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Factors Affecting Chinese Educators' Career Development Experiences in Canada

by

Qiuling Wu ©

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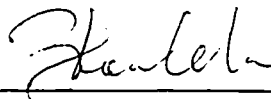
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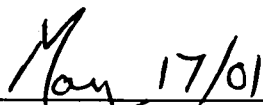
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Factors Affecting Chinese Educators' Career Development Experiences in Canada** submitted by Qiuling Wu in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education.

Dr. Tara Fenwick, Supervisor

Professor Art Deane

Dr. Joe Wu

May 17/01
Date

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, who loved and inspired me so much during her lifetime and to my parents, whose unfailing love and support sustained me throughout the writing of this thesis. Without these, I could have never achieved what I have achieved today. For this, I am forever grateful.

Abstract

This qualitative study identified factors that affect Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada. Through in-depth interviewing and interpretive analysis, it examined the social, cultural and political dimensions which have influenced the participants' career search experiences. Specifically, it looked at the impacts of conceptualization of career, sociocultural factors, barriers, acculturation as well as self-efficacy beliefs on the participants' career development.

This study drew upon the insights of five participants. Each was born in China, worked there as an educator, emigrated to Canada to complete a graduate degree in education, then sought employment in Canada as an educator. The findings point to a close link between the participants' career development and the social, cultural and political contexts within which their career development was situated. Specifically, the participants' career development was characterized by a compromised career concept, strong family influence, priority attached to a secure full-time job, self-blame for occupational disadvantages, preference for high acculturation as well as low self-efficacy beliefs. This study contributes to the scant body of research on Chinese immigrants' career development needs and experiences in Canada. It hopefully will stimulate future research in this field.

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Finally, my family members as well as Denise, Joyce, Keith, Gram and Pat, whose encouragement and faith in my ability sustained me throughout, is deserving of my most sincere gratitude. I thank them for their love, motivation and support.

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CHAPTER ONE
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

This study investigates Chinese educators' career development experiences in

Canada. In doing so, I identify in this chapter who the Chinese educators are, the

contexts in which their career development is situated, the research problem as well as

the significance and potential impacts that this study may have on many people,

including but are not limited to Chinese educators.

From a historical perspective, the establishment of diplomatic relations between

Canada and the People's Republic of China (hereafter China) in 1970 has greatly

contributed to the burgeoning bilateral ties between the two countries. Chinese

educators, among other Chinese professionals, are coming to Canada in increasing

numbers to pursue career-related graduate study and employment. Several factors

contribute to this movement. Among them are: Deng Xiaoping's reforms and "open-

door" policy in China[1], globalization and technological expansion, Canada's post-1967

immigration policies, and the impact of the students' protests at Tiananmen Square in

1989 on many Chinese, especially Chinese students and educators. These factors will

be explained later in this chapter.

I was led to this study partly through my own experiences as a Chinese educator

seeking career development through further education and employment. The scarce

literature on Chinese educators' career development is of only limited help in

understanding this group's unique occupational experiences in Canada. By examining

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[1] *Deng Xiaoping* (1904-1997) is regarded as the chief architect of China's reforms and "open-door" policy. Persecuted during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), he rose to power in the early 1970s. From 1977, he promoted economic modernization, and improved relations with the West. Although officially retired in 1989, he continued to be regarded as an effective leader of China until his death. *Open-door policy* is a term that historically refers to the principle of equal trading rights in China at the end of the 19th century negotiated among the US and major European powers. In this study, it refers to the bold economic and diplomatic policies taken by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 after decades of isolation following the founding of China in 1949. Beginning in 1978, Deng Xiaoping called for the "Four Modernization" of agriculture, industry, military, and science & technology. Foreign investment was encouraged. Thousands of students were sent abroad to study science and engineering. In foreign affairs, he developed closer ties with Japan and the West. Deng Xiaoping's programs produced rapid economic development in China. But politically China is still under tight Communist control.

their career development experiences in Canada, I hoped to understand how these Chinese educators conceptualized career. Specifically, I wanted to explore perceived barriers and enhancers in the process of their career development as well as their beliefs about the impacts of both Canadian and Chinese sociocultural and sociopolitical factors on their occupational aspirations and choices.

This study may have particular social and intellectual significance in that it might help policymakers, higher education administrators, community leaders, career counselors, parents as well as Chinese educators to better understand what I believe to be the highly unique experiences and struggles that this group shares in their career development in Canada. In addition, this study may stimulate future research in this field.

1.2   Contexts of Chinese Educators

The career development experiences of Chinese educators in Canada must be examined in the context of historical and structural conditions in Canada. Historically, since Canada and China established formal diplomatic relations in 1970, educational exchanges between the two countries have been burgeoning. The National Report on International Students in Canada published by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE, 1999) reveals that a total of 18,964 students from China attended graduate schools in Canada during the last ten years. During the early 1990s, like students from other countries, the majority of Chinese students attended educational institutions in Ontario (CBIE, 1999). This situation has changed. Today, Chinese students study in Canadian universities all across the country. The University of Alberta has become one of the top 10 Canadian universities in terms of its international student enrolment. The number of Chinese students enrolled in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Alberta has reached a total of 2,551 for the past ten years (Office of the Registrar & Student Awards, 1990-1999). Although not a large number, Chinese educators are among those who have first arrived in Canada to study and work since the late 1970s.

There are several possible reasons why so many Chinese students, including but are not limited to Chinese educators, have come to Canada to study and work. First,

China's reforms and "open-door" policy since 1978 have exposed more Chinese to the West than ever before.[2] For example, large amounts of foreign investment flooded into China after the late 1970s. The investors, especially those from the West, not only brought in needed capital, but also the Western cultural influences. In addition, China improved diplomatic relationships with most Western countries, including Canada. Therefore, these Western countries were no longer mysterious to the Chinese people. As part of the reforms and "open-door" policy, China sent students abroad to study science and engineering, mainly to Canada and the United States.[3] Increased media accessibility in China likely made information sharing about study in Canada more prevalent. Perceiving democracy and freedom in the West not realized in China, many Chinese, especially the educated urban youth, have developed a keen interest in traveling abroad. At the same time, the government has encouraged students— particularly those who have direct overseas links—to go abroad to study. Therefore, the desire to study abroad among the students has reached an unprecedented level. The post-1978 period has witnessed hundreds of thousands of Chinese students and scholars coming to Canada and other countries to seek educational and career opportunities.

Second, globalization, trade alliances, and technological expansion have made transnational mass movements of population become more frequent than any time in history. According to Richmond (1993), the phenomenon of the mass movement of labor from less to more developed regions is closely associated with the increasing globalization of capitalist systems of production. China, as a member of the global community, has been deeply affected by this phenomenon. As a matter of fact, the government has been battling with the problem of "brain drain" and searching for strategies to deal with it.[4]

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[2] The death of Mao Zedong in 1976 signaled changes were to come. In 1978, under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, the Four-Modernization policy was officially introduced. These post-Mao reforms and "open-door" policy were designed to promote economic and technical cooperation with other countries in part by liberalizing trade and allowing more foreign investment.

[3] Following the reforms and "open-door" policy in 1978, the Chinese government made it an official policy to "support those who pursue overseas studies, encourage those to return after they finish, and allow them to come and go freely". According to Ministry of Education statistics, there have been a total of 340,000 Chinese students studying in over 100 countries and regions since 1978 (Ministry of Education, 2000).

[4] See Lynne (1989) for discussion of the "brain drain" problem in China.

Third, Canada has a relatively low birth rate and an aging population which together creates a high dependency on foreign immigrants to maintain its population growth (Li, 1996). Moreover, some writers assert that Canada also suffers from "brain drain". Every year, highly trained Canadians are immigrating to the United States and other countries where financial rewards are higher.[5] The educational system often cannot adapt immediately to the changing needs of new industries. Therefore, in the foreseeable future, Canada may rely more heavily on foreign-trained personnel to fill certain labor market shortages. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (hereafter CIC) statistics show that since 1990, between 200,000 to 300,000 immigrants a year have been accepted into Canada, and that this momentum is likely to continue in the years to come.[6]

A point which warrants particular mention is Canada's immigration policy. Historically, Canadian immigration policy determined the admissibility of immigrants by race, ethnicity, and nationality. The result of this policy was that European immigrants were welcomed while visible minority immigrants were discouraged.[7] After the Second World War, the Western European countries experienced a shortage of skilled labor. Canada therefore had to turn to other countries in order to entice more talents for its own labor market needs. On the international front, it was not in Canada's best interests to maintain a discriminatory immigration policy if it wanted to play an important role in the world stage. Moreover, within Canada, the liberalism of the 1960s may have contributed to a climate that was needed for the change of Canada's immigration policies. Under these circumstances, Canada finally decided to reform its discriminatory immigration policy in 1967. A new point system was adopted based on

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[5] Although still a contested issue, media coverage of reports such as the Conference Board of Canada's (1999) have insisted that Canada's "brain drain" (losses of highly skilled workers to the US) accelerated during the 1990s. Estimates place annual average migration, both permanent and temporary, to the U.S. during the 1990s in a range of 22,000 to 35,000 (Statistics Canada, 2000).

[6] Canada accepts more immigrants and refugees, in proportion to its population, than any other country. In fact, one out of every six residents was born outside the country. The present immigration program is based on the Immigration Act of 1976, and was most recently amended in 1993. It is built on the fundamental principles of non-discrimination and universality. In the year 2000, Canada plans to accept between 200,000 to 225,000 immigrants (CIC, 2000).

[7] Even after the Second World War, according to Li (1996), between 1954 and 1967 about 83 percent of immigrants who came to Canada were from Europe while 4 percent were from Asia, and 1 percent was from Africa.

factors such as education, age, experience, knowledge of English or French, intended occupation, pre-arranged employment, relatives in Canada, and personal suitability. It was under this new policy that more visible minority immigrants, including Chinese, started to come to Canada.

A significant event further opened Canada's doors to China. On June 4, 1989, the Chinese government, by using its military, quelled the students' protests at Tiananmen Square.[8] This led to outrage among many Chinese, followed by the economic and diplomatic sanctions from the West. In response to this event, the Canadian government set up a special program to help those Chinese citizens who would like to seek political asylum in Canada. An official policy was also made not to deport anyone but criminals back to China. Under this program and policy, the first wave of post-Tiananmen refugees – many of whom were already in Canada as students, overwhelmingly had their immigration applications accepted based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Therefore, most students from China, including Chinese educators, were able to stay as permanent residents or were allowed to remain indefinitely in Canada following the military suppression of the students' democracy movement in Beijing.[9]

Despite the growing numbers of Chinese students and immigrants, literature related to Chinese students' career development is sparse. Research specifically designed to investigate Chinese educators' career development experience in Canada is close to non-existent. Yet I consider the career development experiences of this particular group rather unique in that it is likely to pursue a career path that may not be

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[8] The reforms and "open-door" policy have greatly stimulated socioeconomic development in China since 1978. However, socioeconomic tensions also arose due to a growing gap between the rich and the poor, high inflation, widespread alleged corruption of government officials as well as a call for more freedom and democracy. These ignited the student demonstrations of April and May 1989 and quickly spread to the whole country. On the morning of June 4th, the government quelled the demonstrations on Tiananmen Square by military action.

[9] The military suppression of the pro-democracy demonstrations created an effective pretext for many people to make their refugee claims in Canada. It is estimated that most Chinese who came to Canada after June 4, 1989 to early 1990 were accepted as political refugees. Many students who were already in Canada also overwhelmingly had their claims accepted. Later arrivals had a harder time persuading adjudicators they were not merely seekers of economic opportunity. 4,500 Chinese who sought asylum in Canada after the uprising were denied status as refugees (The Washington Post, 1994).

so stereotypically Chinese in nature.[10] Their career development experiences in Canada therefore warrant special examination. The other reason which has helped prompt this study is my capacity as a Chinese educator. Therefore, this study will serve as a beacon which I hope will light my future career direction.

1.3   Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the scant body of knowledge regarding Chinese educators' career development experience in Canada. Due to data limitations, it is not easy to determine precisely how many Chinese educators have obtained permanent residence status in Canada. However, based on my personal observations and experience, many of those who have come to Canada to pursue graduate studies in education have chosen to stay permanently.[11] It is therefore important to look at their career development experience in this country. Given the nature of my inquiry, which requires me to explore the participants' lived experiences, I have chosen a qualitative research approach. In-depth interviewing and interpretive analysis of the transcripts is the primary research methodology. In this study, I examined the career development experiences narrated by these Chinese educators in terms of social, cultural, and political factors embedded in these narratives. Dimensions such as conceptualization of career, barriers, identity, acculturation and self-efficacy beliefs were explored to determine if there is a link between these dimensions and the participants' career development.[12]

Throughout the study, I focused on one central question, **"What are the factors affecting Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada?"** With this, the following secondary questions were also addressed:

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[10] A *stereotype* is a perceived, standardized, and oversimplified impression of a person, race, situation, etc. associated with specific attributes, particularly those of color and culture. Traditionally and stereotypically, Chinese choose occupations such as medicine, business, science, and engineering. On the one hand, it reflects the prestige and financial security associated with those professions. On the other hand, it is also a result of occupational segregation imposed by the dominant group.

[11] Most of the Chinese educators I know have applied for and obtained landed immigrant status in Canada. Through other channels, I also learned that many Chinese educators in other geographic areas in Canada have also become Canadian permanent residents. Based on these random statistics, I presume that most Chinese educators in Canada, upon completion of their studies, attempt to arrange to stay in Canada permanently.

[12] *Self-efficacy* refers to confidence in or expectations about one's performance capabilities.

1. How do Chinese educators conceptualize career?

2. What sociocultural factors do Chinese educators believe affect their career aspirations and choices?

3. What barriers do Chinese educators perceive and experience in their career search in Canada?

4. How do Chinese educators' beliefs about self and ethnic identity influence their career development?

5. How do Chinese educators' beliefs about career affect their career development?

1.4   Significance of the Study and Its Potential Impacts

An investigation of the career development experiences of Chinese educators in Canada may have particular social significance in that many Chinese educators who have come to Canada to pursue graduate studies choose to stay in Canada as permanent residents. Career issues affect not only their personal lives including their health, but also have a potential impact on race and ethnic relations in Canada. Prejudice, discrimination, differential opportunity system, and occupational segregation are possible consequences.[13] Ethnic communities may be alienated, and successful integration of professional immigrants may be impeded. Therefore, it is of great social importance to look at what these Chinese educators' career experiences are in Canada.

The study is intellectually significant in that it may result in new knowledge about the linkages between social, cultural, and political contexts within which Chinese educators' concept of career is formed and how it is related to their career development in Canada. In addition, exploring their perceptions and experiences of barriers, their racial identity attitudes, acculturation as well as self-efficacy beliefs may shed light on the role that these dimensions may play in Chinese educators' career development experiences. This study hopefully will also stimulate future research in this area.

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[13] *Prejudice* is usually a negative attitude developed toward members of a group; it is an opinion made in advance and not based on evidence. *Discrimination* refers to the behavior resulting from prejudice. It grants or denies individuals or groups opportunities and rewards based on group characteristics such as ethnicity, sex, class, religion, and language (Ghosh, 1996). *Differential opportunity system*, according to Ghosh (1996), manifests institutional racism. It may directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, encourage, support or solidify differential privilege based on race. *Occupational segregation* refers to the distribution of members of an ethnic group across occupations, such that they are overrepresented in some and underrepresented in others (Leong & Chou, 1994).

The potential impacts of the study include the ability to inform the work of agencies across Canada that provide services and supports to ethnic minorities, especially to Chinese educators who need assistance in career counseling and guidance. The potential impacts also include ability to inform decisions made by federal and provincial policy makers whose responsibilities relate to human resources development of Canadians (including, but are not limited to racial/ethnic minorities).

Ultimately, Chinese educators have the most to gain from the ability of findings to inform policies and programs that could potentially enhance their career development in Canada. Through the research, Chinese educators may gain insights on the career development issues that are relevant to them.

1.5   Definition of the Terms

The following terms warrant explicit definition to ensure consistency in usage throughout the study. They are presented here by the alphabetical order.

Acculturation—Acculturation refers to a process that occurs when people from two or more cultures come into contact, with the minority culture absorbing some or all of the culture, traditions, language, values and beliefs of the majority culture. Acculturation can occur to varying degree including assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization (Spink, 1999).[14]

Career—Super (1976) defines it as "the course of events that constitutes a life: the sequence of occupations and other life roles which combine to express one's commitment to work in his or her pattern of self-development" (p.4).

Career development—Career development is defined as "the total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance factors that

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[14] Kalin & Berry (1994) explains that *assimilation* is when "the desire for cultural maintenance is low, combined with a preference for contact with others". They further note that, "when there is minimal interest or possibility of either", i.e., cultural maintenance and other group contact, then it is a process often referred to as *marginalization* (p.301). *Integration* is defined as a process where an immigrant feels he or she has equal access to and wishes to participate in the social, political, and cultural institutions of the host culture (Spink, 1999). Another phenomenon often associated with acculturation is the *acculturative stress*. It usually means certain behaviors and experiences that arise from the acculturation process which are mildly pathological and disruptive to the individual and his group, for example, deviant behavior, psychosomatic symptoms, and feelings of marginalization, to name a few (Berry, 1980).

combine to shape the career of any given individual" (National Vocational Guidance Association, 1973, p.8).[15]

Chinese educators—In this study, Chinese educators refer to individuals who were born in China and who have obtained graduate degrees in education in Canada or China but live and work in Canada as permanent residents or Canadian citizens.

Culture—Culture is defined as the total of all aspects of daily life that are learned by an individual and that determinedly affect that person's behaviour, providing a sense of order, security and identity, and yet paradoxically maintaining a state of continuous change (Barer-Stein, 1993).

Identity— Identity is based on several elements such as race, gender, nationality and sexual preference. It emerges at the individual level, but each person also has several social identities (gender, ethnic, and class affiliations) that have implications at the political and social/cultural levels. Identities are always in the making and are the result of an individual's history and culture, class, and ethnicity/race as well as their experiences as male and female (Ghosh, 1996).[16]

Racial/ethnic identity—In this study, racial/ethnic identity refers to a sense of belonging to a particular racial and ethnic group, along with the values, attitudes, feelings, and cognitions that accompany that sense of group membership (Phinney, 1998).

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[15] Wolfe & Kolb (1980) defined *career development* as involving one's whole life: "career development involves one's whole life, not just occupation. As such, it concerns the whole person, needs and wants, capacities and potentials, excitements and anxieties, insights and blind spots, warts and all. More than that, it concerns him/her in the ever-changing contexts of his/her life. The environmental pressures and constraints, the bonds that tie him/her to significant others, responsibilities to children and aging parents, the total structure of one's circumstances are also factors that must be understood and reckoned with. In these terms, career development and personal development converge. Self and circumstances—evolving, changing, unfolding in mutual interaction—constitute the focus and the drama of career development" (pp. 1-2).

[16] The Canadian Oxford Dictionary (1998) defines *race* as each of the major divisions of humankind, having distinct physical characteristics (p. 1188). By contrast, the word *ethnicity* is more focused on the cultural or historical aspects, such as religion, language, customs, institutions, and history. *Gender*, according to Ambert (1976), is a social construct. It is "one's characteristics or traits determined socially as a result of one's sex" (The Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 1998, p.581).

Class refers to one's socioeconomic status, which is related to education, occupation, and income. According to Ghosh (1996), it is often evaluated in terms of skilled versus unskilled, intellectual versus manual labor, and professional versus blue-collar workers. This distinction is based on occupational level as well as the quality of our possessions, such as the make of the car we drive.

1.6   Limitations and Delimitations

There are several limitations to this study. One of the most obvious limitations is that I am a Chinese educator. Therefore, I may assume that I have a better understanding of the participants than a researcher who is not in the same capacity. The participants, more so than those of other ethnicity, may also assume that I am quite familiar with some, if not all, of their experiences. While this may increase mutual understanding, the assumption itself may limit the endeavors to further explore the participants' career development experiences.

Another limitation comes from within. I believe that my racial/ethnic identity has affected the way I see myself, others, and society. The way I look at career, my personal, cultural and social background will unavoidably influence the way I conduct this research. However, I will do my best to acknowledge this subjective lens, making it explicit in my analysis and reporting of the data.

A third limitation extends from the language chosen for the interviews. While English is not the first language of either the researcher or participants, it was chosen for ease of transcription and data analysis. Participants may not have described their experiences in English with the same freedom and cadence that might have characterized a conversation entirely in Mandarin.

There are some delimitations in this study. First of all, this study focuses on Chinese educators from mainland Chinese backgrounds; therefore Chinese educators from other backgrounds are excluded. I believe that Chinese educators from different socioeconomic, sociocultural, and sociopolitical backgrounds are likely to have different career development experiences.

Second, I chose a small group of participants (five) from a single medium-sized city in western Canada and therefore they may not represent the Chinese educators in other social contexts in Canada. In addition, only one interview was held with each participant, thus delimiting the amount of information and the way in which it was represented.

1.7 My Own Story as a Chinese Educator

Because this thesis is closely linked with my own experiences, both in the research question and the issues I have addressed while interpreting the study's findings, I wish to invite the reader further into my own story as an educator who immigrated to Canada from China and is currently pursuing an educational career in Canada. My experiences are not unlike many Chinese who have emigrated to the West.

I was born in a northeast county in Heilongjiang Province, China in 1966, the same year that Chairman Mao started the Cultural Revolution. During the ten-year revolution, schools were closed nationwide. Chinese youth, most of them were students, became Mao's Red Guards. Three of my brothers and one sister were among millions of students who were Mao's loyal followers, leaving school and thus losing secondary education and the chance to go on to universities. Compared with them, I was the lucky one: the Cultural Revolution ended shortly after I started elementary school. So I had a relatively uninterrupted secondary education. My mother's vision and motivation in particular were driving forces behind my success.

In 1985, I passed the highly competitive national college and university entrance examination administered nationwide in July each year and was accepted into the English Department at Heilongjiang University in Harbin. Here, I had teachers from Canada, USA, Britain, and Australia. For the first time in my life, I learned about Western countries and cultures through direct contact with foreigners. It opened up a whole new world in front of me.

At that particular time in China, especially in the aftermath of Tiananmen Square, most university graduates were not allowed to choose their own jobs. Instead, the university assigned them to different places according to their grades, political behaviour as well as performances in other fields such as music, sports or arts. The degree of involvement in the students' democracy movement was an important factor in the school's decisions regarding where a student should be assigned. At that time, the best positions were in import and export businesses, travel services, and foreign affairs departments of governments at different levels. Teaching positions in universities and colleges were not regarded as really good choices. Although I achieved excellent academic standing, my political record was not as equally impressive, nor was I strong

in music, sports or arts. Therefore, I was assigned to be a teacher in the Harbin Teachers' Training College. I was not unhappy because I looked forward to teaching people English, a subject I had always enjoyed.

After four years of teaching, I decided to go to North America to continue my studies. However, at that time in China, an employee was like the private property of a *Dan Wei* or work unit. To apply for a passport, one had to obtain the approval from his or her *Dan Wei* first. My college refused to endorse my application, so I had to resign my position. Resignation was a risky business, meaning loss of security and stable income. In fact, I was the first one in the college's history who had resigned a position. Many people in the college seemed to believe that I would suffer because of what they perceived as recklessness and stupidity of resigning my work in such a rash manner.

Over the next three years while I applied for visas to the US and Canada, I had no place to stay except secretly in the college's dormitory for the unmarried teachers. I could be evicted at any time. I managed to find part-time work in a local representative office of a US trading firm as a translator, but I found myself marginalized because I was not working for a state-owned business. I was perceived by others as having no job security and therefore unable to provide for the family. I internalized this belief and was in a constant state of panic.

Eventually I came to Canada in 1996 with a visitor's visa and Student Authorization as well as dreams and hopes of a better future. I struggled with culture shock and financial difficulties, and thought of going back to China. However, in order not to "lose face", I decided to stay. Although I found various part-time jobs to cover my tuition and living expenses, the juggling of work and worry interrupted my studies.

Finding a job in Canada after my graduation is another challenge. Families and friends of Chinese students wish them to stay in Canada because having a family member abroad, especially in Western countries can bring them honour, prestige as well as some practical benefits such as sending money home, helping family members, relatives or friends with studying or working abroad. This has been internalized by the students, who feel an obligation to preserve face for themselves and families. I am no exception in this regard.

The Chinese students at the University of Alberta often compare to see who has obtained a secure job in Canada, how much annual income, what kind of house or car is purchased and so on. Many of my friends who were originally studying in humanities and social sciences fields have switched to computer or business programs at the university or NAIT to obtain a good job. As part of the Chinese student community in Edmonton, I have to admit that this trend has undermined my confidence in pursuing a Canadian career in education. For a time, I did not know what I was going to do in the future. I found myself asking questions such as "Should I follow my dreams or should I pursue a stable income?", "In searching for a job, what are my strengths and weaknesses?", "What factors might help or impede my job search?" and so on. These questions led me to this study.

In this study, I would like to find out what factors affect Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada. Thus, I can help not only my own career search, but also those of other Chinese educators who are in a similar situation as me. I would also like to demystify some of the stereotypes surrounding Chinese educators or others who are studying in a field which is not deemed as "practical" by others and are therefore doomed to have a "poor" job prospects. Some larger goals of this study include contributing to the scant body of research on Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada and also hoping to foster healthy racial and ethnic relations within the Canadian multicultural context.

1.8   Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter One, an overview, includes the context of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, its potential impacts, a definition of the terms, delimitations and limitations of the study, my personal story as a Chinese educator as well as an organization of this thesis.

Chapter Two is a review of related literature, also known as the conceptual framework. Literature related to career development, race, ethnicity, barriers, racial identity and acculturation as well as self-efficacy beliefs have been reviewed.

Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology. This includes the design of the study, selection of participants, procedures of data collection and analysis,

trustworthiness of data, and ethical considerations. Participants' background information was also given without using their real names. In addition, the use of English in the data collection phase and its impact on data collection and analysis in particular were explained in this chapter.

The findings of this qualitative study are provided in Chapter Four. This is followed by a critical interpretation of the major findings. The presentation and interpretation of the findings were arranged on the basis of the five major categories which were used to group the research questions.

The concluding chapter, Chapter Five, is a conclusion of the study. It includes a summary of major findings, implications of this study as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1   Introduction

My first task in this chapter entails exploring some of the literature which discusses the interrelationship of work, jobs and careers. As Super (1992) notes, "One of the central, innovative, and yet old, ideas that are highlighting thinking about career development is the distinction between work, jobs, and careers" (p. 422). Therefore, understanding the meanings of these three terms becomes a critical first task.

I begin the review of literature on career development by first looking at career choice. The differences between career choice content and career choice process are identified. This is followed by Roe's (1990) career choice model and Holland's (1985) theory of vocational choice. Next, research on occupational choice from the sociological perspective is introduced. Blau and Duncan's (1967) status-attainment approach and Horan's (1978) dual-economy theory become the focus. I then elaborate on John Krumboltz's (1979) theory of career decision-making. After this, I turn to career maturity and discuss the theory of Ginzberg (1972) and associates—in particular, Super's (1955) occupational self-concept theory, which is believed to be more explicit and extensive than other theories and models on career choice. Finally, theories and models relating to racial/ethnic minority person's career development are discussed. For this purpose, I focus on Gottfredson's (1986) "at risk" framework and Carter and Cook's (1992) culturally relevant model on racial/ethnic minority person's career development.

This chapter then shifts from career development concerns to address the cultural influences which impact racial/ethnic minority person's career development. Two distinct cultural systems, i.e., individualistic and collectivistic cultures, and the characteristics associated with them are identified and described. I then briefly elaborate on the East Asian culture and family systems with an emphasis on Chinese culture, especially in terms of parental wishes, family members' and ethnic group expectations.

The next focus of this literature review is on individual and structural barriers that adversely affect racial/ethnic minority persons' career development. These barriers include, but are not limited to racism, occupational discrimination, non-recognition of foreign credentials, occupational stereotyping, classism, sexism, perceptions of opportunities, lack of educational preparation and role models as well as English language competency.

Finally, this chapter reviews literature pertaining to racial identity and acculturation in the context of Asian minority persons' career development. Several Asian minority persons' ethnic identity and acculturation models have been introduced.

2.2   Career Development

For the purpose of this study, I limited career development literature to the following four areas: the interrelationship among work, jobs and careers, career choice, career maturity as well as career development of racial and ethnic minorities. These literatures were reviewed in the following section.

