Remember, remember always that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

It is difficult to say what is impossible, for the dream of yesterday is the hope of today and the reality of tomorrow.

Robert H. Goddard

# University of Alberta

Changes in hope during skilled worker immigrants'
early settlement in Canada

by

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Abstract

Skilled worker immigrants can encounter many challenges as they settle in Canada. For individuals facing adversity, hope often helps in facing and overcoming difficulties (Edey & Jevne, 2003). The purpose of this study was to explore how the hope of skilled worker immigrants changed during their settlement process. Basic qualitative research (Merriam, 2009) informed the study design. Based on thematic analysis of interviews with four skilled worker immigrants, four meta-themes, referred to as phases, emerged. The findings are represented by these four broad phases, the last phase of which has two alternatives: (1) Arriving with High Hopes and Expectations, (2) Experiences Challenge Hope, (3) Crossroads: Hope or Hopelessness, and (4A) Getting Stuck in Anger and Sadness or (4B) Choosing Hope and Finding Strength. All participants regained their hope, which appeared closely related to their successful settlement and functioning. The implications of this research for counselling and policy are discussed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the individuals who generously gave their time and shared their stories with me. I am so inspired by the strength, determination, and hope they each displayed. Their stories enhanced my hope for all individuals in difficult situations.

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Many thanks to the amazing women in my cohort. Their support has been invaluable and I am so glad that we had the opportunity to travel this road together. Thank you to my family and friends who have provided support, encouragement, love, and understanding throughout this process. I could not have done it without you all. Thank you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

More than 1.2 million individuals were granted Canadian permanent

resident status between 2004 and 2008 (Citizenship and Immigration [CIC],

2009a). Of this number, more than half a million newcomers came via the skilled

worker class, a category of newcomers that is the focus in this research. Although

new immigrants are frequently depicted in popular culture as hoping for a better

life and future, there has been surprisingly little research about the hope of

immigrants throughout the migration and settlement process. Newcomers

encounter many challenges as they settle in Canada. If indeed immigrants arrive

with high hopes, what happens to hope over time and as these individuals face

multiple barriers to successful integration? In the current study I sought to

understand the experiences of skilled workers immigrants and how their hope

changed during settlement.

Immigration is often driven by a desire to improve employment and life

opportunities. As immigrants establish themselves, employment is an essential

component of successful settlement (Galabuzzi, 2005). However, recent

newcomers have encountered substantial challenges integrating into the Canadian

labour market (McIsaac, 2003; Reitz, 2001). Major obstacles to finding suitable

employment include devaluation of foreign education, lack of Canadian work

experience, problems with professional credential recognition, discrimination, and

language issues (Arthur & Merali, 2005; Aycan & Berry, 1996; Bergeron &

Potter, 2006; Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants

and Refugees [CTFMHIAIR], 1988; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Khan, 2007; Galabuzzi; Lee & Westwood, 1996; McIsaac; Reitz). These obstacles may lead to a loss of skills and decreasing confidence in abilities. Immigrants often discover that in order to continue in their pre-migration occupation they must retrain, essentially starting over (Arthur & Merali; Lee & Westwood). It is not surprising that these challenges pose a significant threat to skilled worker immigrants' initial sense of hope upon arrival.

Although immigrants in general have been studied in the past, very little research has explored the particular experiences of skilled worker immigrants. These individuals are selected to come to Canada based on their superior education and work experience, and they logically anticipate obtaining similar or better jobs upon their arrival. Because they were selected based on predictors of employability, these individuals may be particularly impacted by challenges to obtaining suitable employment. For example, in a recent survey, three quarters of skilled worker immigrants reported problems in finding employment (Bergeron & Potter, 2006) and another study reported employment-related concerns as the most frequent worry among skilled worker immigrants (Tang, Oatley, & Toner, 2007). When the hopes and expectations of skilled worker immigrants are not fulfilled, they often report feeling angry and frustrated and describe a sense of loss (Khan & Watson, 2005).

For individuals facing adversity, hope has been found to help in facing and overcoming challenges. Hope has been discussed in various fields including Theology, Philosophy, Psychology, Politics, Nursing, and Medicine (Eliott,

2005). Although researchers have not reached consensus on the precise meaning of hope, an extensive review of the literature revealed the significance and power of hope as its two enduring features over time and across disciplines (Eliott).

Despite recognition of the importance of hope, research exploring the role of hope in the adult immigration experience is sparse. Therefore, a better understanding of hope in the settlement experiences of skilled worker immigrants has a lot to contribute to literature both in hope studies and immigration. In addition, this research provides insight into how individuals are able to enhance their hope when facing obstacles, addressing a need identified by Miller (1989), "The importance of hope is universally accepted. However, despite its wide acceptance…how persons maintain hope while confronting adversity are not well-known" (p. 23).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the present study was to explore the experiences of skilled worker immigrants during their settlement in Canada. A qualitative research methodology was used in order to obtain a rich and in-depth understanding of immigrants' experiences and their changes in hope during settlement. Specifically, the objectives of this study of skilled worker immigrants were (1) to deepen an understanding of the settlement process of immigration, (2) to develop greater insight into how hope changes during this process, and (3) to provide recommendations to counsellors and immigrant-serving professionals based on these findings. Considering the many challenges skilled worker immigrants encounter during settlement and the negative impact these experiences can have

on these individuals, it was important for the research to focus on how these individuals cope and enhance their sense of hope.

Researcher Interest

My interest in studying immigrants was shaped by exposure to a variety of immigrant experiences. I have always been aware of my immigrant roots – how both sets of grandparents left the Netherlands and came to Canada following World War II. Hearing my grandparents' stories of settlement provided a foundation for understanding this process. As I grew up, my family moved a few times, and I had to adjust to living in different places with new people. Although this was much less of a transition than immigrating to another country, it offered a glimpse into what this experience might entail. Another influence has been my husband, who is a recent immigrant from West Africa. Intimately witnessing his struggles and successes while settling in Canada, and how these experiences affected his hope, has been particularly powerful in developing my interest in immigration.

My focus on hope comes from a belief that the problem orientation common in counselling, psychology, and the health sciences is missing the important role of positive factors like hope. Throughout my post-secondary education, I have often been left with the sense that something important was absent from the material. In the past I was not able to grasp this missing piece, but as I have engaged in reading about other topics such as positive psychology, forgiveness, and hope, I have increasingly felt that these subjects provided overlooked insights and answers. In addition to my reading, hope seemed

especially influential and valuable when I reflected on my own experiences. Thus, when I had the opportunity to choose my thesis topic, I immediately thought about studying hope in the context of immigrants' experiences.

Overview of Thesis

In the following chapter, the literature relevant to immigrants and hope is examined. The chapter begins with an explanation of the different ways individuals come to Canada, a brief overview of the history of Canada's immigration system, and a detailed description of the Federal Skilled Worker Program. In addition, demographic information about immigrants is detailed. This is followed by a discussion of immigrants' experiences and challenges in Canada that have been identified in the literature. Next, the little existing research about immigrants and hope is described and discussed. Finally, hope is explored, with particular emphasis on several major theories in the field of hope.

The methodology chapter includes an explanation for using qualitative methods and describes the constructivist paradigm guiding this research. In addition, the methodological framework and method of analysis are outlined. The data collection process is reviewed, along with recruitment strategies and a description of the sample. This is followed by a detailed account of data generation and data analysis used in this study. This chapter concludes with a description of the ways this research was evaluated and a discussion of the ethical considerations pertinent to the population studied.

In Chapter Four each participant is introduced, along with his or her story of settlement. This provides a holistic picture of each individual before presenting

the common themes in Chapter Five. Each theme that emerged during data analysis is described, along with quotations that help support and exemplify the themes. The overarching themes that emerged represent phases in the participants' changing hope, and a visual representation has been provided to illustrate these changes.

The final chapter involves a discussion about the themes and how these themes relate to the current research literature. The implications of the findings for counselling and policy, and recommendations for future research, are also summarized. Overall, this study provides a preliminary exploration of how hope changes during settlement for skilled worker immigrants, and it contributes to the foundational understanding of this complex process.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, Canadian immigration policy is reviewed, examining the categories of immigrant populations and characteristics of newcomers, with particular emphasis on the skilled worker class of permanent residents. Second, the experiences and challenges faced by many newcomers to Canada are described. The third area reviewed relates to the literature about hope and immigrants. Finally, several theories about hope are described, as well as how these connect with the settlement experiences of immigrants.

Newcomers to Canada

People leave their countries of origin for a variety of reasons. Conditions in individuals' countries of origin, such as security risks and lack of employment opportunities, may create push factors. Individuals migrating to Canada have a variety of temporary and permanent options (CIC, 2009a). The temporary paths (see Figure 1) for entry into Canada include staying briefly as a visitor, obtaining a work visa and finding employment temporarily, or acquiring a student visa and attending a Canadian university. Although coming to Canada temporarily can, in some cases, lead to permanent residency, becoming a permanent resident is a process separate from being granted temporary residence. This paper will focus on those individuals who immigrate to Canada as permanent residents, with particular attention paid to the experiences of individuals who immigrate via the skilled worker class.

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│                      ┌─────────────────────┐                          │
│                      │ Temporary Residence │                          │
│                      └─────────────────────┘                          │
│                                                                       │
│   ┌─────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────┐  │
│   │     Visitor     │  │ International Student │  │ Temporary Foreign│  │
│   │ (Temporary      │  │   (Study Permit)     │  │     Worker       │  │
│   │ Resident Visa)  │  │                      │  │  (Work Permit)   │  │
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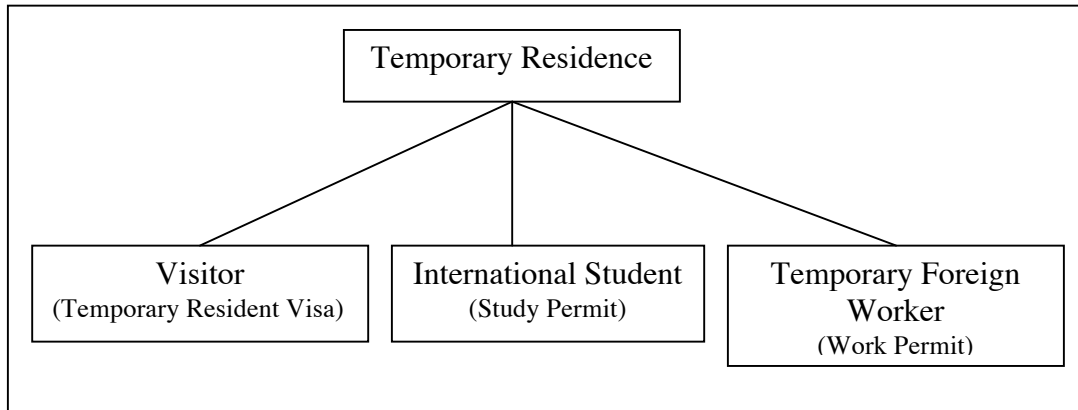
Figure 1. Temporary residence in Canada (as of 2009).

*History of Canada's Immigration System*

There have been many different approaches to immigration since the 18th century. In the time since World War II, Canada has adopted an increasingly expansionist immigration policy (Reitz, 2001). The stated purpose of immigration has been in large part to stimulate economic growth (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). Prior to 1967, immigration policy ranked nations by preference, a practice judged to be discriminatory (Omidvar & Richmond). The Canadian government introduced a points system in 1967 whereby applicants received points for attributes such as education, skills, and ability in Canada's official languages (Omidvar & Richmond; Reitz). The points system has been retained to date, although it has undergone numerous revisions. Currently the points system is designed to select "the best and brightest" individuals for migration to Canada (Omidvar & Richmond). With the *Immigration Act* of 1976 three broad classes of immigrants were created: independents (points-selected), family class, and refugees (Omidvar & Richmond). As a result of these changes in policy, since the 1970s the principal source countries of immigrants have shifted away from

Europe and the United States to Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and

the Caribbean (Omidvar & Richmond).

*Permanent Residence: Objectives and Classes*

There are a variety of ways individuals desiring to move permanently to

Canada may apply to do so, and they must first determine the option best suited to

them (see Figure 2 for an overview of the options). Canadian immigration policy

has three broad objectives: economic, family reunification, and humanitarian

(CIC, 2005a; Reitz, 2001). The three broad categories of immigrants – Economic

Class, Family Class, and Refugees – parallel these objectives (CIC, 2005a). The

Economic Class will be described in the next paragraph. Family Class immigrants

are individuals who are reuniting with close family members already established

in Canada (CIC, 2005a, 2009a). Individuals can be sponsored by a close family

member who is a permanent resident or Canadian Citizen and who has committed

to providing financial support during the settlement of the applicant. Refugees are

individuals needing protection who fear returning to their home country (CIC,

2009a). Small numbers of immigrants can also be admitted as "other immigrants."

This includes various special categories created for humanitarian and public

policy reasons. In 2008, a new category, known as the Canadian Experience

Class, was added to target temporary foreign workers and international students

living in Canada.

The Economic Class consists of several programs: the Federal Skilled

Worker Program, the Business Immigrant Program, and the Provincial Nominee

Program.  Economic immigrants as a whole are admitted based on the likelihood

of success in the Canadian labour market or in business (CIC, 2005a, 2009a).

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2009a), individuals selected

through the Federal Skilled Worker Program have education, experience, and

abilities that will enable them to become economically established in Canada.

Individuals immigrating via the Federal Skilled Worker Program (referred to as

skilled worker immigrants) will be the focus of this study. It should be noted that

skilled worker immigrants and professionals wanting to settle in Quebec must

apply through an independent class known as Quebec-selected skilled workers.

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ Permanent Residence │
                    └─────────────────────┘

  ┌────────┐    ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────┐
  │ Family │    │ Economic │    │   Canadian   │    │ Refugees │
  │ Class  │    │  Class   │    │ Experience   │    │          │
  └────────┘    └──────────┘    │    Class     │    └──────────┘
                                └──────────────┘

  ┌────────────────┐  ┌────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
  │ Federal Skilled│  │ Business Immigrant │  │  Provincial  │
  │ Worker Program │  │      Program       │  │Nominee Program│
  └────────────────┘  └────────────────────┘  └──────────────┘

        ┌───────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌────────────────┐
        │ Immigrant │  │ Entrepreneur │  │ Self-Employed  │
        │ Investor  │  │   Program    │  │Persons Program │
        └───────────┘  └──────────────┘  └────────────────┘
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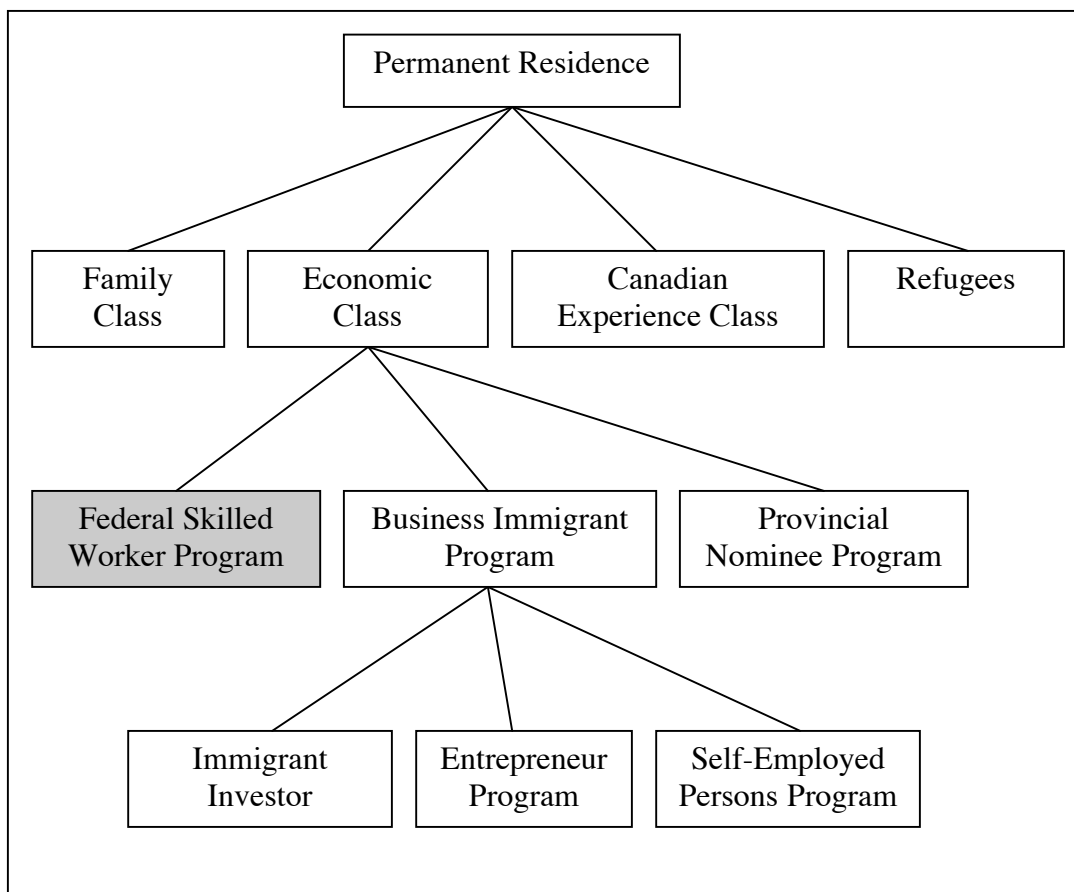
Figure 2. Permanent residence in Canada (as of 2009).

Next, the Business Immigrant Program was designed to attract experienced business people who will "support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy" (CIC, 2009a). The Business Immigrant Program was recently subdivided to include the Immigrant Investor Program, the Entrepreneur Program, and the Self-Employed Persons Program. Investors are required to invest $400,000 into the Canadian economy. The Entrepreneur Program was designed to attract experienced business people who will own and manage businesses (CIC, 2009a). Finally, the Self-Employed Persons Program seeks to attract individuals who have the intention and ability to become self-employed in Canada. In particular, self-employed persons are required to contribute to Canada's cultural, athletic, or agricultural sectors. The final program in the Economic Class is the Provincial Nominee Program which aims to attract individuals with particular education, experience, and skills that will immediately contribute to the province or territory nominating them.

*The Federal Skilled Worker Program*

Determining one's eligibility to apply through the Federal Skilled Worker Program is a complex, ever-changing process. The rules and eligibility criteria are frequently modified. The person applying is known as the "principal applicant" (CIC, 2009a). Currently, the review process for individuals applying via this program involves three steps. First, an individual must satisfy one of three conditions: (a) have an offer of arranged employment, (b) have been living in Canada for one year as a temporary foreign worker or an international student, or (c) have at least one year of full time work experience in one of 38 high-demand

occupations. The second step of the review process requires that the applicant have at least one year of continuous full-time employment, or the part-time equivalent, in the last 10 years in a position classified as Skill Type 0 (managerial occupations) or Skill Level A (professional occupations) or B (technical occupations and skilled trades) according to the Canadian National Occupational Classification list. If an applicant meets these minimum requirements, he or she proceeds to the third step in which he or she must then obtain an acceptable number of points through the previously mentioned points system.

Table 1. Summary of the six selection factors of the points system

| Selection Factor | Points |
|---|---|
| Education | Maximum 25 points |
| Ability in English and/or French | Maximum 24 points |
| Experience | Maximum 21 points |
| Age | Maximum 10 points |
| Arranged employment in Canada | Maximum 21 points |
| Adaptability | Maximum 21 points |
| TOTAL | Maximum 100 points |

The points system involves six selection factors (see Table 1). Points are awarded based on six criteria: (1) education level, (2) language ability in English and/or French, (3) work experience, (4) age, (5) arranged employment in Canada, and (6) "adaptability" factors (CIC, 2009a). Currently, the pass level to be granted permanent residency is 67 points.

Examining each criterion more closely, for education level (1), the number of points awarded increases with educational attainment (e.g., 20 points for a bachelor's degree and 25 points for a master's degree or PhD). In language ability

(2), applicants receive points for their level of proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English and/or French as determined by scores on a language proficiency test; 16 points are awarded for high proficiency in one official language, and up to 8 additional points may be awarded for moderate to high proficiency in the second official language. In terms of work experience (3), points awarded range from 15 for one year of full-time paid employment to up to 21 points for four years or more of full-time paid employment in an acceptable occupation (i.e., Skill Type 0, Skill Level A or B). For the age selection factor (4), applicants between 21 and 49 are awarded the maximum of 10 points, with a penalty of two points for each year outside of this range. Applicants can be awarded another 10 points for having evidence of arranged employment in Canada (5). Finally, applicants may receive a maximum of 10 points for "adaptability" factors (6), including 3 to 5 points for the spouse/common-law partner's level of education, 5 points for having relatives in Canada, an additional 5 points for having arranged employment, 5 points for having previously studied in Canada, and/or 5 points for having worked in Canada.

In addition to obtaining a pass mark on the criteria described above, applicants and family members must complete several application forms and provide documentation to verify their education, language ability, employment, etc. (CIC, 2009a). Applicants must obtain medical exams by an approved medical doctor to prove that they do not have medical problems that will pose health risks to Canadians or be a burden on the Canadian medical system. All family members also require a criminal record check. In addition to fees for processing the

application (e.g., $1400 for a family of four) and the right of permanent residence fee (e.g., $980 for a family of four), applicants must provide proof of having a large sum of funds to assist in their transition in Canada, ranging from $10,833 for an individual up to $28,668 for a family of seven or more (all amounts are current as of November 2009).

Individuals applying to immigrate through the Federal Skilled Worker Program as principal applicants may include their spouse or same or opposite gender common-law partner and any dependent children in their application. Individuals may apply through the Federal Skilled Worker Program from inside Canada or from another country.

Once individuals have submitted their applications, they must wait several months for it to be processed (CIC, 2009a). Processing times vary by region with visa offices in all regions having finalized 80% of cases in an average of 62 months (i.e., over five years). Prior to being granted permanent residence status, applicants may be asked to attend an interview. Individuals whose applications are approved are sent notice of approval and provided with a permanent resident visa and Confirmation of Permanent Residence with an expiry date by which the applicant and his/her dependents must arrive in Canada.

When the new skilled worker immigrant arrives in Canada he/she is greeted by an officer from the Canada Border Services Agency who ensures the individual has a valid passport, permanent resident visa, Confirmation of Permanent Residence, and proof of sufficient funds (as discussed above) to support him/herself and his/her family (CIC, 2009a). The officer also asks the

newcomer questions to ensure he/she still meets the requirements to immigrate to Canada. Assuming these steps go smoothly, the officer authorizes the newcomer to enter Canada and confirms the immigrant's Canadian mailing address where his/her permanent resident card will be mailed. New skilled workers to Canada receive no further support or assistance unless they take the initiative to access existing services themselves.

*Distribution of Classes*

Since the year 2000, Canada has consistently granted permanent residency to more than 200,000 individuals each year (CIC, 2009a). Between 2004 and 2008, Family Class immigrants made up about one quarter of all newcomers to Canada, Economic Class immigrants averaged 57% of all newcomers, Refugees constituted 12% of the newcomers, and the remaining 3.8% was made up of "other immigrants" (e.g., humanitarian and compassionate cases). During the same time period, skilled workers and their spouses and dependents made up 78% of all economic immigrants and 45% of all new permanent residents. On average, more than 100,000 individuals arrived in Canada via skilled worker programs each year from 2004 to 2008. In the past few decades the trend had been toward decreasing proportions of Family Class immigrants and increasing proportions of Economic Class immigrants (Reitz, 2001; Schellenberg & Hou, 2005).

*Source Countries*

Since policy changes in 1967 that eliminated the preference for American and Western European immigrants, there has been a considerable shift in the source countries of newcomers (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). In 2007, the top

ten sources accounting for 52% of new permanent residents were: China, India, the Philippines, the United States, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Iran, the Republic of Korea, France, and Columbia (CIC, 2009b). Overall, the majority of recent immigrants originate from Asian nations (CIC, 2005a). Although there is relative consistency in the top sources countries from year to year, there have also been some large shifts, likely in relation to political factors. Hong Kong, for example, was the top source country in 1997, but the 46th in 2007 (CIC, 2009b).

*Settlement Location*

The vast majority of immigrants settle in the three largest Canadian cities: Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal (CIC, 2005a). Of those who immigrated between 1996 and 2001, 73% settled in these "big-three" cities, whereas only 27% of the Canadian-born population resides in these cities. There is some differential distribution, with immigrants from Western Europe and the United States more likely to settle in smaller cities and other areas of Canada compared to other immigrant groups (CIC, 2005a). It appears that newcomers tend to settle in a location where they have friends and/or relatives (Statistics Canada, 2005a).

*Age, Gender, and Religion*

Almost one half of immigrants arriving between 1996 and 2001 were between the ages of 25 and 44, compared to 30% of the Canadian born population (CIC, 2005a). Based on the sample in the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC), which surveyed about two-thirds (169,400) of newcomers arriving from October 2000 to September 2001, the vast majority of new skilled worker immigrants fell in the 25 to 44 age group, especially in the case of

principal applicants, where 89% fell in this group (Statistics Canada, 2005a). The overall gender distribution of newcomers to Canada is approximately equal to the Canadian distribution with just over one half of all immigrants being women (CIC, 2005a, 2009b). Based on LSIC findings, 77% of principal applicants in the skilled worker category are male; consequently, 75% of spouses and dependents in this category are female (Statistics Canada, 2005a). Some nations have more disproportionate numbers of female immigrants and, less commonly, disproportionately more male immigrants (CIC, 2005a). In terms of religion, while Christianity is still the most common religious affiliation of newcomers, there were significantly higher proportions of Muslim (18%), Hindu (6%), Buddhist (4%), and Sikh (5%) affiliation among immigrants arriving between 1996 and 2001 compared to the Canadian-born population (CIC, 2005a). Each religion is represented by 1% or less of the Canadian-born population.

*Education*

Levels of education differ meaningfully between immigrants and the Canadian-born. Twenty-one percent of all immigrants and 36% of those who immigrated between 1996 and 2001 have obtained a university degree, compared to 14% of the Canadian-born population (CIC, 2005a). This discrepancy is even more apparent when examining economic class immigrants: 78% of principal applicants 15 years of age and older arriving between 2003 and 2007 had at least a university degree (CIC, 2009b). For principal applicants in the skilled worker category, 87% held at least a university degree (Statistics Canada, 2005a, 2005b). Although part of the difference in educational attainment can be attributed to

rising education levels over time, immigrants as a whole, and skilled worker immigrants in particular, are still better educated than the Canadian-born population.

*Migrant Personality*

Boneva and Frieze (2001) have proposed that individuals who choose to immigrate tend to display particular personality traits and values, known as the "migrant personality," that distinguish them from those who prefer to stay in their country of origin. Those who choose to immigrate tend to be more work-oriented, have higher achievement and power motivations, and have lower affiliation motivation and family centrality. It seems that the Federal Skilled Worker Program would tend to select individuals with personality traits like those identified by Boneva and Frieze, especially in terms of their career-orientation and achievement motivation.

*Summary*

The literature provides a variety of information about the demographic characteristics of immigrants in Canada. In the last decade the largest proportion of new permanent residents have immigrated via the skilled worker class. They originate from all over the world, with the most significant numbers coming from Asian countries, and they largely settle in Canada's large urban centers. Most skilled worker immigrants are between 25 and 44 years of age. They tend to be highly educated and career driven. The research literature also reveals some of the common experiences of immigrants during settlement, which are described next.

