important topic in this study that has been discussed in previous studies concerns issues for English-for-the-workplace. There are two main themes: the challenge of teaching VESL, and language issues at the workplace. In terms of the teaching and learning of English, an issue that arose was the need for more integration between the ESL and the skills component of the training program. The participants raised issues that have been discussed in the VESL literature concerning needs assessment and program delivery. The challenge of teaching VESL and integrating language and skills emerged as an important topic. Regarding language issues at the workplace, the present study supports the findings of Goldstein (1994) and Harper et al. (1996) about the need to question the assumption that learning English automatically facilitates employment advancement. A number of the participants here spoke of the importance of languages other than English at the workplace.

## **6.2 Emerging Themes**

In the present study, a number of themes emerged that have not been discussed much in the literature. These themes include the importance of developing an occupational identity and the impact of a particular occupation on self, family and settlement. What was particularly striking for me was the strong desire of the participants to become care aides. Each of the participants had personal reasons for wanting to train and be employed as a care aide. Some reasons included personal fulfilment in helping and caring for others, the importance of occupational identity, and the importance of integrating into Canadian society.

Another theme that emerged was the impact of work as a care aide on the individuals' interactions with family members. The present study explored positive and negative impacts. Positive influences include the ability to care for family members better because of medical knowledge; negative impacts relate to the need to do on-call and shift work and how such a work schedule can disrupt family and social life. As I mentioned in Chapter 5, it would be interesting to find out and compare the impact of other occupations on the self and family.

## **6.3 Implications for Further Research and Training Program Delivery**

Because of the exploratory nature of this study, it has raised issues in a number of different areas. One major area for further research is exploration into employment barriers for those who have successfully completed training and how such barriers can be reduced. Related to this topic is the teaching and learning of employment skills, which appeared to be an important aid to the participants in this study. More research is needed to examine how

programs can better prepare their clients to find employment and to determine what kinds of post-training support would be beneficial. Future studies could focus on this aspect of training, that is, employment finding skills. Both qualitative and quantitative research, i.e., in-depth interviews and questionnaires/surveys, could be used to increase our understanding of what types of job search skills are most useful to immigrants and to examine how those who have been successful in finding work achieved their success.

In terms of program delivery, further research into the integration of the occupational language and skills components of the program is needed. The central issue is how best to help immigrants meet their vocational language needs. Situational studies in care facilities could give valuable insight into the language needs of care aides. An ethnographic approach, as used by previous researchers in second language studies (Duff, 1995; Holliday, 1995; and Roberts et al., 1992) would give a more holistic understanding of the relationship between language use, social interactions, and the culture of a care facility. It would also be helpful to interview residents and various staff members in order to get multiple perspectives on the language needs of care aides.

Another area that is of importance for further research is the impact of training and employment on self, family, and settlement. This study has merely touched on some issues and it has focussed on only one occupational and language training program. Much more can be explored in terms of the impact of other training programs and employment in other occupations on the public and personal lives of immigrants and their settlement process. This study was exploratory and had its limitations. For example, only a small number of participants were involved, and only one interview was conducted with each participant. It

would have been useful to be able to interview the participants more than once in order to better understand their experiences and perspectives. For example, a second interview with the participants after the interview data had been transcribed and summarized would have been very useful to check my understanding and interpretation of their views, and to follow up on some of the major themes that emerged. Also, a longitudinal study, for example, interviewing participants several times over the course of one year or longer, given the delays participants experience in getting full-time employment, would also provide a greater depth of understanding. It would also be very interesting and useful to be able to interview other family members in order to understand how the participation in training of one member affects the others, from their perspectives.

An important related topic that has only been briefly touched upon in the present study and can be further explored is the topic of what facilitates immigrants' settlement process. This study has confirmed the importance of English language skills in the settlement process as it enabled immigrants to access services, find meaningful employment, and participate in Canadian society. What else facilitates or constrains immigrants' settlement? This question can also be explored through in-depth interviews. This study has focussed on immigrant women; we also need to hear about the experiences of immigrant men.

In summary, further research into all of these areas can help to provide a more complete understanding of the impact of skills and language training programs on immigrants' lives. This study is but a small step towards a greater understanding of the experiences of immigrants.