2.2.1   Work, Jobs and Careers

To some people, career is equivalent to "vocation",[17] which refers exclusively to long-term remunerative work experiences (Hernandez, 1992). To others, career means more than that. What exactly is career? What is the distinction between work, jobs and careers? These are old questions yet remain central to career and career development today. To gain more insights on career and career development, it seems quite necessary first to have a clear understanding of the meanings of work, jobs and careers. According to Super (1992),

> *Work* is the expenditure of effort, which may be *paid* as in
> employment or self-employment, or *unpaid* as in homemaking, civic
> activity, or a hobby. A *job* is created when others are willing to pay
> for a service or a product, and normally means working for an
> employer or oneself (it can also mean a task or a contract, such as

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[17] The Canadian Oxford Dictionary (1998) defines *vocation* as one's employment, esp. regarded as requiring dedication.

painting a fence or writing a book). A job may involve one of many *positions*, filled by people doing much the same work. An *occupation* is a group of similar jobs, which may be in different organizations and locations. And a *career*, it seems necessary to keep noting, is the sequence of positions, jobs, and occupations that a person occupies and pursues during a course of a life or preparing to work, working, and retiring from work (p. 422).

Super's definition of career is a big step forward from that of the pre-1950s when career development was viewed as mainly focused on occupational choice. Over the past few decades, the meanings of career and career development have been evolving. In the 1950s, the term *vocation* became popular and *vocational development* appeared in the literature to describe the broadening view of occupational choice. The 1960s witnessed a major shift from vocation to *career*, and hence from vocational development to *career development*. As Gysbers (1984) notes, "This expanded view of career and career development was more useful than the earlier view of career development as occupational choice because it broke the time barrier previously restricting the vision of career development to a cross-sectional view of an individual's life" (p.620). As Super and Bohn (1970) point out, "It is well ... to keep clear the distinction between occupation (what one does) and career (the course pursued over a period of time)" (p. 15).

The definitions of career and career development became broader and more encompassing in the 1970s and 1980s.[18] Jones et.al. (1972) define career as including a variety of possible patterns of personal choice involving an individual's whole life. Gysbers and Moore (1975) propose the concept of life career development in an effort to broaden and extend career development from an occupational perspective to a life perspective. By the same token, Super (1981) proposes a definition of career and he calls it *the life career rainbow*. His notion is that career involves the interaction of various life roles over the life span. For Super, the term career is seen not merely as job,

[18] Stumpf (1984) defines career as "a sequence of work-related positions and activities throughout a person's life" (p.190). According to John Maanen (1977), career is a series of distinct experiences which may be related and which constitute an individual's life. However, compared with Super's (1981) definition, these two definitions are more limited in that they exclude nonwork roles. For Super, the term career refers to the combination and sequence of all the roles an individual may play during his or her lifetime.

but a progression of life experiences, roles, and choices. Super's definition may be one of the most accepted definitions of career in the field of career development today.

2.2.2 Career Choice

Crites (1981) makes the distinction between career choice content and career choice process in career decision-making. According to Crites (1981), career choice content refers to a specific occupation that an individual has selected. Career choice content theories predict career choices from individual characteristics. For example, Roe (1990) assumes that the type of parental environment in which an individual is brought up predicts occupational choice. Holland (1985) predicts occupation from personality type using a six-category typology. Some sociologists have predicted occupational choice from demographic dimensions such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status. By contrast, career choice process refers to the dimensions involved in arriving at that specific occupation. Career choice process theories look at the influences on career decision-making and outcomes of interactions among influences and stress the process of career planning and development. John Krumboltz's (1979) theory of career decision-making is an example that incorporates both the content and process aspects of career choice.

Based on Maslow's (1954) concept of basic needs, Roe's (1990) theoretical model predicts occupational choice from childhood relationships with parents.[19] Her goal is to identify the origin of interests and needs. As Roe (1990) notes, "In our society there is no single situation that is potentially so capable of giving some satisfaction at all levels of basic needs as the occupation" (p. 69). Roe develops a classification scheme based on the primary activities of occupations.[20] She then hypothesizes three categories of parental behavior toward children.[21] These childhood

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[19] Maslow's basic needs include: (a) the physiological needs, (b) the safety needs, (c) the need for belongingness and love, (d) the need for importance, respect, self-esteem, and independence, (e) the need for information, (f) the need for understanding, (g) the need for beauty, and (h) the need for self-actualization.

[20] Roe classifies eight occupation groups: (1) service, (2) business contact, (3) managerial, (4) technology, (5) outdoor, (6) science, (7) general culture, and (8) arts and entertainment.

[21] The three categories of parental behavior toward children are: (1) emotional concentration on the child, (2) avoidance, (3) acceptance.

environments are then related in a predictive way to occupations dichotomized to be either person-oriented or not person-oriented. This psychoanalytic approach represents an initial contribution for understanding and explaining career development. However, its lack of empirical support and its exclusive focus on early experiences make it inadequate for theory building about adult career choices and development.

Holland's (1985) theory of vocational choice is essentially a typology which characterizes aspects of vocational behavior. The four primary assumptions of Holland's theory are (1) in our culture, there are six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional; (2) there are six corresponding environments: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional; (3) people look for environments that will let them "exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and roles" (Minor, 1992, p. 24); and (4) behavior is determined by the interaction between personality and environment. Holland (1985) states that people search environments in which they can express their personalities. Although his theory is descriptive, simplistic and supported by widespread empirical research, it fails to describe adequately the developmental aspects associated with career development.

Sociological research on occupational choice uses basically demographic variables to predict types of occupations entered. It emphasizes factors which are beyond the control of the individual. These factors include father's education and occupation, educational level, race, gender, and influence of significant others. There are several major focuses of the sociological study on career development. One is the area of status attainment.[22] Blau and Duncan (1967) develop a model that postulates that the social status of one's parents affects one's academic achievement, which in turn affects the occupational levels that one achieves. Blau and Duncan erect a framework,

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[22] The basic premise in the status-attainment model is that career statuses indicators, such as education, occupation and income, are passed from generation to generation by a series of interpersonal processes. Significance-other influences (parental status, children's contact with parents, with other adults and peers who come from the similar backgrounds) shape the children's attitudes and status levels. The original Blau-Duncan scheme is expanded substantially by the so-called Wisconsin Model (Sewell, Haller, & Portes, 1969). The Wisconsin Model adds *cognitive variables* and *social-psychological processes* to Blau & Duncan's original version. They are added to measure the mental ability, academic performance in school as well as significant-other influences for the achievement of one's occupational status.

but there are limitations to their model. One limitation is that it does not account for race and gender effects on career outcomes. Furthermore, it does not address critical issues regarding demand-side effects imposed by the labor market.

Another area of sociological research on occupations involves labor market and economic systems. Horan (1978) proposes a dual-economy theory in which two economic sectors (the core and the periphery) have been identified, and hence a dual labor market (the primary and the secondary) is generated.[23] Entry into each sector is largely controlled by the employers based on criteria such as race, gender and history of stable employment. Mobility between the two labor markets is highly restricted. This theory represents a critical supplement to the traditional status-attainment and human capital approaches because it emphasizes the importance of demand for labor rather than concentrating on supply or individual characteristics that affect productivity. In spite of the merits, it fails to explain the psychological processes present in career development.

John Krumboltz's (1979) theory of career decision-making is an application of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory.[24] In this model, four influences on career decision-making are described: genetic endowments, environmental conditions, learning experiences, and task approach skills. As a result of interaction among the preceding four factors, three outcomes can be predicted. The first is the development of self-observation generalizations. The second outcome is the development of task approach skills and the final outcome of these interactions is action. Krumboltz's theory focuses primarily on entry behavior. It does not advocate a developmental model, and this is perhaps its biggest weakness.

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[23] The primary focus of dual-economy research is generally on income differentials between labor market sectors. While the large firms in the core sector have control over employees by offering them higher wages, job security and opportunity for advancement, those who do not enter the primary labor market at a young age are supposedly put at a disadvantaged position.

[24] Bandura's social learning theory assumes that the individual personalities and behaviors arise primarily from their unique learning experiences. This does not imply that humans are passive organisms controlled by the environment. The theory recognizes that humans are intelligent, problem solving and have the capacity to control the environment to suit their own purposes and needs. According to the theory, there are three learning experiences, i.e., instrumental, associative, and vicarious learning experiences.

2.2.3 Career Maturity

Ginzberg's (1972) career maturity theory represents an attempt to identify the major dimensions in occupational decision-making throughout the life span. His basic assumption is that individuals reach ultimate vocational choices through a series of decisions over a period of many years. There are three main elements in his theory. First, occupational choice is a process that remains open as long as people make decisions about their career. Second, early decisions have a shaping influence on career, but so do continuing changes of work and life. Third, "people make decisions with the aim of optimizing satisfaction by finding the best possible fit between their needs and desires and the opportunities and constraints in the world of work" (p. 173). Ginzberg's model has stimulated both research and theorizing, however, lack of attention to women and those of different race and socioeconomic status is perhaps the biggest failure of his model.

Super (1955) presents a development theory that is much more explicit and extensive. His theory is essentially a developmental self-concept theory of vocational behavior. Super proposes the notion that a person strives to implement his self-concept by choosing to enter the occupation he sees as most likely to permit him self-expression. Furthermore, he suggests that the particular behaviors a person engages in to implement his vocational self-concept reflect the individual's stage of life development. Hence, on the basis of these principles, Super generates ten propositions which underlie a vocational development theory.[25] A significant contribution of Super's theory is the idea that career development and even career choices are the result of a process rather than being a point-in-time event. He also presents the idea that career

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[25] Super's original ten propositions are: (1) people differ in abilities, interests and personalities; (2) they are qualified each for a number of occupations; (3) each occupation requires certain abilities, interests and personality traits, with tolerances wide enough; (4) people's self-concepts change with time and experience; (5) the process can be summed up as stages of *growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline*; (6) parents' socioeconomic status, mental ability and personality as well as opportunities to which one is exposed determine one's career pattern; (7) one's career maturity and self-concept are important to the career development; (8) one's career development process is essentially that of developing and implementing one's self-concept. It is a compromise process; (9) the compromise between individual and social factors, between self-concept and reality is one of role-playing, and (10) career and life satisfaction depend on whether one can find a match between career and his abilities, interests and personality traits, and values.

choices and career development could be described by means of stages. Super's theory is a well-ordered, highly systematic representation of the process of vocational maturation. However, the original version is thought by some critics to be too general and lacking details. Later versions are much more detailed, but important social and economic factors which may influence career decisions are not included in his theory.

2.2.4 Career Development of Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Literature with regard to the career development of racial and ethnic minorities has convincingly pointed out the inadequacies of career development theories and research that concern this particular group. Smith (1983) states that,

> life stage development as typically described by career theorists may have limited generalizability to racial minorities. External constraints, limited economic resources, and racial discrimination make the concept of life-stage career development for racial minorities more of a dream than a reality for all but the most persistent, the most fortunate, and the group or mixture of individuals perceived as most socially desirable within a given racial group (p.186).

In addition, according to Smith, within a given racial group, employers perceive that only individuals who are most acculturated to the mainstream white standards are the most socially desired.

Brown and Brooks (1990) highlight the shortcomings of theories to explain racial/ethnic minority person's career development. Their argument is based on the erroneous assumptions, inapplicability of particular theoretical concepts and the omissions of important career determinants that are often associated with these theories. "One erroneous assumption is that people have an array of choices open to them; that is, they are free to choose among alternatives that are close to their interests, values, and abilities. Thus, the restrictions imposed by the sociopolitical environment are ignored" (Brown & Brook, 1990, p.384).

The complaint that the theories are developed to explain middle-class white males—a group viewed as having the advantage of psychological and economic resources that ensures optimal career development—points to the irrelevance of aspects

of certain theories pertaining to racial/ethnic minorities' career development. For example, Super's (1955) model of developmental stages, which proposes that career development is a sequential and continuous process, has been challenged to be inapplicable to poor racial/ethnic minority persons. Osipow (1975) argues that these people do not have the luxury of the exploration stage, instead they must find jobs in their early age and must then take a series of unrelated jobs interspersed by unemployment. Another example is that the higher-level occupational environments (for example, Enterprise, in Holland's 1985 model) may not be equally available to racial/ethnic minority persons and the white middle class.

Meanwhile, Griffith (1980) notes that one of the important dimensions for racial/ethnic minority person's career development—the constraining factors of the mainstream sociopolitical system, particularly racism and the effects of the differential opportunity system is often omitted. Smith (1975), after conducting a review of the career literature on racial and ethnic minorities, concludes that "studies have indicated that racism and its deleterious effects should be taken into consideration when analyzing the minority person's career development" (p. 48).

Despite the paucity of theories on racial/ethnic minority person's career development, some models pertaining to women's career development do seem to incorporate certain important concepts relevant to racial/ethnic minority persons. For example, the components of the structure of opportunity are addressed in Astin's (1984) theory, and the effects of self-efficacy on career behavior are articulated in Hackett and Betz (1981) model. However, the fact remains that a model to specifically explain and predict racial/ethnic minority person's career development has not been developed.

In an attempt to deal with some of these deficiencies, Gottfredson (1986) proposes that the barriers faced by special population can be conceptualized in an "at risk" framework. In essence, her premise is that special groups (even include white groups) face varying degrees of risk that creates career-choice problems. In her model, risk factors are "attributes of the person or of the person's relation to the environment that are associated with a higher-than-average probability of experiencing the types of problems under consideration" (Gottfredson, 1986, p.143). She postulates three categories of risk: (1) factors that cause people to be different from the general

population; (2) factors involving differences within one's own social group; and (3) factors involving family responsibilities. Gottfredson's contribution is that this framework avoids the "different is deficient" implication that emerges when analysis is confined to the problems of racial and ethnic groups. In her view, all groups are at risk in some areas; the risks are simply different.

Carter and Cook (1992) propose a model which is culturally relevant for understanding racial/ethnic minority person's career paths. Their model is a synthesis of the systems model and Okun's (1984) conceptual framework of adult career development.[26] In the systems model, the elements and components associated with racial/ethnic minority person's career paths are conceptualized as a system. The whole system is the society and is characterized by its dominant cultural patterns. Each racial/ethnic minority group's culture contains separate subsystems within the larger dominant culture. The career behavior of each racial/ethnic minority person is therefore considered in the context of the whole system. According to Okun (1984), this systems approach suggests a dynamic interaction of internal factors and environmental dimensions and posits that "individual career and family paths are interrelated and that one dimension of development is viewed as multifaceted and interactional, and a continuous interplay of internal and external forces" (p.411).

Okun's (1984) theoretical model proposes that adult career development be understood in terms of the interactions of individual, family, and career life cycles. Okun (1984) states that racial/ethnic minority person's career options are influenced by access to career opportunities and cultural, social, economic, and political circumstances. In addition, there exist tremendous group variations within and between the groups. Okun begins with the assumption that racial/ethnic minority person's career

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[26] Okun argues that racial/ethnic minority person's career paths are a manifestation of the structure of the general society. According to systems theory, structure has three elements: boundaries, alignment, and power. Boundaries manifest the system's rules and regulations and they define the context in which interactions occur. Alignment is a pattern of subsystem joining. Different institutional subsystems in the dominant society function as separate subsystems that join or align with one another to achieve implicit sociocultural goals and uphold basic cultural values. Power refers to the ability of a person or group in the system to change or determine boundaries or alignments. For example, boundaries dictate what each person or group is allowed to do and how they are allowed to interact with the system. With regard to alignment, educational and occupational systems can collude to restrict the success and participation of racial/ethnic minority persons.

paths are shaped by sociocultural circumstances and their sociopolitical and historical-cultural backgrounds. Contrary to Okun's assumption, psychological and career development theorists begin with the assumption that the focus of development is the individual devoid of social, cultural, and political context.

2.3 Career and Culture

This section of the literature review focuses on the impacts of sociocultural influences on the career development of racial and ethnic minorities', particularly Chinese educators. Two distinct cultural systems, individual-oriented cultures and group-oriented cultures were presented and compared to draw insights into their impacts on career development. Following this, East Asian culture and families were explored with an emphasis on Chinese culture and family influences.

2.3.1 Individualistic and Collectivistic Cultures

The context in which all activities occur in a society is its culture (Conyne, 1998). Pope (1995) states that to be defined as a culture that group must

> have their own geographic living areas, economic and social organizations, cultural traditions, and rituals. Further, a definition of what constitutes a cultural minority must transcend national boundaries, although which specific groups meet the requirements of this definition may vary from country to country (p. 302).

Asante (1987) states that individualistic and collectivistic cultures are two ways of constructing the world and making meaning.[27] Individualistic cultures can be characterized by being individualistic, independent, heterogeneous, Western, youth-oriented, and prefers precision in language use. In addition, this type of culture supports self-actualization goals, focuses on nuclear family, and supports the challenging of authority. Collectivistic cultures are often referred to as collectivistic, interdependent, homogeneous, traditional, and respecting older individuals. This type of culture supports group survival goals, focuses on the extended family, and supports

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[27] Individualistic and collectivistic cultures are also termed as individual-oriented and group-oriented cultures in the literature.

conforming to authority, and prefers symbolic language. In this sense, North America is generally considered an individualistic society, whereas all Asian societies are considered collectivistic.

2.3.2 East Asian Culture and Families

East Asian cultural systems have been guided by the acceptance of a value system based on the work of the Chinese scholar, Confucius (551—479 B. C.).[28] As illustrated by Shon and Ja (1982),

> Those systems do not stress independence and autonomy of the individual but rather that the individual is superseded by the family. Furthermore, the family adheres to the Confucianistic tradition of specific hierarchical roles established for all members. Rules of behaviour and conduct are formalized in members' roles to a greater extent than in most other cultures. An individual response and adherence to this mode of conduct becomes a reflection not of the individual but of the family and kinship network to which he or she belongs (p. 209).

In East Asian cultures, each individual is viewed as a product of his or her ancestry line from its beginning. Social interaction in East Asian families is usually done through "the use of shame and loss of face to reinforce prescribed sets of obligations" (Shon & Ja, 1982, p. 213). The concept of obligation is central in East Asian cultures and families. Obligation is "incurred either through the relationship of ascribed roles or status, such as those of parents and children, and employer and employee. The strongest obligation is to one's parents" (Carter & Cook, 1992, p.205). Family obligations are communicated in an indirect manner and by way of non-confrontational strategies in order to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships.

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[28] Confucius: Chinese philosopher and educator. He spent much of his life as a moral teacher of a group of disciples, and his ideas about the importance of practical moral values formed the basis of the philosophy of Confucianism; his teachings were collected by his pupils after his death in the *Analects*.
   Confucianism is a system of philosophical and ethical teachings founded by Confucius in China in the 6th century B.C. and developed by Mencius in the 4th century, one of the two major Chinese ideologies (the other is Daoism). The basic concepts are ethical ones, for example love for one's fellows and filial piety, and the ideal of the superior man; traditional ideas such as yin and yang have also been incorporated into Confucianism.

The notion of obligation can also be manifested through East Asian parents' sacrifice for the sake of their children. For example, East Asian families immigrate to the U.S. or Canada for economic security. Therefore, parents usually do their utmost to provide basic necessities for the family. English language competency and workplace discrimination result in many working adults trapped in employment with little occupational mobility. These sacrifices are tolerated in the hope that their hard work will be rewarded by their children's future success.

> For the purpose of long-term security, the most prevalent investment
> is to send the children to schools in hopes that professional careers,
> engineer or doctor, would provide the means for successful
> achievement, not only for the child but for the parents who made the
> educational and professional achievement possible (Shon & Ja,
> 1982, p.218).

Therefore, in East Asian cultures, the role of the family is highly complex and intertwined in personal problems (Chan, 1992). Pope et. al. (1998) state that "a person's career development and career advancement tends not to exist as an individual problem in a vacuum but rather within an embedded network of family obligations and expectations" (p.57). For East Asians, pursuing a career is not a personal matter of simply identifying one's interests and implementing the self-concept. Family expectations certainly play an important role in this equation.

Leong's (1991) research findings seem to support the above argument. He notes that East Asians are greatly influenced by their traditional cultures, and these cultural values are also reflected in career-related behaviors. For example, although still a contested issue, Leong (1991) find that East Asians are found to be quite dependent in their decision-making styles. They also demonstrate lower levels of career maturity and vocational identity than White Americans or Canadians. Another research conducted by Leong and Chou (1994) concludes that East Asians seem to choose a career that both satisfies their own interests and is acceptable to their parents. "Career choice and career advancement may be seen more as means of providing for one's own family, helping one's siblings, and fulfilling one's responsibility to care for parents in their old age than as ways of implementing self attributes" (p. 47). In other words, while North American

cultures regard career choice as a way of self-realization and fundamentally as an individual choice, East Asians view career as mutually beneficial for themselves and their families.

2.3.3   Chinese Culture and Family Influences

Chinese culture is essentially a collectivistic culture. Therefore, issues of family, collectivism, and conforming to authority are most important. In Chinese culture, achievements and prestige are highly valued. Failure to meet personal and parental expectations in education and career is often regarded as a shame and loss of face (Bond, 1986). According to Yu and Yang (1994), Chinese culture traditionally treasures scholarship, with parents transmitting to their children strong values of education and achievements. In addition, in a group-oriented culture, "external expectations are potent as the family or other in-group sets the standards, evaluates the individual's performance, and determines outcomes" (Liu, 1998, p.577).

There is a consensus in the career choice literature on persons of Chinese ancestry that parental influence is a factor of fundamental importance in terms of making their career choices. Parental wishes regarding occupational choice and respect for these wishes are theorized as an intrinsic part of cultural values (Beynon, Toohey, & Ksihor, 1998). Chinn and Wong (1992) articulate this commonly expressed view in this way:

> The child's responsibility is to bring honor to the family, and this can be achieved by excelling in school, gaining admission to a good or prestigious college or university, and entering a high prestige or honorable profession upon graduation... It is not uncommon for parents to select a child's college or university or field of study; they may even select or influence choice of courses. Furthermore, the fields of study selected are characteristically those with high extrinsic rewards coupled with high prestige, such as medicine, dentistry, natural sciences, engineering, architecture, economics, accounting and computer science (pp. 120-121).

Therefore, career decisions in Chinese families are made in the total context of the person's life, family, and community. Among all the factors, parental wishes, family members' and ethnic group expectations are especially significant.

2.4 Career-Related Barriers

Chinese educators, like any other racial or ethnic groups, encounter barriers in their career search experiences in Canada. In this study, the barriers that these Chinese educators perceived and/or experienced were classified into two categories: individual barriers and institutional barriers. I focused the literature review on the following aspects of barriers: racism, occupational discrimination, segregation, stereotyping, perception of opportunities, lack of role models, socioeconomic status, educational background, English language competency, minority women as well as devaluation of foreign credentials. These barriers were elaborated upon in the following sections.

2.4.1 Racism

Although the majority of people look upon racism as outrageous and offensive these days, it has not always been the case and racism is still alive in Canada in complex forms.[29] A close look at Canadian history reveals that racism towards Asian immigrants, especially Chinese was systemized and institutionalized.[30] Walker (1997) states that even decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada, well into this century, fail noticeably to move beyond racist dictates of the day. Walker bases his view on several Supreme Court cases where race is the basic issue. For example, the Quong Wing case involves a Saskatchewan law passed in 1912 that made it illegal for a Chinese Canadian to employ a white woman. Quong Wing, a naturalized citizen, hired two women to work in his restaurant in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and this led to a charge and a five-dollar fine. He refused to pay the fine and with the support of the Chinese community took the case to the Supreme Court, where he lost. According to Walker (1997), such a verdict would be considered shocking today.

Other blatantly racist acts against Chinese Canadians include the notorious Chinese Head Tax (1885-1923) and the Chinese Exclusion Act (1923-1947). The Head

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[29] In her book "The Caribbean Diaspora in Toronto: Learning to Live with Racism", Henry (1994) states that racism encompasses four components, i.e., individual racism, institutional racism, systemic racism, and cultural/ideological racism.

[30] Jim Walker is professor of history at University of Waterloo. His book is entitled "Race, Rights and the Law of the Supreme Court of Canada", and is based on research into four Supreme Court cases, i.e., Quong Wing vs. The King; Christie vs. York Corp.; Noble & Wolf vs. Alley; and Narine-Singh vs. Attorney General of Canada.

Tax was levied against all Chinese immigrants to Canada. It started at $50 in 1885 and reached $500 in 1923. From 1885 to 1923, more than 81,000 Chinese paid a total of $23 million in Head Taxes. At the same time, immigrants from Europe were given land and monetary grants to settle in Canada. The Chinese Exclusion Act replaced the Head Tax in 1923. Under this new law, Chinese immigrants were virtually barred until the Act was repealed in 1947. According to the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC; 1995), the Canadian government not only violated human rights and committed a gross and blatant form of racism when it enacted and applied legislation to charge the Chinese Head Tax and to exclude Chinese immigrants to Canada—thereby separating families—but the government is perpetrating a continuing injustice and violation against Head Tax payer and their families by unduly prolonging the resolution of the redress issue and refusing to negotiate a fair settlement.[31] Now, the United Nations Human Rights Commission has been asked to help settle the redress claims of thousand of victims of the Chinese Head Tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act.

A recent study funded by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF) concludes that racism continues to exist in Canada's English print media (Henry & Tator, 1999).[32] The study examines two decades of research on racism in the print media and shows how media practitioners continue to misrepresent and reinforce negative stereotypes of people of color and Aboriginal peoples. The study finds that the media are strongly influenced by racialized assumptions, beliefs and practices and continue to construct and present visible minorities as social problems and outsiders that could undermine the European Canadian way of life (1999). The study shows that despite the media's claims of objectivity and neutrality, racism finds its way into the language, images and ideas that are presented in the English Canadian newspapers on a dismayingly regular basis. This is quite alarming because the print media play an influential role in shaping the public opinion.

Throughout Canadian history, East Asians, especially Chinese, have been portrayed as both the yellow peril and the model minority. Both narratives exist side by

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[31] The Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC) is a national organization mandated to promote the equitable participation of Chinese Canadians in all aspects of society. It has been leading the redress campaign at the behest of the Head Taxpayers, spouses and descendents since 1984.

[32] The study, *Racist Discourse in Canada's English Print Media* is undertaken by Dr. Henry and Tator.

side and validate each other. Okihiro (1994) argues that the model minority narrative arise out of the yellow peril discourse in order to deal with its presence. According to Park (1997), the yellow peril comes from White fear of losing power, whether real or imagined. Therefore, the yellow peril is used to justify White domination. Similarly, the model minority stereotype validates the status quo. It serves to deny the oppression of East Asians and reinforce the oppression of other minorities. This stereotype questions the efficacy of government social programs and validates the belief in culture being the source of a group's successes and failures for the purpose of legitimation of a "just" society. It legitimizes the denial of racism, silences East Asians who do not fit the stereotype and ignores the history of East Asian resistance to racism. Lee (1996) recognizes that:

> The model minority stereotype is dangerous because it tells Asian Americans and other minorities how to behave. The stereotype is dangerous because it is used against other minority groups to silence claims of inequality. It is dangerous because it silences the experiences of Asian Americans who can/do not achieve model minority success. And finally, this stereotype is dangerous because some Asian Americans may use the stereotype to judge their self-worth (p.125).

Griffith (1980) argues that racism and the effects of differential opportunity system in the mainstream North American society have a detrimental effect to the career development of racial/ethnic minorities. Racist thinking or cultural disadvantage assumptions are not uncommon in the career development literature. Among other characteristics, the literature suggests that racial/ethnic minorities lack positive work-role models, are vocationally immature, have negative self-images, have limited occupational mobility, have restricted interests and low career expectations, and are more interested in job security than in self-fulfillment (Brown & Brooks, 1990). Smith (1975) indicates that "racism and its deleterious effects should be taken into consideration when analyzing racial/ethnic minority person's career development" (p. 48).

2.4.2 Occupational Discrimination

The existence of racial discrimination in modern Canadian society is an indisputable fact. To many racial/ethnic minorities, racial discrimination is a way of life beyond their ability to alter, eliminate, or avoid. According to Okocha (1994), racial/ethnic minorities as a whole face many problems as they prepare for the labor force. He states that the main problem is "the racist, oppressive, discriminating, sociopolitical mainstream society that often leads to inequality in the educational preparation of non-Whites versus Whites. This creates not only psychological problems for persons of color but also limits their career opportunities" (p. 107). One result is that they usually suffer from low occupational self-efficacy. The other is that they tend to seek employment where they can find role models to identify with. This may indirectly contribute to more occupational segregation.