*Experiences of Immigrants*

Although each immigrant's experiences are unique, skilled worker immigrants tend to share many similar experiences as they settle in Canada. This section will explore the various experiences of immigrants, including how these experiences may affect their well-being and sense of self. It is important that individuals working with newcomers are aware of their common experiences and challenges, as well as how these experiences may impact immigrants.

*Phases of Settlement*

Immigration is not a single event but a series of steps including the initial move to Canada, obtaining employment, and finally complete social and political participation (McIsaac, 2003). According to Mwarigha (2002), there are three major stages of settlement. Settlement begins in the first stage with immediate needs including food, clothing, shelter, orientation, and initial language instruction. These needs are met by settlement agencies, cultural communities, and the newcomers' families and friends. In the middle or intermediate stage of settlement, immigrants require assistance with accessing employment, education, health care, housing, legal assistance, and advanced language instruction. The goal of the final stage of settlement is equal participation in Canada's economic, cultural, social, and political life. Mwarigha argued that immigrants benefit most from services in the first two stages of settlement. Although the most barriers to settlement occur in the second stage, most settlement programs focus on meeting immigrants' needs during the first stage (Mwarigha). By understanding immigration as a process, difficulties may arise at different stages of settlement.

*Acculturation and Adaptation*

Acculturation and adaptation are challenging, yet unavoidable, aspects of the immigration experience (Berry, 2001, 2003). Acculturation refers to the process that occurs when cultural groups come into contact with each other, with this interaction having an effect primarily on the nondominant group (Berry, 2001). Adaptation refers to changes that occur as an individual or group responds to external demands from the new culture (Berry, 2003). Adaptation may involve changing to become more like one's environment or attempts to change the environment (Berry, 2003). Cultural adjustment can be scary and destabilizing for newcomers, particularly if many of the norms and expectations are very different from the culture in ones' home country. Immigrants often fear losing their cultural identity, customs, and language (Arthur & Merali, 2005).

Newcomers to Canada must decide on (a) the amount of contact they will have with other cultures and (b) how much of their own culture they want to maintain (Berry, 2001, 2003). The strategies newcomers utilize can take four different forms: *separation*, avoiding interaction with other cultures and total maintenance of one's original culture; *assimilation*, frequent interaction with other cultures and loss of one's original culture; *marginalization*, avoiding interaction with other cultures and loss of one's original culture; or *integration*, frequent interaction with other cultures and maintenance of one's original culture (Berry, 2001, 2003).

As Berry (2003) explains, "Integration involves the selective adoption of new behaviors from the larger society and retention of valued features of one's

heritage culture" (p. 31). Integration also requires that certain conditions exist in the host society, such as the shared value of cultural diversity, low levels of prejudice, and a sense of attachment to the host society among all groups and individuals (Berry, 2001, 2003). Berry (2001, 2003) reports that the integration strategy, also known as biculturalism, is linked to the most positive adjustment, adaptation, and mental health outcomes.

*Language Issues*

The ability to speak an official language is widely considered one of the most important predictors of successful economic and social integration (Hiebert, 2009; Statistics Canada, 2005a; Tolley, 2003). Language issues can be a major barrier for immigrants (Arthur & Merali, 2005; Aycan & Berry, 1996; Lee & Westwood, 1996) and may exacerbate workplace hazards (Health Canada, 1999). In a survey of immigrants six months after arriving in Canada, almost all skilled worker principal applicants (99%) reported being able to speak English and/or French (Statistics Canada, 2005a). However, thirteen percent of skilled worker principal applicants cited language barriers as a serious problem they encountered in trying to find employment (Statistics Canada, 2005a), which may suggest their official language skills are not fully developed.  Furthermore, language instruction tends to focus on vocabulary for conversational language rather than the technical language skills that are required by skilled workers. This further limits the opportunities for highly educated immigrants to obtain appropriate language training that could increase their chances for employment.

*Points System Problems*

The points system was initially adopted to maximize the likelihood of immigrants obtaining employment (Reitz, 2001). The underlying assumption of this initiative was that gainfully employed immigrants were most likely to result in a positive economic, social, cultural, and political impact (Reitz). Although the points system has resulted in dramatically raising the skill level of newcomers, in recent years the employment success of new immigrants is declining across the board (Reitz). The inherent paradox for skilled workers has been pointed out repeatedly (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Khan, 2007; Tang et al., 2007). As Tang and colleagues commented, "The system by which economic immigrants are treated in Canada is inherently unfair, in that the same foreign education and work experience that are judged to be sufficient to permit migration are insufficient to access professional work" (p. 288).

*Canadian Work Experience*

Obtaining work in Canada is often difficult for immigrants because they lack prerequisite Canadian work experience. This acts as a major barrier to acquiring employment (McIsaac, 2003). Skilled worker principal applicants most frequently cited lack of Canadian work experience as the most serious problem they encountered as they sought employment (Statistics Canada, 2005b). Immigrants face an inherent paradox in finding a job: They seek jobs in order to obtain Canadian experience, but their lack of Canadian experience is cited as the reason they cannot get a job (Arthur & Merali, 2005; Khan, 2007).

*Foreign Qualifications Recognition*

The second most frequently cited problem in finding employment, as reported by skilled worker principal applicants, was a lack of acceptance or recognition of their foreign work experience or qualifications (Statistics Canada, 2005b). Immigrants are unable to determine the status of their credentials until they arrive in Canada (Khan, 2007; McIsaac, 2003). Problems with recognition of foreign qualifications are a significant challenge as immigrants seek suitable employment (Bergeron & Potter, 2006; McIsaac). Foreign education has been increasingly devalued, resulting in a shift in perception about immigrant education and skills (Reitz, 2001). Research has shown that education and work experience attained abroad are considerably discounted in the Canadian labour market (Alboim, Finnie, & Meng, 2005). Khan argued that "credentials are an instrument used by the dominant class to restrict access, privileges and opportunities for the subordinate classes" (p. 64).

Many professions in Canada, such as medicine, engineering, and teaching, are regulated by professional self-regulating bodies that stipulate the requirements individuals must meet to be part of the professional body, and, therefore, to practice in the profession. The requirements are generally designed with the assumption that individuals have received their education in Canada and many professional bodies are not well equipped to appropriately evaluate foreign education and credentials, which tends to result in a devaluation of foreign qualifications. Many immigrants require additional years of education to meet certification standards to work in their profession in Canada (Aycan & Berry,

1996). Those individuals who want to make up for educational "deficiencies" may find it difficult to acquire the appropriate education and/or experience. For example, Peirol (1996) reported that foreign-trained medical doctors must write licensing exams and complete an internship in order to become licensed in Ontario. Although every Ontario medical school graduate is guaranteed an internship after passing the licensing exams, only 24 of up to 500 foreign-trained physicians were able to participate in such internships each year.

Professional immigrants routinely face these types of difficulties as they attempt to work in their pre-migration occupation, regardless of the reputation of their educational program, years of experience, and pre-migration standing in the field. It is not uncommon to hear stories of immigrants who were well-respected practitioners in their field, unable to work in their profession in Canada (Choudry, Hanley, Jordan, Shragge, & Stiegman, 2009). Not only immigrants suffer as a result of these problems – Canada loses by failing to utilize newcomers' skills and knowledge. It has been estimated that if all immigrants' foreign education and credentials were recognized, between $3.4 and $5 billion would be added to the Canadian economy every year (Conference Board of Canada, 2004).

Self-worth is often tied to immigrants' occupational status (CTFMHIAIR, 1988). The various delays encountered in returning to the workforce may lead to a loss of skills and decreasing confidence in abilities. If immigrants choose to continue in their pre-migration occupation, they are often faced with the reality of retraining, which may mean virtually starting over (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2005; Arthur & Merali, 2005; Lee & Westwood, 1996). This can be scary,

confusing, and overwhelming, particularly for older immigrants (Lee &

Westwood). If immigrants are not integrated into their pre-migration profession

within three years of arriving, they are unlikely to return to it at all (Galabuzzi,

2005). Difficulties with recognition of foreign qualifications tend to negatively

impact the employment experiences of newcomers.

*Employment Experiences*

  The employment challenges of immigrants to Canada are unmistakable.

Employment-related concerns have been reported as the most frequent worry

among skilled workers (Tang et al., 2007). Likewise, problems finding

employment have been identified as the biggest hurdle for newcomers (Statistics

Canada, 2005a). Six months after arrival, 75% of skilled worker principal

applicants indicated having problems finding employment (Bergeron & Potter,

2006; Statistics Canada, 2005a).

  Since 1975 there has been a steady decline in the employment status and

earnings of immigrants (Reitz, 2001). Several years after their arrival, immigrants

in the past were able to match or even surpass the earnings of their Canadian-born

peers (McIsaac, 2003). However, it appears that this is no longer the case, as more

recent cohorts of immigrants have struggled to keep pace, even several years

following migration (McIsaac; Reitz; Schellenberg & Hou, 2005). In addition,

other indicators of economic well being, such as unemployment and poverty

levels, illustrate a similarly bleak picture (Reitz).

  Unemployment and underemployment are major concerns of immigrants

(Arthur & Merali, 2005; Galabuzzi, 2005). The unemployment rate of immigrants

has gradually increased, and the gap between the unemployment rates of the Canadian-born compared to immigrants is continually widening (McIsaac, 2003). In 2007, the unemployment rate among core working-age immigrants was 6.6%, compared to the rate of 4.6% among Canadian-born individuals (Statistics Canada, 2008). The discrepancy is more striking when comparing university educated immigrants and Canadian-born individuals. In 2006 the unemployment rate among immigrants who immigrated in the previous five years with a university degree was 11.4%, nearly four times the rate of 2.9% for Canadian-born individuals with university education (Statistics Canada, 2007).

Underemployment is more difficult to measure, but one indicator of underemployment is to compare an individual's level of education with the level of education required in their current job. Almost three-quarters (73%) of Canadian-born individuals with a university education are employed in a job requiring that level of education, compared to just over half (51%) of university-educated immigrants who arrived from 1996 to 2001 (CIC, 2005a). Grant and Nadin (2007) reported that many skilled worker immigrants from Asia and Africa were unable to obtain employment equivalent to their pre-migration occupation. As a result, these individuals were often underemployed, had to volunteer, and/or upgraded their training. Six months after arriving, two-thirds of employed skilled worker principal applicants were not working in their intended occupation (Statistics Canada, 2005a).

Immigrants face a paradox in obtaining work in that they may be considered underqualified for high level positions for reasons such as lacking

Canadian experience and language barriers; however, they are also not hired in

lower level positions because they are considered overqualified (Arthur & Merali,

2005). Difficulties in obtaining suitable employment have resulted in

disproportionate numbers of immigrants in low paying, part-time, temporary,

insecure, high-risk employment with poor working conditions (Galabuzzi, 2005).

While some immigrants do obtain gainful employment, university educated

immigrants are vastly over-represented in low-skill occupations such as taxi

drivers, security guards, and janitors (McIsaac, 2003) and high-risk occupations

such as those in the manufacturing and construction industries (Health Canada,

1999). The marginal status of immigrants in the workforce makes them prone to

exploitation (CTFMHIAIR, 1988).

  According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2005a), the education

of recent immigrants has not been fully utilized. Despite rising education levels

among immigrants over the years, the gap between the wages of immigrants and

Canadian-born individuals is ever widening, even when examining immigrants

with university education and knowledge of an official language (McIsaac, 2003).

Data indicate that between 1980 and 2000 the income of recent male immigrants

dropped 7% whereas incomes increased by 7% for the Canadian-born cohort

(Galabuzzi, 2005). For university-educated immigrants, the drop in earnings was

even greater at 13%. In 2000, individuals who immigrated from 1986 to 1995

earned about 80% of the average income of the Canadian-born, and individuals

who immigrated from 1996 to 1999 only earned about 70% of the average income

of the Canadian-born (CIC, 2005a).

Immigrants' unstable, low paying employment tends to result in financial struggles. Immigrants have been consistently over-represented among the poor (Kazemipur & Halli, 2001). Skilled worker immigrant women frequently indicate financial strain as a major difficulty (Tang et al., 2007). Financial pressures may lead immigrants to take jobs for which they are highly overqualified. Clearly, this represents a circular problem.

Employment tends to be a good indicator of overall immigrant adjustment (McIsaac, 2003). Participation in the Canadian labour market is essential for immigrants to successfully integrate, to feel a sense of belonging, and in identity formation (Galabuzzi, 2005). The employment-related experiences of immigrants are predictive of adaptation and psychological well-being (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Immigrants' unemployment has been associated with feelings of alienation, acculturative stress, adaptation problems, negative self-concept, anger, frustration, chronic stress, and other health problems (Aycan & Berry; CTFMHIAIR, 1988; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Health Canada, 1999; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). These findings indicate that employment offers purpose, status, identity, and helps in establishing relationships (Aycan & Berry). Because of the importance of social interactions in adaptation to Canadian society, the adaptation of individuals facing unemployment tends to be hindered. When immigrants' employment status and income improves, it tends to lead to a greater sense of competence and success.

*Expectations Meet Reality*

Often a primary reason behind the choice to immigrate is to improve employment opportunities (Boneva and Frieze, 2001). When reality does not

match immigrants' expectations, it can be destabilizing. Research has indicated a link between congruence and mental health, with perceived congruence positively associated with life satisfaction and negatively associated with depression (Murphy & Mahalingam, 2006). Problems with meeting their expectations "results in frustration, alienation from a familiar working environment, erosion of skills, and ultimate loss of human potential to the Canadian economy" (CTFMHIAIR, 1988, p. 30).

The immigration process requires significant adjustment on the part of the immigrant, and when expectations and dreams are obstructed, it can lead to immense frustration. Expectations may help motivate change and adjustment among immigrants (Lee & Westwood, 1996). However, individuals often find that adjusting to Canadian culture and employment are more difficult than they anticipated. Immigrants who have difficulties in the adjustment process may, in turn, experience a sense of inadequacy (Lee & Westwood). While immigrants may anticipate short-term unemployment or underemployment, longer-term unemployment and underemployment tend to have a greater detrimental impact (Health Canada, 1999).

Khan and Watson (2005) proposed a four-stage model to encapsulate the immigration experiences of skilled worker Pakistani women in Canada. In the first stage, Seeking a Better Future, participants identified their pre-migration dreams, hopes, and goals. Shortly after immigrating, in Stage Two, the women were forced to confront the reality of their situation in Canada and their limited options. Overall, the women described a severe discrepancy between pre-

migration hopes and post-migration experiences, with some individuals reporting that they felt misled. Individuals lost financial stability, professional status, and self-confidence, feeling uprooted and without support. In the third stage, Grieving and Mourning, individuals discussed anger and frustration with their current situation, as well as homesickness, family problems, and culture shock. The final stage, Adjusting, involved a sense of appreciation for parts of Canadian life and society such as free education and healthcare. As well, participants' plans to upgrade their education in Canada increased feelings of hope for the future.

*Racism and Discrimination*

Recent immigrants are far more likely to be visible minorities in comparison to immigrants a generation or two ago, who primarily originated from the United States and Western Europe (McIsaac, 2003). This is important when considering the detrimental impact of racism and discrimination (Arthur & Merali, 2005). The cross-cultural adjustment of newcomers to Canada is greatly affected by the attitudes of individuals already residing in Canada, especially when they are perceived as competition for limited jobs (Lee & Westwood, 1996; Palmer, 1996). Research suggests that, controlling for education, gender, and language ability, visible minority immigrants tend to earn less than non-visible minority immigrants (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2005).

Immigrants have also been consistently over-represented among the poor and visible minority immigrants tend to be the poorest group (Kazemipur & Halli, 2001). Poverty rates are higher among immigrants compared to non-immigrants of the same ethnic origin (Kazemipur & Halli). These findings appear to point to

systemic discrimination based on both race and immigration status. In addition,

skilled worker immigrants reported feeling discriminated against by Canadian

employers (Grant & Nadin, 2007). Research with newcomers has established a

link between perceived discrimination and depression (Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou,

& Rummens, 1999). From another perspective, Aycan and Berry (1996) note that

when immigrants blame their failure to obtain employment on discrimination, it

may act as a coping strategy. Therefore, discrimination appears to negatively

impact immigrants, but understanding discrimination as a barrier to finding

employment may help immigrants cope with their unemployment and

underemployment.

*Loss*

Feelings of loss frequently accompany major changes in individuals' lives.

When individuals immigrate to Canada, the losses they experience often feel very

negative. According to Lee and Westwood (1996), difficulties with recognition of

credentials and finding employment frequently lead to feelings of loss. They

explain that "being lumped with other unskilled workers is extremely

disheartening to immigrants who are accustomed to maintaining professional

identities" (p. 35). A loss of professional identity may result in also losing the

validation they experienced through their occupational roles and status in the past.

Larger losses of status have been linked with a lower sense of satisfaction and

accomplishment (Aycan & Berry, 1996). After arriving in Canada, immigrants

may find themselves a minority for the first time, losing their dominant-group

status (Lee & Westwood). Other problems include losses of financial stability,

lifestyle, professional status, culture, social support, and self-confidence (Khan & Watson, 2005).

*Physical and Mental Health*

The immigration screening process tends to result in what has been termed the "healthy immigrant effect" (Health Canada, 1999; Kramer, Tracy, & Ivey, 1999). Despite the superior health status of newcomers, following their arrival, immigrant health generally begins to decline. This has been linked in part to various barriers to accessing health care including language and culture (Kramer et al.). The experience of immigration also seems to have negative effects on the health of newcomers, with Health Canada (1999) stating that "sufficient research was found to warrant inclusion of the experience of immigration itself as a central determinant of health for recent immigrants" (p. 28). The stressors of immigration may be one reason for the deteriorating health of immigrants (Khan & Watson, 2005). The mental health of immigrants, when excluding refugees, has been found to be equal to that of Canadians (Health Canada). Unemployment, however, seems to be related to a decline in immigrant mental health (Health Canada). Likewise, employment-related concerns and financial difficulties have been linked with mental health concerns among Chinese immigrant women (Tang et al., 2007).

*Gender Issues*

Adjustment difficulties are common among immigrant women to Canada. This group may be considered "triple disadvantaged" as a result of being women, immigrants, and often minorities (Wittebrood & Robertson, 1991). They

frequently end up working in poorly paid jobs that lack status. Overall, immigrant women are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than Canadian women (Arthur & Merali, 2005; CIC, 2005a; Health Canada, 1999). Khan and Watson (2005) found that immigration tended to negatively impact families, with marriages, in particular, weakening under the stress of Canadian settlement.

Immigrant women may work in order to allow their husbands to complete the education needed to obtain gainful employment (Worswick, 1996). Because the earnings contributions of immigrant wives are important in the family, the immigration process may challenge previously held gender-role expectations for some newcomers (Dion & Dion, 2001). For example, women who were not employed in their home countries may develop a shift in attitudes and expectations as a result of employment experiences in Canada. As a result, immigrant families may need to renegotiate gender-related roles. Gender-role renegotiation may be an important task for immigrant couples, particularly when both partners are employed. Um and Dancy (1999) highlight this point in their study that showed women who were unable to renegotiate gender-roles were more likely to be depressed than those who did so successfully.

*Other Factors*

The immigrant adjustment process may vary based on other factors including voluntariness, the projected length of the stay, age, and reasons for immigrating (Lee & Westwood, 1996). Lacking sufficient computer literacy can also be an obstacle to employment for professional immigrants (Lee & Westwood). Finally, intergenerational differences between immigrants and their

children who were raised in the dominant society may be a major source of conflict in the family (Arthur & Merali, 2005).

*Summary*

Skilled worker immigrants are a diverse group of individuals who come to Canada based on their education and work experience. As they settle, they encounter a variety of common challenges such as adjusting to a new culture, discrimination, and loss. They may have to learn a new language or improve their language proficiency. Employment is crucial to successful settlement, but many skilled worker immigrants encounter difficulty in obtaining suitable employment. A lack of Canadian work experience is one of the main obstacles in securing employment. Another barrier is the lack of recognition for individuals' foreign education and work experience, which often complicates the transition into their pre-migration professions. Immigrants often experience feelings of loss during settlement; problems obtaining suitable employment can exacerbate the feelings of loss. Immigrant women may encounter additional problems during settlement, such as having to renegotiate gender-roles. For some immigrants, the multitude of challenges during settlement results in declining physical and mental health.

The literature clearly indicates that settlement often represents a very difficult transition. However, research has generally not focused specifically on skilled worker immigrants, nor has it addressed how these experiences affect individuals' hope. Therefore, the goal of the current study was to understand the particular settlement experiences of skilled worker immigrants and to explore how their hope changed during settlement.

Hope

The value of hope is undeniable. When individuals experience difficulties and uncertainty, hope often becomes more visible and more important. For example, Edey and Jevne (2003) state, "hope helps us live with a difficult present and an uncertain future" (p. 45). Although they were referring to the importance of hope in dealing with illness, this statement correspondingly applies to the adversity newcomers to Canada often experience. Hope has received attention within a variety of disciplines and in recent years the study of hope has expanded tremendously (Eliott, 2005). However, hope research related to immigrants is sparse. I will discuss two studies about the experiences of adult immigrants and their hope, both of which studied Pakistani immigrants. Although these studies focused on Pakistani immigrants, the experiences and hopes of these participants are conceivably similar to those of other newcomers.

*Hope Cross-Culturally*

Hope appears to be a culturally relevant concept among a variety of individuals worldwide. Miller (1989) asserted that the "importance of hope is universally accepted" (p. 23). The Hope-Lit Database (accessible at http://www.hope-lit.ualberta.ca/Hope-LitDatabase.html), which is supported by the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta and the Hope Foundation of Alberta, includes over 2000 resources relating to hope. Sources are available about people in at least 36 countries and regions worldwide (e.g., Australia, Belgium, Central and South America, China, Dominican Republic, India, Israel, Middle East, Nigeria, and Thailand). Likewise, based on studies of hope in nine

countries worldwide, Parse (1999) stated "hope is a universal phenomenon arising in personal uniqueness and understood similarly by people of different heritages. Participants from various countries describe hope in unique ways, yet with similar meanings" (p. 288). Hope is also an important concept in various religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all of which are practiced in diverse locations around the globe (Eliott, 2005; Kausar, 2000). Based on this information, hope is expected to be meaningful to diverse immigrant populations, recognizing that the specific meaning and understanding of hope may differ from individual to individual.

*Immigrants and Hope*

There is very little research related to hope and adult immigrants. Only one study was found that directly addressed the hope of immigrants. This section also includes a study in which the hope of skilled worker immigrants during settlement was discussed, although this was not the purpose of the study.

Based on qualitative research of the immigration experiences of skilled worker Pakistani women who had been in Canada less than a year, Khan and Watson (2005) proposed a four-stage model to summarize their experiences (described above). Although the purpose of Khan and Watson's research was not to directly address hope among immigrants, their findings revealed the importance of hope in their participants' immigration experiences. The four stages these researchers identified were: (1) seeking a better future, (2) confronting reality, (3) grieving and mourning, and (4) adjusting.

In the first stage participants identified their pre-migration dreams, hopes, and goals (Khan & Watson, 2005). Shortly after immigrating, in Stage Two, the women were forced to confront the reality of their situation in Canada and their limited options. In this stage the women described a severe discrepancy between their pre-migration hopes and post-migration experiences. Individuals lost financial stability, professional status, and self-confidence, and felt uprooted and without support. Participants described feeling cheated by the points system for giving them false hopes. In the third stage, Grieving and Mourning, the women described anger and frustration with their current situation, as well as homesickness, family problems, and culture shock. The final stage, Adjusting, involved a sense of appreciation for parts of Canadian life and society such as free education and healthcare. As well, participants' plans to upgrade their education in Canada increased their feelings of hope for the future. Khan and Watson noted that participants sometimes contradicted themselves during interviews; however, they explained, "the contradictions reflected the rays of hope that they retained after confronting the reality of their immigration" (p. 316).

Khan and Watson's (2005) study provides valuable information about the early settlement experiences of Pakistani immigrant women.  Whereas Khan and Watson's research examined the first year of settlement, the goal of the present study was to explore the settlement experiences of individuals who had been in Canada longer. In addition, the current research sought to understand the experiences of male and female skilled worker immigrants from various locations, adding a much broader perspective to the study of this topic. Khan and Watson's

study indirectly revealed the importance of hope during settlement. Attending purposefully to hope in the current study provides more understanding about its role during settlement.

In her dissertation research of hope among first generation Pakistani immigrants, Kausar's (2000) participants reported changes in their experience of hope at personal, familial, social, and professional levels. Based on her findings she developed a model of the transformational process of hope, which she proposed occurs in three phases: discovering loss (diminishing hope), exploring resources (recovering hope), and recognizing possibilities (flourishing hope).

The first phase, Discovering Loss, involved recognizing and mourning the losses, and related to diminished hope (Kausar, 2000). When individuals were able to make sense of, accept, and mourn these losses, it led to the potential for growth in the next phase. In the second phase, Exploring Resources, newcomers began focusing on potential, abilities, and strengths. This shift in perspective reminded immigrants of their personal, relational, situational, and spiritual resources, which helped recover their sense of hope and led to successful adaptation. Finally, in the third phase, Recognizing Possibilities, immigrants were able to envision possibilities, alternatives, and opportunities. This phase involved a variety of changes such as creating new goals, pursuing higher education, career changes, exploring alternative routes, growth, more opportunities, integration, reformulation. Newcomers also found meaning in their experiences and their hopes were uplifted.

Overall, Kausar (2000) found evidence that immigrants' hope is closely tied to a successful career and education. She also found that her participants' hope allowed them to use crisis as an opportunity for growth. Although she discussed the transformational process of hope, the main focus of Kausar's study was actually on the *meaning* of hope among Pakistani immigrants. The aim of the current study was to come to a deeper understanding of how hope *changed* during settlement. Since very little research has focused on immigrants *and* hope, it is worthwhile to consider the general literature about hope.

*Theories of Hope*

In this section several theories of hope are outlined. These models offer different ways of understanding hope, each of which provides insight into hope in general, as well as the hope of skilled worker immigrants. Examining how hope has been described and conceptualized helps increase sensitivity to recognizing and exploring the depth of individuals' hope.

*Snyder's Hope Theory*

C.R. Snyder was a major proponent of a unidimensional model of hope that he called Hope Theory (1995). Dozens of studies have been based on this idea of hope and many researchers have used scales derived from this theory to distinguish between individuals with high hope and those with low hope. The language Snyder used to describe his ideas about hope is distinctive. According to Snyder, hope is the "process of thinking about one's goals, along with the motivation to move toward (agency) and the ways to achieve (pathways) these goals" (p. 355). Snyder's hope theory concentrated on goals and how people meet

their goals. He focused on cognitive processes, including thoughts and perceptions, and how one's cognitions help them achieve their goals. Emotions are merely a reflection of an individual's thoughts about their hope in a situation.

Snyder (1995) also argued that hope is primarily dispositional and, as a result, relatively stable over time – therefore, an individual can be considered to be a high hope person or a low hope person and this will tend to be consistent regardless of one's experiences. Snyder concedes, however, that dispositional hope can be changed over time with intervention such as counselling. In summary, Snyder describes hope as a "concrete way of thinking about oneself in relation to goals" (p. 357). Considering that immigrants tend to be career-oriented and have high achievement motivations (Boneva and Frieze, 2001), Snyder's focus on goals may help in understanding immigrants' hopes related to their employment in Canada.