#### **6.4 Another Personal Journey**

I began this thesis with a description of my personal journey which led me to this study of training program. Participation in this study, and the larger study of which this is a part, has also been a very special personal journey. Although I have worked with immigrants in the adult ESL context over the past few years and, thus, thought I had an understanding of my students, this experience has been a humbling one, and showed me how much there is to learn. While I was interviewing the participants, I could not help but feel admiration for the courage and determination of these individuals, who overcame external and internal barriers to successfully complete a demanding training program. I felt very privileged and grateful to have the opportunity to connect with these individuals, and to learn from them. Immigrants have often been perceived as a disadvantaged group in society, as the literature review has shown, and it is true that they must face and overcome many more barriers than other groups in Canada. However, participation in this study has revealed to me the inner strengths of these individuals, and I am left with the feeling of how much they can contribute to Canadian society and can inspire others by their courage, determination, and compassion.



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## Appendix 1: Summary of Research Findings by Topic

### Appendix 1.1: Immigrant Women and Employment

| Author                                | Country | Focus  | Methods   | Findings  | Recommendations/<br>Implications  |
|---------------------------------------|---------|--|---|---|---|
| 1. Beach, C. M. & Worswick, C. (1993) | Canada  | Patterns of earnings of immigrant women                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative</li> <li>Regression analysis of 1973 Job Mobility Survey to examine earning differentials of immigrant women</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greatest earning short-fall for highly educated immigrant women compared to native-born peers</li> <li>Concentration of immigrant women in low-status occupations</li> <li>Theory: immigrant wives initially subsidize their husbands investment in job skills training</li> <li>Earning differential compared to native-born peers more permanent for immigrant women than men</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for recognition of foreign credentials</li> <li>Need for more accessible social services to support immigrant women in juggling the dual roles of mother and breadwinner</li> <li>Need for language training programs to address immigrant women's labour market endeavours</li> </ul>      |
| 2. Boyd, M. (1992)                    | Canada  | Language policy and the socio-economic status of immigrant women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative</li> <li>Examination of Canadian census data (Public Use Sample Tapes)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foreign-born women who lack English or French proficiency are the most socio-economically disadvantaged group, e.g., low level of education, high unemployment, low wages</li> <li>7/10 foreign-born women without knowledge of English or French are employed in service or processing and fabrication occupations</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language training services required to improve the status of immigrant women</li> <li>Need to make programs accessible, e.g., eligibility criteria, cultural sensitivity, structure &amp; curriculum of programs</li> <li>Also need for educational and job skills upgrading programs</li> </ul> |
| 3. Cohen, R. (1987)                   | Canada  | Work conditions of immigrant women live-in domestics             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>Data drawn from a larger study based on a set of unstructured interviews with 50 non-white immigrant women who have worked in private households for more than 4 years</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Racial division of labour</li> <li>Almost half of the women reported some sort of racial discrimination</li> <li>15% reported encountering sexual harassment</li> <li>Problem of lack of privacy and being treated as invisible by employers</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raises awareness of the difficult working conditions of immigrant women</li> </ul>   |

|                                |        |  |   |  |   |
|--------------------------------|--------|--|---|--|---|
| 4. Neal, R. & Neale, V. (1987) | Canada | Portuguese-Canadian women in the office cleaning industry in Toronto | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>Interview, 1 informant</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concentration of Portuguese-Canadian women in the office cleaning industry due to the use of familial and ethnic connections for job contacts</li> <li>Private contracting results in non-unionized, low-paying jobs in cleaning</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to be aware of how capitalist labour market and immigration practices reinforces patriarchal norms and relations</li> </ul>   |
| 5. Ng, R. & Estable, A. (1987) | Canada | Labour force patterns of immigrant women                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature review and use of census data</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation rate of immigrant women higher than for Canadian-born women</li> <li>Concentration of non-white immigrant women in the lowest paid, most insecure and unorganized sectors of the labour force</li> <li>"double day" of women: household responsibilities in addition to work in labour force</li> <li>Downward mobility of immigrant women after immigration</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further research needed into the impact of labour force participation on household characteristics, e.g., power relations within the household and childrearing pattern, and conversely, the effect of child minding on labour force participation</li> <li>Need for qualitative data to identify factors of critical significance to immigrant women</li> </ul> |