There is often a misconception about Asian minorities that they do not suffer as much discrimination as other minority groups in terms of career development because of the *model minority* myth (Leong & Chou, 1994). But according to Sodowsky et al. (1991), occupational discrimination occurs in almost every field Asian minorities choose. Discrimination is usually characterized by lower pay, poorer reviews, or fewer promotions than would be expected on the basis of credentials and performance. Another prevailing form of discrimination which exists mostly in the business world, and is typically associated with women, is the presence of *glass ceiling* phenomenon.[33] Leong and Chou (1994) argue that North Americans of European descent are able to attain the highest possible positions in the business world with hard work and diligent effort, but Asians are rarely able to reach those positions, regardless of years of work and productivity.

2.4.3 Occupational Segregation and Stereotyping

Numerous researchers have discussed the impact of occupational stereotyping within the context of gender and ethnicity (Gettys & Cann, 1981; Leong & Hayes, 1990). The study of Parham and Austin (1994) concludes that "certain occupations are

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[33] *Glass ceiling* phenomenon usually means that advancement for particular persons above a given rank is routinely discriminated against.

ascribed to gender and race specific roles, and that being relegated to those gender and race categories provides a basis for determining whether one might be successful in those specific job arenas" (p.147). For example, a widespread conception about Chinese is that they attain high educational achievement and excel in technically related occupations. Leong and Serafica (1995) hypothesize that stereotyping leads people to believe that Chinese are more competent in physical, biological, and medical sciences and less qualified in verbal, persuasive, and social careers. In supporting this notion of stereotyping, they summarize American statistics on occupation and ethnicity which indicates that Asians, including Chinese, are underrepresented in occupations such as lawyers, judges, chief executive officers, and general administrators while being overrepresented in science and engineering fields.

2.4.4 Perception of Opportunities and Role Models

Leong (1991) states that perceptions of opportunity also influence occupational self-segregation. Whether influenced by role models or a lack of role models, it seems that individuals do select occupations based on their ability to see themselves reflected in a particular work environment or career field. Osipow's (1983) study concludes that a minority person's perceptions of opportunities may be diminished by experiences which show that they can expect a work environment characterized by discrimination in hiring, lower wages, harassment on the job, and few promotional opportunities.

Research has also documented how the lack of available and visible role models in certain areas decreases the likelihood that a minority person will pursue careers in those fields. It follows that if there were relatively fewer visible minority role models in nontraditional careers, those racial/ethnic minority persons who might aspire to such careers would have few role models after which to pattern themselves. This seems, in fact, to be true, and this lack of role models has been widely alluded to as a factor deterring those racial/ethnic minority persons from entering certain careers (Smith, 1980).

2.4.5 Socioeconomic Status and Educational Background

In Canada, the path to occupational or career success is through education and training. But for many racial/ethnic minority persons, this is a less viable path. Carter and Cook's (1992) research findings show that visible minorities have and continue to receive substandard education. While Asians are referred to as the "model minority", racist and cultural disadvantage beliefs affect their career development. Smith (1983) points out that "stereotypes of the abilities of Asian-Americans (good in science and math) and the cultural characteristics such as restraint of strong feelings and difficulty with language ability may function to limit exploration of a wide variety of career options, notably those in the social sciences" (p. 179). Although it might be true that even in minority groups, better educated individuals tend to occupy more desirable occupational positions than do the less educated. Yet the returns on an investment in education are much lower for visible minorities than for the general population. Thus, in addition to the handicap of being in a family with few economic or other resources, the average visible minority person also appears to have less opportunity because of race or culture alone.

Axelson (1985) suggests that career paths for visible minorities must take into consideration the socioeconomic level of the individuals. He further explains:

> Access to education and employment opportunities is more difficult under poverty conditions. Developing a career can be expensive, and low-income people have fewer resources that might enable them to take advantage of available education, to commute to work, or to move to another geographical area where employment or occupational opportunities are more readily available.... Many (visible minority group) members lack the education and skills that are essential for entry into certain occupations and necessary for occupational mobility and advancement. The quality and quantity of basic education that is received especially affects the range of occupational opportunity open to any individual (Axelson, 1985, p. 202).

Therefore, socioeconomic status and educational background are important dimensions in the study of racial/ethnic minority person's career development.

2.4.6 English Language Competency

The U.S. literature on minority school achievement and educational aspirations identifies English language competence as an important barrier for minority students, especially for those of Chinese ancestry (Beynon, Toohey & Kishor, 1998). Pang (1990) notes with regard to these individuals, "they not only feel the inability to do well but reveal a fear of writing and speaking" (p. 58). Hsia's (1988) argues that the contrast between Asian Americans' achievement in sciences and technical fields and their avoidance of the difficulties in the social sciences and humanities fields which require strong verbal communication skills is so stark that even after several generations, it is still noticeable. Chinn and Wong (1992), in their study on Chinese students' perceptions of teaching careers, note that "overlooking the relatively weak verbal skills of Asian students and making no educational provisions for improving those skills is unfortunate...The development of verbal skills, coupled with the acquisition of social skills, can enhance the likelihood of Asians branching out from their traditional areas of study and work and thus help in their recruitment into teacher education programs" (p.131).

2.4.7 Minority Women: Gender and Ethnic Experiences

Women's careers differ in substantial ways from men's. Literature shows that "the gendered structures of North American society are as robust as ever with the wage gap between men and women continuing virtually unabated" (Sterrett, 1999, p.250). Researchers in the field of minority women's career development have noted the potentially strong influence of barriers in the formulation and pursuit of career and educational goals (Astin, 1984; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). Bowman (1993) states that while gender or ethnicity has been considered as perceived barriers in many studies, few of them investigate both factors concurrently. He argues that ethnic women are typically categorized as women or minorities, but are rarely considered as members of both groups in the career literature. According to a nationwide study of girls in school, "All girls confront barriers to equal participation in school and society. But minority girls, who must confront racism as well as sexism..., face particularly severe obstacles" (American Association of University Women,1992, p.4). Beale (1970)

describe the increased discrimination and occupational segregation that minority women experience as a state of "double jeopardy", suggesting that "such women are discriminated against twice: once for being female and once for being non-white" (p.95). Vasquez (1982) adds lack of financial support as another disadvantage that minority women often suffer in pursuing their careers, thus making them become triple minorities (as women, persons of color, and often as members of a lower socioeconomic class). Thus, "the larger social forces of racism, sexism, and classism form a context within which the career and educational attainment of minority women must be understood" (WcWhirter, 1997, p.124).

2.4.8 Devaluation of Foreign Credentials

It is an indisputable fact that racial/ethnic minority persons encounter barriers in the Canadian labor market. Some barriers are described as individual or personal barriers such as lacking Canadian experience and inadequate command of English. Other barriers are depicted as structural or institutional barriers such as devaluation of foreign credentials and nonrecognition of foreign experiences. There are two schools of thought in terms of what barriers account for the occupational disadvantages of racial/ethnic minority persons. Basavarajappa and Verma (1985) argue that the length of stay in Canada has an impact on the ability of Asian immigrants to receive returns for their education. They further suggest that a lack of Canadian experience and low English language competency may cause problems in visible minority person's career development. The second school of thought stresses structural barriers in the recognition of foreign credentials. For example, Boyd (1985) suggests that control of entry to the professions has caused systematic exclusion and occupational disadvantages for professional immigrants. In one of his studies, the differences between Canadian-born and foreign-born workers in the acquisition of career status are compared. Boyd (1985) argues that the Canadian-born receive a greater return for their education compared to the foreign-born due to "difficulties of transferring educational skill across national boundaries" (p.405). Basran and Zong (1998) reinforce Boyd's argument. They note that "failure to locate individual barriers in social conditions and structural arrangements tend to blame immigrant professionals themselves for failing to acquire

professional jobs in Canada" (p. 8). In their recent study on perceptions of devaluation of foreign credentials by foreign-trained Indo-and Chinese-Canadian professionals, they suggest that visible minority professionals face systemic barriers in the Canadian job market. The difficulty of transferring educational credentials and work experience across national boundaries cause many of them to work in fields for which they are overqualified. They further argue that this not only results in downward occupational mobility for these professionals, but it is also a waste of human capital for Canada. Their study suggests that in order for Canada to fully benefit from international human capital transfer, a policy is needed to ensure that the credentials and experiences of foreign-trained immigrants are properly and fairly recognized and evaluated (Basran & Zong, 1998).

2.5   Career, Identity and Acculturation

In this section, the relationship among racial/ethnic identity, acculturation and ethnic minorities' career development was explored. The first part of the literature review deals with racial/ethnic identity attitude and its impact on occupational behaviour whereas the second part focuses on Asian American ethnic identity and acculturation models.

2.5.1   Racial Identity and Occupational Behavior

According to Helms & Piper (1994), "racial identity theory deals with the processes by which persons develop (or do not develop) healthy racial collective identities in environments in which their socially ascribed racial group has differential access to sociopolitical power, which, in this case, means access to the world of work" (p.125). In their study of the implications of racial identity theory for vocational psychology, they propose that "one racial group in U.S. society (Whites) historically has defined and controlled access to work, and all other racial groups (African Americans, Asian Americans) and cultural groups (Latinos and Indigenous Americans) have had to function in a societal work environment which they have had comparatively little control over or influence in shaping" (p. 125).

Numerous writers have argued over the years that race must be considered when investigating vocational behavior. While the majority of the existing race-related vocational literature focuses on the vocational behavior of Blacks and/or Whites, research on Asians has witnessed the development of "two parallel but related tracks" (Leong & Chou, 1994, p.155). Of the two, one is concerned with ethnic identity and the other is concerned with assimilation and acculturation process and their associated consequences (e.g., acculturative stress). In their study on the role of ethnic identity and acculturation in the vocational behavior of Asian Americans, Leong and Chou (1994) propose that Asians with strong ethnic identity and/or low acculturation are more susceptible to occupational segregation and discrimination. In addition, according to Leong and Chou (1994), these Asians may view careers more as a means to an end (e.g., financial security) instead of viewing them as a form of self-actualization. As a result, they may experience more stress and less job satisfaction because of glass ceilings and other forms of stereotyping and discrimination. Likewise, such Asians may hold different attitudes about career, may have low self-efficacy on career choice, interest, or expectations and therefore may be more likely to find themselves trapped in jobs with less occupational prestige and little mobility (Leong & Chou, 1994).

2.5.2 *Asian American Ethnic Identity/Acculturation Models*

Historically, American researchers have dominated the discourse on racial identity development and acculturation. Therefore, I will concentrate primarily on the U.S. research findings in this field. Sue and Sue (1973) present one of the earliest models of Asian American ethnic identity in the literature. Their model encompasses a threefold typology in which three personality types are described: *the traditionalist, marginal man*, and *the Asian American*. The Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA) developed by Suinn and associates (1987) gives impetus to research on Asian American acculturation. In a sense, the SL-ASIA has served as the operationalization of the Sue and Sue (1973) model. The 21 questions of the SL-ASIA assess language, identity, friendship choice, behaviors, generation/ geographic history, and attitudes. The scale can be scored to trichotomize respondents into *Western-identified* or *assimilated* (high acculturation), or *Asian-identified* (low

acculturation), or *bicultural* (medium acculturation).

Berry (1980) proposes a two-dimensional model which has greatly aided research on acculturation among Asian Americans. The model is comprehensive in that it defines acculturation outcomes in terms of each minority's views about their own culture and their host culture. In Berry's model, two questions are assessed in determining which of four varieties of acculturation characterizes a person. The first question asks to what degree one wishes to remain culturally as one has been as opposed to giving it all up to become part of the host society. The second question asks to what extent one wishes to have day-to-day interactions with those of other groups, as opposed to relating only to those of one's own group (Berry et al., 1986). Each question is answered yes or no, yielding four possible varieties of acculturation: *integrationist, assimilationist, separationist,* and *marginalist* (Berry et al., 1986).

Leong and Chou (1994) argue that although Berry's two-dimensional model is called an acculturation model, it really is an ethnic identity model. Acculturation is really a process of developing one's racial, ethnic, or cultural identity. Berry's two questions are helpful in examining the acculturation process, but his model is focused on outcomes. In this sense, Leong and Chou (1994) recommend adding the term "identity" to the end of each outcome, i.e., *integrationist identity, assimilationist identity, separationist identity,* and *marginalist identity.*

While these ethnic identity/acculturation models demonstrate Asian Americans' attitudes towards the host culture and their own cultures, they fall short of explaining the complexities of various forces such as sociocultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical forces and their impact on shaping Asian Americans' ethnic identity and level of acculturation.

2.6   Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the review of literature on the important dimensions which affect Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada. For this purpose, literature relating to racial/ethnic minorities' career development, Chinese sociocultural influences, career-related barriers as well as racial identity attitude and acculturation has been reviewed. Several theoretical models on the career development

of racial/ethnic minorities as well as on Asian Americans' ethnic identity/acculturation have also been introduced.

The following chapter describes the research methodology for this study. The rationale for a qualitative research design is provided. In addition, research method, selection and description of participants, data collection, the reason why English is used in interviews, interview process, data analysis, trustworthiness of data, assumptions as well as ethical considerations are addressed.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an explanation of the research design and methods adopted for this study. In the first section, a rationale for the use of a qualitative research approach with in-depth interviewing as the primary means of data collection is presented. In addition, the criteria for the selection of participants as well as a description of participants are introduced. Data collection, especially the interview process, is explained. The reasons why English is used in the interviews are provided. Data analysis is described in terms of data management, category and theme generation, and the process of report writing. Finally, the trustworthiness of data, the underlying assumptions of this study and a description of the ethical considerations are presented.

3.2 Rationale for a Qualitative Research Design

According to Maykut & Morehouse (1994), "many scholars have called for the use of qualitative research to help us increase our understanding of human experience..." (p.150). As this study focuses on understanding the career development experiences of Chinese educators in Canada, a qualitative research paradigm using an in-depth interviewing methodology was selected as the most appropriate approach. Marshall and Rossman (1995) note that the unique strength of a qualitative inquiry is its effectiveness for research "that is exploratory or descriptive, that assumes the value of context and setting, and that searches for a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon" (p. 39). In this sense, traditional methods of inquiry have their limitations on educational research which concerns human experiences. The following characteristics of qualitative research as outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) provide the basic framework for this study:

1) the research is descriptive in that it is rich in detail and description;

2) it is concerned with process rather than simply outcomes and products;

3) data are analyzed inductively; and

4) the participants' perspective, that is, how they make sense and meaning in their lives, is an essential concern.

This study is aligned with every aspect of the above framework. Therefore, a qualitative research design with in-depth interviewing as the major tool for data collection was selected as the most suitable methodology for this study.

3.3 Research Method for the Study

Described as "a conversation with a purpose" (Kahn & Cannell, 1957, p.149), in-depth interviewing was the overall method employed in this study. Kirby and McKenna (1989) indicate that "interviews are a special form of interaction between people, the purpose of which is to elicit information by asking questions" (p.66). In this study, I adopted a semi-structured, open-ended design for questioning, combined with probing techniques in order to elicit not only factual details, but also rich descriptions of feelings and emotions surrounding these Chinese educators' career experiences. Merriam (1988) suggests that semi-structured interviews provide comparatively valid data. As maintained by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), semi-structured interviews, "although relatively open-ended, are focused around particular topics or may be guided by some general questions. Even when an interview guide is employed, qualitative interviews offer the interviewer considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the subject a chance to shape the content of the interview" (p.136).

The strengths of in-depth interviewing are described by Marshall and Rossman (1995) as being "a useful way to get large amount of information quickly" (p.81). In addition, this paradigm ensures "immediate follow-up and clarification" (p.81) and if "combined with observation, interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings people hold for everyday activities" (p.81).

3.4 Selection of Participants

Five interview participants, all identified through my personal contacts, were selected. All participants are Chinese educators with graduate degrees in education acquired either from a Canadian university or a Chinese university between the period of 1987 to 1996. All are seeking or have sought paid educational positions in Canada

following completion of their studies. In the selection of participants, an attempt was made to balance dimensions of gender, age, and different educational experiences. Willingness to participate was also a factor in selection. Two men and three women were chosen. These participants ranged in age from 35 to 39 years of age at the time of the interview, with a median age of 36 years. All are bilingual, speaking both Mandarin and English. Three had completed master's degrees and two had completed doctoral degrees in education at the time of interviewing.

I approached these participants in person, describing the nature and purpose of the study, and requested their participation through an interview. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary and consent was obtained through signing a consent form. In addition, participants had the right to opt out of the study at any time and the researcher would endeavor to ensure that no harm would come to them. All names of participants appearing in this document are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. If participants had any concerns with regard to the study, they could contact the researcher and his supervisor at any time. All participants readily agreed to be interviewed.

Due to the fact that the participants were chosen mainly through personal contacts, they therefore share certain similarities in their experiences. The researcher is well aware of this limitation and wishes to caution the readers that the result of this study is likely to be different if participants were chosen in a different manner. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized and applied to the whole body of Chinese educators in Canada.

3.5   Description of Participants

The following is a brief description of the five participants in this study. Their real identities have been disguised in order to protect confidentiality.

Participant 1: Weihua

Weihua was a 35-year-old single man who obtained his Master of Education degree in China in 1987. Since then, he had been an associate professor teaching educational philosophy in a northern Chinese university for ten years. He came to Canada in 1997 with hopes of furthering his study and research. In 1999, he became a

landed immigrant in Canada. Weihua's long-term career goal in Canada is to become a university professor in the field of sociology of education. However, when he began his career search in Canada, he saw very few career options available for him in higher education due to language barriers, his lack of Canadian experience as well as his Chinese background. A confident person, Weihua speaks good English and he had made tremendous progress in his skills in English speaking and writing since he came to Canada. The harsh realities made him decide to give up his aspiration for a higher education career, but he would still like to work in an educational field. He quickly found two part-time teaching positions in a university and a private college. Meanwhile, he applied for a teaching certificate from the public school board. Because he had taken all the required courses in China, he was able to transfer them to Canada. He successfully obtained a teaching certificate shortly after he applied without having to take any additional courses. His career plan is to find a full-time teaching position in the public school system for the time being.

In summary, Weihua perceived few vocational opportunities for him in higher education in Canada. As a result, he believed that there were limited options left from which he could choose. So he obtained a teaching certificate which he believed would prepare him for a possible secure job in the future.

Participant 2: Ping

Ping was a 35-year-old woman with a master's degree in education acquired from a Canadian university. At the time of the interview, she was working in a public school teaching Mandarin in a bilingual program in a western Canadian city. She came to Canada in 1990 as a graduate student. Before that, she was teaching English as a second language (ESL) in a college in a northern Chinese city for almost ten years. After she obtained her master's degree in Canada, Ping decided to stay in Canada. In 1993, she became a Canadian permanent resident. Ping was single.

Ping began her career planning to be an adult ESL instructor in Canada and she volunteered in several schools where she taught ESL to new immigrants. However, an experience working as a substitute teacher in an elementary school changed her career plan. She discovered that she truly enjoyed working with children and therefore

decided to pursue a career as an elementary school teacher in the public school system. Although this apparently was not what her parents had in mind for her, they understood her decision. Ping said she enjoyed her work with elementary school children, believing that she could make a difference in their lives. She has secured a full-time teaching position in a public school now.

Ping's English is excellent. She was glad that she had a chance to pursue a master's degree and discover her genuine interests through working with children. She appeared to be a confident person. She said that she always looked on the bright side of everything. That is probably an important reason that she was able to pursue her real interests and became successful. She said her future goal was to make her teaching career more successful and fulfilling.

Participant 3: Suling

Suling was a 37-year-old female doctoral student in education in a western Canadian university at the time of the interview. With her parents' strong emphasis on education, Suling excelled in school right from the start. She earned her bachelor's degree in English in a northern Chinese University and began her career as an ESL instructor in a university in northern China. She taught English in the university in China for seven years. Driven by a strong desire for higher education, she came to Canada to pursue her master's degree in education in 1993. She quickly applied for landed immigrant status in Canada and successfully became a landed immigrant in 1994. As a result, her family members could come and join her in Canada. In 1996 she obtained her master's degree in ESL in Canada. However, after she finished her study, she realized that there was no future for a career in ESL because she saw few people of her background working in this field. Considering the financial needs of the family and her own future, she decided to pursue a doctoral degree in computer science. By doing so, she not only received the much needed funding to support her study and her family, but also paved the way for a future career in technology field. Suling aspires to be a computer programmer or a university professor upon completion of her graduate studies.

In short, Suling's English language skills are at a very high standard. She appeared to be a realistic, hard-working person with a clear goal in her life. She believed that she was the master of her own destiny. In her opinion, by working hard, making realistic choices, and persevering in the effort, everyone could become successful in the end. She regarded failure as a shame and loss of face and constantly looked up to role models for inspiration.

Participant 4: Jon

Jon was a 36-year-old man with a doctoral degree in education acquired from a Canadian University. At the time of the interview, he was teaching Mandarin in a bilingual program in a public school in western Canada. After he obtained a bachelor's degree in English in southwest China, he began his career as an ESL instructor in a university in a big southern city in 1986. Five years later, he came to Canada to pursue his graduate degree in education. He graduated with a Ph.D. degree in education in 1996. At the same time, he applied for permanent residence status and became a landed immigrant in the same year. His first career aspiration was to become a university professor, which turned out to be impossible due to what he perceived as a lack of Canadian experience and language competency. However, Jon considered himself lucky because he was offered a permanent teaching position in a public school system later. Although this was not his initial choice, he quickly found out that he enjoyed teaching young children. In addition, there were opportunities for future promotion. Therefore, he prepared himself for different possible positions that might come up in the future.

Jon was married with children, and speaks excellent English. He attributed his success to hard work, high acculturation, and networking. He appeared to be a highly motivated person who believed that anyone who possessed the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes for the job could succeed.

Participant 5: Xuewen

Xuewen was a 39-year-old woman who was running a successful education and immigration consulting business at the time of the interview. She was single and had a

prestigious career as a university professor in an eastern Chinese city. After about ten years of teaching, she decided to come to Canada to pursue graduate studies in 1988. Because of the Tiananmen incident in 1989, she decided to stay in Canada permanently. This was made possible by a CIC special program which allowed Chinese students to apply for permanent residence in Canada on a compassionate ground. In 1991, Xuewen obtained her Master of Education degree from a Canadian University. Then she decided to move on to do a doctoral degree in education. She obtained her doctoral degree in 1995 in a western Canadian University. Her first career aspiration was to become an educational administrator at a post-secondary institution. She applied for a number of positions but it did not take long before she realized that her previous credentials and experiences would not be properly recognized. From this experience she learned that the power to make decisions and create opportunities for her is important. Therefore, she decided to start her own business. With a friend, she started an education and immigration consulting business. She worked hard and became successful in just a few years.

Xuewen's career decisions were largely affected by the experiences with the differential opportunity system prevalent in the Canadian society. Although she has the qualifications, she was constantly denied opportunities in areas of her choices. Therefore, it is important for her to seek career opportunities that would give her respect, better financial rewards and the freedom to make her own decisions. Her desire of starting her own business in a way is a strategy of dealing with racism and social injustice. When asked about her future goals in life, Xuewen claimed that her goal was to combine her business with education and try to make the best out of it. She was confident that with her business expanding she would be able to use her expertise in education and apply it to her work.

3.6   Table 3.1 Characteristics of Participants

Name	Gender	Age	Highest Level of Education at the Time of Interviewing	Year Obtained	Occupation at the Time of Interviewing
Jon	Male	36	Ph. D. Degree in Elementary Education	1996	Public school teacher Grade Five
Xuewen	Female	39	Ph. D. Degree in Adult & Higher Education	1995	Education & Immigration Consultant Self-employed
Ping	Female	35	Master's Degree in Elementary Education	1993	Public school teacher Grade Six
Weihua	Male	35	Master's Degree in Adult & Higher Education	1987	University & College Instructor Adult Students
Suling	Female	37	Master's Degree in English as a Second Language	1997	Full-time Ph. D. Student in Computer Science

3.7   Data Collection

For the purpose of this study, I decided to limit the number of participants to five so that I could focus in more depth on each person's story. Interviews allowed me to collect rich data, to isolate recurring themes, and to remain true to the initial intent of the participants' words (Agar, 1996). In this study, the primary method for data collection was 90-minute audiotaped individual in-depth interviews. In some cases, participants wished to spend more time, so the interviews were extended.

3.8   The Use of the English Language in Interviews

At the beginning of this study, I had thought of using the Chinese language to conduct my interviews. The reasons are apparent: using the Chinese language to collect data allows both the participants and me to interact in a more personal, natural and adequate manner than otherwise. In other words, it may be easier for the participants to express their feelings, emotions and experiences in Mandarin Chinese than English. However, I had to give up this idea for two reasons. First, the time constraints I was facing made it hard to have the interviews translated into English and then transcribed. Financially, hiring a translator is costly. Therefore, out of these practical considerations, I decided to use the English language to conduct the interviews.

Because the majority of participants had stayed in Canada for a relatively long period of time and most had been educated in Canada in English for a number of years, using the English language to collect data seemed feasible. In addition, prior to their participation, I had indicated in my letter to them that interviews would be conducted in English. None seemed to object to this idea. In fact, during the interviews, only two of the participants seemed to be a little uneasy using English at the beginning, but later on became more comfortable in conversations in English. The rest were quite comfortable speaking English during the conversations.

However, there are certain limitations in using English. First, for some participants, the conversations were a little less personal, especially at the beginning of the interview. In addition, as English is not the native language of the participants and the researcher, it is unavoidable that sometimes the English used by both the participants and the researcher are not always conventional. This may have affected

certain meanings of the questions and answers throughout the interviews.

3.9   Interview Process

Interviews took place in a location of the participant's choosing. Of all the five interviews, one was conducted in my apartment, three in the participants' homes, and one in a private office space. In all cases, interviews were conducted privately to ensure confidentiality and to provide participants with the greatest degree of comfort and privacy.

Prior to interviews, I sent each participant a letter (see Appendix A) inviting him or her to participant in the research. This was followed by another letter in which I briefed each participant the nature and purpose of the research (see Appendix B). I began each interview by explaining again the nature and purpose of the study, as well as the ethnical procedures to be followed. I asked for permission to audiotape the interview, then I asked each participant to read and sign a participant consent form (see Appendix C). During the interview, I followed a protocol that began with demographic questions (see Appendix D), followed by the five basic questions outlined on the Interview Guide (see Appendix E). However, to facilitate development of rapport and a free flow of exchange, I did not rigidly adhere to interview protocol, but rather sought to maintain a fluidity that was essential to the exploration of the participants' career experiences. Interviews focused on five aspects of the participants' career development experiences, i.e., their conceptualization of career, sociocultural influences, perceptions/experiences of barriers, identity, acculturation as well as their impact on the occupational self-efficacy of Chinese educators. In the course of the interviews, I used open-ended questions, together with some probing and additional questions appropriate to the topics that arose in the conversation. As a result, the stories of these Chinese educators began to unfold. The interviews progressed until the participant shared as much as he or she was willing during that session. Tapes were then labeled and kept in a safe place for future analysis.

In two cases, some follow-up was conducted to clarify some initial interview material. In the first instance, I used email to ask some additional questions. In the second instance, I telephoned the participant to ask questions, but did not tape-record

the conversation. I took notes and compared the notes with the original interview transcripts. Such additional clarification was made in order to ensure that the words and ideas represented in the original transcripts reflected thoughts and feelings intended by the participants. I returned to each participant with the transcripts, themes, categories as well as the interpretations obtained through the process of data analysis (described below), and asked him or her to review and validate these transcripts, themes, categories and interpretations.

3.10   Data Analysis

The process of data analysis consists of recording, managing and analyzing the data. In terms of data recording and management, the five interviews were recorded and transcribed in a systematic manner by the researcher. To ease retrieval for data analysis, I labeled tapes, and color-coded and numbered the transcripts and notes to keep track of the data. According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), such practices are "invaluable for piecing together patterns, defining categories for data analysis, planning further data collection, and especially for writing the final product of the research" (p. 109). Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that "data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data" (p. 111). The following approach was adopted for the analysis: (1) organizing the data; (2) generating categories, themes, and patterns; and (3) writing the report.

3.10.1   Organizing the Data

At this stage, tapes were listened to several times although verbatim transcripts were available. Auditory review of the interviews helped to provide a better appreciation of the participants' inflection and the emotive content of the data. Transcripts were also reviewed in detail and important quotations were highlighted for easy retrieval. I read through the transcripts until I became thoroughly familiar with each conversation. The purpose of this process was to make the data and notes retrievable and generally "clean up" (Pearsol, 1985, quoting Marshall & Rossman) what seemed to be overwhelming and unmanageable.