*Morse & Doberneck's Universal Components of Hope*

Like Snyder's hope theory, Morse and Doberneck's (1995) model of hope is similarly goal-directed. It is based on research in the field of Nursing with four distinct groups of participants: patients waiting for heart transplants, spinal cord-injured patients, breast cancer survivors, and breastfeeding mothers intending to continue nursing while employed. From their research, Morse and Doberneck proposed the following definition of hope: "Hope is a response to a threat that results in the setting of a desired goal; the awareness of the cost of not achieving the goal; the planning to make the goal a reality, the assessment, selection, and use of all internal and external resources and supports that will assist in achieving

the goal; and the reevaluation and revision of the plan while enduring, working, and striving to reach the desired goal" (p. 284).

Qualitative analysis of interviews led to a conceptualization of hope that involved seven universal hope components and four hope patterns (Morse & Doberneck, 1995). The seven universal components of hope were: a realistic initial assessment of the predicament or threat, the envisioning of alternatives and setting of goals, a bracing for negative outcomes, a realistic assessment of personal resources and of external conditions and resources, the solicitation of mutually supportive relationships, the continuous evaluation for signs reinforcing the set goals, and a determination to endure.

The four hope patterns were derived on the basis of how the universal components of hope applied to the four groups studied (Morse & Doberneck, 1995). As a result, the four hope patterns corresponded to the groups studied: hoping for a chance was the pattern of hope characterized by patients waiting for heart transplants, incremental hope was the pattern of hope characterized by spinal cord-injured patients, hope against hope was the pattern of hope characterized by breast cancer survivors, and provisional hope was the pattern of hope characterized by breastfeeding mothers intending to continue nursing while employed. Overall, Morse and Doberneck's model of hope outlined a series of steps individuals progressed through as they worked toward their goal(s). The literature about immigrants suggests a number of experiences that may threaten their hope. Therefore, Morse and Doberneck's model provides some insights into how skilled worker immigrants' hope may change in response to these threats.

In summary, unidimensional models of hope focus primarily on goals. When goal-attainment is largely out of individuals' control, as in the case of many skilled worker immigrants, unidimensional models fail to recognize other aspects of hope. Therefore, multidimensional models may be better suited to understanding the hope of skilled worker immigrants during settlement.

*Dufault & Martocchio's Multidimensional Model*

Dufault and Martiocchio's (1985) model of hope was derived from Dufault's dissertation research in Nursing that studied elderly cancer patients using qualitative methods. Their seminal paper integrated much of the previous research about hope to provide an inclusive model. Their work is frequently cited in hope theory and research and Eliott (2005) suggested that subsequent attempts to create a model of hope using qualitative analysis were simply variations on Dufault and Martocchio's model.

They define hope as a "*multidimensional* dynamic life force characterized by a *confident* yet *uncertain* expectation of achieving a future *good* which, to the hoping person, is *realistically* possible and *personally significant*" (p. 380, emphasis in original). The multidimensional model of hope proposed by Dufault and Martocchio consists of two spheres and six dimensions. The two spheres are (1) generalized hope, a sense of some future beneficial but undefined changes, and (2) particularized hope, which is concerned with an outcome, good, or state of being that is particularly valued.

Six dimensions of hope are also outlined: affective, cognitive, behavioural, affiliative, temporal, and contextual (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985). Delineating

each dimension more fully, the *affective* dimension focuses on the emotions and sensations that are part of hoping. The *cognitive* dimension focuses on "the processes by which individuals wish, imagine, wonder, perceive, think, remember, learn, generalize, interpret, and judge in relation to hope" (p. 384). The *behavioural* dimension focuses on the hoping person's action orientation. Actions may function to achieve a hope or actions may be motivated by hope. Next, the *affiliative* dimension focuses on the hoping person's sense of connectedness and relationships with others, God/Higher Power, and other living things. The *temporal* dimension focuses on the "hoping persons' experience of time (past, present, and future) in relation to hopes and hoping" (p. 387). Finally, the *contextual* dimension focuses on the life circumstances that surround, influence, and are a part of an individual's hope. For example, individuals often experience hope in the context of loss.

According to Dufault and Martocchio (1985) hope is process-oriented, or continually changing. They also argue that there is always hope – some sphere or dimension of hope is always present. In addition, hope can be influenced and supported by caregivers and helpers.

Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) multidimensional model addresses several points relevant to skilled worker immigrants. The idea of hope as dynamic fits with the settlement experience that involves changes in hope in response to situations and experiences. The emphasis on hope as personally significant is also important with diverse immigrant populations because individuals' hope needs to be acknowledged as valuable, whether or not it fits the Western mould. The

spheres and dimensions allow for a wide variety of hopes, not limiting hopes to, for example, the goal of finding a job in their pre-migration occupation. This theory provides a framework for understanding hope in a variety of immigrant experiences, such as in the context of loss and in relation to their religious beliefs.

*Farran, Herth, & Popovich's Model of Hope and Hopelessness*

Another multidimensional model of hope is based on the work of Farran, Herth, and Popovich (1995). Much of the research by Farran et al. is based on implicit descriptions of hope. They describe four central attributes of hope and hopelessness: experiential process (pain of hope), spiritual or transcendent process (soul of hope), rational thought process (mind of hope), and relational process (heart of hope). Hope is defined as "an essential experience of the human condition. It functions as a way of feeling, a way of thinking, a way of behaving, and a way of relating to oneself and one's world. Hope has the ability to be fluid in its expectations, and in the event that the desired object or outcome does not occur, hope can still be present" (p. 6). Hopelessness, likewise, is considered "an essential experience of the human condition. It functions as a feeling of despair and discouragement; a thought process that expects nothing; and a behavioral process in which the person attempts little or takes inappropriate action" (p. 25).

Farran and colleagues (1995) explain that hope and hopelessness diverge when it comes to their outcomes; therefore, hopefulness results in enhanced functioning whereas hopelessness results in diminished functioning. They contend that both hope and hopelessness are rooted in intrapersonal (within an individual), interpersonal (between individuals), and environmental/sociological experiences

(among individuals in a community or society). Farran and colleagues consider hope and coping "inexplicably intertwined" (p. 17), explaining that hope may be an antecedent to coping, a coping strategy, and/or an outcome of coping.

This model of hope and hopelessness provides a helpful theory for understanding immigrants' hopes. Acknowledging that hope can arise out of difficult circumstances (the pain of hope) corresponds with the challenging experiences of many skilled worker immigrants. Considering that many newcomers have deeply held spiritual beliefs, it is important to recognize that the soul of hope may be significant to many individuals. Again, the mind of hope and heart of hope would also seem to be consistent with the hopes of newcomers. This theoretical model provides a broad framework for understanding the hopes of a variety of individuals, included skilled worker immigrants.

*Duggleby & Wright's Model of Transforming Hope*

In their study of elderly palliative patients, Duggleby and Wright (2005) sought to understand how these individuals live with hope. In comparison to the theories of hope already discussed that focused on what hope *is*, the emerging theory proposed by Duggleby and Wright concentrated on how hope *transforms*. That is, the processes by which individuals were able to live with hope. Likewise, the goal of the present study was to understand how hope changes during skilled worker immigrants' settlement.

Duggleby and Wright (2005) identified transforming hope as the process that enabled participants to live with hope. The process of transforming hope involved acknowledging "life the way it is," searching for meaning, and positive

reappraisal. Acknowledging "life the way it is" involved recognition that previous hopes may no longer be feasible and coming to terms with losses. Searching for meaning was characterized by reflecting on meaning and value in life, which allowed participants to view challenging situations in a positive way. Finally, positive reappraisal involved a process of adapting to life changes and creating new patterns of hope. Transforming hope was also facilitated by supportive relationships, spirituality, and controlled symptoms. This model provides insight into how skilled worker immigrants' hope may transform during settlement.

*Summary*

The literature about hope, and research regarding hope and immigrants, present a foundation from which to base the current study. The unidimensional models of hope offer a way of understanding the goal-directed hopes of skilled worker immigrants, particularly in relation to their career development. The multidimensional models make sense of the other aspects of immigrants' experiences and changing hopes. The definition of hope used in this study is from Stephenson's (1991) seminal review of hope literature, in which she defines hope as "a process of anticipation that involves the interaction of thinking, acting, feeling, and relating, and is directed toward a future fulfillment that is personally meaningful" (p. 1459). This definition provides a flexible framework for understanding the hope of skilled worker immigrants in this study and was provided to participants as needed.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the changes in hope during the migration and settlement process for skilled worker immigrants in Canada. The objectives of this study were (1) to deepen understanding of the settlement process for skilled worker immigrants, (2) to develop greater insight into how hope changes during this transition, and (3) to provide recommendations to counsellors and immigrant-serving professionals based on the findings. Reality is understood in this study from a constructivist perspective. The method utilized in the design and implementation of all aspects of this study is Basic Qualitative Research (Merriam, 2009) and analysis was guided by thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The following chapter describes the research approach more thoroughly including participant selection, data collection, data analysis, evaluation of the study, and ethical considerations.

Qualitative Research

An important goal of qualitative research is enhanced understanding of human behaviour and experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; McLeod, 2001). Through qualitative methods the researcher seeks to discover understanding from the data, rather than from prior knowledge or theory (Richards & Morse, 2007). According to Merriam (2009), qualitative researchers are interested in understanding "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13). Bogdan and Biklen outline five characteristics of qualitative research: it is based in a naturalistic setting, it gathers rich descriptive

data, it is concerned with process, it utilizes inductive analysis, and it is concerned with meaning. Similarly, Merriam describes four major characteristics that are essential to understanding the nature of qualitative research: the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive. Qualitative methods offer the potential for improved understanding of how the hope of skilled worker immigrants changes during settlement.

Qualitative methods are suitable for studying topics where little is known (Richards & Morse, 2007). Although previous research has identified many of the challenges immigrants in general experience, studies have rarely focused on skilled worker immigrants. In addition, research exploring skilled worker immigrants and hope is virtually non-existent. Therefore, a qualitative approach was appropriate to investigate this topic.

Qualitative research allows the investigator to recognize culture as an important part of an individual's identity (Morrow, Rakhsha, & Casteñeda, 2001). A number of strengths make qualitative research suitable for studying immigrants. These include a recognition of the importance of understanding the individual in context, the need for researcher self-awareness and self-reflection, the ability to capture meanings of experiences, a variety of methods to address questions that traditional methods cannot answer, the ability to investigate unexplored topics and ideas, and the opportunity for silenced voices to be heard (Morrow et al.).

In studying skilled worker immigrants, one must recognize that the individual is situated in a particular social, cultural, and political context (Morrow

et al., 2001). As the researcher, it is important that I am aware of and reflect on my beliefs, biases, and assumptions in relation to the individuals and larger topic being studied, particularly as these individuals have had different experiences than I have had. In research with skilled worker immigrants, qualitative inquiry also provides an opportunity for participants to describe their experiences in greater depth, and for the stories of these individuals to be heard and passed on to a larger audience. Approaching the topic with qualitative methods does not force participants to narrowly quantify or categorize their experiences; instead they are able to share their stories in their full complexity.

<p style="text-align:center">Constructivist Paradigm</p>

Research from a constructivist paradigm entails several assumptions. A foundational premise of constructivism is that the human world is different than the natural, physical world in that human perception is not real in an absolute sense, but is socially constructed (Patton, 2002). In response to the ontological question about the nature of reality, according to a constructivist worldview reality is relative (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The constructivist approach embraces the idea of multiple social realities (Merriam, 2009). Realities are local and specific in nature, yet may be shared by individuals and cultures (Guba & Lincoln). As Guba and Lincoln explain, "constructions are not more or less 'true,' in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated" (p. 111).

The epistemological question is about the relationship between the investigator and participants, and a constructivist paradigm recognizes that the

researcher creates the data and analysis in interaction with those studied (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2003). Finally, in response to the methodological question regarding how the inquirer goes about finding out what can be known, from a constructivist paradigm constructions are elicited and refined through the researcher's interaction with participants (Guba & Lincoln). The methodological goal from this perspective is to create an informed and sophisticated consensus construction (Guba & Lincoln).

From a constructivist paradigm, participants provide the interviewer with a construction of their reality that is context-bound (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the identities of the participant and the interviewer affect the interaction. Likewise, power, professional status, gender, race, ethnicity, and age may all influence the direction and content of the interview. For example, if participants perceive me as very young and naïve, they may feel that I will not fully understand some of their challenges. Alternatively, the participant may feel they have an opportunity to educate me about their experiences, especially if I seem interested and open to learning about what they have to share.

As a grandchild of Dutch immigrants, my personal experiences are somewhat removed from the realities of first-generation skilled worker immigrants. In addition, I differ from my racially and culturally diverse participants in that I am a white Canadian. Being a researcher who is a racial/cultural "outsider" has been identified by some as problematic (Birman, 2006). From a constructivist perspective, however, identities are constructed through interaction (Best, 2003) and differences between an interviewer and

participant do not invalidate results, but produce results that are interesting and meaningful, albeit influenced by the context in which they were obtained (Rhodes, 1994).

<div align="center">Basic Qualitative Research</div>

This study was guided by an approach known as Basic Qualitative Research (Merriam, 2009). The method of basic qualitative research shaped this study from its inception, through data collection and analysis, and into the final report. Merriam indicated that basic qualitative studies are a common form of qualitative research, citing several studies that have used this method (e.g., Kasworm, 2005; Levinson & Levinson, 1996). In this method, the central purpose is to understand how individuals make sense of their lives and experiences. The researcher is interested in how individuals interpret their experiences, how they construct their reality, and what meaning they attach to their experiences.

Basic qualitative research offers an appropriate design for approaching and addressing the objectives of the current study of skilled worker immigrants. Data collection in basic qualitative studies involves interviewing participants and data analysis involves recognizing recurring patterns that embody the data. Interpretation is based on "the researcher's understanding of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 24). Merriam indicates that the findings of a basic qualitative study are the recurring patterns or themes identified during analysis. Data analysis in the present study was further directed by thematic analysis.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was utilized in this study's data analysis activities. According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis is a "foundational method for qualitative analysis" (p. 78). They argue that one of the strengths of this approach is its flexibility, particularly in regards to theoretical and epistemological positions. Therefore, thematic analysis is compatible with the constructivist paradigm informing this study, although it can also be used with other paradigmatic positions.

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as an approach for "identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). The researcher using thematic analysis is actively involved in this process of discovery. Thematic analysis can be used deductively or inductively (Boyatzis, 1998) – I chose to utilize a data-driven inductive approach congruent with basic qualitative research. This analysis technique essentially involves searching across data with the goal of finding repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke). This corresponds with the analysis techniques utilized in basic qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Thematic analysis is described in more detail below in the section about Data Analysis.

Data Collection

*Access and Recruitment*

Because there is no existing comprehensive listing of immigrants in Canada accessible to the general public, I sought access to and recruitment of immigrant populations through a variety of other means, which involved three

main approaches. Several researchers have found that recruitment through personal contact is the most successful strategy in recruiting immigrants (Aroian, Katz, & Kulwicki, 2006; Neufeld, Harrison, Hughes, Spitzer, & Stewart, 2001; Rodríguez, Rodríguez, & Davis, 2006; Shelton & Rianon, 2004). Therefore, the first approach involved contacting friends and acquaintances, requesting that they forward information about the study to potential participants. Personal contact also entailed contacting acquaintances to invite them to participate if they met the inclusion criteria and were interested in contributing. Two other approaches were utilized, but neither of these tactics yielded any participants. The second approach involved snowball sampling, asking participants to forward study information to individuals they knew who might be interested in participating. A third recruitment strategy involved contact with staff members at immigrant serving agencies in the Edmonton region (e.g., Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, The Bredin Institute's Centre for Skilled and Internationally Trained Professionals) and local cultural organizations.

With each of the strategies utilized, I provided the contact person with a flyer with basic information about the study (see Appendix A). Individuals who wanted to participate contacted me to express their interest. After establishing contact with potential participants, I ensured they met the eligibility criteria (discussed below) and asked whether they preferred to be interviewed in English or another language. All of the participants indicated they were comfortable being interviewed in English. As a result, interpreters were not required, although they would have been provided if needed.

*Sampling Approach*

The nature of qualitative methods demands that researchers select a sample that will enable them to learn as much as possible (Merriam, 2002). Therefore, participants for this study were selected through purposeful sampling (Richards & Morse, 2007). This entails selecting individuals based on their characteristics, in other words, those who appear to be information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). Individuals who met the inclusion criteria described below were considered most likely to lead to a richer understanding of how skilled worker immigrants' hope changes during settlement.

*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Eligible participants were selected through a screening process that ensured they (1) were first generation adult immigrants, (2) had resided in Canada for between 18 months and 20 years, (3) immigrated through the Federal Skilled Worker Class, and (4) were willing and able to discuss their settlement experiences and hope in depth. For the purposes of this study, first generation immigrants (criterion 1) were defined as individuals who were born and grew up in another country, later coming to Canada as adults. I chose not to narrow my focus to any particular cultural group because I was most interested in how the hope of skilled immigrants in general changes and what contributes to this, not in understanding hope from a particular cultural perspective. That being said, I certainly recognized that culture influences one's experiences and perceptions. For criterion 2, eighteen months was selected as a lower limit because this helped to ensure that participants have had a variety of experiences in Canada, many of

which may have affected their hope. An upper limit of twenty years was set so that the experiences of settlement were recent enough to be meaningfully discussed and reflected upon. This study focused on skilled worker immigrants (criterion 3) because of the particular challenges they face in obtaining employment, which is critical to their successful integration. Finally, participants had to be willing and able to discuss their settlement experiences and hope in depth (criterion 4), an essential condition for the qualitative research I conducted. Of the six individuals who contacted me about taking part in the study, four were eligible to participate and were interviewed. All were comfortable being interviewed in English, even though the option to use an interpreter was provided.

*Sample Size*

As Morse (2000) explained, the scope of the study, nature of the topic, and quality of the data all affect the number of participants necessary. In this study, the scope is relatively narrow, requiring fewer participants. Financial and time constraints of this Master's study also limited the sample size. However, the four participants provided in-depth and rich descriptive data, which provided insight into the experiences of skilled worker immigrants. Purposeful sampling also helped to ensure information-rich cases. Conducting a second interview and member checks contributed to furthering the analysis. Overall, the variety, depth, and richness of the data gathered were considered sufficient to produce meaningful results.

*Demographics of Participants*

The participants all immigrated to Canada through the skilled worker class. At the time of the interview they were between 33 and 39 years of age and had been in Canada from approximately 2 to 4 years. Prior to immigrating, the participants originated from North Africa, East Africa, Eastern Europe, and South Asia. All of the participants spoke at least one other language besides English. There were two male participants and two female participants. The four participants were all married; two participants had children, and another participant's spouse was pregnant at the time of the interview. Participants had obtained varying levels of education: one participant indicated having completed a Bachelor's degree and graduate level certificate, one had obtained two Master's degrees, and two participants had completed a Doctoral degree. Each of the participants indicated a religious affiliation: one Christian, one Muslim, one Jewish, and one Hindu.

<center>Data Generation</center>

Richards and Morse (2007) explain that qualitative data are made, stating, "*making data* is a collaborative, ongoing process in which data are interactively negotiated by the researcher and participants" (p. 107; emphasis in original). The data in this study were derived from two main sources: interviews, and the research journal with associated memos. The research was also informed by supplementary informal conversations, testimonials of skilled immigrants found online, and reading of various websites related to immigrants and immigration.

*Literature Review*

The primary review of the relevant literature about hope and immigrants was carried out prior to beginning data collection for this study. After completing the study, a secondary literature review was conducted to further inform the findings. Literature from both the primary and secondary reviews was integrated throughout the discussion section and in the implications for counselling and policy sections.

*Interviews*

Data for this study were largely generated through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The interviews were guided by questions exploring the settlement experiences and hope of the participants (see Appendix B for the interview guide). The semi-structured format provided some degree of consistency across interviews, but also allowed respondents the opportunity to discuss what they saw as important in relation to the topic being explored, and which I may not have asked directly about. During the interviews, clarifying statements and probes helped develop a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and hopes, and invited further reflection. Simultaneous data collection and analysis, which is characteristic of qualitative approaches, allowed for modifications and additions to the initial guiding questions as the study progressed (Merriam, 2002).

Interviews took place in quiet, distraction-free locations chosen by the participants. One interview took place in my office at the University of Alberta, one was conducted in a participant's home, one took place in a private room at a

participant's workplace, and one was conducted over the telephone. Interviews

lasted from approximately 70 to 90 minutes. A second interview was conducted

with three of the participants to deepen the analysis and as a member check of the

initial analysis and findings. The fourth participant was involved in a member

check of her story and the emerging themes.

Before beginning each interview, participants were informed about the

nature of their participation and signed a written consent form (see Appendix C).

Next, participants completed a demographic information form (see Appendix D),

which included their choice of a pseudonym to be used in place of their name in

all research materials. Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and

transcribed verbatim. Braun and Clarke (2006) consider transcription to be part of

the first phase of thematic analysis (described in more detail below). Because

researchers who transcribe their own interviews tend to know their interviews

better and to be more familiar with the data (Braun & Clarke; Seidman, 1998),

and due to my familiarity with participants' accents, I chose to complete the

transcribing myself.

*Research Journal, Memos, and Supervision Consultation*

Braun and Clarke (2006) consider writing "an integral part of analysis" (p.

86), to be utilized throughout the study. Early in the research process, I began

writing my thoughts, ideas, questions, and reflections in my research journal.

Following each interview, I wrote field notes recording my observations,

impressions, perceptions, questions, and thoughts. In addition, throughout the

study I frequently wrote in my research journal and in memos about my reactions,

reflections, and impressions associated with interviews and/or analysis. As suggested by Charmaz (1995), memos were written freely with no audience in mind and were treated as "preliminary, partial and immanently correctable" (p. 44). Reflective writing was especially important during the later phases of analyses. Merriam (2002) relates this process to an audit trail, which "describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (p. 27). Journal entries and memos served as a basis for ongoing consultation with my thesis supervisor.

A qualitative data management program, NVivo 8 (QSR International, 2008), was utilized for the organization and management of data including transcripts, memos, and coding. It should be noted that this software was used solely to manage the data, with analysis and interpretation conducted by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was informed by the general guidelines of basic qualitative research, and followed the specific suggestions for thematic analysis offered by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach involves a recursive, rather than linear, process in which movement occurs back and forth between the phases, similar to constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). From a constructivist perspective, the goal was to create an informed and sophisticated consensual construction of the changing hope of skilled worker immigrants during settlement (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

*Steps in Thematic Analysis*

The first step in thematic analysis is to familiarize oneself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As mentioned earlier, this phase involved listening to the audio-tapes and transcription of the interviews. This phase also required immersion in the data, through repeated listening and reading, until becoming "familiar with the depth and breadth of the content" (p. 87). Searching for meanings and patterns began in this first phase, as did writing notes and ideas about potential codes.

Generating initial codes is the second phase of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After becoming familiar with the data, initial codes were created from the data. Codes are the "most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). This phase involved working through all the data systematically, identifying anything that seemed interesting (Braun & Clarke). Braun and Clarke provide three suggestions that were heeded during this phase of analysis: (a) code extensively, (b) code extracts inclusively, incorporating relevant surrounding data, and (c) code extracts into more than one theme as appropriate.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) third phase involves searching for themes, and begins after initial coding of all the data. Themes are simply patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke; Boyatzis, 1998). Generally speaking, the main task of this phase was to refocus the data at the broader level of themes, rather than codes (Braun & Clarke). Specifically, this involved manually sorting codes into various potential themes. This phase initiated consideration of relationships in the data: between

codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes. The eventual fate

of the initial codes developed in Phase 2 was varied: some became main themes,

others sub-themes, and others were discarded due to insignificance.

The fourth phase of thematic analysis is the reviewing of themes (Braun &

Clarke, 2006). This phase involved exhaustive refinement of themes. Braun and

Clarke explain that "data within themes should cohere together meaningfully,

while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes" (p. 91).

First, data extracts (i.e., quotes) were reviewed to determine whether they seemed

to form a coherent pattern within each theme, and changes were made until a

candidate thematic map was formed. The next step involved determining, by

rereading all the interviews, whether the themes and the thematic map accurately

represented the data gathered. Rereading the data also involved coding data

missed in earlier stages. Continuous refinement was required until the thematic

map fit the data.

Defining and naming themes is the fifth phase of thematic analysis (Braun

& Clarke, 2006). This step required definition and further refinement of the

themes, which Braun and Clarke explain means "identifying the 'essence' of what

each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect

of the data each theme captures" (p. 92).  This involved organizing each theme

and accompanying quotes into an account that was internally coherent and

consistent. In addition, this step entailed consideration of each theme in relation to

the other themes, any sub-themes, and the broader overall theme in the data.

Braun and Clarke determine success in this phase by the ability to clearly and

concisely define what the themes are and what they are not. Finally, this phase involved moving from the working titles of themes to the names that were used in the final analysis.

The sixth and final phase of thematic analysis involves producing the report (Braun & Clarke). Braun and Clarke succinctly summarize the goal of this phase:

> Extracts [quotes] need to be embedded within an analytic narrative that compellingly illustrates the story you are telling about your data, and your analytic narrative needs to go *beyond* description of the data, and make an *argument* in relation to your research question. (p. 93, emphasis in original)

Evaluating the Study

Guba and Lincoln (1989) outline four criteria for evaluating trustworthiness in constructivist qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This study was assessed based on these standards because they were congruent with the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research. Next each criterion will be described, along with how it was addressed it in the current study.

*Credibility* is focused on congruency between participants' constructed realities and how well those realities are represented by the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Guba and Lincoln offer several techniques to improve credibility, including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, progressive subjectivity, and member checks.

In the present study credibility was addressed by prolonged engagement with the data and persistent observation to add depth to the findings. Peer debriefing was also utilized by meeting with another graduate student regularly to discuss our research and in discussing the findings with various other individuals. Review of my coding and analysis by my thesis supervisor also ensured solid connections between my data and analysis. Because one of the participant's accounts differed somewhat from the others, this offered the opportunity for some level of negative case analysis. Progressive subjectivity involves monitoring the researcher's developing construction (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This was addressed by maintaining an audit trail of each step of the research process, including memos and a research journal documenting my evolving ideas throughout the research process. Finally, member checks have been described as the "single most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 239). With all of the participants some degree of member checking took place. For example, each individual received a copy of his or her participant introduction and provided feedback about this. In addition, three of the participants took part in a second interview that involved verification of my constructions of their realities.

*Transferability* is the qualitative equivalent of generalizability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Patton (2002) argues that extrapolation is a better term for use in qualitative research: "Extrapolations are modest speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical, conditions" (p. 584). Guba and Lincoln explain that the main technique for establishing the degree of transferability is thick description. Therefore,

transferability was addressed in the current study by explaining individuals' stories (Chapter Four) and the themes constructed (Chapter Five), both of which contained rich and thick descriptions of participants' experiences. From these descriptions it is hoped that readers will be able to relate to the topic and see applications in their own personal and professional lives. Variation in the study sample, in this case interviewing individuals originating from different countries, also allows for a greater potential range of applications (Merriam, 2009).