**Appendix 1.2: Vocational and Language Training Programs: Access and Evaluation**

| <b>Author</b>                    | <b>Country</b> | <b>Focus</b>   | <b>Methods</b>  | <b>Findings</b>  | <b>Recommendations/<br/>Implications</b>  |
|----------------------------------|----------------|--|---|--|---|
| 1. Burnaby, B. (1992)            | Canada         | Description of official language training and discussion of language training issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey of adult ESL training programs in different provinces</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problems of coordination between federal, provincial and local governments, and various delivery agencies</li> <li>Wide range of training institutes involved in delivering programs which meet diverse needs</li> <li>Important role of official language training in immigrants' settlement process</li> <li>Barriers to access to programs because of admission requirements, fees, eligibility, scheduling, transportation, childcare, low confidence, and low literacy</li> <li>Need for specialized language training for accreditation and job mobility</li> <li>Need to coordinate programs with other settlement agencies</li> <li>Need for teacher development and recognition</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for more qualitative information from the perspective of immigrants themselves about their experiences in dealing with official languages</li> <li>More study needed in the area of provision of ESL services</li> <li>Also need to study the perceived role of official language in integration of adult immigrants from those who are not currently vocal in their views, e.g., employers, media, service agencies, and general public</li> </ul> |
| 2. Cumming, A. & Gill, J. (1992) | Canada         | Factors permitting Indo-Canadian women to pursue ESL literacy instruction            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>Action research case study of one six-month long ESL literacy demonstration project</li> <li>Interviews with 13 women students</li> <li>Participant observation by one</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The women's decision to participate related to a number of factors including length of residence in Canada, economic stability of family, husband's support and assistance, desire for literacy in order to deal with public institutions, e.g., children's school</li> <li>Personal aspirations for improving English: gain greater independence, obtain meaningful employment,</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender is a fundamental consideration to be accounted for in conceptualizing adults' motivation or potential to learn a language</li> <li>Potential of ESL literacy education to improve the personal circumstances of immigrant women depends on ability of programs to address the needs, interests,</li> </ul>  |



|                       |                    |  |  |   |   |  |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--|--|---|---|--|
|                       |                    |  |  | of the researchers  | further their education through job-training programs, desire for contact with majority society and reduce isolation  | and social circumstances of specific groups of immigrant women   |
| 3. De Troy, C. (1987) | European Community | Specific training needs of immigrant women                       |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Descriptive general overview of government training programs in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, UK</li> <li>12 qualitative case studies of randomly selected projects based on open-ended discussions with one or more persons responsible for the training</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact of program: self-confidence increased and led to greater personal independence</li> <li>Immigrant women, whether first, second, or subsequent generation, do not have the same opportunities to follow a course of vocational training as indigenous citizens do</li> <li>Little concern is given to the provision of vocational training to immigrant women</li> <li>There is a demand for training enables participants to obtain meaningful qualifications</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School and vocational counselling to girls of foreign origin to broaden career choices</li> <li>Need for complete and up-to-date information relating to the participation of immigrant women in training programs</li> <li>Clear and accessible information needs to be made available to immigrant women</li> <li>Need for proper evaluation of existing programs</li> </ul>  |
| 4. Doherty, N. (1992) | Canada             | Systemic sexism in the National Language Training Program (NLTP) |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>In-depth interviews with 60 immigrant women and 40 community workers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External barriers to access: inadequate training information, program co-ordination and referral prevent immigrants from getting into programs</li> <li>Internal barriers to access: long waiting lists, few training seats, inadequacy and unfeasibility of free programs due to restrictive eligibility requirements</li> <li>Systemic secondary (indirect) sexism with entrance criteria of NLTP indirectly discriminate against women, e.g., Ineligibility of sponsored family class, persons not "destined for employment"</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for an organized system to provide information and referral of immigrants to appropriate programs</li> <li>Need for awareness of specific inequities in the language training programs available to immigrant women</li> <li>Eliminating sexist entrance criteria and increasing number of training seats and subsidies will facilitate immigrant women's access to language training which is needed to help immigrant women bridge the wage gap</li> </ul> |

|                         |        |   |  |  |   |   |
|-------------------------|--------|---|--|--|---|---|
| 5. Hayes, E. (1989)     | U.S.   | Hispanic adults' barriers to access to participation in ESL programs  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative</li> <li>Survey of 200 Hispanic ESL students through a 32-item questionnaire on deterrents to participation</li> <li>Factor analysis to determine underlying source variables for groups of deterrents</li> <li>Cluster analysis identified five clusters related to sociodemographic characteristics</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four deterrent factors identified:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self/school incongruence, which refers to a perceived discrepancy between individual needs, preferences, and self-concept as compared with the educational environment</li> <li>2. Low self-confidence</li> <li>3. Lack of access to classes related to location of the program</li> <li>4. Situational constraints, e.g., lack of time or money needed to attend classes</li> </ol> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of categories of barriers and cluster analysis facilitate further understanding of differences among groups of individuals and their perceptions of barriers to participation</li> <li>Profile of potential target groups provided by the typology is valuable for recruiting and serving greater numbers of hispanic adults in ESL programs</li> <li>Further research needed to establish the stability of both the factor structure and the typology for this population</li> <li>Need to examine characteristics of Hispanic adult learners as a distinct group</li> </ul> | that separates them from the rest of Canadian society |
| 6. Kouritzin, S. (1997) | Canada | Examines how ambivalence and contradiction complicates immigrant women's access to English language classes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>Focuses on five individual stories drawn from life history interviews with 19 non-English-speaking immigrant mothers of schoolchildren</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time conflicts, documented elsewhere, had largely been resolved in these women's lives and was not the main barrier</li> <li>Ambivalence about learning English related to not having made the choice to emigrate and the desire to maintain the mother culture for the children</li> <li>Contradiction related to differences between home and Canadian cultural attitudes and the fact that one can't teach the first culture through a second language</li> </ul>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the classroom, instructors need to understand the ambivalence in their students to learning English</li> <li>Need to open up discussion about some of the difficulties and contradictions they may be facing</li> <li>Need to encourage women to create and maintain support systems with other women</li> <li>Need to look at diversifying instructional models from teaching to helping</li> <li>Need to reevaluate our notions of access</li> </ul>  |   |