3.10.2 Generating Categories, Themes, and Patterns

This phase of data analysis was the most important, difficult and complex. According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), "identifying salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together is the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis and one that can integrate the entire endeavor" (p. 114). To avoid the problem of generalizability due to the subjective nature of qualitative interviews, an "analytic induction" approach was used to deal with this problem. According to Borg and Gall (1989), "analytic induction is the process of searching for propositions that apply to all cases of the problem under analysis" (p.404). Specifically, in this study, a preliminary finding or result was formulated. An assumption of that finding or result was also formulated. Then one result was studied in light of the assumption, in order to determine whether or not the assumption fit the facts in that case. If the assumption did not fit the facts, either the assumption was reformulated to fit the facts, or the result to be explained was redefined so that the negative case was excluded. If the assumption did fit the facts, it was tested against additional cases until a universal relationship was established.

Using this approach, a constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was adopted. This method involved two essential sub-processes that composed the basis of inductive analysis, i.e., unitizing and categorizing. Unitizing was basically a coding operation that identified information units isolated from the text. In categorizing, information units derived from the unitizing phase were organized into categories on the basis of similarity in meaning. As the number of categories reached a saturation point I started to decide which units of information might be included or excluded from the category.

Under this method, the five tape transcripts were carefully reviewed to identify similar and recurring statements. As a result, I identified five major categories in the data with different subcategories, themes and patterns. This constant comparative method of analytic induction, combined with the color-coding process allowed for a more systematic approach to generating patterns, themes and categories. Finally, commonalities and differences were identified among the themes.

3.10.3 Writing the Report

The last phase of data analysis was the writing or presenting of a research report. Kirby and MaKenna (1989) state that "the writing or presentation is an ongoing part of the analysis" (p. 155). According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), "writing about qualitative data cannot be separated from the analytic process. In fact, it is central to that process, for in the choice of particular words to summarize and reflect the complexity of the data, the researcher is engaging in the interpretive act, lending shape and form—meaning—to massive amounts of raw data" (p. 117).

The final report entails a presentation and interpretation of the major findings of this study. First of all, data were presented according to the five thematic categories. This included a description and exploration of the elements of the categories as well as the intra- and inter-categorical relationships. According to Kirby and McKenna (1989), "although there can be some movement from description to more theoretical analysis, in the final report the overall reporting should reflect the voices of the participants" (p. 162). I achieved this by including the direct quotations of the participants and also presenting the contrasting attitudes among participants within the appropriate context. I also realized that as a researcher I had the responsibility of reporting on the research in a way that was fair and equitable to participants. Therefore, every effort was made to ensure the researcher's voice did not dominate the reporting. In addition, the participants' confidentiality was considered and fully protected in the process.

Second, significant findings were interpreted and discussed. This involved the integration and synthesis of the findings and a comparison of findings to the literature. Explanations were sought and discussions were presented.

3.11   Trustworthiness of Data

One of the goals of doing research is to generate new knowledge in a valid and reliable fashion. In this study, the following efforts were made to ensure that data was validated and trustworthiness established:

1. I contacted all the participants to review the transcripts, themes, categories, and interpretations for accuracy and if necessary revision or inclusion of additional data.

2. One former doctoral student was asked to read and review the transcripts and interpretations I had constructed in the data analysis process. To ensure that there is no danger for this person to identify the participants, every effort was made by the researcher not to disclose any information relating to the participants' identities. In addition, this person acknowledged that she did not know any Chinese educators in person.

3. Two data sources were used to ensure trustworthiness. For example, data was collected through my notes, taken during and after the interviews; and the interviews, tapes and transcripts.

4. "Member Checks" were used at various points in the analysis process. I contacted individuals to clarify statements in their transcripts. I took the transcripts back to each person, asking if they had any further comments, and probing some statements in the transcripts for further details. I presented each participant with the themes and categories that I constructed in data analysis, asking if these resonated with their own understanding of their experiences. Finally I presented each participant with a draft copy of the chapter describing the themes and quoting individuals, asking them if they had any concerns or suggestions for revision to the content related to their interviews.

5. Throughout data collection and analysis, I tried to become aware of my personal biases. I made every effort to declare these biases for myself, and to seek alternate ways of viewing the data where appropriate. The assistance of a peer "auditor", the doctoral student who examined my interpretations was most helpful in alerting me to certain personal biases that tended to slant my analyses.

3.12   Assumptions

My first assumption was that participants would honestly and reflectively report their beliefs and understandings about the questions being asked.

The second assumption was that my personal beliefs and history could influence the qualitative research process. They form hidden structure that can, if unexamined and not made explicit, unduly influence and bias the research process. Consequently, I made explicit my beliefs and knowledge about Chinese educators' career development

experiences in Canada prior to conducting this study.

I believe that Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada are influenced by Chinese culture, their concept of career, structural barriers in Canadian society, and their acculturation. Under the influence of Chinese culture, Chinese educators aspire to succeed by seeking prestigious careers in their new country. However, the sociopolitical barriers that exist in Canadian society make them realize that they have to compromise their career objectives. It is also my belief that Chinese educators with high acculturation are less likely to suffer from occupational discrimination and segregation than those with low acculturation. As a result of these structural barriers, I believe that many Chinese educators' occupational self-efficacy is low.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

The following measures were taken to address the ethical concerns in respect to the study:

1. The study was approved by the Department of Educational Policy Studies' Ethics Review Committee.

2. Each participant was advised by the researcher as to the main focus of the study, the degree of commitment required, the specific activities that would be involved, how the data would be used and the ethical standards of the study. This was to ensure that the participants were clearly aware of the nature and purpose of the study.

3. Participation in the study was voluntary and prior to becoming involved, each participant was asked to sign a participant consent form. All participants were informed that they had the right to opt out of the study at any time and that the researcher would endeavour to ensure that no harm would come to them. In addition, any identifying information was kept confidential. If participants had any questions or concerns with the study, they could contact the researcher or the researcher's supervisor at any time. All materials generated from the research were kept secure when not in use. Following completion of the study, the tapes, transcripts and notes will be destroyed.

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

Through the use of in-depth interviews, this study explores Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada. The interview data were analyzed to determine how social, cultural and political factors influence Chinese educators' career development. To achieve this end, five participants shared their career experiences for this research. As the participants related their experiences within the social, cultural and political contexts, the complex and multidimensional aspects of their career experiences began to unfold.

The first objective of this chapter is to present, from the perspective of the participants, their career development experiences in Canada. Their stories are presented within the five main descriptors used to group the interview questions, i.e., (1) the concept of career; (2) sociocultural influences; (3) perceptions of barriers; (4) racial identity and acculturation; and (5) self-efficacy beliefs.

The second goal of this chapter is to discuss, from the perspective of the researcher, the major issues that emerged from the analysis of the findings. The discussion is based on the review of related literature as well as the researcher's critical reflections on the unique career development experiences of the participants.

4.2 Significant Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are described on the basis of the foregoing five classifications which form the backbone of this qualitative research. In order to reflect the voices of the participants, the presentation is focused primarily on the participants' descriptions of their career experiences. Although as an interpretative researcher I felt the need to make a point or observation from time to time, every effort was made to ensure that my voice did not dominate the reporting. In addition, throughout this section, I used "the participants", "these Chinese educators", "the interviewees" or "the Chinese educators in this study" interchangeably to refer to the five Chinese educators who participated in this study.

4.2.1 Conceptualization of Career

In addressing this theme, participants were asked to conceptualize the word "career" in their own terms to determine how the concept of career affects their career aspirations and choices. Many of the participants used the terms *jobs*, *work*, and *careers* interchangeably in their interviews but indicated that they realized distinctions among these terms. As the interviews went on, various definitions of career emerged from the interviews. The participants' definitions of career can be summed up in five main areas, i. e., career as self-actualization, career in relation to community, career as a dynamic concept, career concept as manifestation of ideal and reality as well as career as a compromise.

4.2.1.1 Career as Self-Actualization

Interestingly, nearly all participants referred to career as a way of life which affords them opportunities to realize their dreams and goals. For these Chinese educators, career appears not merely to mean a job, or an occupation which is characterized by working and obtaining financial rewards, but rather a manifestation of their intrinsic interests as well as an opportunity to make important decisions in life which are closely associated with joy, happiness, and pleasure. One of the participants, Ping defined career in this way:

> Ping: Career means the kind of thing that you really enjoy doing. It's also something that can help realize your dreams and life goals. Money is definitely not what career is about. Career is more than that. It is part of your life.

Another participant, Weihua viewed career from a different standpoint. For him, the concept of career is centered on whether he was able to apply his education and meanwhile have his potential recognized:

> Weihua: I've had many years of education. So if I have a job that I don't really like and to which I can't apply my education and my skills, it's not a complete career. For me, career should be built on a person's interest, not money or anything else. Money is absolutely not my purpose. My goal is to find something that will enable me to use my knowledge and ability. That's the most important thing to me.

Other participants, such as Suling, Jon, and Xuewen shared similar views on career. According to them, career was more than a job. Instead, it was an outlet for personal fulfillment and self-actualization.

The above definitions of career clearly indicate that the participants' concept of career appears to be linked to their ability to express their intrinsic interests and realize their goals in life. Idealistically these participants tend to view their career as a means of self-expression and self- actualization.

4.2.1.2 Career in Relation to Community

Another theme that emerged from the data is that the personal career values of the participants interviewed were not entirely based on themselves. Their personal career values were also community-based; in other words, choices that were made about career paths must also benefit the community and the society. Throughout the interviews, these Chinese educators demonstrated a strong desire to make contributions to the society through the pursuit of their careers. As Suling indicated:

> Suling: Career is the pursuit of your dreams. It is something that you hope you can do in order to contribute to the community and the society at large while making a living. In a career, you receive and you also give. In this sense, career is more than just making a living. You want to do your best in your career so that other people can benefit from your work. To me, that's the kind of thing I've been striving to do.

Jon gave a clear, concise definition that he viewed as the "right path" he should take:

> Jon: It seems to me that career is related to both yourself and the society. On the one hand, you get something from your job, such as personal satisfaction and financial income; on the other hand, you also contribute to the community at large through whatever you do in a career.

It seems that Jon's concept of making contributions to the community is linked to his ability to work in areas where he is able to make the majority of people benefit, i. e., a teaching profession. Here, a duality of desire was expressed in Suling and Jon's comments, namely, the practical aspect of "making a living" while simultaneously "contributing to society".

Xuewen is the only participant in this study who was self-employed. At the time of the interview, she was running an education consulting business, which she described as quite successful. Despite the notion by many people that a private business is mostly profit-oriented, Xuewen insisted that an education career meant far more than making a profit:

> Xuewen: As an educator for years, everybody who has the similar experiences as I do should understand that education is not always a profit-making thing. We have to look at education in the long run. We have to look at the long-term benefit education can create and provide. I don't believe we can make a fortune by promoting education. But in terms of the significance, we have to do it, even if it means it doesn't make money. It's gonna be beneficial to the society, especially to China and some other developing countries where education still needs to be improved. We can't only look at profit.

Repeated mention of a desire to offer service to the community resonated through the above interviews. This wish to serve societal interests articulated by the participants may be associated with Mao's orthodox education, which required that everyone must be prepared to serve the needs of the country. Nonetheless, the participants appeared sincere in their descriptions throughout the interviews.

4.2.1.3 Career as a Dynamic Concept

During the interviews the participants voiced their position that their concept of career is not static. Instead, they elaborated on the dynamic and changing process, namely, from enjoying the secure "Iron Rice Bowl" in China to competing for jobs in the Canadian labor market.[33] This meant that they had to learn to rely on themselves. For example, as Suling pointed out, "It's different from what we experienced in China where normally when you graduate, you are assigned to work. But in Canada it's different, you have to actually look for job actively. Jobs will not come to you". Other

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[33] Iron Rice Bowl: A term used in China which refers to any jobs held by people working for the state-owned enterprises, especially before the late 1970s when China started its economic reforms. It usually means a permanent job held by a person for his or her entire life.

participants, such as Xuewen and Jon, seemed to support this notion. Several participants indicated that "career" changes over time depending on an individual's life experience. Xuewen described it in the following way:

> Xuewen: When I was a teacher [in China], I thought I would be teaching all my life and later I just ended up doing something else... As I mentioned just now, you have to be realistic here in Canada mainly because you have to meet the financial needs. So whatever you can do to meet that need, you just get it. That's part of my definition of career.

Suling offered a similar view. According to her, the change of career concept was due to what she thought was her personal weakness as well as the need for survival:

> Suling: In China, I taught ESL and a little bit of management before I came to Canada. In Canada I studied ESL. But it's the law of survival that made me switch to the Computer Science program...I see my personal weakness. I know that in ESL, in English, because I'm not a native speaker, I can never make a great contribution as I could potentially can in another area such as technology. It's a relatively newer area, still under development rapidly. So I have to find specialization where I could realize my potential.

The participants seemed to share the notion that career is part of their life and that factors contributing to the change of concept of career include education, Chinese and Canadian sociocultural influences, one's personal growth, labour market needs as well as technological advance.

4.2.1.4 Career Concept as Manifestation of Ideal and Reality

Generally speaking, the participants' concepts of career appeared to change in a similar process: starting with high hopes for their future careers, to making realistic choices due to the need for survival and providing for the family in their new country. Some participants started out doing something in Canada which was not based on their interests, but later found meanings in their jobs. For example, Ping described the change of her career concept as an elementary school teacher from focusing primarily on the financial needs at first to starting to find meaning in her job and to enjoy it later. She attributed this change to her self-growth. According to Ping:

> Ping: Every time after teaching, I would think I made a very good
> choice because I really feel that I realized my dream and found value
> in myself, and being needed and also learn from life and enjoy life.

Another participant, Suling articulated that her concept of career was constantly

evolving. For her, her ideal career was to be a university professor in ESL evaluation.

But as she put it, it was "the law of survival" and the labour market demand that

prompted her to switch to a more practical field. In her case, technology played an

important part in her decision-making:

> Suling: With the advance of technology, everything in our society is
> changing. Many traditional jobs have disappeared and lots of new
> jobs have been and are being created everyday. For example,
> through computers we can do a lot of distance learning even to the
> people living in the remotest areas within or beyond a country. The
> technological progress really makes us rethink about our traditional
> career concepts. It affects our career decision-making. In today's
> world, you have to prepare yourself for the technological progress.
> You have to learn the new knowledge and skills, otherwise, you'll be
> lagging behind.

Suling's comment seems to be in line with the practical notion that market inevitably

determines career choice.

4.2.1.5 Career, Constraints and Compromise

According to Helms & Piper (1994), in Canadian society professional

occupations are predominantly occupied and dominated by Whites. For some

participants, perceptions of discrimination and feelings of not having equal access to

professional occupations impede their career development. In addition, the lack of role

models in certain fields may influence their efficacy beliefs regarding opportunities in

particular careers. These barriers, coupled with the practical need to support the family,

result in these Chinese educators having to compromise their career aspirations and

choices. This sentiment was captured by Xuewen's comment:

> Xuewen: I learned to be realistic and flexible all these years in
> Canada because there are so many limitations to prevent me from
> getting a decent job. Meanwhile I have to support the family and
> meet the financial needs. So basically the lessons I've learned is that

> I cannot have only daydreams. I have to be flexible in my career choice. According to my observations, in Chinese people's mind, the concept of career is totally changed. It is to find a job, to get money, not necessarily to realize what one wishes to do. It's a compromise.

Besides her own compromises, Xuewen commented on other people in her community. She went on to describe:

> Xuewen: Look at how many Chinese students have changed their subject areas in Canada. I would say more than fifty percent of them are doing something totally different. This doesn't mean they don't have their dreams any more. They still have a dream. But they have to feed their stomach first and then look at their dreams, to see whether they are realistic. If they are not, then forget them.

This theme describes these Chinese educators as people who consciously choose to compromise their career aspirations based on what they see as structural constraints that exist in Canadian society. In Xuewen's case, the external limitations were so powerful that she felt that she had no other alternative but to compromise. She added:

> Xuewen: I had no other choice. If I only had empty dreams, then I would be starving. I had to survive first. I wasn't lucky. If I could find a job to realize my dream, and at the same time to get enough money to support my family, that would be ideal. But I wasn't lucky to get that. Maybe I have to go in a roundabout way, at least to feed my stomach first, and then try to do something a bit more and more, to realize my dream. I've never forgotten my dreams. So many years of education, I don't want to waste everything. I spent so many days and nights. Sometimes I even didn't sleep. I slept in the department for quite a few nights, finish my paper, my projects. I worked and studied at the same time, which was not easy. I had no other choice.

From this comment, it is apparent that career aspirations, institutional barriers, and financial constraints together contribute to these Chinese educators' tendency to compromise their career choices in Canada.

In summary, most of these Chinese educators' concept of career seems to be closely connected with their education, intrinsic interests, satisfaction, self-realization and a need to contribute to the society. In addition, their concept of career is also

undergoing significant change due to both internal and external readjustment. The Canadian sociopolitical contexts in which these Chinese educators' career-related decisions are made also have a huge impact on their career development. Workplace discrimination and the practical need to survive and support the family sometimes force many of these Chinese educators to compromise their career aspirations. As a result, they tend to adopt a more realistic approach in making career choices in Canada.

4.2.2 Chinese Sociocultural Influences

While career values are personal and unique to each individual, they are not immune to external influences. In this sense, traditional Chinese culture certainly plays an important role in the participants' occupational socialization. By the same token, living in Canada means these Chinese educators are also exposed to and influenced by Canadian culture and values, which may mean that they may become less group-oriented and more individually oriented. That is, their career conceptions may be focused more on individual goals and ideals of fulfillment and self-actualization than solely pleasing the family. In this sense, this study offers a unique perspective because it explores Chinese educators' career development experiences in a Canadian context. It is therefore anticipated that the participants in this study are likely to make career decisions based on their personal aspirations and interests even though they are heavily influenced by Chinese cultural influences.

In this chapter, sociocultural factors are used to refer to Chinese social and cultural influences which shape Chinese educators' career aspirations and choices. To achieve this end, I focus sociocultural factors on the following three domains: parental expectations, Chinese culture and its impact on career behaviour and the influence of Chinese culture on career choice.

4.2.2.1 Parental Expectations

Although none of the participants were living with their parents in Canada by the time of interview, this does not mean that parental influences are not there. In fact, most of the participants reported that their parental expectations were largely intangible but were very potent and that their career decision-making was directly or indirectly

influenced by their parents. For example, Ping described her parents' expectations for her career choice in Canada and their reactions when they were told about her decision to pursue a teaching career in a public school:

> Ping: They wished I could become a university professor. So when I told them I found a job in elementary school here, they were quite disappointed at me. They didn't think it's a very professional job, plus the level was too low. So I tried hard to explain to them that it's not easy even to find a job in elementary school in Canada. I was actually one of those lucky ones. Also, whatever subjects I teach in elementary schools or secondary schools, it's not an easy job. So I explained and eventually they understood.

In the case of Weihua, although his parents did not articulate any expectations nor put any direct pressure on him, for some reason, he could feel the presence:

> Weihua: Well, I can feel it. I can definitely feel the pressure. My parents always hope that I can do something to bring prestige on the family. They always think I'm very capable. So I never told them I didn't have a full-time job in Canada. If I told them the truth, they would be very upset because in China I would say I was above the middle class [level]. So my salary and my social status were very high. But in Canada, I don't think my parents would like to see me in this situation. They'll be very sad.

Weihua revealed a sense of loss due to what he thought a failure to live up to his parents' expectations. If his story helps us understand the role of parental expectations in the participants' career decision-making process, then Suling's experience of having to match her career choice with the expectations of her parents and the community truly reveals the potency of these expectations. As Suling put it, it would be unthinkable if she failed to land a decent job in Canada:

> Suling: When you don't have a job, absolutely you are under great pressure because you have a family behind you that you need to support. What's more, when you come to Canada, you give up your decent job back in China. You give up your hometown where you were born and brought up. Therefore, you want to prove that you can succeed in this new country, in your adopted country. Actually when you are talking about giving up your job in China, your parents, your relatives and your friends all say "Would it be worthwhile for you to give up your job and go to an unknown place

where you don't know what's going to happen?" So if you can't find a decent job, if you don't do well, I guess it'll just be unimaginable.

These stories clearly demonstrate that Chinese social pressure may come in direct or indirect, tangible or intangible ways. By the same token, the participants handled these parental pressures with a repertoire of strategies. For example, Ping addressed it with a discussion with her parents. Weihua handled it by concealing the truth. As to Suling, the internalization of parental expectations was translated into motivation which was constantly urging her to succeed in order to please her parents and the Chinese community. The psychological effects, such as inner tension or turmoil, guilt, sense of loss, shame and the need to justify their career choices, are huge. All of these indicate that parental expectations can play an important role in these Chinese educators' career development.

Another related aspect factors into the pressure to "succeed". That is, the "successful" stories of others who have set a precedent. Suling referred to these as self-imposed expectations to "measure up" to other successful people:

Suling: There is a peer pressure because you always hear about many successful stories of who got a good job, who moved to Toronto or the States and whatsoever. So if other people can succeed, why can't I? I'm not a stupid person. That's what I thought, peer pressure, pressure coming from everywhere.

Suling's feelings reveal that the impact of parental or self-imposed pressures to "measure up" to the successful people on the mentality of these Chinese educators is significant.

Jon is the only exception in this study who did not report any parental pressure in his career decision-making. In Jon's opinion, his parents hoped that he would be able to enter university. After he entered university, his parents stopped giving him any more pressure:

Jon: If I go to university, then that's it. Whatever I do in the future, it'll be my own decision. They won't put any more pressure on me. Actually they didn't. They just hoped that after I finished my degree

in Canada, I would go back to China. They wanted me to go back to China, but I would prefer to stay here.

This finding is different from those derived from the rest of the participants in this study. It may have to do with the different intensity of expectations or some other factors such as the participant's age, maturity or his or her parents' education levels.

In conclusion, the participants' career development appears to be influenced by their parental expectations. This finding is consistent with the literature which shows that in Chinese culture career choice is not just a personal decision. Rather, it is a collective decision made by the whole family or community. In the case of my participants, their career development is not only affected by parental expectations, but also impacted by the pressure from other family members, relatives, friends or even the Chinese community in which they live. Oftentimes, these expectations and pressure are intangible, yet are quite potent. Failure to meet these expectations often results in feelings of shame, guilt, and a loss of face.

4.2.2.2 Chinese Culture and Its Influence on Career Development

In the previous section, parental expectations were discussed and their effect on the participants' career decision-making process was examined. In this section, I put the emphasis on the positive and negative influences of Chinese culture on the career behaviour of these Chinese educators in the Canadian context.

Two conflicting themes emerged from the interviews with regard to the influences of Chinese culture on the participants' career development. First of all, the participants reported that Chinese culture in general focused on learning, diligence, perseverance and competitiveness, all of which are good qualities that could potentially help their career development. Conversely, the interviewees reported that Chinese culture values qualities such as modesty, conformity, passivity, restraint and regards failure as shame and a loss of face, all of which are attributes that may hinder their career development. The way in which the participants look upon the characteristics is significant for this study. In the following section, I trace several of the participants' opinions.

4.2.2.2.1   The Negative and Positive Aspects of Chinese Culture

Many participants in this study pointed out that certain attributes inherent in Chinese culture such as modesty, conformity, self-restraint, and unassertiveness could hinder their career development in Canada. This notion was drawn from comparing Chinese culture with Canadian culture. For example, Suling highlighted some of the key differences between the two cultures:

> Suling: When I first came to Canada, I discovered that things were
> so different from those in China. In China I was told to be
> restrained, to be modest, and no matter what, always be modest, and
> never brag about myself. I was told that aggressiveness and
> exaggeration were totally negative things. While here in Canada, I
> have to be aggressive, I have to be good at marketing myself,
> promoting myself, and speaking of all the good things about myself.
> So being modest is not what I need in this society.

The Chinese concept of modesty to which Suling referred in her description may mean not openly talking about one's strengths and achievements in front of other people, especially one's superiors for fear that it could be perceived as showing off, which is not in line with the traditional Chinese virtues. Instead, the general rules are that people tend to be critical of themselves even though they know they have the abilities to perform certain tasks. In Canadian culture, people respond to other people's praises by saying "thank you". However, this is not generally accepted in China. The typical response that a person gives when being praised for speaking good English would be "no, my English is not very good. I still have a long way to go to get there". The notion of modesty is also reflected in one of Mao's quotations, which is most often cited by Chinese parents to teach their children to be humble. It goes "modesty makes people progress; pride makes people fall behind". This clearly shows that modesty is regarded as an important virtue in Chinese culture.

Despite the critical look at Chinese culture, Suling stated that she was not intending to be negative. She reflected upon some of the positive aspects of Chinese culture:

> Suling: I think the important thing is that Chinese culture teaches
> you to be diligent, persistent and remain competitive. All three are

equally important because in China you have so many people to compete with. To make sure you can succeed, you have no other options but to work hard, remain competitive and be persistent in your effort. You have to compete with other people with similar backgrounds. So diligence, persistence and competition are the keys to success in China.

Suling's comments were echoed by Weihua who offered his opinion on the strengths of Chinese culture:

Weihua: As a person who's born and brought up under the Chinese culture, I think this person will be very competitive, hard-working and will never stop trying. I think these are the good qualities or strengths of Chinese culture.

Xuewen, after staying in Canada for twelve years, said that she had altered her perceptions of culture. According to her, what is good in one culture may not necessarily be good in another culture. For her, the best policy was to act in a culturally appropriate way. She elaborated:

Xuewen: Chinese don't brag about themselves. They don't like to show off. That's the oriental culture. However, in Canada, you have to show off, you have to boast. That's the major contradiction between the two cultures. I think it has a huge impact on how a person goes about looking for jobs. For example, when I started my job search, I was not used to selling myself in a very aggressive way, like Canadians always do. I was not accustomed to that way. I think some Canadians exaggerated about what they could do. They boasted about their achievements. I'm not used to this kind of way of selling myself, kind of like a dishonest way. I don't like that. But unfortunately, most of the people here do...I don't want to exaggerate on what I can do, but this is maybe the oriental way, and maybe this is not very good. "When in Rome, do what the Romans do," but unfortunately I did not spend much time doing that...You can't be modest in Canada. If you are modest, you get no chance. If there is anything, I would say when you know what is needed in your resume, which can help you get this job, you have to put it on. Even if you work as a volunteer, you need to do it, do it the Canadian way.

Xuewen's feelings show the struggle between acting in a way that is in accordance with her cultural values and the realization that those might not be the values that will further her career goals in Canada.

4.2.2.2.2   Chinese Culture and Its Impacts on Chinese Education

Most participants in this study held the view that Chinese education failed to teach people certain important skills in life such as creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. They attributed this to the Chinese cultural influences.

> **Weihua:** The other side of Chinese culture, in my opinion, is that in Chinese education, they narrow your mind; they don't teach you anything that will help develop your critical thinking skills. Instead, they limit students in a very narrow subject area. Even the public opinions, like you should do whatever you have been trained [to do]. So I think these are the weaknesses of Chinese culture.

Other participants saw Chinese culture in a similar fashion. According to Ping:

> **Ping:** I come from Chinese educational background, so I used to be quite passive in many ways. For example, I tend to listen to other people instead of having my own opinions. I was not very brave to share ideas. So that's part of the negative aspects of Chinese culture. I mean if you don't share ideas with other people, how do they know what you are thinking about or whether you like to share with them or whether you have any ideas at all (laughing), right?

Paradoxically, these comments revealed that while some of these Chinese educators believed that career success could be achieved through personal characteristics such as hard work, perseverance, and competitiveness, they might not be conscious of the possibility that at least part of their career development could be hampered by the perceived weaknesses exhibited in Chinese cultural values. This can be seen from the impact of Chinese culture on its education system.

Traditional Chinese cultural values have been fully manifested in Chinese education, which is characterized by cramming and rote learning. Respect for teachers is internalized by the students and the best way to show respect is to conform by not asking too many questions in class. If a student openly disagrees with the teacher in class, it may be perceived as deliberately challenging the teacher and therefore both the teacher and often students may regard the student as a "trouble-maker". On the other hand, Chinese culture values reserve and self-restraint, thus the Canadian style of open discussions in classrooms is very rare in Chinese schools. This may narrow the

students' horizons, resulting in a compliant student population and future workforce who are lacking creativity and originality.

However, this does not mean that every one of these Chinese educators' career development in Canada will be adversely affected. In fact, Ping insisted on distinguishing between the generalized culture of Chinese educators and individual characteristics. In her opinion, while Chinese culture may inhibit people's critical thinking skills, she felt that much also depends on how open a person remains to other cultures:

> Ping: But this doesn't mean that every Chinese educator is like that, I mean being passive or lacking critical thinking skills etc. It depends. If you ask me if these aspects of Chinese culture affect my teaching style, I would say no. I think I learn. I think it depends on different people. Some people are very open to new things. Some people just like to hold on to traditional ideas. So it really depends.