*Dependability* is concerned with the stability of data over time (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and with establishing that the results make sense given the data collected (Merriam, 2009). Dependability was addressed in the current study by keeping an audit trail of each step of the research process, including the decisions made as the findings were constructed. Having my supervisor review my data and analysis throughout the research process also helped to ensure the themes fully portrayed the studied experience, and provided support for the dependability of the study. According to Merriam (2009), triangulation can also be used to ensure dependability. Therefore, in the current study triangulation involved interview data collected from people with different perspectives and backgrounds, as well as follow-up interviews with the same individuals.

*Confirmability* refers to "establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination, but are clearly derived from the data" (p. 392, Tobin & Begley, 2004). The methods utilized in this study by their nature helped to ensure confirmability. For example, constant comparative analysis required the analysis to remain grounded in the data.

Chapter Five of this thesis contains information about the data gathered, including quotes from research participants that support the themes outlined. In this way the reader is able to determine whether the evidence adequately supports my constructed findings. Keeping all the research data and materials for a minimum of five years after completing the study enables others the opportunity to confirm the findings if deemed necessary. In addition, my supervisor's review of my analysis acts as another form of confirmation.

## Ethical Considerations

A proposal for this study was submitted to, and approved by, the Faculties of Education, Extension, and Augustana Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. The strict guidelines of the Ethical Review Board helped to ensure appropriate interaction with participants in this study. Qualitative research with immigrants requires particular attention to issues of informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity.

### *Free and Informed Consent*

Informed consent was explained to participants prior to undertaking interviews. Since formality and jargon may alienate participants (Birman, 2006), informed consent was described in an informal style. In addition, because lengthy forms can lead individuals to agree to participate without fully understanding the research (Rodríguez et al., 2006), the consent form was as concise as possible, while still covering the necessary topics. Both these characteristics are evident in the informed consent document included in Appendix C. Verbal and written consent to participate was obtained from participants. The consent process

included assuring participants of anonymity and confidentiality, informing

participants that they could discontinue participation or choose not to answer

questions at any time without penalty, and asking permission for the information

they provided to be used for research purposes. Prior to beginning subsequent

interviews, consent was verbally reviewed again as needed.

Participants were offered a $30 honorarium in recognition of their

participation. Because immigrants, particularly those who have been in Canada

for a shorter time, often work multiple jobs to sustain themselves, the honorarium

recognized that the individual may have taken time away from a job to participate

in the study. It is not believed that this incentive compromised the voluntary

consent of participants. One of the participants declined the honorarium due to a

belief that financial assistance should not be accepted when not in need and

another participant requested that the honorarium be donated to a particular

immigrant-serving program.

After learning about the study and receiving a flyer with more information

about it, individuals interested in participating were required to contact me to

express this interest. This also helped to ensure voluntary consent. For individuals

recruited through personal contacts, I explained that they were not required or

expected to participate to confirm that they did not feel any obligation to

participate by nature of their relationship with the personal contact.

*Confidentiality*

Because cultural communities are often small and tight-knit, maintaining

confidentiality is particularly important in qualitative research with immigrants

(Birman, 2006; Imam & Akhtar, 2005). Confidentiality of interview data was maintained by ensuring that participants' real names were not attached to any of the information gathered (aside from the consent form). Participants were asked to choose a pseudonym and this was used to label any information about the participant including audio files, transcripts, memos, etc. Only on the demographic information form (see Appendix D) were participants' names and pseudonyms both present and these documents, like all physical documents, were secured in a locked filing cabinet. All other documents, both physical and electronic, were identified only by participants' pseudonyms. Electronic files were secured by applying password protection. In publications and/or presentations resulting from this research, the participants' anonymity will be ensured by using pseudonyms and by changing identifying information in their accounts to generalize it. For example, a 45-year old Nigerian man would be described as a West African man in his mid-forties.

Following completion of the study, all electronic documents and files relating to the study will be put on a memory key and kept in a locked filing cabinet with other research documents. All electronic documents and files will be erased from the computer. Once the data and information are no longer needed for research purposes, and five years after data collection is complete, all files and information will be destroyed.

*Cultural Sensitivity*

Finally, cultural sensitivity needs to be addressed when studying immigrants. Without cultural sensitivity, there is a risk that data will be

misinterpreted, perpetuating stereotypes and misunderstandings (Hinton, Guo, Hillygus, & Levkoff, 2000). Cultural sensitivity includes awareness of similarities and differences between cultures and reflexive examination of racial and cultural belief systems. Cross-cultural coursework has provided me with a foundation for cultural sensitivity, but I have continued learning about participants' cultures and have consciously taken time to engage reflexively in a research journal. I made every effort to be culturally sensitive with participants and attempted to take on the role of a curious "student", with the participant as "teacher", particularly in relation to cultural information (Morrow et al., 2001; Rhodes, 1994).

## Conclusion

This study was based on the philosophical perspective of constructivism. Basic qualitative research was the methodological framework guiding this study and thematic analysis was used to organize and make sense of interview narratives. Utilization of this approach enabled a more complete understanding of how hope changes during the settlement process for skilled immigrants. In addition, it provided an opportunity for the voices of these individuals to be heard and appreciated. The following two chapters represent the research results. Chapter Four introduces the participants and their stories through summaries that capture their experiences as a whole. Chapter Five illustrates the participants' experiences through themes that address the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS

In this chapter each of the four participants' stories is presented as a whole in order to enhance a fuller understanding of each individual in this study. Because qualitative research is concerned with understanding the individual in context and with thick descriptions (Merriam, 2009), this chapter facilitates appreciation for each unique individual. During the interviews, the skilled worker immigrants in the study shared their experiences during settlement, how these experiences affected their hope, and how they were able to regain their sense of hope. These accounts offer a snapshot into the life, experiences, and perspectives of each individual. In addition, these summaries provide context and details about each person and his or her specific challenges, as well as his or her methods of coping and hoping.

Ali

*Life before Canada*

Ali is in his mid-thirties and grew up in North Africa. In his home country, Ali completed a Bachelor's degree and a graduate teaching certificate. He taught English for a few years before deciding to immigrate to Canada. He hoped that in Canada he would be able to continue working in his profession. After applying to come to Canada as a skilled worker, Ali waited more than two years before he learned he was accepted. Although Ali considered settling in other Canadian cities, he decided to come to Edmonton on the advice of an acquaintance from his home country who is living in Canada. This individual suggested that there were

more employment opportunities available in Edmonton. At the time of the interview, Ali had been in Canada approximately two years.

*Hopes and Expectations for Life in Canada*

Ali explained how, from the outside, Canada is portrayed as a kind of paradise. Ali came to Canada seeking a better life and with high hopes about his future. In Canada he expected to be able to support his family back home financially, to pursue higher education, to gain more experience in his occupation, to have greater religious freedom, to have a secure status, and to have a better quality of life (including better healthcare, education, being able to meet his basic needs, etc).

*Finding the First Job*

Ali described his transition after arriving as a difficult one in which he felt unsupported in becoming established in Canada. He quickly realized that he could only depend on himself. As Ali searched for teaching positions, he soon discovered he had to apply to his professional regulatory body to have his teaching qualifications from his home country evaluated. Ali waited eight months to find out that he required more credits to be allowed to work as a teacher in Alberta. Ali felt deceived and cheated by the skilled worker program – that the same education and work experience that qualified him to immigrate through this program were insufficient to access work in his profession.

Since he was unable to work in his profession during this time, Ali sought employment in other areas. He was surprised to learn that almost all jobs, even low-skill jobs such as painting, required an applicant to provide a resume of

experience. Overall, Ali found this a demoralizing process. Because he had difficulty securing employment, Ali discovered that he had to be very flexible in order to be hired – he felt he could not negotiate wage, type of work, or availability. After about a month in Canada, Ali obtained a job at a discount department store. Soon after this, he secured a second job with the same company working in a different position, in order to supplement his income. Ali continued working these two jobs for several months, feeling exhausted and disappointed by his early experiences in Canada.

*Deciding to Stay: Persevering*

According to Ali, many of these experiences challenged his hope. As Ali thought about all he had lost and given up to survive in Canada, he considered returning to his home country. However, he recognized that returning home would also require him to start over and that his family and friends would not be supportive of his return, but would consider him "impatient." So Ali decided to persevere in his pursuit of a better life in Canada.

*Other Experiences during Settlement: "Surviving, Not Living"*

After about a year in Canada, during which time he had continually sought better employment, Ali obtained a job in a call centre. Ali identified this transition to a position requiring more skills as a time when he regained some confidence and his hope increased. In addition to this new job, Ali got a second job with a social service agency.

Around this time Ali received the evaluation of his qualifications from his professional regulatory body: in order to work as a teacher he needed to complete

18 more credits (6 courses). Wanting to return to teaching, Ali soon registered at a local university to make up the necessary education. He decided to complete the courses as a part-time student because he could not afford to study full-time. Ali described this life, working two jobs and going to school, as a "hard life." In addition, about a year after first arriving, Ali got married. Less than a year later, Ali and his wife welcomed their first child into the world. Ali found himself balancing multiple responsibilities and commitments and described himself as "surviving", not living. He felt that these challenges also negatively affected his family at times.

To make the situation even more challenging, Ali's job at the call centre became very unpleasant due to a new supervisor. Although Ali had previously cleared his availability, his new supervisor told Ali he should be available anytime and that she didn't want him to continue his education. She threatened immigrant employees with job loss for being late or calling in sick and Ali witnessed immigrant colleagues being fired for such infractions. Despite such injustices, Ali stated that "no one talks" about their "suffering." He described feeling "enslaved" in this job, afraid to misstep for fear of losing his job, and aware that it is not easy for new immigrants to obtain good jobs. Ali explained that because of Canada's multicultural policy he had expected good treatment and respect here. Unfortunately, after experiencing and witnessing discrimination and mistreatment of immigrants, he began to doubt these ideals. As a result of his negative experiences at the call centre, when Ali received employment with a

settlement agency, he promptly quit. He explained that it was important that he maintain his dignity.

*Fluctuating Hope: Coming to a Crossroads*

Overall, Ali's level of hope fluctuated in response to these and other experiences. For example, he explained that the financial pressures he faced as he tried to balance various financial responsibilities (meeting his basic needs, paying for education, supporting family back home) challenged his hope. Ali also discussed things that helped him to maintain or enhance his hope. Seeing the success of other immigrants enhanced Ali's hope. His religious beliefs and practices helped Ali maintain his hope and reminded him that even in challenging times there is always hope. Ali's family and support from his wife also enhanced his sense of hope. Education was another source of hope for Ali, giving him confidence that he could obtain better employment in the future. Although education was related to Ali's hope, the expense demanded by it concurrently challenged his hope. To maintain his hope, Ali found it helpful to think about different ways to overcome hope challenges, such as considering how he could finance his education. Ali described how he had modified some of his hopes in response to his experiences. For example, he had a new perspective about the time it would take to achieve some of the things he initially hoped for.

Ali called hope his "savior" and explained that he tries to make hope his "first consultant" in overcoming difficult situations. During Ali's settlement, "Hope was important, it makes me first be convinced that immigration for me is [a] good thing and with hope I feel confident that I can achieve my ambitions and

also with hope I'm still making, I make myself happy, comfortable in my actual

life and also thinking good about the future life."

Ali described how immigrants in Canada experience a kind of crossroads

in their hope. Due to various difficulties and experiences, he explained, their level

of hope decreases to a point where the newcomer must decide whether to continue

in this hard way of life working toward their hopes or whether to give up their

hopes. Ali had made the choice to continue struggling to try to achieve his hopes.

Ali described dire consequences, including psychological problems and

hopelessness, for those who choose the second option.

*In the Future: Support and Equal Treatment*

At the time of the interview, Ali had been accepted to a Master's program.

However, he was unsure about whether he would be able to pursue this mostly

due to financial and time constraints. Ali was also still in the process of obtaining

the credits needed to register with his professional regulatory body. In the future,

Ali hoped to obtain a secure job that utilized more of his skills.

Ali was hopeful that the skilled worker program and supports available to

individuals immigrating via this program would improve in the future. In order

for this to occur, Ali argued for increased awareness of the challenges skilled

immigrants face. It was important to Ali that skilled immigrants have the

opportunity to contribute their abilities to the Canadian society. Finally, Ali

argued that all individuals in Canada should be treated equally, in accordance

with the principles of multiculturalism.

Daniel

*Life before Canada*

Daniel is in his early-thirties and grew up in East Africa. After completing a Bachelor's degree and working as an engineer for two years in his home country, Daniel was offered a job in a Western European country, where he worked for three years with international companies. Next, Daniel moved to another Western European country and completed Master's degrees in engineering and business. Throughout this time, Daniel was in contact with a friend from his home country whom had moved to Canada after they both finished their undergraduate degrees. Daniel's friend suggested Daniel consider moving to Canada because there were a lot of employment opportunities available. Due to his friend's prompting, Daniel decided to apply to immigrate through the skilled worker program. Around the time he was graduating, Daniel learned his application was approved and was told he should have no problems settling. Consequently, about 3 years ago, Daniel left Europe and migrated to Canada.

*Hopes and Expectations for Life in Canada*

When Daniel thought about life in Canada, he expected that his recently obtained Master's degrees and international experience would help him to land a good job in his profession. Daniel hoped to make more money and to enjoy a good quality of life. He hoped the Canadian work experience he expected to obtain would improve his skills and abilities, so that he would be able to return to his home country with this added experience. Daniel explained that he hoped to

start a business in his home country and, in doing so, give back to his home country.

*Finding the First Job*

Immediately after arriving, Daniel spent a couple weeks relaxing and getting comfortable in Canada, staying with his friend from his home country. Since everyone seemed to be looking for employees, Daniel expected to find a good engineering job almost immediately. However, when his applications received no response, Daniel quickly realized it was not going to be so simple. Daniel began changing his employment tactics and took part in job search classes with a government agency. He implemented some of the new strategies he had learned and began to get some interviews. However, during the interviews Daniel found that employers often had problems with his lack of Canadian experience. Employers also contested some of Daniel's certifications, arguing that they were not valid because they had not been obtained in Canada. Daniel found this frustrating because the certifications in question are international certifications that should be recognized worldwide. As Daniel continued searching for a job, he decided that in order to survive he needed to look for jobs unrelated to his profession. After staying with his friend for three months, Daniel took a job at a call centre and moved out on his own.

*Deciding to Stay: No Other Option*

Several months after arriving in Canada, Daniel considered returning to Western Europe because he felt his employment prospects might be better there. In addition, the country where he completed his post-graduate studies granted

work visas to graduates after completing their studies. However, when he checked, Daniel discovered that his visa had already expired, so he made the decision to stay in Canada.

*Other Experiences during Settlement: Navigating Cultural Differences*

Although Daniel was disappointed at having to work in a low-skill job at a call centre, he found consolation in that it helped him to learn more about and adjust to the Canadian culture. During his year and a half at the call centre, Daniel noticed many cultural differences between his home country, the Western European countries he had lived in, and Canada. For example, he discovered that finding a job in Canada seemed to be more about prospective employees' attitude and how they would fit into the team, than their education and skills. Daniel also described feeling that employers are weary of outsiders because they are different and the employer does not know how such a person would fit into their team. Daniel explained that learning about the Canadian culture and expectations helped him get more interviews and to obtain his current job.

Although Daniel applied for his current engineering job through the company's website, he did not receive a response from his application. Knowing that he wanted to work for this company, Daniel sought to make connections through networking, and finally obtained the same job posted through a complex web of networking. Although this engineering job utilizes some of Daniel's skills, he had hoped to be able to use more of the skills he acquired while completing his Master's degrees. In comparing his current job with the job he held in Western Europe *prior* to completing his Master's degrees, Daniel concluded that his

current job is at approximately the same level, or at a slightly lower level, than his previous job had been.

At the time of the interview, Daniel was not registered with the regulatory body of the engineering profession. Since obtaining his current job, Daniel has begun the registration process, which includes writing exams and working in a company approved by the regulatory body. Ironically, Daniel is currently supervising new engineering graduates, although he cannot officially call himself an engineer.

When Daniel first came to Canada, he had been dating his girlfriend for several years, but she was still living in their home country. Daniel wanted his girlfriend to visit him, but found this very difficult. His girlfriend's applications for a visitor's visa were denied twice, despite evidence of her investment in her home country (e.g., job, assets). Due to these challenges, Daniel and his girlfriend decided to get married while Daniel was visiting their home country. They were disappointed that they were not able to have a wedding in accordance with tradition in their home country, which would require more time and planning, but felt it was necessary for them to be reunited. After returning to Canada, Daniel sponsored his new wife to immigrate via the family class, and after some time, she was able to join him in Canada. Daniel explained that being unable to work in his profession, along with difficulties in being reunited with his significant other, were a double loss for him in that he lost both his life and his career.

*Fluctuating Hope: Hope Takes Conscious Effort*

Daniel shared that his experiences in Canada have affected his hope. When he looks back on his three years in Canada, Daniel shared that he feels stressed and disappointed. He described his hopes before coming to Canada as "false hopes". His level of hope initially was inflated because he did not have information about the realities of life for foreign-trained professionals in Canada. Daniel's hope was challenged as a result of his struggles in finding employment, including credential recognition problems, and in being reunited with his significant other. Financial pressures also challenged Daniel's hope. Daniel explained that one's hope will continue to decrease or "get stuck" at a low level of hope if the newcomer does not consciously make an effort to improve it. A positive mindset helped Daniel to increase his level of hope, as did evaluating his experiences in a more positive light, and modifying his expectations and hopes. For example, he modified his expectations by extending the timeline according to which he had hoped to achieve certain things, such as purchasing a home.

Daniel described his hope as "a positive feeling in the knowledge that there is something great that is happening, knowledge of something maybe beyond you or beyond your reach that is so intense yet not so easy to explain, it's more internalized." For Daniel seeing his experiences as challenges rather than discouragements helped strengthen his hope, as did the belief that, despite various hurdles, he could still succeed in Canada. His hope was also enhanced by finding employment, better understanding of and blending into the Canadian culture, open-minded colleagues and supervisors, recognition of his skills, his religious

beliefs, and his wife. At the time of the interview Daniel's wife was pregnant, and he described his current hope as in the unborn child. Daniel wants to make sure his children have the best and that he will have done everything he can to help them succeed.

*In the Future: Awareness is a Two-Way Street*

Daniel was uncertain about what the future held for him. He planned to continue the registration process with the engineering regulatory body. Daniel hoped that his employment prospects would continue improving, and that he might be able to use the skills he had obtained in his Master's degrees in the future. Daniel still thought about returning to his home country, but was unsure about if, when, or how that would happen.

Daniel hopes that things will improve for skilled immigrants in the future, and that research like this will be a catalyst for such change. Daniel believes new immigrants should be better informed about life and what they can expect in Canada. He argued that immigrants would benefit from training immediately after arriving. According to Daniel, awareness is a two-way street: employers should also be aware of cultural differences and the different types of immigrants, and should not demand things that new immigrants cannot produce, such as Canadian experience. Daniel also indicated that professional regulatory bodies should make it easier for internationally trained professionals to integrate into and practice in their professions. Finally, Daniel argued for policy changes that would make it easier to reunite loved ones.

Orly

*Life before Canada*

Orly is in her early-thirties and grew up in Eastern Europe. After completing a multidisciplinary doctoral degree, Orly worked as a university professor in her home country for a few years. Orly and her husband lived very comfortably in their home country, and enjoyed going to the orchestra and theatre in their spare time. As a result of Canadian promotion in their home country, Orly and her husband decided to immigrate to Canada to seek new employment opportunities. To prepare for this transition, Orly sought out information about Canada and took English classes to improve her English language skills. Three and a half years after applying to immigrate via the skilled worker program, they learned their application was approved, and Orly and her husband moved to Canada. At the time of the interview, Orly had been in Canada about two and a half years.

*Hopes and Expectations for Life in Canada*

Orly described the image of Canada promoted abroad as a kind of "Eden". Due to the long application process in which they had to prove their worthiness as skilled workers, Orly and her husband expected that their skills, knowledge, and experience were needed and would be utilized in Canada. Orly expected to get a good job in her profession, to lead a lifestyle similar to what she was accustomed to in her home country, and to enjoy her life in Canada.

*Finding the First Job*

Orly and her husband arrived in Canada in January. Upon arriving and settling in Canada, Orly was surprised at how different things in Canada were than she had anticipated. Overall, she described this transition as a "horrible" experience. Orly applied for many university teaching jobs and received no response, but was told privately that she would always be last in line to be hired. Orly was crushed. Although a professional association does not regulate academic positions, Orly's education and experience were devalued in Canada. Orly was advised that completing another PhD in Canada might help improve her chances of finding employment as a professor. To Orly it was clear that there was no difference between herself and those she was competing with for positions in terms of professional qualifications and experience, so the awareness that they were being treated differently was difficult for her to swallow. Although Orly recognized there was some support available to newcomers, she felt it fell short in providing practical, "real help" to skilled immigrants. Hoping that it would lead into a job, Orly volunteered doing work that she would normally be paid for as a professor. After some time volunteering and no improvement in job prospects, Orly decided to search for jobs unrelated to her profession. Her first paid job was selling cars, which Orly described as "terrible". She disliked the deception commonplace in her work environment.

*Deciding to Stay: Spring Brings Hope*

For their first three months in Canada, Orly and her husband did not discuss their feelings regarding their move to Canada. The fourth month became a

turning point in whether they would stay or return to their home country. They realized moving back home would also require a transition. It was spring and Orly explained that the change in weather and the increased sunshine helped things to seem more hopeful. They decided to give it one more month, with their decision dependent on whether they were able to achieve certain objectives in that time period. After the month had passed, together they made the decision to recommit to living in Canada.

*Other Experiences during Settlement: Feeling Like a Nobody*

Orly applied to a professional educational program in Canada unrelated to her profession in her home country. When her application was not updated online for some time, Orly went to the university to inquire about it. She was told that her application had not processed because they were unable to find the university where she had completed her previous education in their electronic database. When Orly asked to look at the book that listed international universities and was intended as the second search point, she quickly found her university listed, which it seemed the admissions staff had not consulted. She was mortified. Due to this and similar experiences, Orly felt disregarded and like she was nobody in Canada. Orly found her loss of status in Canada depressing and frustrating.

Orly worked for the car dealership for a year and a half before arranging her second job. On her own initiative, Orly prepared a proposal for an immigrant support group, which she submitted for funding. About six months later, Orly received a grant to run the program for one year, with her wage coming out of this grant.

*Strategies that Facilitated Settlement: Changing Perceptions*

Orly noticed in herself a growing sense of negativity about her experiences in Canada. Rather than continuing to focus on these feelings, she made the decision to look at the situation in a more positive way. She explained that she required sufficient power, energy, and desire to change this trajectory.

A number of strategies facilitated Orly's settlement in Canada. These included searching for meaning in her experiences, resetting her goals and expectations, and resetting her judgments and perceptions of the Canadian people and culture. As a result, Orly was able to find satisfaction in her current job, knowing it is somewhat related to her previous education and experience. Having her husband with her throughout the challenges of settlement was also helpful for Orly. She explained that "we know who we are and who we were" and that they both had the desire to prove that there was a reason behind their move and to understand what that reason was. In order to facilitate her cultural adaptation, Orly decided to stop comparing Canada and her home country. As Orly changed her perceptions, she began to appreciate parts of the Canadian culture and way of doing things.

It was important for Orly to meet people in Canada who shared her values, beliefs, and perceptions about life. She explained that the support from new friends in Canada has been helpful during her settlement. Building relationships with people whom she feels comfortable with helped to ease Orly's transition in Canada and helped her to feel that her move had not been in vain.

Orly spoke about her experiences and hope in very goal-directed terms. For her, hope is a feeling that helps her to achieve her goals, particularly when there are setbacks and obstacles to accomplishing those goals. According to Orly, newcomers' success in Canada depends upon the characteristics of these individuals. Orly believed her internal strength, as well as her age and flexibility, helped her to integrate successfully in Canada. Letting go of her pre-migration expectations, setting new goals for her life in Canada, and support from her husband also facilitated this transition. Orly identified her ambitiousness as integral to her success in Canada. On the other hand, Orly argued that for older individuals who are not as strong, the challenges faced during settlement may be "the end of their life". She also discussed the importance of English language skills to successful settlement, and how men tend to have more difficulty with the loss of power and authority that is common among skilled immigrants.

*In the Future: Providing Newcomers with a Realistic Picture of Canada*

At the time of the interview the future of the program she created and coordinates was uncertain, and, therefore, Orly's future employment was also in question. Orly was in the process of attempting to get funding to continue the program. Orly also shared that she was considering pursuing further education. Essentially, it was important to Orly that she continue growing in her career – whether that required her to return to university or she could do so in the job market. Orly indicated that one of her main goals for the future was to obtain permanent work doing something she enjoys. She also wanted to have children,

and hoped that her husband, who has struggled with settlement, will "find his way" in Canada.

In the future, Orly hopes potential immigrants will have a more realistic picture of both the benefits and challenges of moving to Canada. She also hopes that foreign qualifications will be better recognized in the future and that there will be programs in place to help foreign-trained professionals integrate into their professions in Canada. Finally, Orly felt that English language training in Canada needed to be improved.

<div align="center">Rita</div>

*Life before Canada*

Rita is in her late-thirties and grew up in South Asia. After completing a doctoral degree in psychology, Rita worked as a lecturer of undergraduates for a number of years. Several of Rita's friends and family members immigrated to Canada in the years before Rita and her husband decided to follow suit; meanwhile, they began their family, having a son. Rita and her husband were doing well in their professions in their home country. Then, for about a year, Rita and her family moved to a country in the Middle East in order for her husband to pursue opportunities in his profession, returning to their home country after the year abroad. Rita and her husband decided to apply to immigrate via the skilled worker program in order to explore employment prospects and to provide their children with better education. At the time of the interview, Rita, her husband, and their 14 year old son had been living in Canada about four years.

*Hopes and Expectations for Life in Canada*

Rita expected that she would be able to work as a lecturer when she came to Canada. Overall, Rita felt there were better prospects and work available. When she thought about life in Canada, Rita hoped for greater security and equality – that everyone would be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of status. She expected high quality healthcare and for her children to have access to excellent education and opportunities later in life. Because Rita had extensive contact with friends living in Canada prior to immigrating, she had learned about their experiences and challenges, and she expected to have similar experiences. As she explains, "mentally we were prepared that we are going to another country that's a different culture, different standards, everything is different, so it [is] really going to take time to settle down."

*Finding the First Job*

Less than a month after arriving in Canada, Rita obtained a job working at a call centre. Because she expected to have to work outside of her field when she first arrived, Rita took this change of occupations in stride, seeing it as an opportunity to learn more about the Canadian culture, people, and system. Rita considered the call centre job a temporary necessity in which she was able to contribute financially to supporting her family until she was able to obtain more suitable employment. During this time Rita looked into becoming a lecturer, meeting with a professor who advised her that in order to work as a lecturer in Canada, she would have to complete several more years of education. Unwilling to return to university for a substantial period of time, Rita researched other career

opportunities and decided to pursue a career as a psychologist. Rita applied to the professional regulatory body of psychologists and was told she would have to complete two courses in order to become a Provisional Psychologist in her province. Rita worked at the call centre for about a year and a half, and for about six months she concurrently held a second job at a social service agency. About a year and a half after arriving in Canada, Rita took maternity leave to care for her newborn daughter.