|                                    |                    |  |   |   |  |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--|---|---|--|
| 7. Payne, J. (1991)                | UK                 | Explores women's motivation to seek training, and the impact of training on employment, earnings, and personal factors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative and qualitative evaluation study of government sponsored training scheme</li> <li>Based on statistical data using a nationally representative sample of 2710 trainees from the 1986 training program and interviews with a sample of 785 trainees, 377 women and 408 men</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women still have much fewer opportunities than men to access training programs</li> <li>Importance of support for women to gain confidence to go back to work</li> <li>High levels of satisfaction expressed by women about their training</li> <li>Earnings of women increased after training</li> <li>Job placement rates good</li> <li>Net movement out of semi-skilled and unskilled jobs in manufacturing into better paying jobs which demanded more skill, but still in traditional female careers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women's skills cannot be properly developed without planned and centrally funded efforts</li> <li>Adult training programs can play a part in promoting equal opportunities in employment</li> <li>Future programs: need to integrate practical work experience with classroom learning, get women into a wider range of fields, provide guidance before and after a course</li> </ul> |
| 8. Rockhill, K. & Tomic, P. (1994) | Canada             | Examines connection between racism, hetero/sexism, and access to ESL   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative interviews with 11 workers, who were also former immigrants or refugees, at community centres which serve the Latin American immigrant/refugee women, and two women who were recent refugees</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immigrant women's income often too vital to the family for them to be able to afford to go to school full-time</li> <li>Many immigrant women get basic survival English skills which does not provide language skills needed for economic advancement</li> <li>Difficulties of part-time study while working full-time</li> <li>Immigrant women a source of cheap labour</li> <li>Need for Canadian work experience also a barrier for employment advancement</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immigrant women face great obstacles that prevents them from seriously pursuing the study of ESL</li> </ul>   |
| 9. Sensi, D. (1992)                | European Community | Evaluation of in-company vocational training for women   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative and qualitative data collected from 24 firms in various EC countries</li> <li>Case study approach</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In general, vocational training is accompanied by mobility towards more highly skilled jobs and increase in salaries</li> <li>Training leading to specialized qualifications offered openings to</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations made for the firms, women, trade unions, and institutions to promote training for women in companies, e.g., developing a greater</li> </ul>   |

|                       |        |   |  |  |  |
|-----------------------|--------|---|--|--|--|
|                       |        |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data collected through various instruments: questionnaires, interviews, documents</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>women who had reached occupational dead end</li> <li>Considerable impact of training in terms of self-confidence, autonomy and independence</li> <li>Parental responsibilities limited participation of women with dependent children</li> </ul>  | <p>awareness of human resources, organization and distribution of information regarding equal opportunity measures inside and outside of firms</p>   |
| 10. Tisza, M. (1997)  | Canada | Examines enabling aspects of an ESL class at one adult education centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>Case study approach</li> <li>Interviews with 3 teachers, 9 students, 2 outreach workers, one teaching assistant, and 3 administrators</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling elements of this particular program included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of childcare on-site</li> <li>Bilingual outreach workers who are important links to the cultural community and resource persons</li> <li>Convenient class locations and times and low-cost tuition</li> <li>Curriculum relevance</li> <li>A classroom environment which addresses their social and emotional needs</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of considering gender as a factor when designing ESL programs</li> <li>Efficacy of a needs-based supportive model of ESL classes for immigrant women</li> <li>Studying in a supportive environment can empower women to make changes in their lives</li> </ul> |
| 11. Wilson, S. (1998) | Canada | Evaluation of a long-term care aide/ ESL program                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative and qualitative</li> <li>Questionnaires from 18 former students and follow-up interviews with 6 of these students</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women must overcome barriers to successfully complete training and find employment</li> <li>Importance of job search skills</li> <li>Difficulties regarding working as a care aide</li> <li>Need for language of caring</li> <li>Prospective students need to be aware of the realities of working as a care aide</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to be aware of the challenges faced by immigrant women in their settlement process</li> <li>Need for more support for students after completing training</li> <li>Need to be aware of the language and vocational needs specific to this occupation</li> </ul>       |