This suggests that some of these Chinese educators are open to Canadian culture and therefore are able to adjust well. Some are able to identify certain aspects of Chinese culture which could potentially hinder their career development. Alternatively, others may show a willingness to learn and acquire new skills, thus making them less vulnerable to the fierce competition and other external constraints.

To sum up, two conflicting themes have been identified by the participants with regard to Chinese culture and its influence on their career development in Canada. According to the participants, Chinese culture embodies qualities that could potentially help AND impede their career development. While this is not being disputed, some contend that humans are not static and that as long as they are open to new cultures, they can learn new things which will make them stronger and more competitive in the labour market, thus making their career development experiences in Canada rewarding. The key cultural issue of differences lies in its effects on education and the resulting impacts on these Chinese educators. Specifically, in the Canadian context, these Chinese educators may be found to be less assertive compared to their Canadian counterparts in a job search.

4.2.2.2.3   The Impact of Chinese Culture on Career Choice

Both internal and external factors can potentially influence a person's career decision-making process. The former may include personal endowments, cognitive abilities, career interests, self-efficacy beliefs, career expectations, and career goals. Whereas the latter may include social, cultural, and political influences, for example, environmental supports and barriers. In this section, the participants' career choices are explored within the sociocultural context, specifically, how Chinese and Canadian sociocultural influences shape their career decision-making process.

In examining the relationship between career choice and Chinese sociocultural influences, several interesting themes emerged from the data. To begin, all the participants indicated that their initial career choices were closely related to their previous education and work experience. This may be attributed to the impact of Confucianism. One of Confucius' teachings is that a person learns something in order to apply it to the same field. Therefore, if a person chooses an occupation which has little relevance to the previous education that he or she has acquired, then it will not be regarded as a desirable or successful career regardless of however successful this person may be in that field. In this study, all the participants pointed out that their initial decision-making with regard to their career choices were based entirely on their previous education, training and work experiences.

Another theme that surfaced from the data was that these Chinese educators tended to make realistic and pragmatic choices. In other words, their career decision-making was focused more on job security and a stable income than their aspirations and interests. On the other hand, this may have been, in part, because of the fact that in Chinese culture, failure is always associated with shame and a loss of face. Therefore, a realistic choice means that one can locate a job in a relatively easy fashion and therefore can avoid losing face or having guilty feelings as a result of unemployment. This may also be a result of "fear" that in another country if one does not have a secure job and stable income, the survival of the family may be in jeopardy. Thus, financial rewards and job security are the major concerns when a decision is made about their career choices. As Suling made clear:

> Suling: At that time, because we [my husband and I] were living in quite a shabby situation, we thought any permanent job would do. We did not have any preferences. It doesn't really matter whether it's an elementary, secondary, or post-secondary school teaching job. Anything would do to me. The reason is that neither [of us] had permanent jobs then in Canada, so survival, you know, became the bottom line. I needed to have a job to support my family and me. I had to be realistic. It's very simple.

This clearly shows that Suling was primarily concerned with job security and a steady income in order to support her family. Another participant, Xuewen offered some further insight and clarity by making the following statement:

> Xuewen: Whatever decisions you make, it has to be on a realistic basis. Otherwise, you'll be starving. This means that for us [Chinese], we don't have as many choices as the native-born Canadians. For people with our backgrounds, when you do job hunting here, first of all, you don't look at the area you want the most, you only take a look at those possible areas where you can find a job. Why, because you have to support your family first. That's the basic thing. If you only wish to do something you are interested in, you are getting nowhere. No job there is waiting for you. You'll have trouble, serious trouble.... Well, adult-teaching jobs may be more suitable for me. But for adult teaching jobs, none of them is full-time. All of them are more contract-based and project-based. So I can't afford to do that. I need money, so that's the contradiction.

What intrigues me is that despite her belief that a career choice should be built on a "realistic basis", i. e., stable income and job security, she apparently did not seem to follow her own beliefs. This was indicated in the following comment:

> Xuewen: What I don't like is the fact that you have to demean yourself sometimes when you wish to do something and you know that you can't. When you realize that your choice is not realistic, you have to find something more realistic for you, even though you don't like it. But I'm not that kind of person. If I don't like it, I don't like it.

This comment reveals inner tensions between her aspirations and the harsh reality. While Xuewen realized that she had to be realistic in Canada in order to find a job, she showed unwillingness to compromise her aspirations for jobs which she did not like.

Therefore, she must find an alternative to accomplish her goal and meanwhile meet the practical needs of the family. She suggested a possible solution to this dilemma:

> Xuewen: If I have learned something after graduation, I think I have
> learned that I have to create opportunities for myself. Nobody is
> gonna create opportunities for you except yourself. Of course, if you
> are lucky, you can find education-related jobs. But again, you may
> change your mind later, and you may not be happy with whatever
> you have got. So there are always limits between what you can find
> to do and what you want to do. I think the important step I took in
> the past years is to find a way of creating things for myself, to satisfy
> myself, not necessarily waiting or getting something from somebody
> by luck.... I don't depend on others. I am independent. In China we
> rely on the country, on the government at different levels to provide
> job opportunities for us. So here we have to create opportunities for
> ourselves. This is what I have learned here.

This implies a self-managed entrepreneurial view of career design. For Xuewen, "the limits" were always there if she chose to work for others. Therefore, there was only one solution left: to work for herself.

In direct contrast to the above arguments is another participant's appraisal of the situation. Weihua viewed career choices in a different way. According to him, it would be a sad thing and a waste of talents for both China and Canada if Chinese educators had to focus their career choices on job security and stable income instead of on their aspirations and interests:

> Weihua: To me, it'll be a hard decision to make. Many people have
> changed their mind. They either switch to computer or accounting
> or whatever fields that are more realistic and that can guarantee them
> a secure job and good money. To me, it's a sad thing. Money
> makes people crazy; they can even give up their own interests and
> their own education for many years. They even don't want to keep
> their own dreams any more just because of money and job security.
> It's kind of a sad thing for me. Many people with Ph.D. degrees are
> doing some jobs they are not supposed to do. I think they are
> wasting their education. They are wasting their ability. It's kind of
> sad for both Canada and China.

Weihua lamented what he viewed as a trend of some Chinese educators giving up on their dreams for job security and a stable income. His feelings point to the possibility

that not all Chinese educators are willing to sacrifice their career aspirations or interests just to seek job security and a steady income.

The trend of some Chinese educators giving up on their career aspirations for job security and stable income may have to do with their attitude toward money, which again ties in with the cultural influence. In Chinese culture, people tend to be competitive with each other by comparing themselves with others in areas such as education and career. In many cases, the purpose of this comparison is not to have an objective assessment of one's own education and career in relation to those of others. Instead, the comparison is often aimed at making quick judgements about who is successful or unsuccessful in education or career. Oftentimes, the comparison is based on money and other materialistic things such as housing, automobile, or other possessions. Therefore, it is not surprising that job security and stable income are given so much attention because they are status symbols in Chinese culture and are often associated with the concept of "face". Another reason behind this trend may be connected with that "fear" that in Canada they do not have the social network which they used to have in China. Therefore, without a secure job and stable income, their sense of security may be threatened. This is probably why many of these Chinese educators focus their career on job security and a stable income.

Other themes relating to the participants' perception of Chinese cultural influences on their career development include the emphasis on personal qualifications, role models, peer influences as well as labor market trend. The focus on personal qualifications may have been in part due to Chinese cultural influences. Stevenson's (1992) research indicates that while most North Americans tend to believe in their innate ability, most Chinese people score high in believing in personal effort. With so much focus on personal qualifications, natural endowments and difficulty of tasks may often be disregarded.

In addition, as a group-oriented culture, Chinese culture values conformity and collectivism, individuals are not often encouraged to pursue their own interests and dreams. Therefore, following the general trend is commonplace. Peer influence may be a concrete example of these Chinese educators' tendency to following other people's footsteps instead of making career choices on the basis of their own individual

characteristics. For example, Weihua's career aspiration was to become a university professor in Canada. However, he regarded it as only idealistic rather than realistic. He attributed his dim view of a university career to the lack of role models in the higher education field:

> Weihua: So far I don't think I can achieve this goal. Even if I had a doctoral degree, I wouldn't think there is a chance to get this kind of job because I know there are quite a few people who have doctoral degrees in education, and so far they haven't found any jobs in the university. I know they also want to find positions in universities. So if they can't make it, how can I expect myself to make it? This is only a dream.

The scarcity of role models in higher education made the college or the university seem a very inhospitable place for Weihua. As a result, he had to turn to other places where he could find role models and a support system that would make him feel secure and welcomed. His choice of becoming a public schoolteacher may explain this mentality.

Another participant, Suling cited several sociocultural influences that she considered important in a career decision-making and included labour market demand and existence of role models:

> Suling: To make my final decision, there are several factors I have to consider: first, my own background, my strengths and weaknesses. Second, the demand in the labor market. What is the possible job there for me when I graduate? Another important thing is that you have to refer to other people's successful stories, like what types of jobs are they mostly doing and in what fields? So combine these factors, you make your final decision on a future career. It's not just what you want to do, but what the market wants you to do. This is true even with those Canadians who were born here. When they choose their careers, they have to consider these factors as well. You don't do anything just out of your own interests. You can think of becoming a rocket scientist, or a minister in the government, but do you have the qualifications needed for the job? You have to be realistic. Of course, you always have kind of like a goal, which is not always realistic, otherwise, if you don't have that, your life will become meaningless, you'll have no motivation and you'll lose your momentum. You need a goal as something to keep you going. However, at the same time, you have to be realistic.

From Suling's comment, we can see that she focused more on the fit between her own qualifications and the demand of the labor market than on following her personal dreams. In addition, peer influence and role models played an important part in her decision-making process. Suling's approach of balancing "reality" with ideals shows the tendency of some of these Chinese educators to be practical in making their career choices. That is, the labour market factors play a more important role in their career decision-making than their own aspirations. This may be common to most immigrants. Comparing herself to other Canadians may reflect a low level of career maturity and indecisiveness in career decision-making. It may also reflect some of these Chinese educators' tendency of trying to justify their own decisions. The implications of this finding lie in the fact that for anyone following his or her dreams is important. Although this may not necessarily mean leading to immediate job security or stable income; however, one thing remains certain: that is, by following their dreams, these Chinese educators may find job satisfaction and personal fulfillment. This is important because these may lead to eventual occupational success.

Other interesting themes that surfaced from the interviews included the participants' subsequent discovery of their interests through doing jobs which were not their initial choices. For example, three participants, Ping and Jon started out working in fields which were not quite the same as they had initially planned. However, through doing their respective jobs, they gradually developed an interest in their fields and began treating them as their careers. This finding has especially been true for Jon. He treated his teaching job in an elementary school as merely some kind of work. However, through teaching, he quickly discovered that he really liked the job. He also saw opportunities for further promotion. Therefore, Jon began to see that he could develop a career in that. Another two participants, Suling and Ping, reported the impact of negative job experiences on their career decision-making. For example, after making several futile attempts at job-hunting for ESL-related jobs, Suling decided that the ESL field was an unwelcoming place for her and she finally made a decision to switch to what she considered to be a more practical program for her doctoral studies. In Ping's case, the negative experiences she had working in a restaurant made her aware of the existence of racism and differential opportunity system. She described these negative

experiences as not being treated equally and not appreciated for the work she had done. In addition, she mentioned that she was always treated as a foreigner. Oftentimes, she felt that she was cheated or taken advantage of by the boss and other co-workers. Therefore, she did not really feel happy about the job. In these circumstances, choosing a teaching career might also have been a way of escaping from the structural barriers surrounding her.

In general, the interviewees' career decision-making process appears to be heavily influenced by Chinese culture, specifically Confucianism. Major findings include making career choices on the basis of previous education and experience, believing in personal qualifications and effort, and tending to make "realistic" choices, defined according to availability of stable and secure employment. Other important themes that emerged from the data include the effect of peer influence, role models as well as the labor market demand on career decision-making.

4.2.3 Perceptions of Barriers

In the last section, the impact of Chinese sociocultural influences on the participants' career development was examined. The purpose of this section is to explore the sociopolitical constraints that may impede these Chinese educators' career development in Canada. Specifically, I asked the participants to talk about their perceptions and experiences of barriers in relation to their career experiences. The majority of the participants reported *individual barriers* such as language incompetence, lack of Canadian experience and unfamiliarity with Canadian culture and *structural barriers* such as discrimination, racism and a differential opportunity system. In addition to the individual and structural barriers, these Chinese educators' attitudes toward these barriers and their coping strategies were also explored. Individual barriers and structural barriers are interrelated to each other. In many cases, structural barriers result in individual barriers or make individual barriers more severe.

4.2.3.1 Individual Barriers

In this study, the participants tended to treat individual factors such as inadequate command of English, lacking Canadian job experience, and unfamiliarity

with Canadian culture as major occupational barriers that impeded their career development. Throughout the interviews, the majority of the interviewees described how individual attributes affected their occupational experiences. For example, when responding to the question of what the major barriers were in his career development, Jon replied with the following:

> Jon: I think the major one is the language and also the lack of Canadian experience. If you are trying to find a college or university job, especially in the field of education, you must have some teaching experience in North America. Otherwise, it's very difficult to teach your students. If you don't have any teaching experience in Canada, how can you teach other people, and help them to teach?

Another participant, Suling elaborated on her perceptions of barriers. According to her, two individual attributes account for her occupational disadvantages: the inadequate command of English and lack of knowledge about Canadian culture. She reflected on how the English language barrier affected her job search experiences:

> Suling: I expected some barriers. For example, the most serious one in my job search is that I'm from a non-English speaking country. If I want to work in the ESL field, I need to speak and write English as well as native speakers. But I know you can never reach that level because you were an adult when you started learning English. You may write a little better, but when you speak, there's always an accent. Sometimes there are always delicate things such as how to choose the right word for the right context. In ESL, you are competing with native speakers. So this is the major barrier that's fatal in my case because you are going to teach other people English. When you speak, they can tell the difference.

Suling went on to describe the need to familiarize her with Canadian culture:

> Suling: There may also be some cultural barriers. For example, in China you don't have to look for a job, jobs come to you actually. But in Canada, you have to look for a job. So you have to know how to take care of yourself. You have to engage in the process actively. That's the difference. In order to do that, you have to adjust to Canadian culture. You have to do it in the Canadian way. Otherwise, you'll get lost.

From Suling's comment, I sensed that she was referring to "aggressiveness" and "being more active" in her career search in Canada. She gave me the impression that given time she would adjust quite well culturally. However, according to her, the language barrier seemed insurmountable that she even used the word "fatal" to describe it. Therefore, it was not surprising that she was very likely to choose a career outside the ESL field in order to avoid dealing with the language deficiency she had perceived as a major barrier to her career success. It is interesting to note that Suling seemed to put much emphasis on having to be active in Canada and taking initiative in her career search. While being active and aggressive in the job search is absolutely necessary, it may not be a panacea for all the career-related problems that these Chinese educators face in Canada. In addition, being aggressive may be difficult to do when one is unfamiliar with the subtle cultural norms.

In Weihua's case, his career aspiration was to teach in a Canadian university. However, he regarded it as unrealistic simply because of his perception that he had an inadequate command of English and lack of knowledge about Canada. He made the following comments:

> Weihua: I prefer to be a university professor, but so far it's like a dream. It's almost impossible because one problem is the language. I have no problem communicating with people, but as an instructor, if you want to teach in a university, you have to have a very good command of English. It's not like you can speak or talk. You have to be very familiar with the Canadian culture. You have to understand it well. You have to understand students in class and you have to use English in the way students can accept in Canada. As an educator, if your language is not good and your speaking is not good, how can you teach [other people]? So I think it's a big problem.

Weihua defined these barriers as deficiency in language and cultural competency. In terms of deficiency in Canadian culture, he was referring to lack of knowledge about Canada and those subtle cultural norms in interpersonal relations as well as in other areas such as teaching in a higher education setting. Weihua believed that the university setting would require a higher degree of competency than he felt he had. Another participant, Ping, described individual barriers she had experienced in teaching in a public school:

> Ping: Language is the first barrier. I wasn't very confident because even if I could speak, read and write, but different workplaces have different languages to use. And also when you deal with the students, they have to adjust to your language because they will think that it sounds different from their Canadian teacher. So I learned through all these years. Language is the first [barrier]. Experience is the second or maybe the first still. For example, how would they discipline the kids in school, the routines of the school, teaching styles, teaching methods, teacher-parent conference time, report cards time... You have to know the language of how to put the words down for the report card time for each student. Lots of things to learn.

According to Ping, such subtleties in language and cultural competencies are specific to different work environments. For a schoolteacher, such competencies would be complex, ranging from in the norms of staff relations and school routines, to understanding subtle cues of students' and parents' cultures. All these took time to learn.

In this section, all the participants point to the lack of Canadian experience, unfamiliarity with Canadian culture, and inadequate command of English as individual factors that if combined will hinder their career development in Canada. The following section focuses on the structural barriers existing in the Canadian sociopolitical system, which could impede the career development experiences of Chinese educators.

4.2.3.2 Structural Barriers

There is a fundamental debate on whether individual attributes are mainly responsible for an ethnic minority person's occupational disadvantages, or whether it may be institutionalized barriers such as racism, discrimination, non-recognition of foreign work experience and devaluation of foreign credentials. To determine what barriers account for the occupational disadvantages of the participants, I asked them about what structural barriers they had perceived or experienced in their career search experiences.

To my great surprise, the majority of the participants only briefly mentioned structural barriers throughout the interviews. This was in sharp contrast to their lengthy descriptions of the individual barriers in the previous section. As a matter of fact,

according to my observation, many of the participants seemed to be quite ambivalent and slightly reticent to talk about the structural barriers. For example, among the five participants, only two overtly mentioned non-recognition of previous experiences and credentials as a major barrier in their career search experiences. The rest made only a brief mention of the structural constraints that existed in Canadian society.

The following are the participants' voices with regard to the structural barriers that could impede their career development in Canada. In response to my question of whether she had perceived or experienced any discrimination in her career search, Ping denied it flatly:

> Ping: Not at all, not at all. In schools, there is no such thing as discrimination. They are very sensitive. They don't show it. They treat people really politely and friendly. I think that's part of the reason why I like teaching in schools, not so clearly being discriminated against as I was working in restaurants before.

According to Ping, school was a place where racism and discrimination were not tolerated. I questioned Jon in the same manner. His answer was slightly ambiguous. In his opinion:

> Jon: There may be a lot of people, in their heart; they don't like people of different colors. But they don't act on it. They don't show it. That's probably in a way not really racism. Even among minorities, for example, in my heart I don't like certain kind of person, for example, I don't like people being too fat. But I am not going to tell that person that I don't like him or her. So that means I'm still a good person, is that right?

On the surface, Jon seemed to admit that racism and discrimination did exist; however, according to my observation, this might or might not be true. The ambiguity toward racism may show the tendency of some Chinese educators having internalized racism. This "colour-blindness" may also explain the tendency of why some Chinese educators "buy into" the mainstream stereotypes on ethnic minorities, including but are not limited to Chinese people.

Xuewen was the only participant who admitted overtly that her previous experience had not been properly recognized. However, when it came to the question

of who was to blame for her occupational disadvantages, the answer she gave me was provocative:

> Xuewen: I knew my experience wouldn't be recognized. I knew that. I think people here are realistic, when they see that this guy worked mainly in China and never worked here before, they don't want to train this kind of person. They don't want to invest time and money in a position just to make you familiar with what you should do. That's one of the major barriers. All my experiences before were not recognized. They only want North American experience, but I don't have it. So they'll look for someone else. As an Asian, an ethnic minority person, I feel that they don't like to hire somebody like us mainly because they will feel more comfortable to work with a Caucasian, other than an Asian-looking [person] who doesn't have any experience here before, who is still learning. This is how the system works here. I felt that there was a racist stereotyped attitude but I didn't have any evidence. So I have no comment on that. They wouldn't say that. If they said that, I would look for someone to deal with them.

This reveals that although Xuewen acknowledged the existence of structural barriers, for some reasons she did not want to criticize the institutions that imposed those barriers on her. She implied that if she were sure that she had been discriminated against, then she would take action. Instead, she blamed the lack of Canadian experience and held it responsible for her occupational disadvantages.

"Qualifications don't always count" was what Suling came up with after an unsuccessful job competition with a person whose qualifications she thought were far lower than hers. Suling thought that the other applicant was hired because she is a Caucasian. In spite of this, when I questioned her on whether she felt she was discriminated against, somehow Suling was reluctant at first to put the blame on anyone:

> Suling: People don't tell you you are not interviewed or hired because you are not a Caucasian. I don't know if it's hidden. Maybe, maybe not. But like I said, you are not told so, then how can you appreciate that?

I probed again by asking what she thought the real reasons were. She finally shared the following in an ambiguous way:

> Suling: I don't know. Sometimes you might feel part of the reason
> is because you are not White. In that job competition, the other
> person has different qualifications from mine. But for that particular
> job we were competing, I'm positive that I am more qualified
> because I know the other person well and I know her background.
> Discrimination might be a factor. Otherwise, how do you explain it?
> My name immediately tells I'm Chinese.

This forms somewhat a contradiction to the previous statements made by other participants maintaining that individual attributes should be held responsible for a person's career success or failure. In Suling's case, her qualification was better than that of the other person; however, according to her, qualifications were not the sole criteria when it came to hiring.

In another case involving Weihua's teacher certification application, he reported lengthy procedures and unprofessional attitudes on the part of local education authorities. He stated that he was discriminated against for lacking Canadian credentials. According to him, it took him a year to be finally certified; however, for people with Canadian credentials, it could take as little as two months. Even with his Chinese credentials, Weihua contended that he was overqualified for a public school job. He was glad that he finally obtained his certification but was frustrated with the bureaucracy and dismissiveness he felt he had received during the one-year lengthy waiting period.

In conclusion, it appears that individual, structural or institutionalized barriers do exist in the Canadian society, thus posing a threat to the career development of ethnic minority persons. In this study, structural barriers take the form of occupational discrimination, stereotyping, segregation as well as a differential opportunity system. Occupational discrimination can take the form of lower pay, poorer reviews, or fewer promotions. Occupational segregation and stereotyping contribute to the existence of each other and make each situation worse. A differential opportunity system is built on the practice of encouraging, supporting, or solidifying differential privileges to different groups based on race. For the Chinese educators in this study, the institutional barriers they had experienced include their credentials not being properly recognized and being victimized by a differential opportunity system. However, throughout the interviews,

Chinese educators seemed hesitant to talk about structural barriers. Even among the very few participants who reported that they were victimized by institutionalized barriers, they somehow fell short of expressing any strong sentiments and tended to avoid blaming the institutions.

The following section serves as a continuation of the previous section. It is focused on the attitudes Chinese educators have toward structural barriers and the corresponding coping strategies they adopt in their career search process.

4.2.3.3 Attitudes towards Barriers and Coping Strategies

Throughout the interviews, the participants made a link between personal effort and occupational success. In this sense, it is not surprising that these Chinese educators tend to avoid discussion of the existence of structural barriers. Instead, in most cases, they would attribute their lack of occupational success to personal factors such as lack of Canadian experience, inadequate command of English, and insufficient personal effort. Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the most often cited coping strategies for these Chinese educators was to improve their own qualifications. In other words, they would rather blame their own educational or experiential deficiencies.

The following participants expressed their attitudes towards career-related barriers and corresponding coping strategies. Their comments serve to answer two questions, that is, "who is to blame" and "what to do accordingly." For example, Weihua described the major barriers in his career search experiences and the corresponding coping strategies. According to him, his inadequate command of English and his unfamiliarity with Canadian culture were the major barriers. As to the coping strategies, he stated in the following way:

> Weihua: I think to me the most important step is to improve myself
> and to compete with Canadian people, the English speakers. I
> always push myself instead of complaining about somebody else.

This implies that improving one's qualifications and making more personal effort is more productive than simply making complaints about other people.

I questioned Suling in the same manner but her answer was more direct than Weihua's. In her opinion, the biggest barrier was herself. In order to prove this point,

she referred to other people with similar backgrounds who became successful in their careers.

> Suling: I think the major barrier for me is myself. I have to beat myself because there are successful stories.[34] There are some people who are from the same country, speak the same language, and are educated mostly in the same country with the same educational system and who become successful in this country. I'm talking about Chinese people, or other visible ethnic minorities. They succeed in this society, why not me? So it totally depends on myself. I have to work harder.

Although Suling made no mention of structural barriers in her comment, she did agree that people should fight against any forms of discrimination. She made these remarks when responding to my follow-up question regarding how to cope with career-related barriers:

> Suling: Beat yourself. Improve yourself. That's the only way. At the same time, if you feel that there is any kind of discrimination, you should fight against it. Otherwise, if you just passively accept it, it'll be there forever. That's also written in the Constitution. You should fight for everything, equal opportunity and equal rights, and so on. Also, you need kind of network. Even Canadians need kind of network. Eighty percent of employment is done through internal network, through the referral in North America. So you can see only twenty percent are done through public channel. The best jobs are never publicized.

It is interesting that Suling's coping strategies on fighting against racism and discrimination seemed to be meant only for other people. She maintained that through personal effort and through proper networking, she could achieve her occupational goal.

I then turned the same questions to Jon and Xuewen. Jon's reply was brief, and his advice and attitudes on what the major barriers were and how to overcome them were similar to Weihua's. Jon offered the following perspectives:

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[34] Beat myself: Suling means competing with herself in this context.

> Jon: I think for anyone, no matter you are Canadians, Americans, Chinese, or Japanese, if you have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for the job, and meanwhile there is a vacancy there in the market, if you go and apply, there is always an opportunity there. I think it's very important to prepare yourself for the job, rather than blaming other people. It's no use blaming other people.

This implies that Jon took a self-determined view of his career searching in Canada. This may reveal a neo-liberal view of believing in the ability of oneself as well as the market forces instead of taking into consideration of the structural constraints that impede the career development of any disadvantaged groups, including but are not limited to ethnic minorities.

Despite his unsuccessful career search attempts due to various structural arrangements including the non-recognition of her previous experiences, Xuewen insisted that the reason why her job search was unsuccessful was due to a lack of Canadian experience:

> Xuewen: Sometimes I don't blame them mainly because I know that people here are very practical. If you have never had any experience here, you need to have some. I can't afford to have some experience without being paid. This is a very practical thing. If I work, I need to get some pay. I need to work, and I need to support my family. So if I can get a chance, I think I can do as well as anyone else. But I didn't get an opportunity. So that's the frustrating thing.

She acknowledged that she should have had some volunteer experiences, but insisted that her financial situation did not allow her to do that.

From the above comments, it appears that all the Chinese educators in this study strongly believe in personal effort. This may be a result of traditional Chinese cultural influence as well as these Chinese educators' belief that a person has to be active and self-responsible in determining one's own destiny in Canada. Therefore, most participants believe that their occupational success depend on their own qualifications and individual determination. They seem more likely to blame themselves rather than blame any racist and oppressive structures in society for their occupational disadvantages. In other words, it appears to be their belief that individual attributes such as one's cognitive abilities, experience, command of English, as well as familiarity

with the Canadian culture are major determinants of their occupational success or failure.

4.2.4 Acculturation and Ethnic Identity: Toward a Bicultural Identity

While section two focuses more on traditional Chinese cultural influences, this section emphasizes the role of Canadian culture in shaping the participants' new cultural identity. Specifically, this section deals with the acculturation process and how it helps form the participants' new identity and how it affects their career development experiences in Canada. For the purpose of this study, ethnic identity concerns the issue of which cultural identity, whether it is a Chinese identity, a Canadian identity or a Chinese-Canadian identity, best serves the interests of the participants in terms of their career development. Acculturation pertains to whether high acculturation, medium acculturation or low acculturation best helps Chinese educators' career search experiences in Canada. To avoid confusion, acculturation focuses on the process while ethnic identity (e.g., a bicultural identity) emphasizes the outcomes of this process.

Several common themes are apparent throughout the interviews. Among them are (1) all the Chinese educators in this study appear to recognize the important role ethnic identity and acculturation play in their career development experiences; (2) it is generally acknowledged by most participants that a higher degree of acculturation will help one's career development, whereas a lower degree of acculturation will impede one's career development; and (3) many participants seem to realize that it is impossible to completely conform to Chinese cultural norms in Canada. In addition, considering that racism and discrimination are something that cannot be ignored, a high degree of bicultural competence is therefore preferred. This implies that many of these Chinese educators realized that living in Canada they needed to adjust to Canadian cultural norms. However, they also realized that it was impossible for them to be fully integrated into Canadian society even though they were fully acculturated. Therefore, it seems natural for them to take a balanced approach, i.e., keeping the best part from each culture and becoming a bicultural person. It seems to be one of the few options for them to have dignity and win respect from both Canadians and Chinese without fearing

to be ill-treated by the mainstream because of being too different and to be despised by their fellow Chinese because of behaving like a non-Chinese person.