*Other Experiences during Settlement: It Takes Time*

While on maternity leave, Rita completed the courses required by the regulatory body and helped out in the business her husband had begun a few months after their daughter was born. The following year, Rita's husband moved to a smaller community in another province to pursue a new business, and a few months later, Rita and the children joined him. After moving to a new province, Rita had to apply to the professional regulatory body of psychologists in that province. She arranged employment, however, she was unable begin practicing until being granted approval by the regulatory body. As she waited, Rita worked alongside her husband in his business. Rita indicated that having a child and moving to a new province delayed her entrance into her new profession, although she had no ill feelings about this, mindful that her settlement would take time.

Rita reported that she and her husband never regretted their decision to come to Canada. Having moved around in her home country and having lived abroad for a year, Rita did not feel very homesick upon moving to Canada or have trouble adjusting to the culture. Rita was cognizant that cultural differences

existed, but felt all cultures "have some good things" and was prepared to accept the Canadian culture. After arriving in Canada, Rita was very involved in her cultural community. However, since moving to a smaller, primarily Caucasian town, the cultural differences have become more apparent. Occasionally Rita and her family encountered negative reactions from Canadians, but generally their interactions with Canadians were positive. Overall, Rita's transition into the Canadian culture was smooth, although she recognized that some newcomers have difficulty adjusting to the different culture.

Rita shared that other professional immigrants, such as medical doctors, often experience greater difficulties having their qualifications recognized and integrating into their professions, especially for those individuals who worked in their profession for many years in their home country. According to Rita, the barriers immigrants face to working in their professions challenges their hope. Although her own transition was not without challenges, Rita was prepared for such experiences. As a result of this preparation, Rita shared that she did not have negative feelings in response to difficult experiences (like working low-skill jobs and having to upgrade her education). Recognizing that every country has different professional standards, Rita knew she had to accept the Canadian standards. After completing the two courses required by the regulatory body, Rita indicated that she recognized their value and why she needed to take them. However, Rita explained that if she had been told that she needed to complete 10 courses, she would have felt "surprised and frustrated."

*Fluctuating Hope: No Looking Back*

For Rita, having hope helped her to be optimistic and to "look towards your goal and feel positive things, and then you feel motivated to achieve it". Overall, Rita felt her experiences in Canada had been "good" and she felt no negativity about coming to Canada. Rita and her husband maintained hope that they would get through whatever they encountered, although Rita conceded that because the standards were different in Canada, it takes time to fully settle.

Rita did not report major changes to her hope since immigrating to Canada; rather, the fluctuations were quite subtle. Although she has maintained her hope throughout her time in Canada, Rita's hope was challenged slightly by being unable to work in her profession and the time it has taken to get started in her new career. However, because she was prepared for these challenges, her hope was not severely impacted. Instead of focusing on the challenges and the delays to meeting her goals in Canada, Rita stated, "I realize that once it is done, then it is done, you don't have to look back then." Rita was also aware of the progress she had made toward her goals, "we are getting there" she said.

According to Rita, support from others has helped her maintain her hope. Because Rita and her family already had friends and family living in Canada prior to immigrating, when they arrived they received lots of help and support from these individuals, which was beneficial as they settled. Rita observed friends who arrived before them going through the same process of settlement, noting that they were "not complaining much." Being prepared for the challenges of settlement was key to helping Rita maintain her hope. Education was also related

to Rita's sense of hope. Her own education helped her to have confidence that she would eventually obtain suitable employment. Rita explained how immigrants who upgraded their education in Canada improved the options available to them.

Rita described how skilled immigrants generally took one of two paths as they settled in Canada. She explained that not all immigrants have the strength necessary to succeed. Many professional immigrants need to upgrade their education in order to work in their profession in Canada. According to Rita, it is very hard to balance one's work, studies, and family responsibilities, and only those who are internally very strong are able to persevere in order to successfully integrate. Immigrant professionals who are unwilling to begin in a low-skill job are more likely to be frustrated, to feel shame, and to have other negative feelings. Rita indicated that when individuals have a hope and are not able to achieve it, it can be frustrating. She explained that a loss of hope is accompanied by negative thoughts and feelings, failing to successfully integrate, and feelings of depression. Alternatively, strong individuals who are prepared for the challenges in Canada, are accepting of the Canadian culture and professional standards, are willing to begin in a low-skill job, are able to upgrade their education and eventually obtain suitable employment, and have support, are better able to maintain their hope and fully settle.

*In the Future: Better Professional Integration*

At the time of the interview, Rita was hoping to receive approval from her provincial professional regulatory body in the next month so that she could begin to work as a psychologist. Rita was eager to begin her career as a psychologist

and felt that once she was able to work, things would be better as both she and her husband would be doing what they want to be doing. If for some reason she was unable to become a psychologist, Rita believed she would not lose her hope, but was confident that she would find suitable employment in another career.

Aware of the substantial challenges for some professional immigrants to reintegrate into their profession, Rita argued for more flexible professional standards that would help these professionals re-enter their profession in a timely manner and would more appropriately utilize their skills.

## Conclusion

Each individual in this study told a unique story reflecting his or her settlement experiences. Although many factors differed among the participants, the accounts also shared several characteristics and experiences. On a basic level, they had in common that they had all immigrated to Canada via the skilled worker class. The participants described arriving with many hopes and expectations regarding their lives in Canada. They also reported many similar experiences and challenges as they settled which affected their sense of hope. In addition, all the participants indicated that they had discovered ways of coping with their challenges and regaining their hope. In the next chapter, the common themes among participants' accounts are described in much greater depth.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

Four overarching meta-themes regarding the changes in hope during settlement in Canada emerged from the interviews with the research participants. The meta-themes are being called phases based on the time frame and content represented in the themes and sub-themes. The phases explain how skilled worker immigrants' hope changes throughout their first few years in Canada. It should be noted that the term phase is used instead of stage to avoid the perception of a linear progression in the hope of skilled worker immigrants. Rather, phases discussed here are based on analysis of the participant interviews, and may not apply to all skilled worker immigrants. In addition, because participants had been in Canada a relatively short time of 2 to 4 years, it is not clear how these findings would relate to immigrants over longer periods.

The phases contain themes and sub-themes. The themes encompass the common experiences of the participants as they arrived and settled in Canada with emphasis on the transformation of their hope throughout this process. Sub-themes have been utilized to describe broad themes more clearly. Although each participant's story was unique, there were shared elements among the experiences of immigrants and in their changing hope.

The first three phases that encapsulate participants' changing hope during settlement are: *Arriving with High Hopes and Expectations, Experiences Challenge Hope*, and *Crossroads: Hope or Hopelessness*. Phase 4 has been divided into two general trends to capture the different paths skilled worker

immigrants tend to take at this point. Phase 4A is *Getting Stuck in Anger and Sadness* and Phase 4B is *Choosing Hope and Finding Strength*. Each of these phases and their accompanying themes and sub-themes are described in depth below. Table 2 provides an overview of the phases, themes, and sub-themes.

Table 2. Summary of phases, themes, and sub-themes

*Phase 1 – Arriving with High Hopes and Expectations*
   a) Career Advancement
   b) Quality of Life

*Phase 2 – Experiences Challenge Hope*
   a) Feeling Like Second-Class Citizens
         i. Difficulty Finding Suitable Employment
        ii. Underemployment
       iii. Lack of Settlement Support
        iv. Discrimination
   b) Acculturation Challenges
   c) Experiencing Loss

*Phase 3 – Crossroads: Hope or Hopelessness*

*Phase 4A – Getting Stuck in Anger and Sadness*

*Phase 4B – Choosing Hope and Finding Strength*
   a) Acceptance
   b) Reframing
         i. Finding Good in the Bad
        ii. Using Hopeful Language
       iii. Normalizing
        iv. Modifying Hopes and Goals
         v. Noticing Evidence for Hope
   c) Striving for Success
   d) Support Helps Maintain Hope
   e) Imagining a Better Future

A visual representation has also been created to illustrate the phases and associated changes in hope in Figure 3. A few details are worth discussing at this point for the purpose of clarity. The graph included is not based on any real

numerical data, rather it was produced based on participants' qualitative accounts and the analysis resulting from this. I have intentionally not included scales to indicate the length of time or the level of hope – it is meant only to demonstrate a general change and its theorized relationship to time. This means that the period of time of each phase and the level of the change in hope are estimates. In all likelihood, the length of each phase and the amount of change in hope vary for each individual based on a complex interplay of factors (e.g., age at immigration, support, amount of difficulty obtaining suitable employment). Although hope has been depicted as changing in amount, one could argue that the *amount* of hope does not change; rather, it is the *visibility* of hope that changes. Finally, it should be noted that the phases demonstrate general trends. For example, in Phase 2 when hope tends to be declining, there are still times when hope is enhanced, however, the general trend during that phase and the overall sense experienced by the skilled worker immigrant is of decreasing hope.

<div align="center">Phase 1 – Arriving with High Hopes and Expectations</div>

In the first phase of settlement, participants have just arrived in Canada and their level of hope is very high. Participants generally decided to come to Canada on the basis of their hopes. In this context, participants' hopes were primarily future-oriented and goal-directed. As the participants arrived in Canada, they described being very hopeful and having high expectations about their new life. In particular, their hopes and expectations were directed towards two general areas: (a) seeking to advance their careers and (b) seeking a better quality of life.
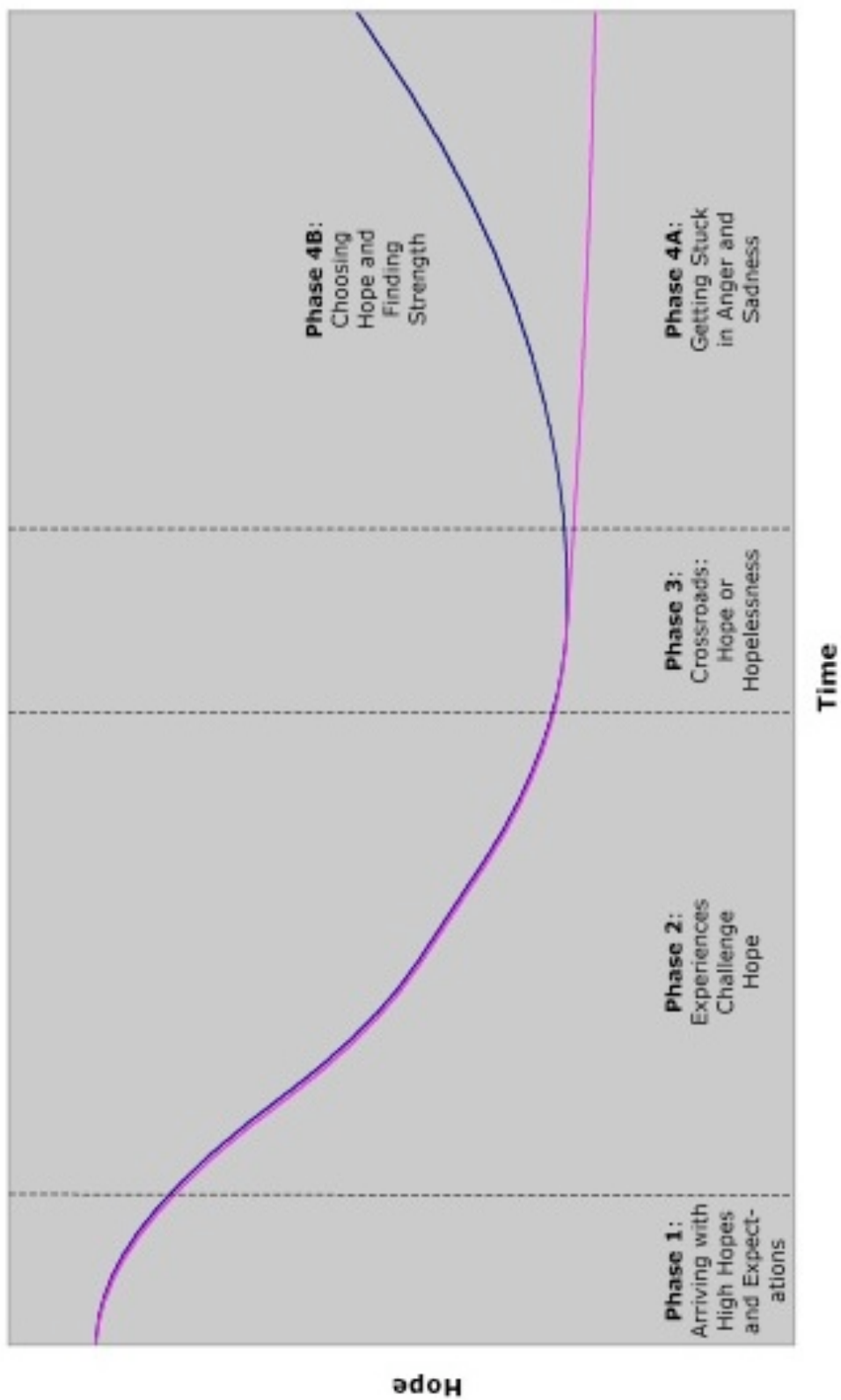
Figure 3. Changes in hope during settlement

*Career Advancement*

Career advancement was a central reason skilled worker immigrants reported for their move to Canada. For example, Rita shared, "We wanted to come to Canada for better, better prospects and for the work." Participants hoped to improve their occupational knowledge and skills by working more in their profession and/or by furthering their education. All the participants expected to find an equivalent or better job in their pre-migration occupation in Canada, and they generally did not anticipate much difficulty with doing so. Daniel explained his thinking en route to Canada:

> And so the mentality, the mental framework that I came with when I was on the plane from [Europe] to Canada is "Okay, I have, the you know, very good education, you know, [Eurpoean country where completed Master's degree] education is by any means world-class education, I have experience, good experience, I've worked in Europe, which is, you know, if you work in Europe nobody can say you cannot work in Canada." So my thinking was "Okay, I'm going to just stay for a week or two weeks just looking around and afterwards I will land a, you know, a very good job with handsome salary and all that kind of stuff."

Participants hoped to contribute their experience and skills in their new Canadian job. As Orly explained:

> You see, I believe that the main vision was that Canada is looking for us as for professional and it means that we expect that our knowledge our experience will be used here.

One of the participants also discussed wanting to return to his home country with his Canadian experience and skills in order to give back to his country of origin. As skilled worker immigrants, their professions, education, and experience had enabled them to immigrate to Canada. It is no surprise, then, that the participants considered their careers a central component of their settlement.

*Quality of Life*

Seeking a high quality of life was also important in the participants'

decision to immigrate to Canada. They sought a better financial situation, more

religious freedom, well-respected education, and quality healthcare, as well as

security, stability, and equality. Ali described the kind of life he looked forward to

in Canada:

> Yeah, a better life is first, it's more freedom for my religion…Another
> thing better life of course means that you can have a decent life, good
> healthcare, good education, good food, good, enjoy your life with your
> kids.

Rita, who already had a child when she and her husband immigrated, discussed

her hope that her children would have better education and, therefore, better

opportunities later in life. Rita also provided an example to illustrate what she

meant by "life security" in Canada:

> It's just an example that if somebody die on the road in [my home
> country] then very few people get medical attention, but here in Canada if
> somebody die on the road or somebody fell on the road, immediately
> people can get medical attention and those kind, so these kind of life
> security is here.

Although quality of life was an important consideration for these skilled

worker immigrants, they tended to enjoy fairly comfortable lives in their home

countries. The greater force driving immigration was the hope for career

advancement; however, participants' experiences after arriving in Canada

threatened their hope on this front.

Phase 2 – Experiences Challenge Hope

During the second phase of settlement, participants faced a variety of

challenges to their successful settlement, and many of these experiences affected

their sense of hope.  Three broad themes encapsulate the experiences the respondents encountered in Canada: (a) feeling like second-class citizens, (b) settlement challenges, and (c) experiencing loss. In response to the difficulties represented by these themes, participants exhibited a variety of negative thoughts and emotions. Overall, many of the challenges skilled worker immigrants faced during this phase of settlement resulted in a narrowing of the options available to them, an experience which challenged their hope.

<div align="center"><em>Feeling like Second-Class Citizens</em></div>

Although skilled worker immigrants are in theory considered equal to Canadian-born individuals, experiences in which participants' skills, education, and experience were devalued, along with incidents of neglect and discrimination, contributed to the feeling of second-class citizenship in Canada. As a result of feeling less valued than others living in Canada, participants described a range of stress-related reactions including anger, frustration, depression, and sadness. The experiences that prompted such reactions among the participants and that led to them feeling like second-class citizens included: (i) difficulty finding suitable employment, (ii) underemployment, (iii) lack of settlement support, and (iv) discrimination.

*Difficulty Finding Suitable Employment*

After arriving in Canada, participants began searching for a job in their profession. However, they soon discovered that several barriers hindered the transition into their careers, including a lack of recognition of their qualifications and a lack of Canadian experience. The devaluation of their education and experience led to the feeling that they were second-class citizens. Rita explained

that because Canada has different educational standards, she was unable to work

in her pre-migration profession:

> When I came here I told you that I thought I can do well as a lecturer, but I thought that no it will take me much time because I met with a professor and he said that "no that you have to do lots of more studies again and then for at least for five years, it will take five to six years to become a lecturer here again."

After sending out numerous resumes and receiving no response, Orly began

talking to professors at local educational institutions. She explained:

> And it was so sad because, you know, after that I began to communicate with people from the university and, and for me it was obvious that there is no difference between me and them and when I ask them "So what should I do to be part of the system?" They told me "So you can try to do another PhD here and maybe after that you will have a chance but we are not sure because we have too many PhDs now."

Ali felt underestimated by employers who failed to recognize his skills and

abilities:

> They [employers] never consider you that you have abilities, that you are educated person or something like this so there is no consideration for this, they consider you, just you are immigrant, you are from an underdeveloped country, so from the beginning they underestimate you, that's something that we suffer.

At first Daniel sought engineering jobs, taking employment classes when he

failed to get interviews. After completing these classes, Daniel began getting

some interviews, but employers were not satisfied:

> In the interview they say "Okay, you don't even have any Canadian experience." But unless you give me that opportunity to work, how am I going to get it? They're asking for something which you can't.

> Participants tried to overcome these obstacles, for example, by

volunteering in order to obtain Canadian experience, or by upgrading education.

However, progress seemed slow. Several participants were surprised and shocked

to have so much difficulty obtaining suitable employment, an experience that

provoked frustration, disappointment, and which challenged their hope.

*Underemployment*

Due to the obstacles to obtaining suitable employment, participants were

eventually forced to take low-skill, "survival jobs" in order to meet their basic

needs, while they continued to pursue more suitable employment. Survival jobs

were typically low-skill, low-paying jobs that unemployed participants took for

the purpose of covering their basic costs of living. After a few months without a

job offer, Daniel came to a realization:

> I spoke to my friends and said, "Okay, maybe you just have to take
> anything because you have to survive…I have to take anything that comes
> up." So I had to take a job in a call centre. You know, I never expected
> that I would do that, that is somebody, a job for somebody who is leaving
> high school, you know you don't need any training.

Since all the participants began their employment career in Canada with a

survival job, underemployment was a major issue for these skilled worker

immigrants, especially in their first couple years in Canada. Ali explained his

experience of working in a survival job:

> And that's a part of the process of when you work, when you do any job,
> so that you can survive, I never say "to live" because you live you have to
> live in a normal, in a decent way. We are just surviving, we are just
> looking for jobs to have money to buy basic needs, food, rent, and also to
> pay the education.

Some participants took a second job in an effort to decrease the financial pressure

resulting from their underemployment. For example, Ali described his difficulties

balancing both time and financial responsibilities:

> I find it hard to work and I'm married, I have my home, I'm helping my
> family at home country, and at the same time I have to pay for my

education, so here the need for the second job was something obligatory. So my life was like this, two jobs and studying at the university for the evening classes and also I have a family so it's like living a very very difficult life.

Participants' skills were not fully utilized in their first jobs in Canada, a reality that was difficult for many individuals to accept. Their underemployment clearly challenged their hope. For Orly, the behaviour of her colleagues at her first job prompted her to question Canadian society as a whole:

> When I work for car dealership, I don't know if you have any associations with the car business, but usually it's quite dirty business…So of course when you're in an organization who's doing this type of business you are meeting the certain type of people and it's not pleasant and basically you just begin to think about whole Canadian society so "Okay, so whole society like this? Or what is going on?"

While underemployed, several of the participants considered leaving Canada, uncertain that they could be successful or achieve their goals here. With their hope challenged and less visible to them, the participants wondered if their sacrifice would be worthwhile. However, the respondents were also aware that returning home would require a difficult transition.

Participants talked about their struggles using language that demonstrated their cognitive state, for example, discussing the "suffering" of immigrants and describing their reality as a "hard life". Participants' underemployment was a constant reminder of their second-class citizenship in Canada. Rita explained the negative consequences of underemployment for those who did not anticipate having to take low-skill employment:

> The people who are coming that are a doctor here and [that are thinking] "I am going to Canada and I am not going to drive a cab, I am not going to work in a Superstore, Walmart or maybe any small thing" and they have shame kind of feeling when doing that, they feel I think more frustrated.

*Lack of Settlement Support*

Some participants talked about feeling unsupported as they settled in Canada. There seemed to be a perception among people the participants encountered that skilled worker immigrants do not require support in the same way as other newcomers. Orly explained that she felt there was assistance available for certain tasks in Canada, but that the support was absent when she needed "real help", such as practical help to access suitable employment:

> So, you know, from one side it's so easy to go through the paperwork here, like if you're doing car registration or something like this, but to do something, you know, more personal, it's always very difficult here…When I am asking for real help if I need something, where can I go, nobody's helping, and they're telling, "Oh we have not many problems for people with your status." They assume that everything is fine with you.

Participants reported that the support available was in the form of information booklets and generic employment classes. Participants felt that "real" support for skilled worker immigrants was lacking. As Ali stated, "you have to depend on yourself." Ali described the difference between the support he expected, and what he received:

> The image how Canada was, is seen to the other world is a bit exaggerating, when they say it is a welcoming country, it is a country of immigrants, multiculturalism, you think you will have a good welcome, you will have assistance, support, and at least that's what person needs at the beginning, but in reality there is nothing. And when I say nothing, yeah, there are hospitals, there are places where you can search work, but the real assistance to go with the system here is still not, if it is no one knows, maybe we are not, we don't have the information, or there is nothing that helps skilled worker to adapt and to have good life here.

Overall, there seemed to be a lack of understanding and support for the specific settlement needs of skilled worker immigrants. Unable to obtain the

support they needed, participants were left feeling that their needs were less important than the needs of both Canadian-born individuals and other newcomers.

*Discrimination*

Participants described experiences where they witnessed and/or felt they were being mistreated in comparison to Canadian-born individuals. They told stories about incidents in which it appeared that they had fewer rights than Canadian-born individuals. These encounters with discrimination were further reminders of their second-class citizenship. Participants provided several accounts of discrimination by various individuals: employers, customers, educational institutions, and strangers in social situations. Daniel shared that he felt discrimination towards immigrants was often "subtle" and not always intentional. Daniel offered an example where, when working at a call centre, despite his English proficiency, he had a customer ask to speak to someone who spoke English.

To Ali the prejudice was obvious, albeit covert, and he spoke extensively about discrimination in his previous workplace:

> I was not expecting such behaviour or such treatment here in Canada…we heard a lot of human rights, equality, social justice, all these nice words, but when you are at work, you don't find them…If you call sick it's very hard, next day they send you an email, "Now, if you do that, we don't allow people for such things, no," it's like they are warning you, and you ask questions, "I'm not a human being? I can be sick, I can call sick, why they treat me in this way?" So you feel that you are enslaved in such context....If you are also late, that's another story, they warn you and they talk to you, every time there is the threatening language that you will lose your job, so the fear for us immigrants, because we can't work in any other places easily, we do what they like, really, we work nights, we work the weekend, we do our best to be on time, we don't call sick even a lot of times we are sick, we go because we know that they will fire us....A lot of skilled workers or immigrants from different countries, they suffer but the

problem no one talks, no one express these suffering, no one say that there is mistreatment for me and there is discrimination because every time they told you "you have proof? you have evidence? or this this" so you say, "okay, I don't need to go into this process, I will not talk about it."

Orly shared her story of applying to a university program. The admissions department had concluded that the university where Orly obtained her original education did not exist, but did not inform Orly about this. When Orly went to inquire about the status of her application, she learned about the university's erroneous conclusion. After finding her university in a reference book, she had a strong reaction:

> Oh, it was terrible, yeah, I just lost control, I just lost control, I was furious, I just tell them "How you see me?", you know. Do you think that I am nobody, that I can't complain, that I can't struggle for my rights and so on.

Skilled worker immigrants in this study encountered various situations in which, like Orly, they were left feeling like they did not matter or were not valued. These experiences of discrimination, along with a lack of settlement support, underemployment, and difficulty finding suitable employment, unmistakably contributed to the perception that they were second-class citizens in Canada.

*Acculturation Challenges*

Adjusting to the Canadian culture tended to be challenging during participants' first few months in Canada. As participants sought employment, they quickly noted differences between job-related practices in Canada and their countries of origin. For example, Ali was surprised that low-skill jobs required a resume and Orly was frustrated when she did not receive a response from her

applications, if only to say "sorry, we don't need you or we don't want you or something like this."

Some participants were initially surprised as they encountered discomforting or "strange" parts of the Canadian culture. For example, Orly was at first shocked to see people in pajamas in public, and thought these people must be crazy. Daniel noticed that Canadians were extraordinarily polite and very indirect. For Ali the idea that an employee could be "fired" was new and unexpected. Aware of various cultural differences, respondents understood the need to adapt and generally adjusted without too much difficulty. Orly explained her experience navigating the Canadian culture:

> You see like at the beginning we didn't get what Canadian culture is, means, you know, or looks like, everything was a little bit strange for us…At the very beginning you always, I think it's like for anybody, you always compare "Okay, so in Canada it's like this, okay how back to [my home country]? Oh maybe [my home country] is better." But you know after that you just, understood that there are two different systems and the systems looks, look absolutely different and you just can adapt or leave, like there is no middle.

All the participants spoke English to some degree prior to immigrating. Despite their English skills, participants sometimes experienced problems and discrimination due to their accents. It was also noted that language barriers posed an obstacle for some immigrants, although none of the respondents experienced this personally.

*Experiencing Loss*

Because most participants arrived with such high hopes and expectations about their life in Canada, being faced with their new reality was often described in terms of experiencing a sense of loss. As it became increasingly clear that

many of their hopes and goals may not be realistic, this realization challenged

participants' hope. Participants reported losing their social network, friends,

family, culture, possessions, good jobs, free time, loved ones, income, self-

confidence and much more. The difficulty Daniel experienced with having his

significant other visit him in Canada, along with difficulty obtaining suitable

employment, prompted him to say:

> They're [immigrants are] here alone, they don't find job, their loved ones
> are not here. It's double, double loss. You are losing on your life, you're
> losing on your career.

One of the most difficult losses experienced by all the participants was the

loss of status from being unable to work in their professions. The skilled worker

immigrants in this study were respected professionals in their home countries.

They had spent many years obtaining education and experience in their

professions, but as they settled in Canada they lost the opportunity to work in

these professions. In addition, they lost their professional status, and the respect

and confidence that were a part of that role. Orly described her sense of loss and

its emotional impact:

> [For the] first couple of months we ask ourself everyday why we are here,
> you know, why we came, because our life in [home country] was very
> good, very good. I had always vacation for three months a year, you know,
> I never have problem to earn money and stuff. And when we came, I think
> just, it was, it was very difficult to lose your status…and when we came
> here and when we had to use bus and live in a basement and had all this
> environment around us, I think it influenced us very much, and it was so
> depressing and so frustrating.