Appendix 1.3: VESL and English for the Workplace

| Author  | Country | Focus  | Methods   | Findings   | Recommendations/<br>Implications  |
|---|---------|--|---|--|---|
| 1. Goldstein, T.<br>(1994)                      | Canada  | Examines language choice and English language training in a multilingual workplace   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>Draws from author's 1991 study on bilingual life and language choice in a manufacturing factory where the majority of the workers were first generation Portuguese women</li> <li>Interviews with 27 workers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of Portuguese functions as a symbol of solidarity and group membership on the production floor</li> <li>Importance of making friends on the line to access assistance if needed</li> <li>Using English at work is associated with social and economic risks</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to re-examine assumptions that the use of official languages automatically leads to economic and social gain</li> <li>Suggests a curriculum that may be more useful for workers who use a language other than English at work, e.g., language for dealing with bureaucracy</li> </ul>   |
| 2. Furnborough, P. & Munns, R. (1984)           | UK      | Describes a retraining program developed by the Lancashire Industrial Language Training Unit to meet the specific needs of adult South Asian textile workers           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not specified</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Course syllabus consisted of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generic skills: planning, measuring, production processes, assessment</li> <li>Learning and communication strategies, linguistic skills, cross-cultural awareness</li> </ol> </li> <li>Learning styles vary considerably in different cultures</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trade instructors need to understand the relationship between language and trade skills training and to recognize that crosscultural factors can affect learning</li> <li>Language instructors should participate in skills training in order to assess language needs</li> </ul>  |
| 3. Harper, H., Peirce, B., & Burnaby, B. (1996) | Canada  | Examines the possible connection between workers' linguistic behaviour and the pedagogical practices in the English for the workplace classes at 3 Levi Strauss plants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>Draws on the authors' study of the EWP program at the garment factories (see below Peirce et al)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in EWP classes did not increase involvement of workers in the company</li> <li>Student-centred pedagogy in the EWP class, although well-intentioned, promoted private and personal forms of language practices over public practices</li> <li>Learning English associated with desire to be Canadian and to be autonomous</li> <li>Workers expressed wish to</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The structure and content of EWP programs may serve to maintain or alter the present status and conditions of women participants</li> <li>From a critical perspective, EWP programs can promote greater equity at the workplace by providing an English that would allow women workers to promote their interests in the public</li> </ul> |

|                         |                        |  |   | improve their communication with their supervisors, signifying the importance of good worker-supervisor relationships   | domain   |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| 4. Holliday, A. (1995)  | Middle Eastern country | Explores the role of ethnography in assessing language needs for a company sponsored English program   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ethnography</li><li>Interviews with management, a sample of supervisors, and a sample of national employees</li><li>Participant observation</li><li>Document analysis</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lack of English amongst national staff resulted in inefficiencies throughout the organization</li><li>Communication breakdowns strain working relations between expatriate and national staff</li><li>Lack of English could also impede professional development of national staff</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Need to introduce extensive training in technical and non-technical English language communication skills</li><li>Training should be provided during office hours and attendance should be compulsory</li><li>Employ expatriates to develop the training courses and train local instructors to continue this work</li></ul> |
| 5. Peirce et al. (1993) | Canada                 | Investigates factors related to the participation of workers in an EWP program and the impact of the program on workers, supervisors, and management personnel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Qualitative</li><li>Interviews, participant observation, and document analysis</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Deterrents to participation:</li><li>Lack of promotion of program</li><li>Resistance of supervisors</li><li>Demands of production; fear of loss of productivity</li><li>Anxiety over loss of income</li><li>Resentment of peers</li><li>Limitations of program</li><li>Need for affiliation</li><li>Domestic pressure</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Management and union representatives need to be unequivocal about their support for the program</li><li>Program should be actively promoted</li><li>Elimination of piecework system may reduce production anxiety</li><li>Address problems of ESL workers who are not literate in their mother tongue</li></ul>              |
| 6. Platt, E. (1993)     | U.S.                   | Examines collaboration between vocational and VESL teachers  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Qualitative</li><li>Data collected from 6 highly recommended vocational programs in the U.S.</li><li>Interviews with teachers, counsellors, and administrators</li><li>Observations of vocational classroom instruction</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Pervasive barriers to productive working relationships related to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Differences in philosophical and professional orientation</li><li>Attitudes toward each other and toward the students</li><li>Power and authority issues</li><li>Integration of conceptual and pedagogical knowledge between ESL and vocational staff</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>VESL teachers can assist in the inservice and ongoing staff development of vocational and other content colleagues</li><li>VESL teachers need for administrative support and cooperation of their peers</li></ul>  |