4.2.4.1 Acculturation and Its Impact on Career Development

Acculturation has been described, and is usually assessed, as a process of giving up an individual's traditional cultural values and behaviours while taking on the values and behaviours of the dominant social group (Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987; cited in Atkinson, Lowe, & Matthews, 1995). In other words, it is a process of a person's interaction with mainstream culture. The Chinese educators in this study recognized the importance of acculturation in shaping their career decision-making and therefore aspired to acculturate into Canadian culture through active participation in the activities which they believed would eventually help their career development in Canada.

To determine the role of acculturation in the participants' career development. I questioned several Chinese educators in this study on how they view acculturation and its impact on their career experiences. Xuewen was emphatic in her response:

> Xuewen: I would say the more you know the mainstream culture here, the more advantages you would have in your career search. That is proved true. You have to learn something from your own experience and my own experience tells me if you want to be involved in the activities of the mainstream society, you have to understand its culture. There is no other choice. If you don't understand that, people will look down upon you. Maybe people will ill-treat you. They will not treat you in a decent manner mainly because you don't understand their culture.

To Xuewen, those who are less acculturated are more likely to be discriminated against by the mainstream in their career search process. I made a follow-up question on how she viewed her own acculturation. She replied in the following way:

> Xuewen: I don't know. I believe I understand most aspects of the mainstream culture, but I still need to improve. I'm still learning. It's not easy to fully understand every aspect of the Canadian culture, especially those subtle things. For me I think it's lifetime learning. I believe the more you know, the more you benefit from it. You always benefit if you are eager to learn, if you are willing to learn.

The above statement reveals that acculturation is a learning process. Certain subtle things such as humour, sarcasm, political or religious beliefs may take longer time to learn. Xuewen appeared to have committed herself to an extended process of adjusting to the mainstream culture.

Another participant, Jon, believed that high acculturation was the best way to help one's career development. According to him:

> Jon: Acculturation is very important. If you know the mainstream culture, then you'll probably know their expectations. I mean you have to know the Canadian culture first, which means that you have to be fully acculturated, and then you have to know the culture of the particular place where you are looking for jobs. Take a very traditional school for example, basically if you want to teach there, you have to know the culture of that school. You have to be very comfortable with the traditional teaching philosophy. If you go there with a very progressive teaching philosophy and trying to teach in this traditional school, even if you are qualified, you have the knowledge, skills, and experience, but your philosophy is different, they probably wouldn't accept you. If they accept you, later on they know that they will have some trouble with you because your philosophy is different. So you have to understand the culture.

I followed up by asking him what his opinion was on low acculturation. He went on to respond in this way:

> Jon: For people with low acculturation, that'll be very hard. Employers feel if they hire you, you'll not be part of the team. When they hire someone, they'll see how this person can fit in the team. They expect someone to come to work with other people. So you can't be too different. If you are so different, it might be hard for you to work with other people, and also it may be very hard for other people to work with you. So the employer will have to think about it.

Jon seemed to allude to Canadian acculturation and specifically work-culture acculturation. For example, in a particular Canadian school culture, a common teaching philosophy may need to be adopted by all the staff including Chinese educators who hold teaching positions in the school. This may be considered as a micro-acculturation.

For Jon, high acculturation seemed to be indispensable to a successful career in Canada while low acculturation is totally undesirable.

It seems that the Chinese educators in this study strongly believed that acculturation played an important role in facilitating their career development in Canada. Part of this notion may be built on the fear that if less acculturated they might be more susceptible to occupational discrimination.

4.2.4.2 Toward a Bicultural Competence

According to Anda (1984), "Minority individuals must learn to function in two environments: their own culture and that of the mainstream society" (p. 101). Studies have shown that a minority individual's understanding and participating in both cultures without sacrificing one for the other is not only possible but also desirable (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Liu, 1998). In this study, the participants acknowledged that a bicultural competence would be conducive to their career development. This notion was based on the need to familiarize them with Canadian culture in order to be accepted by the mainstream and therefore be less susceptible to discrimination against in their career search experiences. It was also partly based on their belief that it was almost impossible for them to achieve full integration to Canadian society no matter how highly acculturated they became. Suling's case proved this point. Therefore, a bicultural identity seemed to be the most realistic choice for them.

For example, although Ping believed that acculturation was important not only in her working environment, but also in her daily life, she rated herself "bicutural" or "medium acculturated". In her words, "Some part I like [the Canadian way]. Some part I like the Chinese way". As Ping put it:

> Ping: Acculturation is *very* important in teaching or in any settings. Teaching is not the only thing you do in life. You socialize with people everyday. That's the major part. So if you don't know the culture, if you don't open up to the people you are working or living with, it'll be a big problem because they won't accept you. The school principal, your boss won't accept you. You will be really distant from the mainstream culture. You'll feel isolated. And I can tell the difference. If you are comfortable with them, they are

comfortable with you. But if you keep yourself far away from them, they think you are not with the group. So you really have to interact with the people around you...I think I'll rate myself medium acculturated. Some part I like the Canadian way. Some part I like the Chinese way. Maybe I belong to that so-called "bicultural" group.

A bicultural identity seems to allow Ping to take what is good from each culture, thus making her balanced in her cultural identity. For example, she learned to be less reserved and formal in her interpersonal relations. This may be a result of Canadian cultural influence. On the other hand, certain Chinese values such as hardworking, respecting seniors and superiors may be retained by her. In the case of Weihua, adjusting to Canadian culture does not mean abandoning his own. A balanced approach, according to him, is an ideal one. He referred to this approach in teaching when asked if he would like to adjust to Canadian ways and make changes on teaching styles. He responded in the following way:

Weihua: Yeah, I would like to do that because I don't think teacher-centered [teaching method] is the best way. Also, I don't think student-centered is the best way either. I think if you can find a balanced way, that's better.

In the case of Suling, although in her opinion it was desirable to be highly acculturated, she expressed her skepticism about the link between high acculturation and a full integration into Canadian society. In addition, it is almost impossible and probably undesirable to totally discard the Chinese cultural values. Therefore, she stated that a bicultural competence was needed:

Suling: I know that everyone wants to be part of the mainstream. It represents power and influence in the society. So everyone wants to be integrated in the mainstream culture as much as possible. However, I noticed that it will be difficult because you can see that even for those second, third generation visible minority immigrants, it is still difficult for them to be fully immersed in the mainstream. Why? Because inside you may think you are a Canadian, and therefore part of the mainstream, but how would the mainstream look at you? Why do you think people call us Chinese Canadians instead of Canadians? So there is a boundary, immediately you are out. What I mean is that I want to be in the mainstream. I want to be in

this most powerful group. However, would the mainstream accept me? So that's why people call the Chinese "bananas", which means inside you are white, but outside you are still yellow. Your appearance is still Chinese. I want to be part of the mainstream. However, I know it's unrealistic, at least now it is. I want to be a Canadian, but I know in many ways it's hard. Also, it's very difficult to be completely like Canadian. In many ways I am still very Chinese. So I think a bicultural identity is the best.

Suling's description is powerful and thought provoking because it represents a person who aspires to be integrated into the Canadian society but somehow realizes that it is not quite realistic or suitable. I sensed her frustration and continued to question her on what type of acculturation would be most beneficial to one's career development. Suling explained:

Suling: I think medium acculturation is the best. I think if people know two cultures, it would help in a way in that they are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of both cultures. That's why people say travel makes a person wise because they see the differences, they know the merits, the advantages of those good things and they try to get rid of those bad things and weaknesses. High acculturation means they throw away totally what they brought with them, totally assimilated, which means, like I said, good things or bad things. When they throw away everything, I don't think it's good. I think in this global age, information era, we need people who not only know their own country, and their own culture. We need people to know the world. People with low acculturation make themselves unavailable to the mainstream. They immediately shut themselves out of the opportunities. They isolate themselves, and they may be hostile to other people.

Suling's description indicates the desirability of becoming a bicultural person. Her perspective seems to be influenced by the desirability of cultural globalization. In this sense, she sees possibilities in offering up both of her cultures as strengths. In this increasingly globalized world, retaining one's own culture is important because anyone who understands more than culture can serve as cultural ambassadors and this makes sense not only in cultural terms, but in educational and economic terms as well.

In summary, all the participants in this study realized the important role acculturation plays in their career development. Therefore, they all made an effort to familiarize themselves with the Canadian culture. While there is only one participant

who regarded assimilation as the best way to help his career search experience in Canada, the rest of the participants seemed to prefer the notion that a bicultural identity was the most conducive to their career development.

4.2.5 Self-Efficacy Beliefs

According to Gloria and Hird (1999), self-efficacy refers to confidence in an individual's ability that he or she can perform specific tasks to achieve particular outcomes. Self-efficacy beliefs play a very important role in shaping one's interests, actions, and performance in relation to career development (Lent et al., 1994). For the purpose of this study, I assumed that the social, cultural, and political contexts in which Chinese educators are situated would influence their beliefs about self-efficacy. Specifically, dimensions such as acculturation, sociocultural influences, sociopolitical constraints, positive and negative career search experiences were regarded as factors which would have an impact on these Chinese educators' self-efficacy beliefs.

Throughout the interviews, the participants described at various lengths how environmental barriers and supports had influenced their self-efficacy beliefs. Specifically, as I have shown in earlier sections, these factors consisted of unfamiliarity with Canadian culture, inadequate command of English, lack of Canadian experience, racism, discrimination, and a differential opportunity system. Furthermore, the unsuccessful career search experiences also have a detrimental impact on these Chinese educators' career self-efficacy beliefs. Of the participants, only one participant argued that cognitive abilities such as knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes were the only factors which influenced his career self-efficacy beliefs. The rest of the participants agreed that their career self-efficacy had been affected by those contextual influences such as the aforementioned individual and structural barriers, negative career search experiences as well as environmental supports such as networking they had received.

The following is a brief description of the participants' accounts with regard to career self-efficacy as well as the contextual influences that affect it. The first participant I approached was Suling. Here is how she responded to my question on whether career-related barriers had a negative impact on her self-efficacy:

Suling: Definitely. Sometimes you wonder "am I really so stupid?" You ask yourself the question "why did other people succeed? I work so hard, why did I fail?" I sometimes even doubt whether I am capable. I think I work hard enough—no weekends, no evenings, no social life, nothing. I work hard, and I always believe I could succeed. However, sometimes when you don't, you start doubting your ability. So it does affect my confidence. Sometimes you lose your confidence in yourself. After a few times of failure, I know what's suitable for me and what's not suitable for me. For example, I don't apply for any ESL related jobs any more after several negative job search experiences in that field because I know I have so many competitors who are native speakers. Also, although many ethnic minorities were born in Canada, you don't see many visible minorities teaching in ESL field. There is competition, and there is discrimination as well.

Although Suling's self-efficacy beliefs were low after several unsuccessful career search attempts in the ESL field, she said she quickly regained her confidence after switching to another program in which she had a tremendous interest. She added:

Suling: Initially I was not confident because I didn't succeed in anything. I applied for two or three jobs, but it's total failure. So this definitely doesn't increase your confidence. Instead, it makes you lose your confidence. But when I switched my area, I think it gradually gave me confidence because I found that I'm useful again. And also people started hiring me for what I have been studying, so this increases my confidence a great deal. So when you succeed, in some cases, it boosts your confidence. But if you always lose, I don't think it'll be helpful for your confidence.

This shows the impact of successful and unsuccessful career search experiences on a person's career self-efficacy beliefs. Ping's story corroborated this finding. In her case, the first two years of teaching in public schools were hard and this had an impact on her self-efficacy. As a result, she had a poor self-concept and low confidence in her ability to communicate with her colleagues well. Fortunately, this did not last too long before she felt comfortable with herself in teaching. Another participant, Weihua, did not elaborate on his self-efficacy beliefs. However, through conversations he appeared to demonstrate strong self-efficacy beliefs in him.

In the case of Xuewen, after she graduated from university, she immediately started her career search. But unfortunately, she explained that most of the places for

which she had applied did not even reply to her applications. As a result, she was left wondering what was going on. She described this experience and how it affected her self-efficacy beliefs:

> Xuewen: As I mentioned, if you got no response from the companies, or government institutions, you didn't know what's wrong with your own experience. If you get feedback from them, even if you didn't get the position, you'll know where you need to improve. So this is why sometimes you lost your confidence, you didn't know where to go. You got nowhere mainly because you didn't know where you need to improve, where your strengths are, you don't know, because the other people didn't recognize them and they even didn't talk about it.

This frustrating experience may have affected Xuewen's self-efficacy beliefs, which may have triggered her idea to start her own business. Xuewen's story may also suggest that her problem lies in the gap between her expectations and what happened, which she interpreted as there being "something wrong" with her experience (as opposed to simply lack of fit).

Jon, on the other hand, believed that self-efficacy arises from cognitive abilities. In his words, knowledge, skills, and attitudes are all the elements for a successful career search. As Jon put it:

> Jon: Once you have the knowledge, skills and attitudes, confidence will obviously be with you. If you don't have these, even if you are confident, you are not going to be hired. Confidence is not important. The most important is the knowledge, skills and attitude. Once you have these, from your conversation, people will say you are qualified to teach. It's not your state of mind; it's your state of your ability that matters. Confidence is not given. Confidence is acquired. Once you have all these three aspects, knowledge, skill and attitude, confidence is automatically with you. What I am saying is that ability is very important. A lot of people are very confident because parents, former teachers probably believe that to make a person confident, then he or she will be able to succeed. But in essence it's not true. Confidence shouldn't be given. Confidence is acquired. Once you acquire it, it's very important.

Jon firmly believed that cognitive factors of career self-efficacy should be held responsible for a person's career search success. He failed to incorporate any external

factors into the equation.

In conclusion, the career self-efficacy beliefs of the Chinese educators I have interviewed appear to have been affected by both internal and external influences. Among these are cognitive abilities, individual and structural barriers as well as negative career search experiences. Of all the five participants, four of them reported negative career search experiences in their perception. Only one participant did not report any negative job search experience. Through the interviews, participants also briefly mentioned the role environmental supports had on their career self-efficacy beliefs. These supports include verbal encouragement, networking as well as organizations offering career-related services. However, they did not elaborate further on this aspect of their career development experiences.

In the following section, I will discuss the major issues that have emerged from the data analysis from my own point of view. This is based on linking the themes of the foregoing discussion of the participants' experiences with themes from the literature review and as well as my own critical reflections.

4.3   Discussion of Significant Findings

The interpretation of findings focuses on five main themes. The first theme is related to the concept of career. Although the participants viewed career as a dynamic concept which was closely linked to their ability to realize their goals in life and to contribute to community development, their concept of career is found to be focused more on the practical needs than on their aspirations and intrinsic interests despite evidence that two participants find meaning and interests later in their respective jobs. This compromise of their career concept is related to the social, cultural and political influences on these Chinese educators' career development. The second theme features Chinese culture in which high expectations, achievements and sacrifices on the part of Chinese educators and their parents are discussed. The third theme pertains to the relationship between individual barriers and structural arrangements that affect Chinese educators' career development. It serves to explore the question, "Who is to blame?" Acculturation and ethnic identity is the fourth theme in this section, which highlights Chinese educators' need for a bicultural competence. The last theme involves self-

efficacy beliefs. It deals with the important role self-efficacy plays in Chinese educators' career decision-making as well as the personal, contextual, and environmental factors which affect the development of self-efficacy beliefs for Chinese educators.

Generally speaking, in this study the participants' career development in Canada comprised both positive and negative experiences. Despite the social, cultural, and political constraints imposed on them, the majority of the participants were able to find decent jobs that were related to education.

4.3.1 The Concept of Career

In this study, the participants' concept of career seemed to be influenced by many factors, which may include traditional Chinese cultural values, internalized beliefs by the participants as well as external impediments imposed by the differential structures in the Canadian sociopolitical system. In addition, the Chinese educators in this study viewed career as a dynamic concept. They attributed this notion to factors such as education, traditional Chinese cultural values, Canadian sociopolitical influences, technology as well as labour market demand.

4.3.1.1 A Dynamic and Ideal Concept

Super (1976) describes career as the multiplicity of roles a person plays and career choice as the implementation of one's self-concept in an occupational role. This definition of career seems to be mirrored by the concept of career that was shared by the Chinese educators in this study. That is, career was not merely a job, or an occupation which is characterized by working and obtaining financial rewards, but rather a manifestation of their intrinsic interests as well as an opportunity to make important decisions in life which are closely related to self, family and community at large. In the case of Xuewen, her definition of career was very different from the conception held by her parents. In her opinion, her parents' definition was more focused on job security and a steady income. In other words, they seldom changed their career concept and they seldom changed their jobs in life. The participants' definition, however, provided for a great deal more flexibility of choice. That is, the concept of career was changing

as life progressed. Intrinsic interest, labour market trend, and technology could all be factors that prompt them to make a career change.

4.3.1.2 Self, Family and Community

Throughout the interviews, all participants demonstrated strong personal career aspirations. These personal career values were family-based and community-based. In their opinion, choices that were made about career paths must not only be good for the self, but positive for family and community as well. Cultural influence might play a role in this regard. Chinese culture emphasizes valuing the collective group rather than the individual. The profound sense of commitment and feelings of indebtedness and responsibility for the family are critical in the career decision-making process. In this study, high parental expectations and feelings of making the parents happy about their career choices were evident. Personal career values were found to be closely tied to a powerful sense of responsibility and allegiance to family and community.

4.3.1.3. Constraints, Reality and Compromise

Within the Canadian sociopolitical context, the participants' personal career values appeared to have been influenced by many internal and external factors. Workplace discrimination based on race and ethnicity continues to affect Chinese educators' career development. The stereotypic views about Chinese Canadians as being strong in sciences and engineering and weak in verbally oriented careers seemed to be internalized by many Chinese educators. They seemed to attribute their occupational disadvantages more to their individual attributes than to the institutional barriers. For example, they mentioned lack of Canadian experience and linguistic difficulties as being responsible for their lack of success in career. This apparent "blame-the-victim" mentality contradicts the differential opportunity structure in Canadian sociopolitical system that denies entry of Chinese Canadians to certain occupations. As a result, the participants' career self-efficacy belief appeared to have been deeply affected.

Many of the participants' comments revealed feelings of being compromised by external factors. The greater sociopolitical structures of which the participants were a

part placed them in the position of having to make career decisions they would not otherwise have made. The need to survive and provide for the family left many Chinese educators with no other choices but realistic choices, that is, a secure job and steady income seemed to take precedence over their career interests. Two participants reported that they later developed an interest in their jobs although they started from a practical basis.

In conclusion, these Chinese educators' concept of career was influenced by social, cultural, and political factors. It was found to be closely connected with self, family, and community and impacted by the differential opportunity structure in the Canadian sociopolitical system. As a result, these Chinese educators' concept of career seemed to be focused more on practical needs such as job security and steady income than on their personal career aspirations and interests.

4.3.2 Sociocultural Impacts on Career Aspirations and Choices

This section deals with the impacts of traditional Chinese cultural influences on the participants' career development in Canada. It focuses on three main themes: high parental and self-expectations, parental and self-sacrifices as well as a focus on high academic and occupational achievements. It is also argued that these achievements came at the expense of certain important skills in life such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

4.3.2.1 High Parental and Self-Expectations

Chinese cultural values are deeply entrenched in family life. As Yu and Yang (cited in Liu, 1998) described, in a group-oriented culture, "external expectations are potent as the family or other in-group sets the standards, evaluates the individual's performance, and determines outcomes" (p. 577). In fact, among many Chinese, the motivation to achieve and to excel has been internalized at a very early age due to the powerful role of culture and parental expectations. This internal drive for success is so strong that in order to succeed and remain competitive people have to work hard, keep learning new things and persevere in their effort. Therefore, in Chinese culture, achievements and prestige are always highly valued and failure is usually linked to

shame and loss of face (Bond, 1986). In order not to lose face and bring shame on the family, many Chinese usually feel that they have no other choices but to achieve success in life.

One of the major findings that surfaced from the interviews and data analysis is that the participants experienced pressure to achieve occupational success because of high internal and external expectations. Sources of external pressure were (a) the parents, although oftentimes their pressure is intangible as in many cases in this study; (b) the Chinese community, where social conversations revolve around education and career achievements. In this study, the majority of the participants reported parental pressure at varying degrees in their career decision-making process. For example, as Weihua explained, "I can definitely feel the pressure...I never told (my parents) I didn't have a full-time job in Canada. If I told them the truth, they would be very upset". This was echoed by Suling who reported that "it'll just be unimaginable" if she could not find a decent job and do well in Canada because it would embarrass her parents, relatives and friends. Ping made a similar comment in relation to parental pressure by recalling that her parents were actually disappointed when she told them about her career choice as an elementary school teacher. In their opinion, it was not a professional career.

4.3.2.2 Parental and Self-Sacrifices

The high internal and external expectations exhibited among these Chinese educators, their parents, and other family or community members may have something to do with Confucian influence. In Confucius' view, learning is the supreme form of human activity. Achieving excellence in learning is the only way that a person can ascend to a high-ranking position. Under this influence, the primary responsibility of the parents is to motivate and supervise the students as well as provide for them in the hope that the children will achieve education and career success and thus bring honour to the family. Many Chinese parents are willing to make sacrifices for the sake of their children because they perceive these sacrifices as a long-term investment in their children's education and career. Therefore, children usually harbour a profound sense of filial piety and a strong feeling of indebtedness to their parents and they tend to make

a commitment to their parents' welfare and happiness, which usually includes providing financial support and caring for their parents in old age. This notion is highly consistent with Leong and Serafica's (1993) recent study on the career development of Asian Americans. According to them:

> Career choice and career development may be seen as means of providing for one's own family, helping one's siblings, and fulfilling one's responsibility to care for parents in their old age than as ways of implementing self attributes such as gregariousness...They [Asian Americans] may value career success and advancement more for the honour bestowed upon the family than as expressions of their individuality (cited in Leong & Chou, 1994, p. 167)

The success attained in career therefore brings honour on the family. This reciprocal obligation between parents and children reveal a powerful role one's parents and family play in his or her career development experiences.

The aspect of parental sacrifice passes from generation to generation and is often transferred to the overseas Chinese who still hold traditional Chinese cultural values. For the participants in this study, several of them were willing to sacrifice their own career aspirations for the sake of their children's future education and career success in Canada. For example, in Weihua's case, although he realized that his previous experiences would not be recognized, somehow for the sake of the family, he was willing to sacrifice his career aspirations by staying in Canada and taking a job which was not what he aspired to do initially. He described the experience as follows:

> Weihua: I thought several times to go back to China to continue my university teaching job, but things are very complicated because my wife is here, my daughter is here. It's hard to make a decision to go back to China. I think not only me; many of my friends are in the same situation. They stay only because it's good for their children's future. I don't think they are really happy. Many of them have changed their minds. They have given up their interests—they went to NAIT to study computer, or accounting, just for money. They don't want to keep their dreams any more. It's kind of sad for me.

Suling, Xuewen and Ping all had the similar experiences. They chose to stay in Canada after graduation in hopes of having a better future for themselves as well as their children. However, because of certain structural constraints they perceived, they felt

they had to compromise their career aspirations and interests. This finding is consistent with Shon and Ja's (1982) study on East Asian families. They point out that East Asian families immigrate to North America for economic security. Therefore, parents usually do whatever they can to provide for the family. Because of the language barriers and workplace discrimination, many of them are trapped in employment with little mobility. However, these sacrifices are tolerated in the hope that their hard work will be rewarded by their children's future success (Shon & Ja, 1982).

Another contributing factor to the high external and internal pressure may have something to do with China's population and the competition it has created. Resources are disproportionate to the number of people who share them, thus making education and career development highly competitive. In order to survive the fierce competition and achieve education and career success, external and internal expectations have to be high so one can remain motivated and stay competitive. In many cases, this means sacrificing many extracurricular activities and opportunities to develop hobbies and other interests.

4.3.2.3 High Achievements and Chinese Education

The high external and internal expectations shown in many Chinese people may help explain why many Chinese students aspire to gain admission to a prestigious university and enter a high status or an honourable profession upon graduation. This notion is consistent with Chinn and Wong's (1992) findings in which they note that the fields of study chosen by Chinese students are "characteristically those with high extrinsic rewards coupled with high prestige, such as medicine, dentistry, natural sciences, engineering, architecture, economics, accounting and computer science" (p.121). These paths differ from the routes taken by academics who are not rewarded well in China financially. Instead, teachers and professors choose their career for intrinsic rewards.

Another interesting finding from data analysis is that despite the high expectations, hard work and achievements among Chinese people, it seems that certain important skills necessary for developing a person's all-round abilities may have been neglected and compromised. For example, the participants articulated throughout the

interviews their perceptions that the Chinese educational system failed to train them with critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. As Suling noted, what have been regarded as good qualities in Chinese culture such as restraint, modesty, and passiveness have become liabilities for her career development in Canada. Ping and Weihua offered their perspectives by arguing that certain aspects of Chinese culture narrows their minds and jeopardizes the development of their critical thinking skills. This was echoed by Xuewen who asserted that modesty is regarded as a virtue in China but in Canada she learned that she had to abandon it and be more aggressive in order to impress the potential employers during the job search process. For Xuewen, "When in Rome, do what the Romans do" is the best policy to adjust to the Canadian way of doing things.

In Chinese society, Confucian influence is strong and ubiquitous. This can be shown in people's attitudes toward occupations. According to Confucius, those who use their brains will rule while those who use their brawn will be ruled. Therefore, throughout Chinese history, people who have performed physical work have always been looked down upon. Parents, in order to have their children stay focused on their schoolwork, seldom asked them to do any manual work. As a result, all students were encouraged to learn is from the textbooks. That is why many people say that Chinese students are found to be strong in theoretical skills but weak in practical. In addition, parental pressure as well as internal expectations makes many students work hard on their schoolwork, which means that students usually spend hours on memorizing textbooks and doing assignments both at home and in school. As a result, the chance to engage in extracurricular activities and develop hobbies and interests are often neglected.

Another Confucian tradition that prevails is modesty and decorum.[35] This has been pointed out by many of the participants in this study. As a matter of fact, most Chinese educators in this study regarded it as an impediment to their successful career search in Canada. According to Leong and Serafica (1993), traditional Chinese culture emphasizes reserve and formality in interpersonal relations, inhibition of strong

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[35] *Confucius*: Confucian philosophies continue to hold a place in Chinese culture. Young and old alike can quote famous Confucian proverbs.

feelings, restraint, and obedience to authority. This may explain why some participants believed that the educational system failed to train people with necessary critical thinking skills. Politically, Chinese leaders may not want people to be critical thinkers out of the consideration that they may challenge their legitimacy and rule. In fact, this may explain why Mao started the Cultural Revolution.[36] For this purpose, educational system can serve as a tool to brainwash people in order for them to obey and follow the rules. This way of thinking contradicts the way that the participants described as the mind-set necessary to succeed in building a career in Canada, that is, a person has to be aggressive to succeed in the labour market.

In short, several themes relating to Chinese cultural influences on the participants' career development emerged from the interviews and data analysis. The first one is that most Chinese educators in this study reported experiencing high parental expectations in their career search process in Canada. In many cases, the pressure seemed to be intangible but potent. Confucian influence and the competition as a result of population explosion are accounted for the powerful parental involvement in their children's education and career development. Many Chinese parents are often willing to sacrifice their own interests for their children's education and career future, and this was evident in the findings of this study. These Chinese educators were apparently willing to sacrifice their own career aspirations for the sake of their children's future

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[36] *The Cultural Revolution*: in full "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" is an upheaval launched by Chinese Communist Party chairman Mao Zedong during his last decade in power (1966-1976) to renew the spirit of the Chinese revolution. Fearing that urban social stratification in a society as traditionally elitist as China could threaten his power, he mobilized the country's urban youths and organized them into groups called the Red Guards in order to provide them with a revolutionary experience and to achieve some specific policy changes so as to make the educational, health care, and cultural systems less elitist. During the Cultural Revolution, China's cities were thrown into turmoil: schools were shut down, Red Guards were encouraged to attack all traditional values (including Confucianism) and "bourgeois" things, many intellectuals were not only verbally attacked but were physically abused. Many died. Key politburo leaders were removed from power. Large armed clashes between factions of Red Guards were occurring throughout urban China. The resulting anarchy, terror, and paralysis completely disrupted urban economy. It ended with Mao's death and the purge of the Gang of Four in the fall of 1976. Its consequences are serious: they include political instability, economic slowdown, bureaucratic timidity, and a whole generation of youths being denied education and productive careers. The fundamental damage to all aspects of the educational system took several decades to repair. Another serious problem is the corruption within the party and government. Many people became disillusioned with the party leadership and turned away from politics altogether. Among the people themselves, there remained bitter factionalism, as those who opposed each other during the Cultural Revolution often shared the same work unit and would do so for their remaining careers.

education and career in Canada. Another finding is that many of the Chinese educators interviewed for this study appeared to regard Chinese culture as something that hindered the development of their all-round abilities such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Political reasons were also explored to account for this aspect of Chinese cultural influence.