The loss of professional status was particularly unpleasant for these skilled

worker immigrants whose very acceptance through the skilled worker program

implied that their qualifications would be recognized and utilized. Some of the

participants described feeling deceived and cheated by the Canadian immigration system. Ali explained how he had to essentially start over in Canada:

> So that was really another point that makes me sad…any skilled worker in Canada here came, he went or she went through a process of evaluation and assessment…the Canadian embassy overseas assess and evaluate the person based on the languages, experience, diplomas, age, and everything. So then they give you a visa based on these qualifications, but when you come to Canada you started from zero, no one recognize…We start here from zero, it's like I am a person not skilled worker.

Participants often experienced a sense of loss when they looked back on their time in Canada and thought about what they had given up. Like the other experiences that challenged their hope, recognizing their losses prompted a range of painful feelings. When Daniel reflected on what he had lost during settlement, he stated, "I become a bit stressed."

During their settlement, participants' hope was threatened from various sides. A number of experiences contributed to the feeling of second-class citizenship among these skilled worker immigrants. Acculturation issues and recognizing losses also chipped away at the participants' sense of hope. The course of their hope appeared to diminish until they came to a fork in the road.

Phase 3 – Crossroads: Hope or Hopelessness

Based on their experiences, the skilled immigrants in this study seemed to approach a crossroads in their hope process, which is referred to here as Phase 3. This phase is marked by a division between individuals who chose to hope and those whose hope continued diminishing. Although all the respondents indicated having regained their sense of hope and having found ways of coping, they were aware that others were on a downward trajectory.

The participants all spoke about how there were in essence two possibilities for skilled worker immigrants. Although the language they used to describe this varied, the underlying idea was similar: some individuals choose to regain their hope and others continued to allow their hope diminish. Orly and Rita described individuals who were strong compared to those who were not. Ali explained that immigrants "have two choices: you continue in the confusion as I'm doing, working two jobs and studying or you give up." Daniel explained that ones' hope "goes low and if you are not, if you are not careful, it may stay here. You really need to work hard to bring it up again."

For some it seemed this turning point was triggered by another decision. For example, for those who considered returning to their home country, the decision to stay in Canada seemed to be a turning point, as in the case of Orly:

> You know I think that like when we made the decision that we are not going back, so I think it was like a point from which we decided, okay, so what shall we do now? And we started to, you know, build our way here. You know it's difficult to say of course like I think each person has a minute of depression when you begin to say, "Oh I am miserable, oh I am bad, oh something like this", but I believe that you should have enough power and enough energy and desire to go forward, to move forward, so if you have not, you can stuck in your depression till the rest of your life.

For Orly, the turning point was also related to her decision to stop comparing Canada and her home country, accepting that the systems were different. It was at this point that she resolved to adapt to the Canadian system. Orly explained:

> You know it was a point when we understood, I believe, that it's [comparing Canada and her home country] not, it's not getting us anywhere so like it's only like a negative emotion which we, you know, use, use and use in our life, and it grows, grows, grows, grows like negativity grows and we just decided "Okay, we should stop it because this wouldn't make it possible to live here with this feeling."

Whatever the trigger, participants described a shift in perspective that helped them maintain and build their hope (see Phase 4B for more details). Along with this shift, participants found renewed vigour to persevere. Participants repeatedly explained that those immigrants whose hope continued to decline and who were not as "strong" exhibited depression and other psychological problems, and that these individuals tended to resign themselves to low-skill survival jobs (see Phase 4A for more details).

All the individuals interviewed for this study felt that they had chosen the path of hope, although they recognized that many others get stuck in diminishing hope. Although it is in Phase 3 that the skilled worker immigrant encounters the crossroads and makes a decision, it is in Phase 4A and Phase 4B that the consequences of that decision become clearer to them.

<div align="center">Phase 4A – Getting Stuck in Anger and Sadness</div>

This phase is marked by a continued decline in the newcomers' sense of hope. Although none of the participants personally experienced this phase, they were all very familiar with it from witnessing others deeply entrenched in it. Ali had observed individuals in this phase, those who had given up, and he described the consequences:

> When you give up, you will drive a taxi, or you will do cleaning job *all* your life because you don't have any other choice…But also the people who give up, they are very, they can have some psychological problems or they can be shocked or disappointing and they have no hope all their life. And I said once that this also affects a whole generation, they don't keep that for themselves as a parent, but also they inject that in their children, so we are creating a new, hopeless generation.

Orly explained that skilled worker immigrants in this phase regret their decision to come to Canada, but do not to return to their home country for various reasons, such as having "burned bridges" when they left. According to the participants, the individuals in this phase are characterized by inflexibility, bitterness, depression, frustration, and considerable anger. They are "not strong", they do not set goals for themselves, and they complain a great deal. Their anger permeates various parts of their lives and, as Ali indicated above, they may exhibit psychological and health problems. They may also get stuck in sadness and depression. As Rita explained, "lots of immigrants are, I mean feeling in a negative, they are depressed and they are in Canada but not doing well." Orly indicated that for some the challenges of settlement are the "end of their life."

According to Ali, individuals stuck in this phase have given up trying to work in their pre-migration occupation, instead surviving in an occupation with no other choices. Ali explained that these individuals blame the system and others for their difficulties. Ali indicated that the negativity displayed by these individuals may "bring down" newer immigrants. For this reason, Ali shared that he advises newcomers to be cautious of listening to hopeless, bitter immigrants who are stuck in this phase.

This description paints a bleak picture. Fortunately, there is another option available to skilled worker immigrants. Since all the participants considered themselves to have taken this alternative path, they spoke about this phase from their personal experiences.

Phase 4B – Choosing Hope and Finding Strength

In this phase, the participants reported an increasing sense of hope. Along with this enhanced hope, participants exhibited flexibility and a sense of expanded possibilities. They found strength and confidence in various experiences and, with that, a restored desire to succeed. Participants demonstrated a number of strategies that accompanied their rising hope including: (a) acceptance, (b) reframing, (c) striving for success, (d) receiving support, and (e) imagining a better future.

*Acceptance*

Recognizing that they could not change the system in Canada, the participants understood the need for acceptance. This did not mean participants approved of the obstacles skilled worker immigrants experience, rather they realized that in order to successfully settle in Canada, they needed to let go of and move beyond the anger and pain related to these injustices. Associated with this acceptance was releasing those things over which they had no control, and taking responsibility and control for those things they could control. Rita explained how acceptance was a necessary step during settlement:

> One more thing is that once you are coming to another country, every country has a different standards of the education, Canada has a relative higher standards, so if you want to settle down here, you have to accept that certain standards, you can't change the standards, right?

Daniel described his thinking as he came to this conclusion, and the effect it had on his hope:

> You should think, "I'm not necessarily the norm, probably it's me who has to change, not the system who has to change to suit my own desires." So if you, if you have that mental framework then, and you start to integrate yourself, it [hope] may grow again.

Acceptance allowed the participants to move forward and to take control of what they could influence. It also facilitated their engagement in other hope-fostering strategies.

## *Reframing*

Participants frequently used reframing in ways that supported their sense of hope. Reframing required flexibility and involved looking at an experience or situation in a different way that enhanced their hope. They intentionally changed their perspective and way of thinking and feeling about a situation. Overall, reframing was connected to a gentler evaluation of themselves and their progress. Participants utilized several strategies that helped shift their perspective including (i) finding good in the bad, (ii) using hopeful language, (iii) normalizing, (iv) modifying hopes and goals, and (v) noticing evidence for hope.

### *Finding Good in the Bad*

Participants were able to look at difficult experiences, and find something good in them. For example, participants' initial survival jobs were seen as helpful in learning about and adjusting to the Canadian culture. Daniel described how his job at a call centre was valuable:

> So during that time I learned more about Canadians, about the Canadian culture. The way to, to conduct yourself in the interview, to interact, the culture and stuff. And I think it was very useful, so in the end, I don't think it was wasted your time because it helped me a lot even in my job right now to have the soft skills.

Likewise, Rita explained how her first job in Canada benefited her by familiarizing her with the people and the culture. During that time she was also able to reset her occupational goals and learn how she could obtain more suitable employment, while still earning money to support her family. Similarly, after

completing two courses required by her professional regulatory body, Rita

indicated that she recognized their value and why she needed to take them.

Ali described how experiences that on the surface appeared to be very

difficult and "bad" often had good by-products. Therefore, he sought to learn and

grow from his challenges. Similarly, Orly sought meaning in her challenges,

trying to understand the reason for her experiences. Although at first the Canadian

culture seemed strange to Orly, as time progressed she began to appreciate aspects

of the culture, such as the freedom of self-expression.

*Using Hopeful Language*

The participants modified their way of thinking about their experiences in

Canada by using more hopeful language. Daniel demonstrated how a simple

change in language could alter his perspective about his experiences:

> I have seen, too, in Canada that we should take this as a challenge, it
> should be, it shouldn't be a discouragement, we don't have to say "Okay,
> I'm an immigrant, okay, so I cannot make it in Canada." It should be a
> challenge, we should seek to do more, to deliver more. I believe
> excellence cannot hide itself.

Ali also used hopeful language to put his challenges in perspective. Although he

found both studying and working challenging, he considered it a "stage of life"

and part of the process of settlement. Language like this helped participants see

their challenges as more manageable, and made their hope more visible.

*Normalizing*

It was important for the skilled worker immigrants in this study to feel that

they were not alone and that others were encountering similar challenges. When

they met others with similar experiences they felt relieved and understood.

Individuals were also able to normalize their experiences on their own. Rather than becoming discouraged, Ali normalized his experiences:

> All that time I was hesitant to stay or to come, because it was a hard time really. But every time I say that's how immigration starts, every time I try to make myself patient, I say "Yeah, it will be just a certain time and I will be better."

Daniel explained how meeting other immigrants who had similar challenges during settlement helped him to feel better about his own struggles and to feel that he was not alone. Similarly, Orly believed it was important for skilled worker immigrants to connect with each other in order to normalize their experiences and reactions.

*Modifying Hopes and Goals*

Participants reset their hopes, goals, and expectations to fit the reality of their situation. This made their hopes and goals more feasible in the context of their circumstances. For Orly, this was crucial to her settlement. When Orly modified her goals about her work, she was found satisfaction in her job, even though it was not in her pre-migration occupation:

> So now I'm happy to have a job which is like a closely, which is…somehow related to my previous experience, you know, and I really happy that I am here because it's a unique organization and just, I feel myself great here and I can realize all my ideas and, you know, do a lot of good stuff and I can see the results.

All the participants recognized that it would take more time to achieve their goals than they had initially anticipated. Ali described how his timeline had been extended:

> But I'm hopeful for a future but, for example, instead of achieving my ambitions in, for example, three or five years, I've started thinking now of ten years or fifteen years, so that's how I can explain to you my hope.

Rita was also cognizant that it would take time to integrate. Rather than becoming

frustrated by this, she stated, "I realize that once it is done, then it is done, you

don't have to look back then." Daniel was aware that he should not compare his

success with Canadian-born individuals who had different advantages. This

understanding helped him to evaluate his progress in Canada more kindly.

*Noticing Evidence for Hope*

Seeing hopeful evidence also enhanced participants' hope. Hopeful

evidence was anything that affirmed or provided proof for the participant's hope.

Rather than assuming all experiences were hope-neutral, this involved actively

looking for hope in their experiences. For example, when Ali obtained a new,

somewhat better job, he saw it as a hopeful sign:

> And I keep searching and searching and when I move to [job at call
> centre] I found out that I, I got rid from that bad situation and I start
> having some confidence, some hope, and some, that I could be better.

Recognizing progress toward her goal of working as a psychologist was a hopeful

indicator for Rita. When, after some time in Canada, Ali got interviews for

teaching jobs, it enhanced his sense of hope. Even though he was not offered the

job, getting such an interview was a better outcome than expected. Daniel also

found getting interviews a hopeful sign, as it signified progress toward obtaining a

suitable job, compared to a time when he was not able to get interviews at all. Ali

explained how the success of other immigrants enhanced his hope:

> And also when I see others who succeeded. Because all this, there are
> some people who succeed in their immigration, they could achieve their
> high self-esteem and they could find better life. So when I saw some
> examples of other immigrant, that foster hope in me and makes me
> hopeful and they are opportunities to these things.

Evidence of hope could also come from something very ordinary, as in the case of Orly:

> We came in January and it was awful, it was so dark and miserable and cold, and in the springtime everything is, looks a little bit better…I think that's influenced a lot especially you know when like it's a complicated situation and even small thing like, you know, sunshine, can give you some hope, I could say.

Participants were able to change their perspective through a variety of experiences and intentional strategies. These reframing techniques helped enhance the hope of the skilled worker immigrants in this study. Participants' perseverance as they sought success in their life in Canada also supported their sense of hope.

### *Striving for Success*

It was clear that the skilled worker immigrants in this study do not give up easily. For all the participants, their careers were a very important part of their settlement, and it was vital for them that they be successful in this part of their lives. They continually sought to integrate into their pre-migration occupations or to enter another career which utilized at least some of their skills and where they were satisfied. In order to get there, some individuals accessed employment support, some pursued education, and one participant essentially created her own job.

For Ali, education was strongly tied to his sense of hope. It was very important for him to continue his studies, even if it meant other sacrifices for a time. Ali felt certain education would ultimately improve the opportunities available to him and lead to a better life. Rita also felt education was key to

successful integration: "if you're upgrading your education and, as well as working, then of course in a few years you will have a better options open."

Having goals was a central aspect of striving for success. According to Orly, "If you have goal in your life, I think it's the most important thing to do, to achieve this goal." Daniel also indicated that goals were essential in providing him with a sense of direction, and that it was helpful to break goals into manageable parts. According to Daniel, flexibility in goal-setting and in the route taken to achieve the goals was also important, as the individual may have to take a different path to achieve their goals than originally planned. Orly considered herself "ambitious" and felt it would be a shame to give up. She also had a strong desire to "prove to myself that I am able, capable to do something." Both Orly and Rita explained that skilled worker immigrants need internal strength to continue setting and achieving their goals. Rita described her hope in goal-related terms:

> So if you have hope, you are optimist, you are motivated, and you wanted to achieve your goal and you look for, look towards your goal and feel positive things, and then you feel motivated to achieve it, so that's the main thing.

Participants also shared how preparing for potential obstacles to success helped them to maintain their hope. Ali found it helpful to brainstorm solutions with his wife:

> To talk and thinking about ways or strategies to deal with difficult situations is good, it also makes you hopeful in the sense it makes you confident that you can deal with difficult situations. And that's something important.

Rita felt confident that she would find an alternative career goal if her current goal to become a psychologist was somehow blocked:

> I have a hope that if something goes wrong I can't become a psychologist…then I can work anywhere, I am very qualified, so whatever experience I have, what experience I got working with the business or working with my husband and working in [my home country] and here, I can get any other better job, and I'll do that, so that's not, I lost my hope, but yeah, still I can find any other job.

The participants had a strong drive to continue getting better and improving themselves. Even after obtaining more suitable employment, the skilled worker immigrants in this study spoke about wanting to continue growing professionally. Although their employment success was vital to their settlement, they recognized they could not do it without supportive people in their lives.

*Utilizing Support Helps Maintain Hope*

Support was important to skilled worker immigrants in maintaining and enhancing their hope. Participants found support from their spouses, families, larger social networks, and in their faith. Prior to immigrating, all of the participants were in contact with a friend or acquaintance from their home country living in Canada, and these individuals provided the participants with, at minimum, initial support upon arrival. For Orly, pre-migration contact with an acquaintance in Canada blossomed into friendship as she settled. Rita was in contact with several individuals in Canada prior to immigrating, and found substantial support from these individuals and from her cultural community when she arrived in Canada. For Daniel, support from his wife was crucial to his sense of hope. Likewise, Orly explained the importance of support from her husband:

> You see definitely like I think our relationship with my husband helped me a lot because you see like for me and for him doesn't matter like what we are doing now, we still know who we are and who we were so and it, I think it gives us, you know, like desire to prove it for ourselves that…our move from [our home country] to Canada was for a certain reason.

In addition to spousal support, it was vital for Orly to connect with individuals whom she was comfortable with and who shared her outlook on life:

> For me it was very important to meet right people here, you know, the people who will share my hierarchy of values, my knowledge, my perception of life, and when you begin to communicate with this level of people here, so life begin to be a little easier. And you begin to feel that, you know, this establish you already made, like you made it for some reason.

Ali's faith was essential to maintain his hope, and support from his family further buttressed his sense of strength:

> So we are still, we have nothing than hope and me as a Muslim, I pray much for God to help me to overcome this difficult situation and to help me to have a good future, bright future for me, for my wife, and for my daughter… For me I think that the faith and the prayers they are very important for me and for my family, yeah, that's, I'm very sure these things make me strong to…still feel that I am able to face more than that. It means, I felt that it's good to have this feeling that you're still strong to resist and to face problems and problems. And I say the source for that is my faith and, as I told you, my family, support of my family is too.

Ali described how his religious beliefs helped him to be confident that "there is always hope everywhere." He understood that even if he failed to experience good things during his life on earth, "there are good things after death." Orly explained that in difficult experiences, like those associated with settlement, immigrants turn to God and their religious beliefs. Daniel's faith was a "tremendous source of hope." Daniel trusted God and God's plan that there was something better in store for him, even if he could not see it himself yet. Daniel believed that "it is in our weakness that God's strength can be manifested."

The support others and their faith provided was helpful in and of itself, but it also facilitated the use of other strategies that enhanced the participants' sense

of hope. For example, Daniel explained that his faith helped him to believe that everything happens for a reason (reframing). Participants' faith also helped them have confidence that the future, near or far, would be better.

*Imagining a Better Future*

Despite their challenges, the individuals interviewed in this study were hopeful that things could improve for skilled worker immigrants and for themselves in the future. Rather than dwelling on what was behind them, they focused on looking forward. Daniel was hopeful that research, like this study, has the potential to help change detrimental government policies. Ali described his hope for the future of the skilled worker program:

> But we are still have, we are, not me, *we* as skilled workers, we have the hope that Canada will, will change a lot of things and maybe rectify, maybe correct this situation of skilled workers.

Although the participants recognized the need to accept the Canadian system for their own well-being so that they could move forward, they were acutely aware of areas that could be improved. All participants provided recommendations and suggestions for improvements that they believed would enhance the skilled worker program, which demonstrated a sense of hope about the program. They cited a need for increased awareness of skilled worker immigrants' realities among individuals considering immigration, employers, immigration policymakers, and the general public. For example, Daniel wondered whether employers were aware of the different immigration programs:

> I'm not sure if potential employers know that the government of Canada has this program of attracting skilled immigrants to come to Canada and maybe they could educate the public that we are actually bringing, the people you see are not only people who are immigrating because they are

being politically persecuted, no, there are others who are coming because they are skilled, because of their skills, we actually attract them to come to Canada. If there was that, I think it could be useful too.

Daniel also felt it was unfair and unreasonable of employers to demand that new immigrants have Canadian experience. The participants had many other suggestions for improvements as well, including more support, improved bridging for foreign-trained professionals, and greater equality.

Ali argued that skilled worker immigrants need more support during settlement, and particularly during their transition into their profession. He explained that in the current system, refugees receive assistance, but skilled worker immigrants are left to fend for themselves; Ali said, "I'm [the system is] helping someone and I'm neglecting someone else, so I'm just creating like a bad situation." Likewise, Daniel pointed out that although skilled worker immigrants are required to bring money to assist them as they settle, money alone is insufficient and supports are needed. Orly argued that English language programs in Canada should be improved.

The participants were particularly concerned with the skilled worker immigrant program. Ali felt it was unfair that skilled worker immigrants could not work in their profession, and argued that the Canadian government should not have a separate class for skilled workers immigrants if their skills are not going to be recognized in Canada. He explained that the government should assist skilled worker immigrants to integrate, which will benefit both skilled worker immigrants and society:

> I will want to share this with the government or the official authorities whoever is so as that they can help us upgrade our system, our credentials

and get jobs that fit our education and our, so as, because after that those will benefit me as a person and also the society and the government, they would benefit from me because I'm going to contribute with my experience, with my education, so I'm going to contribute in a positive way to this new society.

Rita indicated that professional standards should be more flexible to help skilled worker immigrants more easily integrate: "Professional standards which can take them into the system. If it is more flexible then they [skilled worker immigrants] can have a better life, better options."

Finally, despite the experiences that challenged their personal hope, some participants expressed hope for their children. For example, Daniel explained about his unborn child, "My hope, my hope is now in her womb. I cannot wait, that's, that's what my whole focus, I'm working to make sure my kids will have the best they can." Ali considered his immigration to be not only for himself, but also for the good of his family. Rita expressed confidence that her children would have many opportunities available to them in Canada. It seemed that participants' children helped them focus not only on themselves as individuals at one moment in time, but also on these new lives beginning and the future ahead.

This theme of imagining a better future demonstrates how participants' hope came full circle. In the first phase respondents had hope for their children and in this theme this hope was reaffirmed. Similarly, some of participants' suggestions about the skilled worker program derived from their pre-migration hopes of, for example, support, equality, and congruency. The participants had arrived in Canada focused on the future and once again they were looking forward to what lay ahead.

Summary

The results of this study emerged from in-depth interviews with four skilled worker immigrants. The common elements between participants' accounts were developed into themes that encompassed their shared experiences and processes. Overall the findings demonstrate that skilled worker immigrants' hope shifts substantially during settlement. Four over-arching themes, known as phases, were developed to illustrate these changes in hope and individuals' associated experiences.

In the first phase, Arriving with High Hopes and Expectations, skilled worker immigrants arrived anticipating career advancement and a high quality of life. The second phase, Experiences Challenge Hope, was characterized by facing many challenges and a marked decline in hope. Some of the challenges included employment-related difficulties, discrimination, a lack of settlement support, cultural adjustment, and experiencing loss. In the third phase, individuals encountered a crossroads in their hope and either chose to hope or allowed their hope to continue declining. Following the crossroads of Phase 3, the choice made corresponded with one of two options in Phase 4. For those who allowed their hope to continue declining, they enter the phase called Getting Stuck in Anger and Sadness. This phase is characterized by a variety of negative outcomes and poor functioning. Those who decided to hope at the crossroads progressed into the phase called Choosing Hope and Finding Strength. In this phase, participants developed a variety of strategies that helped them cope and enhanced their hope. They also utilized support from others and their faith.

The next chapter involves a discussion that extends and further interprets the results. In addition, the findings are compared with the existing research literature. Finally, implications of the findings for counselling and policy are discussed.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of skilled worker immigrants during their settlement in Canada and the ways their hope was affected during this process. The participants identified experiences that both challenged and enhanced their hope. While each participant's specific story was unique, the shared elements were described by themes in their changing hope. These findings suggest that skilled worker immigrants' hope shifts during their settlement in Canada in a fairly consistent pattern, as was seen in Figure 3 (p. 96). This is represented by four broad phases, the last phase of which has two alternatives: (1) Arriving with High Hopes and Expectations, (2) Experiences Challenge Hope, (3) Crossroads: Hope or Hopelessness, and (4A) Getting Stuck in Anger and Sadness or (4B) Choosing Hope and Finding Strength. Research specifically about the hope of skilled worker immigrants is extremely limited. However, literature about hope and research regarding immigrants in general provide some insight into these findings. In the following section the results of the current study are explored in the context of the research literature.

*Phase 1: Arriving with High Hopes and Expectations*

The skilled worker immigrants in this study arrived with elevated hopes regarding their new life in Canada. From their countries of origin, Canada sounded like a perfect land of opportunity, and they used words like "Eden" to describe their pre-migration perceptions. As professionals with considerable education and experience, they expected to resume their careers in positions that utilized these qualifications. They also anticipated opportunities for continued

career growth and advancement. Aside from their careers, participants expected to enjoy a good quality of life in Canada for themselves and their children. Khan and Watson (2005) described similar results in their study of skilled immigrant women from Pakistan, reporting that participants in their study sought a better future and arrived with hopes of flourishing in Canada.

The participants in this study repeatedly discussed the importance of their career in their decision to immigrate and during settlement. This provides anecdotal support for research about a "migrant personality" (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). Boneva and Frieze found that individuals who immigrate tend to be more work-oriented and have higher achievement and power motivations. Correspondingly, study participants were highly career-directed and appeared very motivated to achieve and be successful. Others have also identified the search for adequate employment and the hope to develop occupationally as a key reason individuals immigrate (Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008).

*Hope upon Arrival*

Participants' hope in Phase 1 tended to be future-oriented and goal-directed. As such, hope during this phase can easily be understood from Snyder's (1995) perspective. Snyder described hope as a process of thinking about goals involving motivation (agency) and the individual's plans to achieve these goals (pathways). Thinking of hope in this way, participants possessed both the agency and pathways to achieve their goals in this early phase of settlement. However, the skilled worker immigrants in this study were generally not yet aware of the challenges that lay ahead for them. For this reason, Snyder's hope model may be

useful for understanding skilled worker immigrants' hope in the first phase but does not provide context for the challenges that may be experienced over time.

*Phase 2: Experiences Challenge Hope*

Not long after arriving in Canada, the skilled worker immigrants in this study encountered a range of difficulties that negatively impacted their sense of hope. Along with their diminishing hope, participants described negative emotional reactions to their experiences. Many of the challenges faced by participants in this study have been previously described in the literature.

*Employment Challenges*

Participants reported a number of barriers to successful integration into their careers. They identified a lack of Canadian work experience as an obstacle to obtaining suitable employment, a finding that has also been identified in the literature (CTFMHIAIR, 1988; Khan & Watson, 2005; McIsaac, 2003; Statistics Canada, 2005b). Another challenge for participants in finding appropriate employment was a lack of recognition of their foreign qualifications and work experience. This included a devaluation of their international education, experience, and credentials by professional regulatory bodies, employers, and educational institutions. Several researchers have discussed immigrants' difficulties having their qualifications accepted and recognized (Alboim et al., 2005; Bergeron & Potter, 2006; Choudry et al., 2009; Khan & Watson, 2005; McIsaac; Reitz, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2005b). Kausar (2000) identified the lack of recognition of foreign qualifications as challenging to participants' sense of hope, which is congruent with the findings of the current study.

As a result of the obstacles these skilled worker immigrants faced in obtaining suitable employment, they were required to take survival jobs in order to satisfy their basic needs, an experience also identified by Chen (2008). All the participants began their employment in Canada in a survival job and spoke about their underemployment as an experience they found frustrating and demoralizing. Underemployment led to a strained financial situation, a finding also discussed by Khan and Watson (2005). Overall, participants frequently spoke about their employment-related difficulties during settlement. According to various sources in the literature, difficulty finding employment, unemployment, and underemployment are major concerns among new immigrants (Arthur & Merali, 2005; Galabuzzi, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2005a; Tang et al., 2007; Wayland, 2006). During this phase, three of the participants in this study considered leaving Canada, an experience also identified in Kausar's (2000) study of Pakistani immigrants. This suggests that the obstacles encountered by skilled worker immigrants greatly challenged their hope and their belief that they could successfully settle in Canada.