|                                       |      |   |  |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|------|---|--|---|---|
| 7. Stapp, Y. (1998)                   | U.S. | Describes a model for VESL instructor and employer collaboration in a technical workplace English program                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 techniques described; most used the employer's expertise and did not demand too much of his time</li> <li>E.g., tape recorded question-answer communications between the employer and the students; tape transcribed and used in teaching language and content</li> <li>Other techniques include employer as lecturer, videotapes, shop-floor tour</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employer's participation motivated employees by his demonstration of commitment and interest in their learning</li> <li>Employer's collaboration also made it possible to guarantee the accuracy and relevance of the technical information presented in the materials</li> </ul>  |
| 8. Svendsen, C. & Krebs, K. (1984)    | U.S. | Identifying English language needs for work in 2 health care occupations, central supply technician, and hospital transporter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>Describes how the teachers in one VESL program identify and prioritize language to teach in job-specific ESL classes that accompany vocational skill training</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of language at the job site by tape recording typical dialogues, interviewing people working at all levels on site, and observing</li> <li>Results of language identification process: language for immediate job duties, language for greater flexibility and increased responsibility, and social language</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of seeking clarification, reporting problems, understanding imperatives and numbers, and being able to socialize is fundamental to most entry level jobs</li> <li>Also crucial is for the student to understand the "why" behind the skills and language he is learning</li> </ul>  |
| 9. Yogman, J. & Kaylani, C. T. (1996) | U.S. | ESP program design for mixed level students   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>Based on the authors' experiences in developing and refining a four-week Business English program</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barriers to program development include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of time to do a comprehensive needs analysis</li> <li>Flawed communication between content-area and language faculty during planning and implementation phases</li> <li>Varying agendas in a mixed group of interested parties, e.g., students, administrators</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where content-program support needs are not great or are ill-defined, a curriculum centred around well-chosen miniprojects and employing a team approach have been used successfully</li> <li>Where joint planning occurs, much of the needs analysis focuses on the content-area curriculum and the cognitive and language skills necessary for the students to deal with it</li> </ul> |

**Appendix 1.4: Immigrant Settlement and Identity Issues**

| <b>Author</b>          | <b>Country</b> | <b>Focus</b>  | <b>Methods</b>   | <b>Findings</b>   | <b>Recommendations/<br/>Implications</b>  |
|------------------------|----------------|---|--|---|---|
| 1. Peirce, B. (1995a)  | Canada         | Social identity, investment, and language learning          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>Diary study, interviews with 5 immigrant women</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposes notion of investment to capture the complex relationship of language learners to learning the target language</li> <li>Uses poststructural perspective of social identity as multiple, a site of struggle, and changing over time</li> <li>relates social identity to language learning and to the women's motivation to learn English and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom implications: second language teachers need to help language learners claim the right to speak outside the classroom</li> <li>classroom-based social research : collaborative research carried out by language learners in their local community in order to enhance language learning and social interaction</li> </ul> |
| 2. Rockhill, K. (1991) | U.S.           | Examines two sides of literacy for women: threat and desire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative</li> <li>Life-history interviews with 35 Hispanic women, more than half of whom were recent immigrants</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literacy is associated with the symbolic power of education, which may be perceived as threat to traditional Hispanic family relations by women's husbands</li> <li>Literacy also symbolizes the hope for a better life, a way out of the working class into a world of middle class culture and lifestyle, and thus, is perceived as desire</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connection between gender and literacy practices</li> <li>Literacy has "charged dynamic" for women and is not neutral</li> </ul>   |



## Appendix 2: Recruitment Letter

[original on ISA letterhead]

January 28, 1998

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to let you know that a woman named **PING WONG** will be calling you in the next couple of weeks. She is part of a team of researcher from the University of British Columbia - UBC. They are doing a research study with this year's Resident Care/Home Support Attendant Program here at Immigrant Settlement Agency. They have been interviewing students and staff, including myself. They are interested in the experiences of students who are immigrants, and who take health care training in Canada.

The research team would like to ask you to take part in their study because you are a graduate of the program. They would like to interview you about your experiences before your training program, during your program, and after you graduated. The interview with you would be at a time and place that is convenient for you. It would take one to two hours. **Ping Wong** will be calling you to ask if you would be willing to be interviewed. You are not required to do this. If you do volunteer to be interviewed, you can always change your mind at any time.