Generally speaking, the participants in this study and their career development experiences in Canada have been greatly influenced by certain aspects of Chinese culture. This influence is characterized by high expectations, achievements, and sacrifices on the part of parents, the participants as well as the participants' own children. It is found that Chinese culture is deeply entrenched in family life and also heavily influenced by Confucianism.

4.3.3 Individual Barriers and Structural Barriers: What Prevents Career Success?

As noted earlier in this chapter, all participants in this study identified individual barriers as major factors impeding their career development in Canada. Compared with individual barriers, structural barriers received relatively little attention from the participants. For the purpose of this study, individual barriers are described as participants lacking Canadian experience and linguistic abilities needed for Canadian jobs while structural barriers are depicted as institutions failing to recognize foreign credentials and experience. Other individual and institutionalized barriers comprise individual attributes such as unfamiliarity with Canadian culture and other structural constraints imposed by the Canadian sociopolitical system, including but are not limited to stereotyping, racism, prejudice, discrimination, segregation, as well as differential opportunity system.

4.3.3.1 "Blame-the-Victim" Mentality

One of the most striking findings from the interviews and data analysis is that the majority of the participants tended to believe that it was their fault if they had not obtained a good job in Canada. In other words, they were inclined to accept individual attributes as the major factors which may have hindered their career development. For

example, among all the participants who offered their perspectives on career related barriers, five cited lacking Canadian experience, four quoted inadequate command of English and four mentioned unfamiliarity with Canadian culture as the major barriers that had affected their career development. In direct contrast to these arguments, only three participants briefly touched upon institutionalized barriers. Among them, two talked about institutions failing to recognize their previous education and experience and one alluded to discrimination and the differential opportunity structures in Canadian society.

In spite of the minor complaints about structural barriers, few overtly blamed the institutional injustices, which may include occupational discrimination or differential opportunity structures in hiring and promoting. Throughout the interviews, the participants tended to agree that they had themselves to blame. For example, as Weihua reiterated, "I always push myself instead of complaining about somebody else." Suling expressed her viewpoint by saying, "I think the major barrier is myself. I have to beat myself, improve myself. That's the only way." Xuewen made a similar comment, "Sometimes I don't blame them (the institutions) mainly because people here are practical. If you have never had any experience here, you need to have some." The institutions, then, are not blamed for participants' self-perceived "deficiency".

4.3.3.2 What Is Behind This Mentality?

Several factors may contribute to this mentality. First, these Chinese educators' occupational beliefs seem to tie in with meritocracy and the classic liberal notion of individual responsibility in the free market. In other words, the changing perceptions of public and community good to individualism and individual responsibility seem to take precedence. Therefore, it is not surprising that although several participants asserted that they were entitled to certain jobs in the market on the basis of their qualifications, their rationales for failure to obtain such jobs were centered upon self-blame. In these cases, individual attributes were held accountable for explaining any occupational success or failure while social, cultural and political influences have mostly been disregarded in the process. Ratner (2000) illustrates the neo-liberal notion of individual responsibility in his latest study on agency and culture:

The individualistic notion of agency exempts society from critique because it presumes that each individual is responsible for his own problems. Since each individual can deal with social events any way he wishes, any difficulties he may suffer are due to his style of dealing with events, not to the events themselves. People who suffer under poverty, war, discrimination, and autocratic leadership could disabuse themselves of any problems by simply learning to ignore, circumvent, or negate them. If they don't, it's their fault. There is no need to criticize or alter the social system (p. 424).

These Chinese educators' attitudes toward individual barriers and institutionalized barriers seem to be aligned with this neo-liberal belief in individual responsibility in the free market place[37].

In their recent study on the devaluation of foreign credentials as perceived by visible minority professional immigrants, Basran and Zong (1998) point out that failure to locate individual barriers in the Canadian sociopolitical context and structural arrangements often result in immigrants blaming themselves for not being able to acquire professional jobs in Canada. Therefore, there is a correlation between individual barriers and structural barriers and it is sometimes difficult to separate one from the other, especially for visible minority persons who may perceive racial discrimination. For example, lacking Canadian experience is considered an individual attribute, but it is related to employers refusing to recognize or value foreign experience and to hire visible minority persons in jobs suited to their education and training (Basran and Zong, 1998). Thus, in the case of the Chinese educators in this study, it

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[37] *Neo-liberalism*: According to Martinez & Garcia (1996), neo-liberalism has the following elements:
- The rule of the market—freedom for capital, goods and services, where the market is self-regulating allowing the "trickle down" notion of wealth distribution. It also includes the deunionizing of labour forces and removals of any impediments to capital mobility, such as regulations. The freedom is from the state, or government;
- Reducing public expenditure for social services, such as health and education, by the government;
- Deregulation, to allow market forces to act as self-regulating mechanism;
- Privatization of public enterprise (things from water to the internet);
- Changing perceptions of public and community good to individualism and individual responsibility.

At the international level as well, elements of neo-liberalism include:
- Freedom of trade in goods and services;
- Freer circulation of capital;
- Freer ability to invest.

would not be accurate to consider their occupational disadvantages as resulting from two types of barriers in isolation.

Leong and Chou (1994) offer their perspective of this phenomenon from the standpoint of racial identity and acculturation. In their study, they link racial identity and acculturation to the vocational behaviour of Asian Americans. They propose that Asian Americans who are the least ethnically identified will perceive and experience the least amount of occupational discrimination because they tend to believe that the lack of success of Asians is due to individual lack of ability and not to discrimination. They expressed their concern in this way:

> This belief that lack of success is because of lack of personal effort characterizes someone who is not strongly identified with their ethnic culture and who somewhat "buys into" the majority culture's stereotypic beliefs about minorities, namely that minorities' economic difficulties are due solely to their lack of effort and other internal attributes (p. 166).

This implies that those who are more assimilated to the mainstream Canadian culture are more likely to have this "blame-the-victim" mentality and "buy into" the mainstream stereotypes on minorities and the neo-liberal notion of "let the market rule" and that as long as there is equality of opportunity, minorities are on their own to succeed.

Another factor which may help explain why the Chinese educators interviewed for this study tended to underplay the impact of sociopolitical constraints in Canadian society is that most Chinese people usually score high on believing in personal effort, while Canadian students and their parents tend to believe in innate ability (Stevenson, cited in Chen, 1996, p.2). In this sense, the participants of this study may have believed that they could achieve occupational success through personal effort such as hard work, perseverance, and competitiveness. In addition, according to many participants, peer influence is important in most Chinese people's educational and career socialization. For example, parents often like to compare their children's academic and career success with those of other children. This can put enormous pressure on the children because success means bringing honour on the parents and family while failure means bringing shame and loss of face on the household. Therefore, Chinese students are often

motivated to achieve and to excel as the result of their socialization experiences. In these circumstances, most Chinese people often believe that failure is a result of lack of personal effort. In addition, blaming other people may sound like searching for excuses for one's unsuccessfulness, which in most cases will be regarded as unreasonable and therefore subject to other people's ridicule.

In general, a sense of entitlement to a better job appears to be widely held among the participants in this study. The tendency to blame themselves primarily for the failure to get a better job seems to be strong among Chinese educators. Although several participants point to institutional forces for their occupational disadvantages, they typically see themselves as active agents of many of their own present and future education and job choices in the context of such constraints (Livingstone, 1999). The choice that is most frequently referred to is improving one's own qualifications through education and training.

4.3.4 Identity, Acculturation and Career Development

Ethnic identity and acculturation are closely related to each other. The former is focused on the outcomes, whereas the latter is on the process in which a person's identity is developed. A review of the literature indicates that for Asians, including Chinese Canadians, "their ethnic identity and status in the acculturation process serve as moderators in many areas of their lives, including career development and experiencing of the opportunity structure in the mainstream society" (Leong & Chou, 1994, pp. 163-164). For the purpose of this study, emphasis was given to possible effects of ethnic identity and acculturation on the career behaviour of the Chinese educators in this study.

4.3.4.1 Acculturation as an Escape from Occupational Discrimination

Throughout the interviews, most participants emphasized the important role their ethnic identity and acculturation play in their career development experiences in Canada. This finding is consistent with Leong and Chou's (1994) notion that Asian Americans' ethnic identity and status in the acculturation process serve as moderators in their career development experience. For example, Xuewen maintained that a person has to understand the mainstream culture in order to be involved in the mainstream

activities and she agreed that acculturation is a learning process. Ping offered her insight by stating that acculturation is not only important in her teaching but also makes socialization experience with her colleagues more fulfilling. The reasons they gave me were more or less similar. That is, they stated that higher acculturation made them less susceptible to occupational discrimination. This sentiment is captured by Xuewen's comment:

> Xuewen: There is no other choice. If you don't understand [the mainstream culture], people will look down upon you. Maybe people will ill-treat you. They will not treat you in a decent manner mainly because you don't understand their culture.

Ping expressed her viewpoint by saying, "it'll be a big problem because they [the employers and colleagues] won't accept you". As Jon made clear, "If you are so different, it may be hard for you to work with other people, and it may also be hard for other people to work with you. So the employer will have to think about it". Therefore, from these participants' point of view, acculturation is essential.

These statements point to the fact that ethnic identity and acculturation were important dimensions in some participants' dealings with occupational discrimination. One interpretation of the above finding is that the participants may have perceived that assimilation was the only way to avoid occupational discrimination. In other words, they did not want to be perceived as being too ethnically identified for fear of being viewed as "troublesome" compared to someone who is less Asian or Chinese ethnically identified. This may explain why many participants in this study shared the view that high acculturation was the most desired. It may also explain why these Chinese educators tended to attribute their lack of success to individual lack of ability and not to discrimination. For them, blaming the dominant group for lack of success may contradict their desire to be included in this most powerful group. Therefore, many participants "bought into" the majority culture's stereotypic beliefs about ethnic minorities. That is, they seemed to believe that lack of success in one's career was due solely to his or her lack of personal effort and other internal attributes.

Another finding that was generated from the interviews and data analysis is that in addition to showing desirability for high acculturation, the participants pointed out unanimously that low acculturation would hinder their career development. For example, Jon raised concerns with people who are less acculturated.

> Jon: It'll be very hard [if you are less acculturated]. Employers feel if they hire you, you'll not be part of the team. When they hire someone, they'll see if the person can fit in the team. They expect someone to come to work with other people. So you can't be too different.

Suling offered her perception of the problem by stating that "people with low acculturation make themselves unavailable to the mainstream. They immediately shut themselves out of the opportunities. They isolate themselves, and they may be hostile to other people [in the mainstream society]".

The above comments made by several participants are congruent with Leong and Chou's (1994) research findings on the role of ethnic identity and acculturation in the vocational behaviour of Asian Americans. In their study, they propose that Asians who are less acculturated are more susceptible to occupational segregation and may believe occupational stereotyping to be more valid. They attribute this phenomenon to the traditional Asian cultural background which emphasizes reserve, restraint, and formality, attributes which are more suitable for work in fields that do not stress aggressive or confrontational behaviour, thus contributing to segregation in the workplace. Other factors may include their difficulties with the English language or understanding the mainstream norms of social interaction, thereby resulting in segregation into fields which require less mastery of the English language and less social interaction.

In terms of occupational choice and interest, according to Leong and Chou (1994), less acculturated Asian Americans may regard careers more as a means to an end (e.g., financial security). Moreover, they may exhibit less self-efficacy in career choice, interest, or expectations because of the strong family influence. As a result, they may be more likely to find themselves trapped in jobs with less occupational prestige, leading to less job satisfaction and little mobility.

4.3.4.2 Fostering A Bicultural Flexibility

Despite evidence that many participants showed a preference for high acculturation, several of them raised their concerns about its limitations. In addition, they expressed doubts about whether the mainstream would accept them even if they made an effort to acculturate. They also realized that Chinese culture has certain strengths to draw on. Therefore, in their opinion, a bicultural competence was perhaps the most feasible and desirable for both their personal and career development in Canada. This sentiment was captured by Suling's following comment:

> Suling: I think medium acculturation is the best. If people understand two cultures, that's really cool because they get the best things from both of them. You don't want to throw away whatever you have in your culture in order to become assimilated into the Canadian culture. In this global age, we need people who not only know their own country and their own culture. We need people to know the world.

Weihua and Ping both expressed their viewpoint by stressing that there was no such thing as one culture being better or more superior than the other. For them, every culture had its merits. The best policy was to take what was good from each culture in order to make them stronger.

For Suling, it was the other side of the story. Although she expressed desirability for high acculturation, she was skeptical on whether this would stop the mainstream from discriminating against them.

> Suling: Inside you may think you are a Canadian, and therefore part of the mainstream. But how would the mainstream look at you?...Would the mainstream accept me?...Your appearance is still Chinese. I want to be part of the mainstream. However, I know it's unrealistic, at least now it is. I want to be a Canadian, but I know in many ways it's hard.

One interpretation of this comment is that although Suling aspired to be fully integrated to the Canadian mainstream society, she realized that racism and discrimination would still be there. She felt she still wouldn't be fully accepted by the mainstream society. In these circumstances, a bicultural identity seems to be both natural and necessary.

LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton (1993) present a bicultural competence model which posits that a minority person's understanding and participating in both cultures without sacrificing one for the other is not only possible but also desirable. They argue that maintaining effective relationships with both cultures can facilitate bicultural competence and subsequent emotional well-being. In this sense, minority individuals must learn to function in two environments: their own culture and that of the mainstream society (de Anda, 1984).

In this study, some participants demonstrated "medium acculturation" by referring to a bicultural identity or a Chinese-Canadian identity. As Ping explained, "Some part I like the Canadian way. Some part I like the Chinese way". Suling remarked that "medium acculturation is the best". Supporting the bicultural competence literature, the findings of this study suggest that some participants were progressing toward a high degree of bicultural competence as manifested by their descriptions and experiences. According to Maceri (1999), bicultural individuals possess flexibility about learning that reaches out to other domains. He states that bilingual individuals' brains are characterized by what researchers call a "plasticity" of the brain, making it easier to pick up new things. Because they understand that there is more than one way to say the same thing, bicultural individuals know that there is also more than one way to acquire a new skill or solve a problem. This flexibility about learning is vital for business and industry in an ever-changing technological world where employees are constantly asked to acquire new skills.

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that the Chinese educators interviewed for this study recognized the importance of ethnic identity and acculturation in their career development experiences in Canada. Their desirability to be highly acculturated showed a tendency to avoid workplace discrimination. This may contribute to the notion that these Chinese educators tended to blame themselves for their lack of success in career. All participants in this study agreed that low acculturated persons were more susceptible to occupational stereotyping, segregation, and discrimination. In addition, they tended to exhibit less self-efficacy and less job satisfaction in jobs with less prestige with limited mobility. Throughout the interviews, some participants seemed to realize that a bicultural identity or Chinese-Canadian

identity was probably the most realistic and desirable identity. This was based on a notion that high acculturation or assimilation had its limitations; Chinese culture had its certain strengths, and a sense that workplace discrimination would not disappear. Therefore, a bicultural competence was desired by some of the participants.

4.3.5 The Role of Career Self-Efficacy Beliefs

For the purpose of this study, Lent, Brown and Hackett's (1994) social cognitive career theory is utilized to explore the factors that are essential to Chinese educators' career development. Anchored in Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, Lent et al.'s theoretical model emphasizes the predictive role of self-efficacy in career development (Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). It posits that career behaviour is mutually influenced by self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals (Lent et al., 1999). According to Bandura (cited in Gloria & Hird, 1999), "self-efficacy beliefs, or an individual's beliefs that he or she can perform specific behaviours to achieve particular performance outcomes, are the most central mechanisms of personal agency" (pp. 157-158).

Lent et al.'s (1994) model asserts that self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations are the key elements in shaping career interests, actions, and performance. According to this model, a person chooses a certain occupation because he or she feels confident in that area; this confidence then leads the individual to be interested in that area. Interests then lead to career-related actions and performance. Thus, it is important to learn about self-efficacy because people's perceptions regarding their ability to perform an activity will influence their interest in that activity. Interest, in turn, affects actions and performance related to the activity.

According to Lent et al. (1994), in addition to the cognitive factors of career self-efficacy, other personal and contextual factors, such as race/ethnicity, acculturation, support system, role models or peer influences, labour market trends, and past learning experiences are all major sources of career-related self-efficacy beliefs. Although not regarded as sources of self-efficacy, environmental supports and barriers do affect career-related beliefs and actions as coping with such commonly occurring

environmental hurdles as racism and differential opportunity structure can arouse anxiety, which in turn influences one's self-efficacy (Hackett and Byars, 1996).

In this study, according to most participants' descriptions of their experiences, their career self-efficacy beliefs may have been influenced by several factors which include the following: (1) traditional Chinese culture; (2) acculturation; (3) role model and peer influence; (4) support system such as networking within the Chinese community; (5) labour market; (6) past learning experiences such as successful or unsuccessful job experiences; and (7) individual/institutional barriers. To substantiate the above statement, many participants shared their opinions on the factors that influence their career self-efficacy. For example, Jon was the only participant who held that cognitive ability and labour market shortage were the sole factors that influence one's career self-efficacy. The rest listed Chinese culture, acculturation, individual and/or institutional barriers, positive and/or negative previous job experiences, lack of role models, peer influences, and labour market need as major factors that influence their career self-efficacy.

Throughout the interviews, most participants reported high parental expectations in their career decision-making process. Because respect of parents is a strong trait in Chinese culture, the wishes of the parents may be a strong factor. This may also explain Leong's (1991) finding that East Asians demonstrate higher levels of dependent decision-making styles as well as lower levels of career maturity and vocational identity than White North Americans. Therefore, parental and family involvement in career planning may affect these Chinese educators' self-efficacy in career decision-making. Moreover, traditional Chinese culture values qualities such as hard work, perseverance, and competitiveness, all of which are elements necessary for Chinese educators' education and career success. However, other attributes such as reserve, formality, inhibition of feelings, conformity, and nonaggressiveness in interpersonal relationships may serve as impediments in Chinese educators' career development in the Canadian cultural context. This conflict between Chinese culture and Canadian culture may also affect Chinese educators' self-efficacy beliefs in their career development.

In terms of the effect of acculturation on self-efficacy, many participants in this study indicated that more acculturation means more adaptation to the mainstream

culture and therefore less discrimination from the dominant group. They also pointed out that those who are less acculturated might be susceptible to stereotyping and discrimination. This finding is congruent with Leong and Chou's (1994) notion that Asian Americans who are less acculturated may exhibit less self-efficacy in career choice, interest, or expectation. Gloria and Hird (1999) argue that "by adopting a higher other-group orientation (e.g., bicultural flexibility and understanding) racial/ethnic minorities may be more efficacious in the world of work, without necessarily abandoning their own cultural values" (p. 169). Again, this is substantiated by the participants in this study who regard bicultural identity as desirable because they would see both the strength and weakness of each culture and therefore be able to make a more realistic career choice.

During the interviews, four participants identified lack of role models, peer influences, and labour market need as factors influencing their career development. For example, all of the participants expressed a desire to work in post-secondary institutions. However, due to lack of role models and other reasons, none of them ended up working in higher education fields. Of the two participants who were working in public schools, according to their descriptions, their career choices were in a way influenced by peers who had already been in the field. Another participant who expressed interest in pursuing a public school teaching job might also be encouraged by the successful experiences of his peers. Of course, labour market need was also a factor for their consideration. In Xuewen and Suling's cases, market forces might be the major determinants for their respective career choices, namely, a private business and a future career in technology field.

According to Lent et al. (1999), "the most robust source of self-efficacy beliefs is personal mastery experience; successful performance enhances self-efficacy which, in turn, raises the probability of future effective performance; failure experiences tend to diminish self-efficacy" (p. 299). This is corroborated by three participants' shared experiences. For example, after Suling's negative experiences with her job searching in ESL field, she decided never to look for jobs in that field again because her confidence was shattered. In the case of Xuewen, many unsuccessful job search attempts made her

realize that she had to create opportunities for herself. Therefore, she started her own business instead of waiting for the job to come. She described her experiences:

> Xuewen: I tried different things, tried different areas, not just educational administrator positions, but also some other positions which I believe I could use my own expertise to work for those kind of companies, but I wasn't successful. This is why I lost my confidence. Maybe this is why I didn't want to try more. Maybe this is why I learned that I got to create a chance for myself instead of waiting there.

This comment corroborates Lent et al.'s (1994) notion that past learning experience is the primary source of career self-efficacy.

As for the support system, in addition to utilizing government employment centers and seeking help from career counselors, the majority of the participants in this study alluded to the role of friends and networking in their career search. Jon's description was typical:

> Jon: It was friends and network that really helped me. I just stayed in my home and people phoned me. I had several important friends and that helped a lot.

Three other participants offered similar perspectives. For them, friends and network were instrumental in their career search experiences in Canada.

The interpretation of this finding is that in Chinese culture, career development mostly depends on *Guanxi* or relationship. Therefore, in Chinese society, it is not about what you know, it is about whom you know. Most job search is done through friends' referrals. This network may include one's parents, other family members, relatives, friends, colleagues, teachers, students, or any other possible connections. In China, in some cases, this may involve bribery or a return of the favor on the part of the job seeker. For the Chinese educators interviewed in this study, this *Guanxi* or networking still works well in the Chinese community in Canada. Although they did not mention the bribery aspect of *Guanxi*, I assume that it is not an aspect of the *Guanxi* in Canada. Therefore, most participants in this study referred to *Guanxi* in the sense of "networking" as a major factor which had helped them in their career search.

Finally, according to the majority of participants, individual and structural barriers affected their career self-efficacy beliefs. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, most of the participants attributed their lack of success in career to individual barriers. In other words, they tended to blame themselves for their occupational disadvantages. The most cited individual barriers include difficulties with the English language or understanding the mainstream norms of social interaction as well as lack of Canadian experience. For the purpose of this study, I focus my discussion on English language proficiency, as it was the most cited individual barrier in the interviews. An analysis of this barrier may shed some light on the interrelationship among cultural, social and political factors that affect Chinese educators' career development and how it relates to their self-efficacy beliefs.

English language proficiency may be regarded as a personal problem or a "cultural" pattern. In this study, most participants perceived it as the most important individual barrier that hinders their career choice, especially in the higher education arena where strong verbal communication skills are usually required. Its negative effect on self-efficacy is self-evident: if the participants are not confident about their English language competency, they are not likely to pursue careers in any fields that require strong verbal communication skills. In other words, they will be intimidated by those careers in which they have to interact with people on a daily basis in a language in which they do not have complete confidence.

These difficulties with language are often mentioned in the literature regarding students of Chinese ancestry. As Pang (1990) notes, "They not only feel the inability to do well but reveal a fear of writing and speaking" (p. 58). Beynon and Toohey (1995) compare the perceptions of teaching careers between Canadian university students of Chinese and Punjabi-Sikh ancestry and they discover that only Canadian students of Chinese ancestry regard difficulties with English as responsible for their decision not to pursue teaching careers and they also see the problem as persistent. As Beynon and Toohey (1995) note, "...difficulties were experienced by those who emigrated in their teenage years, but also by several who were born in Canada" (p. 454). In fact, in my socialization with Chinese students on the campus, one of the things I often hear is about their poor English proficiency. It seems that Chinese students are never happy

with their English language skills. In this study, four participants majored in English in their undergraduate study and they all taught English at universities and colleges in China for several years before coming to Canada. In addition, they had many years of English medium education in Canadian universities doing their master's or doctoral degrees. Therefore, it is hard to believe that they still consider themselves incompetent in the English language.

It is important to remember that career decisions have not only to do with differential socialization, talents or interests, but also with opportunities and institutional arrangements (Beynon and Toohey, 1995). According to Basran and Zong (1998), "Failure to locate individual barriers in social conditions and structural arrangements tends to blame immigrant professionals themselves for failing to acquire professional jobs in Canada" (*p. 9*). In this sense, what most participants identified as linguistic barriers might encompass what they also perceived as social barriers. That is, the structural arrangements that make it difficult for them to enter certain professions. This suggests that "what appear to be personal and individual inadequacies may be constructed impediments to the participation of individuals from particular groups in particular jobs" (Beynon & Toohey, 1995, p. 454). This notion is supported by Li (1988) who identifies relative absence of Canadians of Chinese ancestry in jobs requiring social interaction as a strategy for avoiding disadvantageous competition.

Traditional Chinese culture holds modesty in high regard. That is why Chinese people seldom speak highly of themselves. Overstatement is regarded as an act of bragging or showing off. In this sense, the notion of having difficulties with the English language may be simply a culturally appropriate thing to mention. However, it may also have been internalized by many participants because they internalized the mainstream stereotyping that people of Chinese ancestry are not strong in verbally oriented careers. Whatever accounts for the persistence of problems, one thing is certain. That is, social, cultural and political factors can interact with one another and jointly affected the participants' career-related beliefs and actions.

In conclusion, this section adopts the theoretical approach of Lent et al.'s (1994) social cognitive career model, but utilizes the personal, contextual, and environmental factors for self-efficacy based on the characteristics of Chinese educators. Specifically,

traditional Chinese culture, acculturation, availability of role model and peer influence, support system (e.g., networking within the Chinese community), labour market need, past learning experiences (e.g., successful or unsuccessful job experiences) as well as individual/institutional barriers are included to account for the influences on self-efficacy. Because this section focuses on the predictive role of self-efficacy beliefs on the career development of the participants, other dimensions of Lent et.al.'s (1994) model, such as outcome expectations, goals and action/performance are not touched upon in this section. In order to determine the factors that affect these Chinese educators' self-efficacy beliefs, one of the individual barriers cited most often by the participants, i.e., English language incompetence, is targeted specifically to explain how cultural, social, and political factors work together to affect their career self-efficacy beliefs.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

Using a qualitative research design with in-depth interviewing as the major tool for data collection, this study investigated Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada. Five participants shared their feelings and stories relevant to their career search experiences in Canada. I recorded stories that were crisscrossed with success and struggle, joy and pain, hope and despair. As the participants shared their experiences, the complex and multidimensional perspectives of their career development began to emerge. The analysis of the data led me to numerous findings that were subsequently organized into the following five major issue areas: 1) the conceptualization of career; 2) sociocultural influences; 3) sociopolitical impediments; 4) identity and acculturation; and 5) self-efficacy beliefs. These are summarized in this chapter. Then I outline the major implications of these findings for policymakers, educators, practitioners, community leaders, parents as well as the Chinese educators who participated in this study. Finally, some recommendations for future research are presented.

5.2   Overview of the Study

In this study, Chinese educators' career development experiences were examined within Chinese and Canadian social, cultural and political contexts. The investigation serves to address one primary question, "What are the factors affecting Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada?" To achieve this goal, several secondary questions were also addressed in this study:

1. How do Chinese educators conceptualize career?

2. What sociocultural factors do Chinese educators believe affect their career aspirations and choices?

3. What barriers do Chinese educators perceive and experience in their career search in Canada?

4. How do Chinese educators' beliefs about self and ethnic identity influence their career development?

5. How do Chinese educators' beliefs about career influence their career development?

It is my hope that this study may contribute to the scant body of literature on Chinese educators' career development. By investigating this group's unique career experiences in Canada, I hoped to shed some light on what social, cultural, and political forces could potentially enhance or impede Chinese educators' career development. In so doing, my objective was to find out what could be done to help their successful integration into Canadian society through career development. In addition, by exploring their career experiences, I hoped to raise their awareness of potential sociopolitical structures that may create unequal employment opportunities and relations between different racial and ethnic groups. The ultimate goal is to help Chinese educators achieve their occupational success. This study may also generate new knowledge and further research about the career development of Chinese Canadians, especially Chinese educators.

5.3 Summary of Key Findings

The following is a brief summary of the key findings of the study. The findings were organized according to the five categories used to group the research questions, i.e., the conceptualization of career, Chinese culture and its influence on career behaviour, perception of barriers and its impact, the role of racial identity and acculturation, and the importance of self-efficacy beliefs in career development.

In summarizing the findings, I asked myself questions such as, Is this a noteworthy result? Is it consistent with the results of previous research? Is there an existing theory that can explain the result? Are there alternative explanations of the result? Does the result merit further investigation to clarify it? The purpose of posing these questions was to provide other researchers an opportunity to better understand the experiences of the participants.