Research has indicated that immigrants' employment-related experiences are predictive of their psychological well-being and adaptation (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Yakushko, Backhaus, et al., 2008). Employment problems have been linked to feelings of alienation, acculturative stress, adaptation problems, negative self-concept, anger, frustration, chronic stress, and other health problems (Aycan & Berry; CFMHIAIR, 1988; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Health Canada, 1999; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). Khan and Watson (2005) indicated that the stress of settlement negatively impacted the health of points-selected immigrant women.

Similarly, participants in the current study discussed negative reactions to their employment challenges including anger, frustration, stress, sadness, and depression. Settlement was clearly a taxing and stressful transition for participants.

*Lack of Settlement Support*

The participants in this study reported feeling that "real" support for skilled worker immigrants was lacking. Mwarigha (2002) indicated that newcomers tend to experience the most barriers to integration during the intermediate (second) stage of settlement, when one of their primary needs is access to the labour market. However, most settlement services are focused on meeting the immediate needs of immigrants during their first stage of settlement (Mwarigha). The skilled worker immigrants in the current study did not describe many challenges during Mwarigha's first stage of settlement, rather the second stage was fraught with difficulties, and settlement support during this stage was felt to be inadequate. Likewise, Khan and Watson (2005) reported that immigrant women in their study felt they lacked the information and guidance needed as they settled. In addition, Khan and Watson's participants felt discouraged instead of welcomed or supported by individuals in their cultural community. It appears that the supports skilled worker immigrants most require during settlement do not exist or are inadequate to meet their needs. This in turn challenges their early experiences of high hope. The literature has established the importance of relational support in upholding hope (Duggleby & Wright, 2005; Farran et al., 1995; Morse & Doberneck, 1995); thus, when these supports are lacking, hope tends to be negatively impacted.

*Discrimination*

Participants in this study reported experiences of discrimination by a variety of individuals including employers, customers, individuals in educational institutions, and strangers in social situations. This contrasts with their initial hope for equality when they arrived. Others have also found that skilled worker immigrants report feeling discriminated against in Canada (Choudry et al., 2009; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Khan & Watson, 2005). Chen (2008) indicates that immigrants often encounter "invisible" discrimination that is not obvious but still impacts individuals. Research has established a link between perceived discrimination and depression (Noh et al., 1999). Together these findings suggest that experiences of discrimination may be linked to negative feelings and depression, particularly during Phase 2 (Experiences Challenge Hope). Kausar (2000) identified experiences of discrimination as a hope challenge, which is congruent with the findings of this study.

*Age and Gender*

Participants described age as a factor affecting the settlement success of skilled worker immigrants. Specifically they indicated that younger individuals tend to integrate more easily into the new system. Lee and Westwood (1996) also found immigrant adjustment could vary based on immigrants' age at the time of migration. The women in this study did not report any particular challenges as a result of their gender, although the research literature has indicated that immigrant women may be considered "triple disadvantaged" (Wittebrood & Robertson, 1991) and may experience a number of additional difficulties during settlement, for example, due to challenging gender-role expectations (Dion & Dion, 2001;

Um & Dancy, 1999). Both women in this study had careers prior to immigrating and did not describe changes in their family structure since coming to Canada. However, Rita acknowledged that taking a maternity leave and moving to another province for her husband's business had delayed her entry into her new profession as a psychologist. This provides some support for the assertion that immigrant women tend to experience additional challenges during settlement (Wittebrood & Robertson). Some minor differences between male and female participants' accounts were noticed, for example, the women appeared to talk more about the importance of social support. However, given the limited comparison, it is not clear whether these were individual differences or differences related to participants' gender.

*Culture and Language*

According to Berry (2001, 2003), acculturation and adaptation are challenging aspects of the immigration experience. The acculturation and adaptation process impacts recent immigrants personally/socially and has implications for their career development (Chen, 2008; Yakushko, Backhaus, et al., 2008). The results of the current study indicate that skilled worker immigrants encountered some challenges adjusting to the Canadian culture, but that this transition generally occurred relatively smoothly. Although the strategies participants utilized during settlement were not discussed directly with them, it appears that they adopted a strategy of integration in which they interact with other cultures while still maintaining valued parts of their original cultures (Berry, 2001, 2003). For example, the importance of adjusting to the Canadian culture was obvious to Rita, but she also spoke about her involvement with her cultural

community. Berry (2001, 2003) reports that the integration strategy has been linked with the most positive adjustment, adaptation, and mental health outcomes. However, integration may not be the strategy employed by all skilled worker immigrants, and participants' use of this strategy may be associated with their hopefulness and their overall approach to settlement.

In Khan and Watson's (2005) study, culture shock was exhibited in participants' fears about their children's exposure to the Canadian culture. Kausar (2000) reported similar reactions among her Pakistani immigrant participants. Whereas all the participants in Khan and Watson's study had children prior to migrating, only one of the participants in the current study had a child before migrating. Therefore, the individuals in this study may describe similar challenges when they have school-age children. Alternatively, because they will have been in Canada for a longer period by the time their children reach that age, perhaps balancing the two cultures will not pose as great a challenge.

Language issues have been shown to be a substantial barrier to immigrants' successful settlement (Arthur & Merali, 2005; Aycan & Berry, 1996; Chen, 2008; Choudry et al, 2009; Lee & Westwood, 1996). The skilled worker immigrants in this study all spoke English to some degree prior to immigrating, but encountered some challenges related to their accents. They also acknowledged that other immigrants may encounter more language barriers during settlement. Similarly, in Khan and Watson's (2005) research of skilled worker immigrant women, they found that communication in English was not seen as a major problem, but that participants acknowledged some difficulty with their accents and fluency. Research has demonstrated that in employment interviews,

applicants with an accent are viewed less positively by the interviewer than applicants who do not have an accent (Purkiss, Perrewé, Gillespie, Mayes, & Ferris, 2006). This suggests that skilled worker immigrants' career integration may be hampered by their accents. It should be noted that because advertising materials for this study were only printed in English, it is possible that participants self-selected in part due to their English proficiency.

*Experiencing Loss*

There was a sharp contrast between participants' hopes and expectations about life in Canada and what they actually experienced as they settled. As the skilled worker immigrants in this study recognized this disparity, they reported a sense of loss. The losses were many and included their social network, culture, career, and self-confidence. Researchers have indicated that experiencing loss and pain are an unavoidable part of the Canadian immigration experience (Khan & Watson, 2005; Lee & Westwood, 1996).

For skilled worker immigrants, whose foreign qualifications had permitted them to immigrate to Canada, devaluation of these qualifications and their inability to work in their pre-migration occupation were particularly challenging losses. The reason they were able to come to Canada had become completely irrelevant. Along with this, participants lost the status, respect, and confidence associated with their professional role. Other researchers have criticized the inconsistencies between immigration criteria and hiring policies (Chen, 2008; CTFMHIAIR, 1988; Khan & Watson, 2005). Because skilled worker immigrants often possess such high education and professional status, the loss of education and status is greater and they may experience more extreme feelings of loss and

pain during settlement (Khan & Watson). Khan and Watson reported that the loss of status was one of the most painful losses for Pakistani skilled worker immigrant women in their study.

The findings of the current study suggest that recognizing their losses resulted in declining hope among participants. In Kausar's (2000) model of the transformational process of hope, the first phase involved discovering loss, and was also associated with diminishing hope. In this phase individuals recognized and mourned their losses. This corresponds with the findings of the current study, in which participants' sense of loss challenged their hope. Although Khan and Watson's research with immigrant women was not focused on hope, they too explained how participants' hope diminished as a result of their challenges.

Participants described a range of negative feelings in response to their losses including anger, frustration, sadness, and depression. They also reported feeling cheated by the immigration system. Consistent with these findings, Chen (2008) indicated that coping with vocational identity change poses "the most significant challenge for immigrant professional workers who were well established in their worklife and career in their home countries" (p. 428). Khan and Watson reported that participants in their study expressed similar emotional reactions, including disappointment, anger, and depression. According to Khan and Watson, they experienced "feelings of deep pain" (p. 310) in relation to losing what they had prior to immigrating. Skilled worker immigrants' experience of loss involved reactions that could be understood as grieving and mourning.

Research exploring the link between congruence (related to pre-migration expectations and post-migration realities) and mental health has indicated that

perceived congruence is positively associated with life satisfaction and negatively associated with depression (Murphy & Mahalingam, 2006). Participants in this study who were better prepared for the challenges of settlement, such as Rita, seemed more satisfied with their decision to migrate and appeared to exhibit fewer negative emotional reactions. When participants' pre-migration expectations were incongruent with their post-migration realities, they described more negative feelings including anger and depression. However, skilled worker immigrants' acceptance of this reality seemed to negate the effect of the perceived incongruence.

Being prepared for the challenges in Canada seemed to cushion the loss felt by participants. Rita's story in particular brought the idea of preparation to the forefront. She described how talking to friends and family members already living in Canada prepared her for the reality that she would have to begin by working in a low-skill job. This preparation appeared to help Rita take these challenges and threats to her hope in stride, enabling her to recognize them as part of the process of settlement and helping her to maintain her hope. Other participants explained the importance of preparation for skilled worker immigrants, and described how they had been unprepared for many of the challenges in Canada, but especially for their difficulties obtaining suitable employment. The challenges that participants were better prepared for did not appear to have as many negative consequences to their hope and settlement. For example, participants seemed mentally prepared for challenges related to having to adjust to the new culture. As a result, this transition was described as much less problematic. On the other hand, the participants did not anticipate being treated as second-class citizens, being unable

to work in their profession, or their loss of professional status and confidence. As a result, these challenges appeared more difficult for participants to deal with and seemed to contribute substantially to a decrease in hope.

*Hope in the Face of Challenges*

From Snyder's (1995) perspective, many of the challenges during settlement could be understood as disrupting the pathways toward participants' goals. For some participants, the interruption to their pathways also seemed to affect their agency, at least for a time. Without the agency or pathways to achieve their goals, participants' hope declined. One area in which the results of this study seem to depart from Snyder's theory is that Snyder argues that hope is dispositional and, therefore, relatively stable over time, regardless of experiences. The participants in this study, however, described fluctuations in their hope, so this finding does not fit with Snyder's hope theory.

According to Dufault and Martocchio (1985), hope is continually changing, a perspective that is congruent with participants' shifting hope in the current study. In Kausar's (2000) research with Pakistani immigrants, she found substantial changes in her participants' experience of hope. Farran et al. (1995) also describe hope as fluctuating based on experiences. One of the four central attributes in Farran and colleagues' model of hope is of hope as an experiential process – also described as the pain of hope. They explain that hope is often discussed in relation to extremely painful and challenging experiences. Farran et al. argue that hope and hopelessness are closely related but different experiences. They both grow out of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental/ sociological experiences. Both hope and hopelessness may occur in experiences

of loss (Farran et al.). The hope of skilled worker immigrants in the current study was challenged by their difficulties and corresponds with the experiential process of hope described by Farran and her colleagues. Hope tends to arise out of painful, challenging, and stressful experiences that may appear hopeless. For the participants in this study, hope emerged from their adversity, which is consistent with findings in the research literature (Edey & Jevne, 2003; Farran et al.).

*Phase 3: Crossroads: Hope or Hopelessness*

The results of this study suggest that skilled worker immigrants tend to take one of two paths: one marked by hope or the other marked by diminishing hope. The finding that skilled worker immigrants come to a crossroads in their hope has not been previously described in the literature. Much of the research and literature relating to immigrants has focused on their difficulties in settlement. As a result, how these individuals recover their sense of hope and integrate successfully has been largely overlooked. Therefore, the finding that there is a turning point in the hope of skilled worker immigrants is an important idea deserving of further discussion.

During Phase 2, the hope of the skilled worker immigrants was diminishing. This trajectory would have continued if not for a turning point. The turning point was different for each participant, but it seemed to involve a conscious decision to do something differently, particularly in regard to the way they were thinking and feeling about their situation. What was obvious to the participants was that there were other skilled worker immigrants who were struggling in Canada – they were not functioning optimally or integrating very successfully. In comparison to the participants who regained their hope, it seems

that those who continued on the downward hope trajectory into Phase 4A (Getting Stuck in Anger and Sadness) did not change their ways of thinking or feeling about their experiences. In general, the longer an individual maintains particular beliefs, thoughts, and feelings, and continues acting and relating in certain ways, the more that person gets comfortable in that pattern of functioning. Therefore, the longer skilled worker immigrants continue on a path of diminishing hope, the more difficult it would seem to change their course. Perhaps they fail to realize other, more hopeful ways of functioning exist. Or if they do recognize other patterns of functioning are possible, they may not know how to change their functioning and/or be unwilling to do so. They may believe that hope requires too much effort or for them to accept things they are not willing to accept.

Given that all four of the study participants were able to find hope in their circumstances attests to the strength and determination among this group of individuals. At first glance, the reality for many other skilled worker immigrants who have become stuck in their anger and sadness seems daunting. However, when one considers the idea of the crossroads, hope is actually embedded in what might otherwise appear discouraging. The results suggest that for some skilled worker immigrants, the momentum of diminishing hope resulting from their negative experiences in Canada can push them to continue in a pattern of diminishing hope. At some point, however, the individuals in this study choose to change the trajectory of their hope and turned onto a more hopeful path. The timing of, and circumstances surrounding, that turning point differed for each individual, which suggests that at any point along the path of diminishing hope, an individual can choose to change his or her direction. This means that there is

not *one* crossroad, rather there are *many* possible crossroads for skilled worker immigrants. What makes it a turning point appears to be the decision and determination to commit to a different path. This also suggests that individuals who remain on the path of diminishing hope, even to the point of becoming stuck in their anger and depression, still have the opportunity to change the course of their hope and the trajectory of their future.

Life course literature provides some insight into the idea of turning points. According to Wheaton and Gotlib (1997), the "essential characteristic of a turning point is that it changes the direction of a trajectory" (p. 1). Therefore, participants were on a trajectory of diminishing hope, and the turning point represented their change to a trajectory of growing hope. In this study a particular decision or experience seemed to trigger the turning point in participants' hope, such as deciding to stay in Canada or receiving information about how to integrate into one's pre-migration profession. Similarly, the literature suggests that turning points may be prompted by a life transition, such as graduation or marriage, or an attempt to change direction (Abbott, 1997; Wheaton and Gotlib). Kausar (2000) also reported that major life events or experiences could expedite immigrants' transformation from diminishing hope to flourishing hope. Life course literature indicates that a turning point is only visible after it has occurred and must have lasting effects on the individual's life (Abbott; Wheaton & Gotlib). Likewise, the participants in this study identified their turning points retrospectively. They also talked about how there are differential outcomes for skilled worker immigrants, which is consistent with Wheaton and Gotlib's contention that a turning point involves alternative pathways connecting with divergent outcomes.

Even though the idea of a crossroads of hope has not been explicitly addressed in the hope literature, there is acknowledgement that when facing hopeless circumstances some individuals find hope and others get stuck in hopelessness (Farran et al., 1995). Although she did not explore this idea in detail, Kausar (2000) explained that when faced with a crisis, individuals respond with hopelessness or hope. Regarding the outcomes of this crossroads of hope, Farran et al. explained that hopefulness results in enhanced functioning whereas hopelessness results in diminished functioning. This clearly fits with the differential outcomes among individuals in Phase 4A compared to those in Phase 4B.

*Phase 4A: Getting Stuck in Anger and Sadness*

Although none of the participants in this study felt they were in this phase, they clearly recognized that the hope of some skilled worker immigrants continues declining and that these individuals are unable to find the strength needed to successfully settle in Canada. Participants' descriptions suggest that individuals in this phase get bogged down in the difficulties and negative feelings they experienced in Phase 2 (Experiences Challenge Hope), and have trouble changing the downward trajectory of their hope. Therefore, this phase may be considered a continuation of Phase 2. From the perspective of Snyder (1995), individuals who continue into this phase are characterized by an inability to reactivate their agency or find alternate pathways to meet their goals. As a result, their goals become dreams that have little likelihood of coming true.

For individuals in this phase, the impact of their difficulties can be crippling. They have not discovered sustainable ways of enhancing their hope, so their hope continues declining toward hopelessness. At this phase, individuals

have difficulty accepting the Canadian system and may blame the system for ruining their lives. They may be trapped in narrow ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. To individuals in this phase it may seem that the options are limited and they have trouble envisioning alternate paths to achieve their goals. These individuals may be characterized by inflexibility and feelings of anger, depression, and bitterness. Their hope has faded and they may have given up. Skilled worker immigrants in this phase are more likely to exhibit health problems, symptoms of psychological distress, and signs of diminished functioning. Similarly, other research has described the potential negative impact of employment-related problems, including feelings of alienation, chronic stress, psychological problems, and health problems (CFMHIAIR, 1988; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Health Canada, 1999; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003; Yakushko, Backhaus, et al., 2008).

Farran et al. (1995) describe the type of hopelessness portrayed in this phase as a pathological level of hopelessness. Hopelessness has a more pervasive hold on individuals, marking those who have succumbed to their challenges. They explain that this pathological hopelessness can be related to mental illness and is characterized by diminished physical, psychological, and spiritual functioning and quality of life. While some individuals face adversity and give up, others emerge stronger and with a deeper sense of hope.

*Phase 4B: Choosing Hope and Finding Strength*

The skilled worker immigrants in this study were able to find hope despite the challenges they encountered during settlement. The hope literature does a better job of addressing this topic than the literature about immigrants, which

tends to focus on the problems immigrants experience. Therefore, this study contributes to the discourse regarding successful outcomes for immigrants.

The outcomes for individuals in this phase are very different than the outcomes described for individuals in Phase 4A (Getting Stuck in Anger and Sadness). For skilled worker immigrants in this phase their hope is growing, they are continuing to move forward, they have regained a sense of strength, and they have found strategies that support their integration and their sense of hope, results consistent with Kausar's (2000) findings. This demonstrates the strength, resourcefulness, and flexibility of the skilled worker immigrants in this study. Many of the strategies utilized by participants that fostered their hope also helped them cope with their challenges. This provides support for Farran and colleagues (1995) assertion that hope and coping are "inexplicably intertwined" (p. 17). Participants' hope was enhanced by various strategies, and these strategies seemed to positively influence one another.

*Acceptance*

The skilled worker immigrants in this study understood the need for acceptance of the Canadian culture and system. Recognizing and accepting their losses helped them to move forward and enhanced their sense of hope. In her research of Pakistani immigrants, Kausar (2000) also identified acceptance as a "hope uplifter." Kausar found that acknowledgement and acceptance of loss was the point at which the potential for growth began and immigrants discovered their resources. Kausar indicated that the immigrants in her study felt compelled to accept the things they could not change. For the participants in the current study, acceptance seemed to involve deciphering what they had control over, accepting

those things they could not change, and reclaiming control of things they could change.

According to Farran et al. (1995), the process of hoping involves accepting life's struggles as "integral parts of ourselves" (p. 7). Duggleby and Wright (2005) identified acknowledging "life the way it is" as part of the process that enabled elderly palliative patients to live with hope. The skilled worker immigrants in the current study engaged in a similar process when they recognized their previous hopes and expectations were no longer viable, acknowledged their losses, and were able to accept what they could not change.

The skilled worker immigrants in this study described a shift in their sense of responsibility and control. Phase 2 (Experiences Challenge Hope) was associated with a focus on what needed to change externally. For example, individuals blamed others and the system. Participants' difficulties during this time and their accompanying feelings of frustration may have led them to think that their efforts were worthless and that they were not in control of their own futures – that there was little they could do that would change their situation. While this external focus can serve to take the pressure off individuals for their difficulties, it also may lead to feelings of powerlessness, a reality also described in the literature (Farran et al., 1995). In the current phase (Choosing Hope and Finding Strength), participants shifted to an internal locus of control. They still acknowledged the need for external change, but an internal focus helped them recognize what they had control over and to accept what they could not control. This was empowering because individuals were able to take control of and change parts of themselves to facilitate their settlement and enhance their hope. Similar to

these findings, hope research has identified locus of control as crucial to enhancing hope in cancer patients (Bunston, Mings, Mackie, & Jones, 1995).

In summary, acceptance appeared to be a prerequisite for enhancing participants' hope. It seemed that without acceptance, other strategies failed to deeply impact individuals' sense of hope. Other hope-fostering strategies, such as reframing, appeared to build on acceptance as a foundation of hope.

*Reframing*

Reframing was used by participants to support their sense of hope. It involved an intentional shift in perspective, accompanied by a change in thoughts, feelings, and actions. This appeared to be mainly a cognitive strategy, although it impacted other aspects of the skilled worker immigrant's life (e.g., emotionally, relationally). A variety of strategies were helpful in reframing, such as finding good in bad situations, using hopeful language, normalizing, modifying hopes and goals, and noticing evidence for hope.

As part of the sub-theme of Finding Good in the Bad, participants sought meaning in their challenges, a finding that corresponds with research by Kausar (2000). She explained that when immigrants were able to make sense of their losses, it helped them to move forward. Similarly, Duggleby and Wright's (2005) participants described searching for meaning in their experiences and challenges, and by doing so, recognizing the value of the difficulties they had faced. In all three studies, meaning making was associated with enhanced hope. Another theme from Duggleby and Wright's research that corresponds with the findings of this study was the use of positive reappraisal, which involved a cognitive shift in perception of situations, expectations, and goals. Likewise, the skilled worker

immigrants in the current study explained how they revised their hopes and goals

to better fit their circumstances, and positively interpreted difficult experiences. In

Khan and Watson's (2005) study of Pakistani immigrant women, participants'

adjustment involved appreciation for aspects of the Canadian society, a finding

also identified in this study.

*Striving for Success*

The skilled worker immigrants in this study persevered as they sought to

achieve their goals. They explained how their careers were a vital part of their

settlement. Likewise, other researchers have argued that employment is essential

to successful settlement and tends to be a good indicator of immigrant adjustment

(Galabuzzi, 2005; McIsaac, 2003). For some individuals in the current study,

education was also closely tied to their sense of hope. Similarly, Kausar (2000)

found evidence that immigrants' hope was related to a successful career and

education.

Having goals was central to participants' hope. In the hope literature,

goals have been described as a crucial component of hoping (Farran et al., 1995;

Snyder, 1995). Participants in the current study indicated that goals should be

reasonable, manageable, and flexible. Participants found it helpful to prepare for

potential challenges by considering alternatives in how they might achieve their

goals. This corresponds with research by Morse and Doberneck (1995), which

identified the envisioning of alternatives and setting of goals as a universal

component of hope. From the perspective of Snyder (1995), in this phase skilled

worker immigrants were able to create new pathways and access a deeper sense of

agency, which enabled them to continue working toward their goals. As a result, their hope was bolstered.

Hope for the skilled worker immigrants in this study was related to a sense of possibility and choice. A general rule could be proposed from the findings: Hope helps to expand the possibilities whereas diminishing hope makes it difficult to recognize alternatives. The opposite process might also be concluded: A lack of alternatives challenges hope whereas expanded possibilities enhance hope.

Choice and envisioning possibilities were important parts of skilled worker immigrants' hope during their settlement. During Phase 2 (Experiences Challenge Hope) participants described a narrowing of their available options along with their diminishing hope. In Phase 4B (Choosing Hope and Finding Strength) participants discussed the importance of flexibility and described their growing hope and sense of expanding options. Given these findings, an individual's flexibility appears to broaden the options available to him or her. In other words, because the system constricts the options for skilled worker immigrants, flexibility helps to counteract this constriction and to increase the perception of possibilities.

Skilled worker immigrants seem to benefit from flexibility as they adapt both culturally and professionally. This adjustment is a key part of successful settlement. Flexibility may involve modifying hopes and/or changing the path by which they plan to achieve their hopes. Similarly, Kausar (2000) indicated that flexibility and adaptability facilitated the hoping process among Pakistani immigrants in her study.

*Support*

Support was found to be crucial to the maintenance of participants' hope. The support participants received from others and from their spirituality helped them to enhance their hope, a finding also identified by Kausar (2000). Others have similarly described the importance of support from others and from religion in times of adversity, and how this fosters one's hope (Duggleby & Wright, 2005; Farran et al., 1995; Khan & Watson, 2005; Kausar; Morse & Doberneck, 1995). For palliative patients seeking ways to live with hope, supportive relationships and spirituality facilitated their transforming hope (Duggleby & Wright). Farran et al. identified the relational process (heart of hope) and spiritual process (soul of hope) as central attributes of hope. Clearly social and spiritual support enhances the hope of skilled worker immigrants and facilitates their settlement. Support also assisted participants in reframing and as they strove to be successful.

*Hope as a Choice*

The multidimensional nature of participants' hope was particularly evident in this phase. From Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) perspective on hope, the skilled worker immigrants in this study described cognitive, emotional, behavioural, affiliative, temporal, and contextual dimensions of their hope. Each of these dimensions of hope was also utilized in participants' hope-fostering strategies.

The second and third phases of Kausar's (2000) transformational process of hope corresponded with the findings in Phase 4B (Choosing Hope and Finding Strength) of this study, albeit the organization differs. According to Kausar, hope is strengthened and deepened during the process of transformation. In the second

phase, Exploring Resources, the Pakistani immigrants in Kausar's study began focusing on potential, and their abilities and strengths. This shift helped participants remember their personal, relational, situational, and spiritual resources, which assisted in recovering their sense of hope and was related to successful adaptation. The third phase, Recognizing Possibilities, involved the ability to envision possibilities, alternatives, and opportunities. Along with this shift, participants created new goals, pursued education, made careers changes, explored alternative routes and opportunities, and reformulated goals. They also found meaning in their experiences and their hope flourished. In Kausar's study, hope allowed participants to use crisis as an opportunity for growth.

Based on her model of the transformational process of hope for immigrants, Kausar (2000) explained that the phases were not linear, but back and forth and recursive. The model constructed to represent the findings of the current study implies that skilled worker immigrants progress through the phases in a relatively linear fashion. That being said, it should again be noted that the phases represent general trends in participants' hope. Therefore, in Phase 2 (Experiences Challenge Hope) individuals encounter experiences that challenge their hope, as well as experiences that enhance their hope. As hope challenges are more salient during Phase 2, the general trend involves diminishing hope. Thus, it could be concluded that the phases proposed in the present study are linear in terms of the general trends of hope. Within those general trends, however, individuals experience fluctuations in their hope.

The findings of the current study also overlapped with Khan and Watson's (2005) results. The final phases of both studies had common characteristics.

However, Khan and Watson's fourth stage of the immigration experience, Adjustment, was not as fully delineated as the corresponding phase in this study, Phase 4B: Choosing Hope and Finding Strength. That the participants in Khan and Watson's research had been in Canada less than a year may help to explain this difference. Because participants in the current study had been in Canada from two to four years, their longer time in Canada may help to explain the fuller development of the last phase. It seemed that during their first year, participants in Khan and Watson's study were primarily focused on their challenges and losses, although rays of hope could be seen. The skilled worker immigrants in the current study had more time to change the course of their hope and to develop strategies to support it.

The skilled worker immigrants in this study found ways of supporting their hope and constructed strategies to make this hope even more visible. As their hope grew, participants' settlement and functioning appeared to benefit. In addition, their sense of strength, confidence, and possibility developed. The ways participants enhanced their hope provide insights into how helpers can support skilled worker immigrants in counselling.

Implications for Counselling with Skilled Worker Immigrants

Hope has been identified as one of four key factors related to psychotherapeutic effectiveness across theoretical orientations (Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 1999). Barsan (2005) found that hope increased and psychological symptoms decreased significantly during counselling. This suggests that counselling helps to enhance individuals' hope. Therefore, counselling may benefit skilled worker immigrants by helping to foster their hope.