Also, your name will not be used in reports, or any information you feel is too private.

If you need any other information, please call me at --- ----. You can also call the research team leader, **Dr. Patricia Duff**, at UBC --- ----. She would be happy to answer any questions about the study.

I hope all is well with you and your family, and that you have a great New Year!

Kind Regards,

Janet  
Project Manager  
Resident Care/Home Support Program

## **Appendix 3:**

### **Interview Schedule for graduates of the ISA Resident Care/Home Support Attendant Training Program**

#### **Background Information**

1. Could you tell me a bit about yourself? For example, where you are from, what you did (work? school? domestic responsibilities?) before you came to Canada.
2. How long have you been in Canada?
3. What did you do before you took the course at ISA? Why did you decide to take this particular course?
4. What have you been doing since you finished the program?

#### **Impact of Program on Life and Self**

1. Is your life different now than your life before you took the course?
  - Could you tell me about some changes in your life when you compare the time before taking the course and after taking it? (outside the home, at home)
2. Did the program change your English skills?
  - Has that changed your interactions (contact) with English-speaking Canadians?
  - Do you have more contact? Do you do things or go places that you didn't do (or go) before?
3. Has it changed the things you do or how you do things at home?
4. Has the program changed your confidence or independence?
5. What about opportunities you have now compared to before the program?
6. Are the changes in your life what you had expected before you joined the program?

... next page

## **Appendix 3 continued**

### **Work as a Care Aide**

1. What kind of things do (or did) you do in your work?
2. What do you find the most rewarding? What do you like best about your work?
3. What do you find the most challenging? What do you like least?
4. Has doing this kind of job affected your life at home? outside the home?
  - Does it affect what you do or how you do things?

### **Follow up questions**

1. What did you find most helpful about the program?
2. How could the program have helped you better?
3. Is there any advice you would give to someone who is thinking about joining a program like the one you took?
4. What are your plans for the future? What would you like to be doing in five years?
5. Are you planning to take any more courses?
6. Did you take any other courses after you finished the ISA program?
7. Is there anything else you would like to talk about or do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

## **Appendix 4: Informed Consent**

(original on UBC, Department of Language Education letterhead)

### **INFORMED CONSENT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Title of Study:** "Socializing Language and Sociocultural Identity from the Margins: A Study of Immigrant Women Learning English as a Second Language for the Health Professions"

#### **Principal Researcher**

Dr. Patsy A. Duff, Department of Language Education  
University of British Columbia

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#### **Co-investigators**

Dr. Margaret Early, Dept. of Language Education, UBC, Phone: --- ---- Fax: --- ----  
Ping Wong, UBC and ISA. Contact through ISA at --- ----.

#### **Purpose**

The issues facing immigrants who seek to improve their employment and language skills are very complex, and this is reflected in the wide range of programs that are developed to serve them. We are particularly interested in programs developed for women who speak English as a second language and who wish to work in health/caring professions, such as programs for institutional long-term care aides. We are interested in the programs and also in the people involved. Specifically, we would like to know more about the experiences of students (immigrant women, in particular) enrolled in the programs: why they are there, what their previous work and life experiences have been, why they have chosen this profession, and how they change as a result of their ongoing experiences learning ESL, learning about healthcare, and undergoing practical training in healthcare.

#### **Procedures**

We would like to interview former participants in the program on one occasion, and possibly follow-up on the interview if necessary. The individual interviews will be scheduled at mutually convenient times and locations.

#### **Participation or Non-participation**

Although we would like to speak with as many people involved in the ESL/healthcare program(s) as possible, we respect your right NOT to participate in this research project. Participants are free to withdraw from the research project at any time without any problem. Participation in this project is completely separate from job or course requirements and assessment.

Consent Form, page 1 of 4

## **Appendix 4: Informed Consent**

(original on UBC, Department of Language Education letterhead)

### **Confidentiality**

The names of any people or research sites involved in this project will be kept confidential. That means the identities will be disguised and kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms in all reports. If audiotapes of the interviews are made, they will be used for research and educational purposes only. All confidential information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal Investigator's office at UBC.

### **Payment/Benefit to Participants**

Unfortunately, we are unable to pay you for participation in this research project. However, participation could be beneficial by increasing your understanding of the program, its participants, and your role in it. It will give former students opportunities to speak with others who are ESL specialists about their experiences before entering the program, and their experiences during and after the program as well. This opportunity to reflect on their lives and careers can be validating and informative. For people who have interviews with us, we will offer a department store gift certificate (worth \$20).