5.3.1 The Concept of Career

The participants' concept of career was found to be closely associated with their prior learning experiences. This could be interpreted as a result of strong Confucian influence in Chinese culture. Furthermore, the participants' concept of career reveals that their desire to contribute to the community and society at large was often consumed by the practical needs of supporting themselves as well as their immediate and extended families. Although they articulated that career should be related to their intrinsic interests, in reality, interests seem to be not necessarily related to their career choices. One interpretation of this finding is that in Chinese culture people tend to pursue occupations that are financially secure and rewarding and that are practical or more marketable. Moreover, they tend to pursue careers that can bring them high status and prestige. This ties in with issues of honour and social esteem as well as with obligations of taking care of one's parents and other family members, all of which are typical Chinese values. Another factor may be the sociopolitical constraints that discouraged many participants from pursuing their career interests in Canada. The participants may perceive that ability, hard work, and perseverance are not enough to bring about career success. Therefore, they may end up pursuing careers where they can see the successful experiences of their older counterparts or peers and they may regard them as their role models.

Another finding is that participants tended to regard their careers as not static, but instead changing. This could be the result of social, cultural and political influences as well as the labour market demand and technological advances. In this study, the participants often acknowledged that their careers were compromised due to social, cultural and political influences.

In summary, the above results support research findings that East Asians' career development tends to be embedded in a network of family obligations and expectations (Pope et al., 1998; Chan, 1992; Leong & Chou, 1994; Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). Likewise, research that suggests Asians may not choose occupations in which they have interest (Leong & Chou, 1994) seems to be validated by this study. Congruent with the literature was the participants' notion that their career aspirations and interests had been compromised due to external factors (Hernandez & Morales, 1999).

5.3.2 Chinese Cultural Influence on Career Behaviour

In this study, it was found that Chinese culture continued to exert its influence on the participants' career development in Canada. Specifically, the influence lies in three areas, i. e., parental role, overemphasis on success, and impediments inherent in heavily Confucian-influenced traditional Chinese culture. In terms of parental role, the majority of the participants reported strong parental pressure in their career decision-making despite the fact that they did not live with their parents in Canada. In addition, due to the collectivistic nature of Chinese culture, the participants seemed to choose a career that could satisfy their own interests, meet the practical need of supporting the family, and meet the acceptable standards expected by their parents.

Chinese culture emphasizes achievement and excellence. In many cases, the motivation to achieve and excel has been internalized by many Chinese people, including Chinese educators. While most participants in this study agreed that high internal and external expectations could motivate them in their career search, therefore possibly contributing to their achievement of success, they also reported that overemphasis on success could put them under great stress due to pressure and inability to meet the expectations.

According to most participants, certain attributes inherent in traditional Chinese culture might hinder the development of their all-round abilities such as critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities. In addition, many argued that qualities that Chinese culture values such as reserve, formality, modesty, restraint, and non-aggressiveness in interpersonal relationships might contradict the Canadian cultural values, which would possibly be disadvantageous to their career development in Canada.

Meriting discussion are several issues emerging from the findings. Some findings are consistent, whereas others are inconsistent with existing research. First of all, consistent with the literature was the participants' report that parental expectations, the practical needs to support the family as well as their intrinsic interests were all considerations when making a career decision (Leong & Chou, 1994; Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999; Liu, 1998; Beynon & Toohey, 1995). Research that suggests Asian Americans exhibit higher levels of dependent decision-making styles and lower

levels of career maturity than Caucasians (Leong, 1991) also finds support in this study. The Chinese tendency to overemphasize success and its possible psychological impact on the participants corroborates findings that Chinese students lack self-confidence due to pressure and inability to meet expectations (CCNC, 1995). Similarly, reports that certain aspects of traditional Chinese culture could cause impediments to the development of the participants' all-round abilities are congruent with the extant research (Leong & Chou, 1994). These findings are further corroborated by the following remarks made by John Cheng at a panel presentation during the National Forum on education hosted by Chinese Canadian National Council:

> We often lament about the inequity of senior positions allocated for ethnic minorities in corporations or government agencies. However, there might be lessons we could learn and pass onto our second generation so that they can benefit and succeed. In this competitive society, it is not just academic excellence that employees are gauging when hiring or promoting. There are other factors and qualities that they usually consider and they are often overlooked by immigrant parents such as leadership skills, personal skills, communication skills, working habits, righteousness, attitudes, manners, integrity, trustworthiness, honesty, punctuality, mutual respect, openness, self-motivation, etc. Immigrant families have to be aware of these issues in order to enrich and enhance the opportunity of successful future for their children (CCNC, 1995).

This self-examination of Chinese culture reveals that certain important attributes necessary for the career success of the participants may be missing from traditional Chinese culture, all of which warrant attention in order for the participants to achieve occupational success in Canada.

However, the reported expectations and career choices made by some participants contradict Liu's (1998) findings that a positive relationship exists between high expectations and high achievements. This could be attributed to the fact that all participants are first-generation immigrants. Therefore, because of lack of experience, English proficiency, and knowledge about the social norms in interpersonal relations in Canada, they were more likely to be subject to the sociopolitical barriers. This merits further investigation to determine whether length of stay in Canada has to do with the achievement of occupational success. As I suggest in the upcoming recommendations,

This could be explored through a comparative study between first-generation immigrants and second-generation immigrants.

5.3.3 Perceptions of Barriers and Their Impacts

The majority of the participants in this study perceived individual attributes such as lack of Canadian experience, English proficiency, and knowledge about Canadian social norms in interpersonal relations as major barriers that could impede their career development. Although a few of them recognized institutional barriers such as their previous experiences and qualifications not being properly recognized, they almost unanimously pointed to individual barriers as the major impediments in their career development. In other words, most would sooner blame themselves for lack of occupational success than blame the institutions for imposing restraints on their career development. One interpretation of this finding is that in Chinese culture people usually attribute academic and occupational success to personal effort rather than to ability of the individual and other external factors (Schneider & Lee, 1990). Another possible interpretation is that the participants seemed to "buy into" the neo-liberal notion of individual responsibility and free market mechanism, which is supported by the mainstream stereotypic views about minorities, i. e., minorities' economic problems are caused by lack of effort and other internal attributes (Leong & Chou, 1994). What caused the participants to embrace the neo-liberal values and accept the mainstream stereotypes is not the focus of this study. But it might have something to do with the socioeconomic changes in China for the past twenty-two years. The post-Maoist era has seen China's young people quickly losing spiritual adherence. According to Terrill (1991), this may be caused by widespread corruption among government officials, the devaluation of education as well as the national obsession with moneymaking. This may help explain why people attribute their career and economic success to individual effort. This may have a huge impact on the participants as they may blame themselves for all their misfortunes and therefore resulting in having low self-confidence. It may also serve to deny them from having any affirmative action rights as they may "buy into" the mainstream misconception of Chinese as "model minorities."

This finding is noteworthy because it concerns what factors can be attributed to Chinese educators' occupational advantages or disadvantages. The notion that the participants attributed their career disadvantages mainly to individual attributes corroborates existing literature on East Asians' educational and career achievements (Schneider & Lee, 1990; Stevenson & Lee, 1990) and is also consistent with research with regard to neo-liberal thinking and its influence on people's perceptions of their educational and career success (Livingstone, 1999; Ratner, 2000). Reported attitudes toward barriers seem to support Leong and Chou's (1994) proposition that East Asians who are more assimilated are likely to perceive and experience the least amount of institutional barriers as they tend to believe that their lack of success is due to individual lack of ability and not to discrimination. This may merit further investigation, as this study does not focus primarily on acculturation. Moreover, as there are so many parameters to determine one's acculturation level and this study relies only on the subjective description and appraisal of the participants' experiences, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods may be more appropriate to determine a person's acculturation level in a more accurate manner.

5.3.4 The Role of Racial Identity and Acculturation

The findings of this study show that the participants had a tendency to regard high acculturation as desirable and low acculturation as undesirable. This tendency is closely linked to the fear of racism and discrimination. That is, the participants believed that by being highly acculturated they might be less likely to experience discrimination and any unequal treatment in their career development. Conversely, they may be subject to more racism and discrimination if they think they are less acculturated. However, many participants also showed a preference for a bicultural identity. This notion is built on the belief that assimilation has its limitations and that racism and discrimination will prevent them from achieving full acculturation into the mainstream society.

In general, the findings support the literature that acculturation has a positive impact on Asian Americans' career self-efficacy beliefs, interest, and career choice (Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). In addition, it provided empirical evidence for Leong

and Chou's (1994) proposition that acculturation is a moderator for Asian Americans' career development. Research that suggests a minority person's understanding and participating in both cultures without sacrificing one for the other is not only possible, but also desirable (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993) also finds support in this study. However, there is a need for further studies to investigate the relationship between higher acculturation and the experience of occupational discrimination in minorities' career development in Canada.

5.3.5 The Importance of Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Career Development

According to most participants' descriptions of their experiences, their career self-efficacy beliefs have been influenced by social, cultural and political factors. Specifically, the influences they described include parental expectations, peer pressure, existence of role models, market demand, acculturation, environmental supports and barriers, as well as past job search experiences. In terms of parental expectations, many participants reported lack of confidence due to high pressure from their parents and sometimes inability to meet those expectations as a result of internal and external constraints. As to peer pressure, many participants mentioned that in Chinese culture people are taught to be competitive, therefore comparing themselves with their peers is commonplace. In many cases, their peers' occupational success can bring them pressure, as they always want to be equally successful or even more successful than their peers are. Therefore, failure to do so may be a big blow to their self-confidence. Likewise, the existence of role models and the market demand may also affect their career self-efficacy, as they may perceive potential opportunities (or lack of potential opportunities) in certain fields.

Acculturation was found to have a huge impact on most participants' self-efficacy beliefs, interests, and career choice. The majority of the participants indicated that high acculturation meant more adaptation to the mainstream culture, thereby possibly reducing their chances of experiencing discrimination. Conversely, many pointed out that low acculturation often meant more susceptibility to stereotyping and discrimination, therefore creating more barriers for their career development, which in turn will affect their self-efficacy, interests and career choice. A bicultural identity was

regarded by many participants as desirable because they would see both the strength and weakness of each culture and therefore be able to make a more realistic career choice. In addition, they referred to racism and discrimination as major factors preventing them from being fully acculturated or integrated into mainstream Canadian society.

As for past job search experiences, a positive relationship was identified between successful experiences and strong career self-efficacy beliefs. In addition, many participants reported that environmental supports and barriers also had an impact on their self-efficacy. In terms of supports, they specifically mentioned the role networking played in their career search experiences. As for barriers, the majority of them focused on lack of English proficiency as the major impediment that affects their self-efficacy beliefs. An interpretation of this finding is that the perception of lack of linguistic abilities may be caused by social barriers and structural arrangements that make it difficult for them to enter certain professions. This may have a huge impact on the participants' self-efficacy beliefs: this perception could be internalized by the participants so they may believe that they are incompetent for certain jobs in certain areas where strong verbal communication skills are required. The result of this is that they may never want to look for jobs in those areas.

The findings support Lent et al.'s (1994) model that self-efficacy play a mediating role in a person's career development. It is also consistent with their proposition that self-efficacy is influenced by personal, contextual, and environmental factors. The positive impact of self-efficacy on career choice is also corroborated by the findings of this study. Finally, the results are congruent with the research findings that self-efficacy plays an important role in the career development of Asian Americans and other minority groups (Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999; Gloria & Hird, 1999; Leong & Chou, 1994).

5.4   Implications of Key Findings

The findings of this study may have implications for policymakers, educators, practitioners, community leaders, parents as well as Chinese educators. First of all, policymakers at federal, provincial, and school levels should be committed to

implementing, monitoring and strengthening employment equity policies and programs to ensure that Chinese educators as well as educators of other minority groups receive equal employment opportunities in the field of education. Access barriers, non-recognition of overseas credentials, and a lack of effort to encourage Chinese Canadians to enter the education professions may have resulted in an under-representation of Chinese Canadians in the teaching professions. Therefore, programs should be developed to address the under-representation of Chinese educators as well as other minority educators in teaching, such as promoting minority teachers as role models and recognizing their diversified language and cultural abilities as assets. Basran and Zong (1998) state that "the problem of transferring educational equivalencies and work experience across international boundaries results in professional immigrants taking jobs for which they are over-trained, resulting in downward occupational mobility relative to their occupations held before their immigrating to Canada" (p. 18). Thus, prior learning and credentialing policies should be reviewed and evaluated to ensure that the credentials of foreign-trained professional immigrants, including some Chinese educators, are properly and fairly evaluated.

Second, Chinese Canadians, regardless of whether they are locally born or immigrants, "continue to be portrayed as intruders, outsiders, and people responsible for defacing the so-called Canadian value" (CCNC, 1995). In addition, the popular myths about Chinese Canadians' capabilities and weaknesses hinder their personal development, pursuit of interests and post-secondary education opportunities as well as career options, thus creating vicious cycle. Therefore, higher education organizations might develop strategies to demystify stereotypes of Chinese Canadian minority students, including Chinese educators and other minority students who are in a similar situation. Specifically, they need to foster the career development needs of each individual (Chinese educators or not) and respect those needs, goals, and aspirations. Programs need to be developed for educational and training equity that are attentive to the needs of Chinese educators and other minority groups and consequently provide them with appropriate preparatory skills and experience. School curriculum at different levels should include materials that enhance critical thinking, social adaptation, leadership and English language communication skills, all of which are critical to

Chinese educators' occupational success in education. Furthermore, schools could promote and set up peer empowerment programs to facilitate Chinese educators and other minority student groups overcoming barriers. They could also encourage Chinese educators as well as other minorities to integrate into mainstream and yet remain proud of their own culture and heritage, thus helping them foster a bicultural flexibility.

At the community level, local Chinese community organizations should act as liaison between Chinese educators, the world of school, and the world of work by holding information sessions and promoting access and participation. Community workers could also assist Chinese educators in the settlement and integration process. In addition, Chinese community organizations should build alliances with other groups facing similar barriers and advocate equal access to the world of work locally, systemically and politically.

The findings of this study also have implications for Chinese educators who assume parental roles in Canada. First, they should recognize learning as a life-long process which goes beyond the academic arena, thus encouraging their children to participate in extra-curricular activities which could enhance their social awareness and network, build their creative and critical thinking skills necessary for future career development. Second, Chinese educators should encourage their children to explore their interest and potential and not impose their own expectations on them. In addition, they need to show more positive reinforcement to their children instead of just pressuring them. It is advised that they should refrain from comparing their children with other students, thus reducing the pressure on them. Finally, Chinese educators could be proactive by joining school committee, parents' council and affect policies at the school board level.

In terms of counseling practice, it seems imperative that career counselors address and integrate sociocultural contexts into their programming and interventions (Leung, 1995). Findings from this study support this contention. Counselors need to recognize the conflicts Chinese educators may have experienced within their families and within their traditional culture. Since Asian Americans do not necessarily choose occupations in which they have interest (Leong & Chou, 1994), counselors should carefully interpret the meanings of some results while working with Asian Americans

on their career decision-making issues (Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). Incorporating parental expectations and family obligations (Leong, 1993) may be particularly helpful. In addition, career counselors should assess ethnic identity and acculturation to provide holistic and contextualized career counseling to Chinese educators and other minority clients. Counselors may help highly acculturated individuals challenge the stereotyping of Chinese Canadians by addressing the segregation and discrimination issues. If the client is less acculturated, which may be indicated by lack of knowledge about Canadian culture, lack of access to career information, and less competence with the English language, counselors may offer them concrete advice and assistance to obtain the required skills for related occupational fields (Tang et al., 1998). Counselors should also foster Chinese educators' bicultural flexibility by recognizing their language and cultural abilities as assets in education profession.

An in-depth assessment of self- and other-imposed barriers is another counseling implication that warrants examination. First, counselors must examine Chinese educators' internalized stereotypes that may influence their ethnic identity and impede career-related decisions. For instance, Chinese educators may have internalized societal stereotypes about their English language skills that discourage them from entering a particular career field. Debunking negative stereotypes can enhance Chinese educators' ethnic identity and efficacy beliefs, thereby expanding their perceptions of possible career options. Counselors should alert Chinese educators that while it is important to strengthen certain skills necessary for future employment, blaming themselves for lack of career success is harmful in that it neglects the larger sociopolitical structures that create unequal employment opportunities for racial and ethnic minorities. Furthermore, this self-blame mentality may result in Chinese educators having low self-esteem and self-concept, which in turn will hinder their career development.

Finally, Chinese educators should choose careers that are guided by a balance of ideological and practical considerations. In other words, they should choose careers that interest them. To do that, they need to follow their own instinct, be flexible and open, assess their needs, strengths, weaknesses, aptitudes, desires, and recognize "non-traditional" professions. They may also need to develop certain skills such as leadership skills, personal skills, communication skills, trustworthiness, openness, self-motivation,

etc in order to enrich and enhance the opportunity of successful future for their career development. Furthermore, they should observe career trends, update their own information about the skill requirements of various careers, develop and expand their Canadian networks, and support one another. Finally, Chinese educators should realize that finding a secure full-time job is not what career development is all about. In many cases, part-time jobs may lead to full-time jobs. The important aspect is that they should incorporate their aspirations, interests, abilities as well as other important dimensions into their career development to have a fulfilling and productive life in Canada.

5.5   Recommendations for Future Research

This research is a qualitative study. Therefore, it is subjective in the sense that it relied on five participants' descriptions of their career development experiences and the researcher's interpretation based on the descriptions as well as his critical reflections on them. For this reason, caution must be exercised in drawing generalizations from it. Due to the fact that the participants were chosen mainly through personal contacts, they therefore share certain similarities in their experiences. The researcher is well aware of this limitation and wishes to caution the readers that the result of this study is likely to be different if participants were chosen in a different manner. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized and applied to the whole body of Chinese educators in Canada.

The value of this study lies in the identification of some social, cultural and political factors that affect certain Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada. The data generated by this study present several areas that may warrant further research.

A similar study that encompasses a larger number of Chinese educators across Canada using both qualitative and quantitative research methodology would allow for expanded and more accurate comparisons and generalizations related to this group's unique career experiences.

Generational status appears crucial to acculturation level. A future study that compares first generation Chinese educators with a later generation would present a

more complete picture of Chinese educators' career development. A comparison between Chinese educators from different social, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds would be meaningful as well.

This study has identified some social, cultural, and political dimensions that influence Chinese educators' career development experiences. In order to better understand the impacts of each dimension on Chinese educators' career development, it would be advisable to conduct the same study on each one of those dimensions rather than to do so on all the dimensions as a whole. Specifically, future research might examine the relationship between Chinese educators' acculturation and their internalization of certain societal stereotypes about their skills and abilities, as well as strategies for demystifying and debunking those myths. A study that looks at the role Cultural Revolution may have on Chinese people's perceptions of teaching careers and how it affect Chinese educators' career self-efficacy also warrants further investigation.

It would be advisable that future researchers look at women Chinese educators' career development experiences to determine whether gender-related issues may affect their career development experiences.

Furthermore, an analysis of the role meritocracy and neo-liberal ideology may have on Chinese educators' perceptions of institutional barriers also merit further study.

Finally, a study that looks at strategies for encouraging Chinese educators to seek teaching and leadership positions in higher education arena may be especially meaningful and useful.

5.6   Conclusion

The challenge of ethnic diversity is one of the most critical issues facing career development today.• The proliferation of Asian Canadians in the Canadian labour market, coupled with the common misconception that Asian Canadians are problem-free and the existing research suggesting otherwise, gives rise to the urgency of more research to better understanding this group's career development experiences. As part of this endeavour, this research looked at five Chinese educators' career development experiences in Canada with the hope that it would shed some light on the various

factors that influence their career development experiences. Specifically, this study examined five key dimensions that could potentially impact these Chinese educators' career development experiences. These five dimensions include their conceptualization of career, Chinese sociocultural influences, sociopolitical factors in the Canadian society, acculturation and ethnic identity as well as their self-efficacy beliefs. The findings of this study point to the fact that these Chinese educators' career development in Canada is not problem-free. Instead, it faces multiple challenges. Some of these challenges come from the traditional Chinese cultural influences; some of them come from external forces such as the Canadian sociopolitical system. In addition, how these Chinese educators acculturate into Canadian culture and what cultural identities they adopt were also found to affect their career development. These Chinese educators' concept of career was found to be deeply entrenched in the network of self, family and community. In addition, individual and structural barriers they continue to face in Canada have resulted in a compromise in their career choices. The findings of this study also points out that these Chinese educators' self-efficacy beliefs were deeply influenced by the aforementioned factors.

As a Chinese educator myself, I have had similar experiences as described by many of my research participants in this study. In a way, writing about these five Chinese educators' career development experiences is like writing about my own experiences. It is with sincere hope that this study will offer insight for other Chinese educators about dimensions that help or hinder their career development in Canada. The aim of this research is finally to contribute to the occupational success of Chinese educators in Canada.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
COVER LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS

July 27, 2000

Re: <u>Participation in the study on Chinese educators' career experiences</u>

Dear Participant:

Further to our recent discussion during which you agreed to participate in the study on factors affecting Chinese educators' career experiences in Canada, I am hereby requesting that you acknowledge your consent by signing the attached consent form. Please read the letter of informed consent prior to the signing. This letter explains the purpose and significance of the study as well as the nature of your involvement. The researcher's commitment to ensuring the rights of participants has also been outlined in this letter.

As a participant in this study you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, at a time and location convenient to you. This interview should take approximately ninety minutes. The discussions will be audio-taped and the transcripts will be provided to you to check the accuracy and to confirm any points that need to be clarified. It is anticipated that these interviews will take place in the middle of July.

Please note that as a participant you may at any time withdraw your consent to participate in the study. You are also granted veto rights over the transcripts of the discussions and conversations that you are involved in. Please be assured that at no time during the study you will be under any risk or coerced into participation during the discussions.

Following the study you will be provided with a summary of the findings. In this, as well as in the official thesis, you will see that your real name will not be used to protect your confidentiality. The name that you will provide me in private at the start of the study will be the one used in the report. That is known only to you and the researcher.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I appreciate your generosity in sharing your time and insights. I hope that you find the process to be enjoyable and rewarding. Should you require more information, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor Dr. Tara Fenwick, Department of Educational Policy Studies, Phone: 492-4879, Email: <u>tara.fenwick@ualberta.ca</u>.

Sincerely yours,

Qiuling Wu

P. O. Box 52066 . Edmonton, Alberta . T6G 2T5
Phone: (780) 431-1959 . Email: qiuling@ualberta.ca

APPENDIX B
NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Nature and Purpose of the Research

Since Canada and China established formal diplomatic relations in 1970, educational exchanges between the two countries have been burgeoning. Chinese students who come to Canada to pursue graduate studies have been increasing over the past 10 years. Among them, there are a number of Chinese educators who came to Canada to pursue graduate studies in Education. Canada's immigration policy allows many of them to apply and stay as permanent residents in Canada. The career path of each and every one of them is different. The experiences could be positive or negative. But one thing is indisputable: a positive career experience will have a positive impact on one's life. Conversely, a negative career experience will impact one's life in a negative way. I am interested in discovering Chinese educators' career search experiences also because I am a Chinese educator myself. The findings from this study will undoubtedly offer me perspectives in this regard.

This research will explore Chinese educators' career search experiences in Canada. By looking into their career experiences in this country, I hope to discover how Chinese educators conceptualize career, what their career goals and aspirations are, what perceptions of career barriers they have, and most importantly, whether social and cultural factors play a part in their career search experiences. The research will also investigate whether one's racial/ethnic identity and level of acculturation affect one's career choices and decision-making process. With this information, I hope to help agencies across Canada that provide services and supports to racial and ethic minorities, especially to Chinese educators, be well informed and gain a better understanding of the needs and experiences of this particular group.

Chinese educators have the most to gain from the abilities of this research to inform policies and programs that could potentially enhance their career development in Canada. The concluding results may also be useful to the participants themselves, especially to those who are still trying to "find their way" into the Canadian labor market. This study may also stimulate future research in the field.

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

The University of Alberta requires that all graduate students undertaking research take into account certain ethical procedures for the benefit of all participants. Therefore, as a researcher, I am committed to ensuring the following rights for my participants in this research:

1. The right to be fully informed of the purpose and nature of the study;
2. The right to opt out of the study at any time for any reason during this research, without negative consequences;
3. The right to expect confidentiality (pseudonyms will be used, and all identifying characteristics removed in the final report);
4. The right be respected at all times and free from any harm to you and your family;
5. The right not to be coerced or deceived in regards to any aspect of the study;
6. The right to review the themes and quotes generated for the final report from your transcript;
7. The right to see a copy of the final thesis upon request, and to receive an executive summary of the key findings of the research.

Your involvement in this research is entirely voluntary. Should you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at any time by phone or through email, or contact my academic supervisor Dr. Tara Fenwick at (780) 492-4879, tara.fenwick@ualberta.ca.

I, (please print name)_____have read the attached letter of informed consent and understand my rights and responsibilities as a participant in this research, as explained both in the attached document as well as to me personally by the researcher.

Signature (participant): _____
Address (participant): _____
Telephone Number (participant): _____
Email (participant): _____
Date: _____
Name (researcher): Qiuling Wu
Signature (researcher): _____
Telephone (researcher): (780) 431-1959
Email (researcher): qiuling@ualberta.ca

APPENDIX D
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

Demographic Information Sheet

Please fill in the blanks with the required information:

Name given for the interview:_____

Age:_____

Gender:_____

Citizenship:_____

Age upon arriving in Canada:_____

Age upon attending school in Canada:_____

Total years attending school in Canada:_____

Years living in Canada:_____

Years living in non-Chinese neighborhood:_____

Highest degree obtained (field, when & where)_____

Previous occupation:_____

Present occupation: _____

Ideal job for the future:_____

Education level of your parents:

Mother_____

Father_____

Current occupation of your parents:

Mother_____

Father_____

APPENDIX E
THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE
(five open-ended questions with probes)

1. **CAREER ASPIRATIONS, INTERESTS & CHOICES**

   - When you decided to stay and look for a job in Canada, what were your expectations of a career in Canada?
   - What were your family's expectations for your career? Did you feel any pressure from your parents, other family members, friends, and your own community in relation to your career? Give me some examples, please.
   - What career choice did you finally make? Was it based on your career aspirations interests?
   - What factors have influenced your career choice? (for example, familial roles, successful experiences of role models, environmental factors, job market situation, etc.)
   - Were you happy with your choice then? Are you still happy with it now? If not, what are your career goals in the future?

2. **JOB SEARCH EXPERIENCES**

   - How did you actually do your job search? Did you have access to career information? Were you familiar with the Canadian culture in regard to job search and interviews and so on?
   - How long were you actively engaged in your job search? Was your job search generally a positive or negative experience? Would you like to share with me about your experience? Please give me some examples.

3. **ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS/BARRIERS AND THEIR IMPACT ON A PERSON'S CONFIDENCE IN CAREER**

   - I presume that in your job search process, you must have experienced both supports and barriers. What kinds of support did you receive? How did these supports help boost your confidence in your career search?
   - Did you expect and experience any barriers prior to the job search? If so, what were the major barriers? Did these barriers have a negative impact on your confidence?
   - Any advice on how to overcome job-related barriers?

4. **CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CAREER**

   - The word "career" may mean different things to different people. In your opinion, what is a "career"? How do you define it?
   - Has your concept of career changed over time? What factors do you think has contributed to this change?

- Do you think one's concept of career affect his/her career interests and choices? Could you please give me some examples?

5. CULTURE, IDENTITY & ACCULTURATION ON ONE'S CAREER SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS

- Have you always been confident that you will successfully realize your career goals in Canada? What factors do you think affect your confidence in your pursuit of career? Please give me some examples.
- Cultural factors play an important role in the career development of ethic minority groups. What role do you think Chinese culture plays in your career choice?
- What is your self-rating of acculturation?[38] In other words, do you feel more Chinese, or more Canadian, or bicultural, or marginalized? To what extent do you think your degree of acculturation help or hinder your career development in Canada?

Is there anything else meaningful that has not been discussed so far? If yes, please feel free to talk about it.

Thank you very much for your participation in this interview.

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[38] I usually explained the concept of "acculturation" to participants, describing it as follows: Acculturation is a process of an individual's interaction with mainstream culture. According to research, individuals who hold a positive view of the mainstream culture but a negative view of their own culture are called Assimilationists or highly acculturated; individuals who view the mainstream culture negatively and their own culture positively are referred to as Separationists or Traditionalists or lower acculturated; individuals who hold positive views of both their culture and the mainstream culture are Integrationists or medium acculturated or bicultural; the last category, individuals who hold negative view of both the mainstream and their own culture are labeled Marginal person.