Before explaining the counselling implications based on the findings of this study, it is worthwhile to describe some practical considerations in counselling immigrants that have been identified in the literature. Research has indicated that immigrants may hold attitudes and adhere to cultural norms which make it less likely that they will access services, particularly mental health services, in the dominant culture (Arthur & Merali, 2005; Yakushko, Backhuas, et al., 2008). When immigrants do come into contact with counsellors, these are frequently negative experiences that feel demoralizing and devaluing (CTFMHIAIR, 1988). In order to build rapport with skilled worker immigrant clients, counsellors should have knowledge about the immigration process and the difficulties of integration (Arthur & Merali, 2005), like those described by participants in this study. The findings of this study also indicate that skilled worker immigrants' experiences during settlement impact their hope, as well as their emotional and cognitive functioning. Therefore, counsellors should be aware of the psychological effects of clients' settlement experiences. Because immigrant clients may not be familiar with or may mistrust confidentiality in counselling, it is crucial that counsellors address this early in the counselling process (Yakushko, Backhaus, et al.). To help create a therapeutic space that is culturally and personally affirming, counsellors can explain their desire to better understand these individuals and their cultures (Yakushko, Backhaus, et al.).

A key to addressing stress in immigrants' lives involves providing these individuals with culturally relevant mental health services (Yakushko, Watson, & Thompson, 2008). Many recommendations that are relevant to cross-cultural counselling generally, also apply to counselling skilled worker immigrants, and it

is advised that counsellors familiarize themselves with cross-cultural counselling literature (e.g., Cheatham et al., 2002a, 2002b; Grant, Henley, & Kean, 2001). Counsellors must develop competencies in working with skilled worker immigrants and it is important that counsellors are aware of their own values and biases when working with this population (Cheatham et al., 2002b; Wittebrood & Robertson, 1991; Yakushko, Backhaus, et al.).

Helpers may encounter skilled worker immigrants when these individuals seek employment counselling, settlement services, and/or traditional counselling. Counselling with skilled worker immigrants may also be effective in groups, with the added benefit of connecting individuals with and experiencing the support of peers (Yakushko, Backhaus, et al., 2008). The findings of the present study identified the importance of social support in helping individuals regain their hope, which suggests group counselling may be particularly beneficial with skilled worker immigrants.

Since immigrants' career development is affected by different factors than those that influence the career development of the native-born population, career counselling with immigrants must reflect their specific realities (Chen, 2008; Yakushko, Backhaus et al., 2008), like those identified by participants in this study. For example, skilled worker immigrants may be forced to change careers, an experience that can be very challenging and involve many feelings of loss. As such, the career counsellor needs to recognize that this decision is largely involuntary, and to address the effects of this transition on the individual.

Although skilled worker immigrants may engage in counselling for a specific purpose, such as to help them obtain suitable employment, counsellors

should be mindful of the impact of that difficulty, including anger, sadness, and diminished hope, as identified in this study's findings. Therefore, it is important that counselling services with skilled worker immigrants address the whole person and not only the particular issue for which they have sought help.

*Hope-Focused Counselling with Skilled Worker Immigrants*

The results of this study suggested that an increase in hope was associated with enhanced functioning and more successful settlement. Therefore, a hope-focused counselling approach (e.g., Edey & Jevne, 2003; Jevne, Nekolaichuk, & Williamson, 1998; Larsen, Edey, & LeMay, 2007) appears to be suitable in psychotherapy with skilled worker immigrants. Counsellors who plan to use a hope-focused approach should have a thorough understanding of hope and ways of working with it in counselling. Prior to counselling skilled worker immigrants and at various points throughout the duration of counselling, it is advised that counsellors consider their hopes for their clients. It is important that counsellors are aware of their own hope and areas their hope might waver in working with these individuals. In order for counselling to be most successful, psychotherapists should consider how to enhance their sense of hope about working with this population (Lipschitz-Elhawi, 2008). By doing so, counsellors are able to consciously ground themselves in a hopeful orientation. Hope-focused counsellors use a vast array of strategies to help enhance the hope of their clients. Counsellors may address hope with clients implicitly and/or explicitly (Larsen et al.). Many of the tools described below focus on addressing hope explicitly with skilled worker immigrant clients based on the results of this study. A starting

point for conveying hope to a client is to establish a supportive relationship with that individual.

A key goal of counselling skilled worker immigrants is to enhance their hope so that they are better able to cope with their situation. The findings of this study suggest that fostering the hope of skilled worker immigrants may also positively impact their settlement and their cognitive, emotional, and behavioural functioning. Additionally, hope-focused counselling may help skilled worker immigrants regain their confidence, find meaning in their experiences, envision possibilities and alternatives, and construct new hopes and goals for their life in Canada. The ability to see hope even in extremely challenging situations will assist these individuals to continue moving forward day by day. Enhancing the hope of skilled worker immigrants may result in a ripple effect in their social interactions with family, friends, other newcomers, colleagues, and classmates.

*Telling Their Story*

Clients should have an opportunity to share their immigration and settlement story. This story may contain elements described in the findings of this study. Counsellors might inquire about the reactions and emotions of skilled worker immigrants in response to their experiences, as well as how these experiences have impacted their lives and hope. Counsellors may explain to immigrant clients that it is acceptable, and may be helpful, for them to share their negative perceptions about the host society, and that the counsellor will not be offended by these critiques (Yakushko, Backhaus, et al., 2008). This may be particularly essential if the counsellor visibly belongs to the majority culture.

Providing skilled newcomers with an opportunity to share their story has a number of purposes. Because immigrants tend to be marginalized and silenced, sharing provides an opportunity for them to reclaim their voices, an experience that can be empowering. When counsellors are open to stories marked by despair and negativity, it allows individuals to feel heard. For example, Larsen and Stege (2009) explain that an important part of conveying hope is acknowledging clients' stories and being with them in their hopelessness. Likewise, Flaskas (2007) describes the importance of holding both hope and hopelessness and finding a balance between them. It is unwise to focus exclusively on either hope or hopelessness, both deserve attention and respect. Another benefit for clients in sharing their stories is the opportunity for normalization it can provide – the counsellor can indicate the parallels between the client's experiences and the experiences of other skilled worker immigrants. This can help individuals recognize that they are not alone, that their reactions are not unusual, and that others are experiencing similar challenges and feelings. Normalizing immigrants' experiences and struggles can be enormously relieving and supportive as it takes pressure and blame off the individual. Finally, this time of sharing one's story can represent part of the grieving of losses, which Kausar (2000) explained was an important part of the transformation of hope among newcomers.

*Talking About Hope*

Asking about clients' hope contextualizes counselling in a hopeful orientation. Talking about hope will tend to sensitize skilled worker immigrants to think about and notice hope. Since the findings of this study suggest hope is associated with enhanced functioning, increasing skilled worker immigrants'

awareness of hope has the potential to be beneficial. Counsellors may ask clients questions about their hope including (Edey & Jevne, 2003): What is hope for you? Where does your hope come from? Why hope? What threatens your hope? What enhances your hope? Who is your role model of hope? Counsellors might also suggest that skilled worker immigrants pay attention to people, things, and/or experiences that affect their hope. These exercises may help skilled worker immigrants become more familiar with their "hoping selves" (LeMay, 2006).

*Reframing*

All the participants in this study used reframing in a manner that shifted their perspective and supported their hope. Clients can be helped to reframe in various ways. Counsellors can prompt clients to make meaning of their experiences and challenges by asking them about the purpose of difficulties in life and/or by facilitating their recognition of good things they took away from challenging experiences. For example, skilled worker immigrants could be asked how their initial survival job was beneficial. Perhaps they were able to learn about and adjust to the Canadian culture, or it may have acted as a stepping-stone to obtain a better job, or it allowed them to support their family. Kausar (2000) described finding meaning as an important part of enhancing immigrants' hope.

Noticing and drawing attention to clients' hopeful language may be beneficial in counselling. Likewise, using hopeful language, including the language of "when," "yet," and "I believe," can also convey hope to clients and facilitate a change in perspective (Edey & Jevne, 2003). Counsellors may use other hopeful language that helps participants reframe their experiences, for

example, talking about the "obstacles" to settlement rather than "barriers", or talking about their difficulties as "challenges" or "one part of settlement."

*Setting Goals*

For the participants in the current study, goals were essential to their sense of hope. Therefore, it may be valuable for counsellors working with skilled worker immigrants to help them in setting goals. Goals may reflect various points in the future: in a short time (weeks or months), in a year, in a few years, and so on. Goals should be realistic given the clients' context, broken into manageable pieces, and should address things the client can control. Clients should also be encouraged to be flexible in their goal-setting. Counsellors may ask skilled worker immigrants about how they plan to achieve their goals, possible obstacles that could make it difficult to achieve their goals, and alternatives to overcoming these obstacles. Clients may find it useful to brainstorm ideas and solutions for dealing with obstacles (Yakushko, Backhaus, et al., 2008). Talking about goals suggests that a better future is possible and helps individuals to look forward. By discussing goals, the counsellor has an opportunity to address the client's sense of control and to focus the client on setting goals related to things he or she has control over.

*Exploring Resources*

The findings of the present study suggest that participants' social and spiritual resources were a major source of hope for them. Therefore, exploring skilled worker immigrants' resources may remind them of the many resources and supports available, which can increase a sense of connectedness with others and help in recovering their sense of hope (Herth, 2000; Kausar, 2000). Counsellors

can ask skilled worker immigrant clients to make a list of the resources they have in their lives. If the client is having trouble thinking of resources, the counsellor might bring up categories to consider, such as: home, school (university/college), work, religion/spirituality, internal (things about me), external (others), formal, informal, family, friends, people, agencies, organizations, etc. The counsellor might also provide assistance to clients on this task by, for example, suggesting resources the client did not generate.

*Noticing Hopeful Evidence*

In the current study noticing hopeful evidence helped participants change their perspective and enhanced their hope. Therefore, facilitating a discussion about hopeful evidence may help to foster the hope of clients in counselling (Larsen et al., 2007). Counsellors can prompt skilled worker immigrants to consider evidence for hope by having them think about (1) a time when something turned out better than expected, (2) a time when something that seemed impossible became possible and/or (3) a hope that has come true. By remembering things that enhanced one's hope in the past, a shift in perspective may occur, from fear and uncertainty to hope and possibility. This hope can provide individuals with the courage to move forward when in a situation with an uncertain future, such as not knowing whether they will find satisfying employment in Canada.

Counsellors may also suggest that skilled worker immigrants seek mentorship from another professional immigrant. Mentors may present powerful evidence of hope for skilled worker immigrants, allowing individuals to envision possibilities, consider alternatives, and see that success is possible. This can result

in a shift in perspective that encourages skilled immigrants to continue moving forward, even when the difficulties seem insurmountable. In addition, mentors provide individuals with support, which has been clearly found to enhance skilled worker immigrants' hope.

<div align="center">Implications for Policy</div>

The participants in this study made several suggestions about policy changes that they believed would improve the experiences of skilled worker immigrants in the future. Therefore, many of the policy recommendations included below were derived from participants' ideas. The literature also points to many changes needed in the policies related to skilled worker immigrants in Canada. Results of this study have provided additional support for the importance of addressing such issues.

In the past, immigration has been a critical part of the Canada's economic success (Reitz, 2001). The current downward trend in the employment status and income of immigrants is alarming. Canada is failing to fully utilize the skills and talents of newcomers in the economy and in public life more generally (Conference Board of Canada, 2001; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). Since the barriers that exclude immigrants from full participation in the economy are systemic, the solutions to address these concerns also need to focus on the system as a whole (Khan, 2007; McIsaac, 2003; Omidvar & Richmond). These efforts need to be coordinated among the various stakeholders (e.g., government, educational institutions, professional regulatory bodies, employers) in order for the changes to be most broadly effective. Innovative thinking is needed to address

the current issues so that immigration continues to have a positive impact and immigrants are better integrated into the Canadian labour force.

*Improving Congruence*

The skilled worker immigrants in the current study felt misled and cheated by the government because the qualifications that enabled them to immigrate were insufficient to obtain suitable employment. Research indicates that the points system used to select skilled worker immigrants has resulted in the highest ever education and skill levels among immigrants (Reitz, 2001). Despite increasingly stringent immigration policies, recent immigrants have experienced declining employment success (Reitz). There is clearly a disconnect between the Canadian government's skilled worker program and the vocational structure and demands in Canada (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Chen, 2008; Khan, 2007; Tang et al., 2007). Changes are needed to improve the congruence between the government's selection system and the realities of employment for skilled worker immigrants.

*Government: Informed Decisions*

The findings of this study suggest skilled worker immigrants are often not aware of the challenges they will experience in Canada. The current system of immigration for skilled workers and professionals does not provide individuals with an opportunity to make a fully informed decision about whether or not to come to Canada. The points system implies that the knowledge and experience of skilled worker immigrants will be utilized in Canada. However, individuals experience a very different reality when attempting to find employment in Canada. In addition, individuals are unable to determine their likely employment

prospects prior to immigrating because they cannot have their foreign education evaluated until they are Canadian residents.

One prospective change would involve assessing applicants' credentials against Canadian standards before they are allowed to apply to immigrate (Alboim et al., 2005). Another alternative would entail linking the points applicants receive for education to the equivalent of their education in Canada (Alboim et al.). These changes would provide potential immigrants with a more realistic understanding of the value of their education in Canada.

Assuming the current points system does not change, applicants should be given more accurate and realistic information about the difficulties many skilled workers immigrants experience integrating into their profession. This will help individuals make better informed decisions about immigration and will assist in preparing skilled worker immigrants for the obstacles they will face in Canada. In addition, this kind of full disclosure will help to lessen the emotional and psychological impact related to being unable to work in one's profession. Pre-migration orientation in the immigrant's home country may also improve the transition process for new immigrants. This has already been implemented to a limited extent with a program called Canadian Orientation Abroad (CIC, 2005b).

*Real Equality*

The most vulnerable in a society are most likely to be mistreated and to suffer the consequences of a poorly structured system. In Canada, immigrants often lack power and a voice. The government and its policies only perpetuate these dynamics in which immigrants are taken advantage of, and it is the immigrants who suffer. Skilled worker immigrants in this study spoke about

feeling like second-class citizens in Canada. Therefore, changes are needed to ensure skilled worker immigrants receive equal treatment by the relevant stakeholders (e.g., employers, professional regulatory bodies, educational institutions). Research has indicated that immigrants are marginalized as they try to access the job market (Chen, 2008; Khan & Watson, 2005). As legal immigrants, skilled worker immigrants have the right to full and legitimate access to the Canadian labour market (Chen). Thus, changes are necessary that will improve skilled worker immigrants' vocational integration.

*Increased Awareness*

Participants spoke about a need for increased awareness among employers, professional regulatory bodies, and the general public about skilled worker immigrants – about where they originate from, their skills and experience, and their economic, social, and cultural contributions. A public awareness campaign could increase public recognition of the challenges and barriers immigrants experience (Conference Board of Canada, 2004). This could also enhance public understanding and support for improving settlement. Employers may benefit specifically from learning that many immigrants have substantial education and experience that could be valuable to their organizations, as well as learning about the benefits of hiring skilled worker immigrants (Conference Board of Canada, 2004).

*Fair Credential Recognition*

Credential recognition problems were a major concern of participants in this study. Clearly the lack of recognition of foreign qualifications, training, and work experience by employers, professional organizations, and educational

institutions in Canada poses a substantial barrier for skilled worker immigrants seeking employment in their pre-migration profession. A further challenge is the lack of coordination among the different parties assessing immigrant credentials (i.e., educational institutions, professional regulatory bodies, and provincial credential evaluation services). The Conference Board of Canada (2001) called the lack of recognition of immigrants' foreign credentials "the biggest single learning recognition problem in Canada today" (p. 29). The complexity of this issue demands a multifaceted solution.

Professional regulatory bodies have had difficulty balancing the need to protect professional integrity and public interest while also utilizing the skills of immigrant professionals (Conference Board of Canada, 2001). There is a need to improve existing and/or to create new qualification recognition systems so that "a lack of knowledge does not lead to systematic underevaluation or exclusion" (McIsaac, 2003, p. 62). Educational institutions and professional regulatory bodies need to develop fair, consistent, accountable standards for evaluating the education and experience of foreign-trained professionals, and these standards should not be influenced by labour market conditions (Alboim et al., 2005; Wayland, 2006). Independent appeal mechanisms should be created for applicants who wish to challenge the decisions of professional regulatory bodies (Wayland).

On a larger scale, it has been suggested that a common framework for evaluating learning be developed (Conference Board of Canada, 2001). Creating national learning recognition institutions that recognize, credential, and accredit formal and informal learning would benefit Canadian-born individuals and immigrants alike (Conference Board of Canada, 2001). Improving institutional

linkages internationally could also facilitate the transition and academic qualification recognition of skilled worker immigrants, for example, through the development of mutual recognition agreements (Alboim et al., 2005; Conference Board of Canada, 2001).

Lacking Canadian work experience was also reported to be an obstacle for the skilled worker immigrants in this study. One participant was particularly vocal that employers should not require immigrants to have Canadian experience as it poses immigrants with a problem that is by definition impossible to overcome. Employers need to recognize this, and consider other means of determining whether a skilled worker immigrant will be a good match with their organization. For example, immigrants could be initially hired on a limited probationary period to help employers determine whether or not they demonstrate the needed experience and skills to be successful in the position.

*Facilitating Integration*

Apprenticeship programs can grant skilled worker immigrants the Canadian experience they require to work in their field (Wayland, 2006). Mentorship programs, which match new immigrants with mentors in the same profession, can help improve the employment prospects of skilled worker immigrants by helping them navigate the job-search process and provide them with local connections and knowledge (Wayland).

According to study participants, there is an obvious need for better integration of skilled worker immigrants into their pre-migration professions. This requires coordination among professional regulatory bodies, educational institutions, settlement agencies, and employers. Credential assessment should

take place immediately after arrival so that skilled worker immigrants can complete the necessary upgrading and retraining without delay, and more quickly integrate into their professions (Alboim et al., 2005). It has been suggested that if individuals were able to have their qualifications assessed prior to immigrating, they could begin necessary bridging from abroad, for example, by completing courses online (Alboim et al.; Conference Board of Canada, 2004). When immigrant professionals do lack certain competencies, bridging initiatives should acknowledge immigrants' skills, education, and experience and target retraining and education to make up for specific deficiencies (Tang et al., 2007). Ideally bridging programs should provide only the academic, skill, language, and work-experience top-ups the skilled worker immigrant needs to fill gaps and connect him or her to licensure or employment (Alboim et al.). Bridging programs that integrate academic upgrading, occupation-specific language training, and work experience have been found to be particularly effective (Alboim et al.).

Skilled worker immigrants may have difficulty upgrading their education because financial pressures require them to work, as was true of some of the participants in this study. To address this challenge, bridging programs could be offered part-time to enable immigrants to work while upgrading. Supports could also be developed (e.g. loans, government funding, supplying childcare) that would provide skilled worker immigrants with the option of focusing on their upgrading. In some locations, these types of initiatives already exist. For example, the Calgary Foundation created the Immigrant Access Fund with the objective of providing micro-loans to internationally trained immigrants for their accreditation, training, and upgrading (Wayland, 2006).

*Appropriate Settlement Support*

The participants in this study reported feeling that there is a lack of support for the specific needs of skilled worker immigrants during settlement. Likewise, research has indicated that there is not a good fit between the services immigrants require and the programs available (Conference Board of Canada, 2004; Wayland, 2006). To remedy this deficit, settlement agencies should develop supports to address the particular settlement needs common among skilled worker immigrants, including those specific to the second stage of settlement. During the second stage of settlement immigrants require assistance with tasks such as accessing the labour market, bridging cultural and lifestyle differences, upgrading skills, and obtaining advanced or employment-specific language instruction (Mwarigha, 2002).

## Considerations for Future Research

The topic of this research has received minimal attention in the literature to date. Skilled worker immigrants make up a substantial segment of the Canadian population, yet very little is known about their settlement process. Although research has addressed the barriers skilled worker immigrants experience, there is a dearth of information regarding positive immigrant outcomes and the mechanisms that facilitate successful settlement. The current study provides a snapshot into the early experiences (up to 4 years in Canada) of skilled worker immigrants and the hoping process that enabled them to continue moving forward. Research is needed regarding skilled worker immigrants' experiences later in settlement. More research is also needed to further explore the strategies skilled worker immigrants utilize in coping with the challenges of settlement, and

to deepen understanding about the methods individuals develop to enhance their hope.

In this study I found that participants encountered a crossroads in their hope. This idea has not been previously discussed in depth in the literature about hope or immigrants; therefore, more research is needed to explore this important phase in skilled worker immigrants' process of changing hope. In addition, researchers should seek to better understand the outcomes of the different paths after the crossroads. As none of the study participants considered themselves to be in Phase 4A (Getting Stuck in Anger and Sadness), further research should explore this phase, the characteristics of individuals in this phase, and interventions aimed to enhance the hope of skilled worker immigrants in this phase.

Employment was found to be a key aspect of participants' settlement. All the individuals in this study indicated some level of satisfaction with their current employment, or the expected end result of their current employment (e.g., to help them get a better job). It would be worthwhile exploring how individuals who are not able to acquire satisfactory employment deal with this loss long-term. For example, do they come to place more importance on other aspects of their lives, such as their family or community? How is their hope affected by this experience?

Recent changes to immigration policy are likely to result in a decline of individuals immigrating through the Federal Skilled Worker Program and an increase in the number of Provincial Nominees and temporary workers (Alboim, 2009). Therefore, research will be needed that seeks to understand the unique

challenges and experiences of individuals who immigrate through these programs. It will be valuable to study the settlement of these individuals over time and to explore the changes in their hope during settlement.

## Final Conclusions

The changing hope of skilled worker immigrants during settlement has not been studied in the past. Therefore, in this study I sought to provide a preliminary exploration of this topic. Skilled worker immigrants were found to arrive in Canada with high hopes about their future. The process of settlement, however, involved many obstacles and experiences that challenged individuals' hope. Although some skilled worker immigrants succumbed to these difficulties, others emerged stronger, having found ways of enhancing their hope. The hope of skilled worker immigrants appeared to be closely related to their settlement success and their functioning. The results of this study offer insight into the complex process of how hope changes during settlement. Participants' stories impart hope; even in very challenging circumstances, participants looked to the future with anticipation of the good yet to come.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

**Study about Immigrant Skilled Workers and Hope**

Newcomers often arrive with many hopes for life in Canada. However, settlement can be a very difficult process involving many challenges, and barriers. Lisa Okoye is doing a study to learn about the experiences of immigrant skilled workers, and how their hope changes during the settlement process. Lisa is a student at the University of Alberta and is working with Dr. Sophie Yohani. Her study will help service providers and other professionals better understand the experiences of skilled workers who migrate to Canada. It may also help people who work with immigrants to serve them better and it may help with making some policy changes.

Lisa wants to talk to individuals who immigrated to Canada through the Skilled Worker class. If you agree to be in the study, you will talk with Lisa about your experiences since coming to Canada and how these experiences have affected your hope.

The meeting will take about one and a half hours. It will be at a time that works best for you. Everything you talk about will be private. Someone who speaks your language can be there to help you talk with Lisa if you need it.

> You can participate in this study if:
> (1) You immigrated to Canada through the Skilled Worker class as an adult
> (2) You have lived in Canada for between 18 months and 20 years
> (3) You are willing to talk about your settlement experiences and hope

If you would like to be part of this study, please call Lisa at (780)XXX-XXXX or email her at okoye@ualberta.ca and let her know you are interested in participating. Lisa will call you or email you back and ask you some more questions and answer any questions you have. Next, she will arrange a time and place to talk with you.

Appendix B: Guiding Interview Questions

1. What led you to come to Canada?

2. What were your hopes before coming to Canada?

3. Tell me about your experience settling in Canada as a skilled worker and how these experiences affected your hope.

    a. How has your hope changed since coming to Canada?

    b. What has challenged your hope?

    c. What has enhanced/increased your hope?

4. Tell me about your hope now.

Appendix C: Information Letter and Consent Form

This study is about the experiences of immigrant skilled workers, and how their hope changes during the settlement process. This study is being done by Lisa Okoye as part of her Master's degree. She is a student at the University of Alberta in the Department of Educational Psychology working with Dr. Sophie Yohani. Her study will help people better understand the experiences of skilled workers. It may also help people who work with immigrants to serve them better and it may help with making some policy changes.

If I sign this form, I know these things about this study:

1. I know that if I am in this study, I will be asked to talk about my experiences since coming to Canada. I will also be asked to talk about how these experiences have affected my hope. I will meet with Lisa for about one and a half hours.

2. Lisa will talk with me in English. Someone who speaks my language can be there to help me talk with Lisa if I need it. This person will promise not to tell anyone my name or what I said.

3. Lisa will phone me to arrange another time to meet to talk to me again to make sure she understands my story. She may ask a few more questions to check that the information is right. I will have a chance to add or change anything that we talked about in the first meeting. This second meeting will take about one and a half hours too.

4. I know that my meetings with Lisa will be recorded on a tape. After the talk is over, Lisa will listen to the tape and type out what I said on paper. Everything I say to Lisa will be private. She will take out my name and put a made-up name that I choose on the tape and paper so nobody will know that the words I said are mine. The typed paper and tape will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in Lisa's home for five years. After five years has passed, Lisa will destroy the information I told her.

5. Talking about my experiences in Canada might make me feel stressed or worried. If this happens, I know I can get some free help if I tell Lisa about what is going on.

6. I know that it is up to me whether I want to be in this study or not. Even if I sign this form, I can stop being in the study at any time without questions or problems. If I decide I don't want to be in the study anymore, and I let Lisa know before she's done her study, she will take out what I told her and not use it in her study.

7. The things I talk about with Lisa will be kept private. She will not tell anyone that I was in the study or what I said.

8. Lisa will write papers and may give lectures about what she learned in this study to help people understand and better help immigrant skilled workers. Some of my words may be used in the papers and lectures. Nobody will know that the words are mine because she will not use my real name.

9. I understand that I will receive $30 for being in the study.

10. I understand that if I have any questions or concerns, or want to know what Lisa learned from this study, I can talk to her in person, send her an email to okoye@ualberta.ca, or leave a message for her at (780) XXX-XXXX. I can also call Lisa's supervisor, Dr. Sophie Yohani at the University of Alberta at (780) 492-1164.

11. This study has gone through the University of Alberta committee that makes sure that research is done properly and that people who take part in the study are treated properly. This committee is called the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board. If I have any concerns about how this study is being done or about my rights as a person taking part in it, I can call the head of the committee, at (780) 492-3751.

Name: _____
       (please print)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____

|  | Lisa Okoye | Dr. Sophie Yohani |
|---|---|---|
|  | Master's Student | Assistant Professor, Supervisor |
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|  | Edmonton, AB  T6G 2G5 | Edmonton, AB  T6G 2G5 |

Appendix D: Demographic Information

| | |
|---|---|
| Name | |
| Pseudonym | |
| Gender | |
| Age | |
| Country of origin | |
| Ethnicity | |
| Language(s) spoken | |
| Education | |
| Occupation:<br>  a) In country of origin<br>  b) Current | a)<br><br>b) |
| Religion (optional) | |
| Marital status | |
| Number of children<br>• Ages of children | |
| Date of arrival in Canada | (month)    (year) |
| Reason(s) for immigrating | |
| Immigration class | |