### **Time Requirements**

Participation in this project will require approximately 1 hour. There may also be the possibility of brief follow-up interviews of less than 30 minutes.

### **Contact**

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Patricia Duff at the following telephone number: --- ----. You may also contact Dr. Margaret Early at --- ----, or Ping Wong, through ISA at --- ----. If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Director of Research Services at the University of British Columbia, Dr. Richard Spratley, at --- ----.

### **Consent**

Please indicate your consent or refusal to participate in this study by completing the attached forms. Please keep this description of the study (page 1-2) for your own records, and one signed copy of the consent form (p. 3) for your own records. Please return the other copy of the consent form (p. 4) to the researchers.

## Appendix 4: Informed Consent

(original on UBC, Department of Language Education letterhead)

### STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

**Title of Study:** "Socializing Language and Sociocultural Identity from the Margins: A Study of Immigrant Women Learning English as a Second Language for the Health Professions"

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If you would be willing to participate in this study, please fill in the information below.

Be sure to keep a signed copy of page 3 for your own records, and pages 1-2.

Please sign your name here to show that you have received pages 1-3. \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

Please sign below if you **consent** to participate in the project outlined on pages 1-2.

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE KEEP THIS COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS.**  
**Thank you very much for your time and consideration!**

**Consent Form, page 3 of 4**

## Appendix 4: Informed Consent

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\*\*\*\*\*

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Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN THIS COPY TO THE RESEARCHERS.**  
**Thank you very much for your time and consideration!**

**Consent Form, page 4 of 4**

### Appendix 5: Context of Interviews

| Participant | Place                      | Date and time               | Length of interview and other information   |
|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Anna     | telephone                  | April 20, 1998<br>morning   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about 60 minutes</li> <li>• Anna was very open and seemed comfortable talking to me</li> </ul>   |
| 2. Yin      | telephone                  | April 20, 1998<br>afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about 30 minutes</li> <li>• I thought that Yin was a bit hesitant to talk about her experiences, especially concerning anything negative</li> <li>• as the interview progressed, Yin seemed to be more relaxed</li> <li>• think she may have been a bit tired as she was working midnight shifts and studying part-time</li> </ul> |
| 3. Magda    | telephone                  | April 20, 1998<br>evening   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about 35-40 minutes</li> <li>• Magda was very open about her experiences</li> <li>• at times I had to repeat as she could not hear my question</li> <li>• she had to interrupt the interview twice to talk to her son briefly</li> </ul>   |
| 4. Sofia    | in-person<br>ISA classroom | April 22, 1998<br>morning   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about 40 minutes</li> <li>• Sofia was very pleasant, a bit self-conscious about her English skills</li> <li>• was very direct and open</li> </ul>  |



### Appendix 5 continued

| Participant | Place                      | Date and time               | Length of interview and other information  |
|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 5. Alberto  | in-person<br>ISA classroom | April 22, 1998<br>morning   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about 40 minutes</li> <li>• Alberto had come on his day off and brought his family, wife and two young children with him</li> <li>• they waited in the car during the interview</li> <li>• Alberto seemed quite comfortable talking about his experiences and self-confident</li> </ul> |
| 6. Karen    | telephone                  | April 23, 1998<br>morning   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about 40 minutes</li> <li>• Karen was open and forthcoming about her opinions and experiences</li> <li>• very high English ability; had no difficulties expressing herself</li> </ul>   |
| 7. Rita     | in-person<br>ISA classroom | April 23, 1998<br>afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about 40 minutes</li> <li>• Rita was very well-dressed and composed</li> <li>• soft-spoken and seemed a bit cautious when answering questions</li> </ul>  |

### Appendix 5 continued

| Participant | Place                    | Date and time               | Length of interview and other information  |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 8. Karina   | in-person<br>in her home | April 24, 1998<br>morning   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about 75 minutes</li> <li>• Karina seemed quite at ease</li> <li>• we were alone for the most part as her husband took the children to another room</li> <li>• the interview was very relaxed</li> <li>• Karina seemed to enjoy talking</li> <li>• after the interview, she asked to hear her voice on tape</li> </ul>  |
| 9. Fatima   | in-person<br>ISA         | April 28, 1998<br>afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about 35-40 minutes</li> <li>• of all the interviews, this one was the most challenging to conduct as her 4-year-old son was in the room and often tried to get her attention</li> <li>• the interview was interrupted a number of times</li> <li>• Fatima also seemed a bit tired; she had just come from her volunteer job</li> <li>• at the end of the interview, I let her son record his voice so that he could hear himself; he enjoyed that</li> </ul> |