

The Experiences of Mainland Chinese Immigrant Professionals Who Believe They Have Made a Successful Transition: Strategies That Help or Hinder

Lulin Zheng
Norman E. Amundson
William A. Borgen
Lee D. Butterfield
University of British Columbia

Abstract

The focus of this qualitative and exploratory research study (using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique) is on the experiences of Chinese immigrant professionals who feel that they are doing well with change. In the 11 interviews that were conducted 191 incidents were identified and these were categorized into seven helping, hindering and wish list categories. The results of the study highlight the structural and personal barriers faced by Chinese immigrant professionals.

The need for skilled immigrants is essential for Canada's competitive position in the global economy (Blair, 2005). Since 1998, Mainland China has contributed the largest number of skilled immigrant professionals to Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007).

Current Chinese immigrant professionals consider moving to Canada as a means to advance in their professions. With the knowledge and skills learned at home, they anticipate being able to transfer their skills and contribute to the economy of the host country, expecting their professional experience and education will fit into the structure in Canada (Bai, 2007; Salaff, Greve & Xu, 2002). Unlike many of those who immigrated earlier, they are not coming to Canada to escape starvation, disease, or war. They are looking for more than

mere survival, they are hoping to boost their careers in the new country. In fact, many wish to explore their own values, pursue self-realization and make a contribution (Zhu, 2005).

Despite strong educational and professional qualifications and a relatively welcoming Canadian immigration policy that takes their qualifications into account as part of the immigration process, studies demonstrate that many immigrant professionals face unemployment or underemployment after landing in Canada (Basran & Zong, 1998; Bauder, 2003; Boyd, 1985; Boyd, 1992; Brouwer, 1999; Calleja & Al-nwick, 2000; Depass, 1989; Mata, 1999; McDade, 1988; Wu, 2001; Zhu, 2005; Zong, 2004). These researchers have examined immigrant professionals' adjustment and transition, mostly focusing on the barriers and challenges to integration and re-entering their professional fields. These barriers include both individual barriers, such as poor English skills or lack of Canadian work experience, and structural barriers, such as non-recognition of foreign professional experience, devaluation of foreign-earned credentials and subtle discrimination existing in the Canadian work place. Salaff et al. (2002) state that Canada's "programs lack mechanisms to integrate professional and technical employees into good jobs" (p.3).

There is a small but growing body of research on immigrant professionals from

Mainland China (Basran & Zong, 1998; Li, 1999; Liu, 1995; Salaff, et al., 2002; Salaff & Greve, 2003a; 2003b; 2005; Wu, 2001; Zong, 2004; Zhu, 2005). This body of research has emphasized the incongruity between Chinese immigrant professionals' educational and professional levels and their current employment status in Canada. Most of this research is quantitative in nature and focuses on the barriers faced by the immigrant professionals from Mainland China, primarily non-recognition of credentials, lack of Canadian experience and lack of competency in the English language.

Despite the problems, there is also some literature indicating that some immigrant professionals do remain positive and seem to do well with the changes that affect their work when moving to a new country (Zheng & Berry, 1991; Bai, 2007; Amundson, Yeung, Sun, Chan & Cheng, 2011). For example, based on the data from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) conducted by Statistics Canada (2005), six months and four years after landing, 73% of the respondents (60% immigrant professionals, the rest belonging to other immigration categories such as family class or refugees) reported being satisfied with their life in Canada.

The current research study was designed to emphasize this more positive direction using a more qualitative research approach. The focus was on explor-



ing what we can learn through the success stories of Chinese immigrant professionals. The specific research questions are: What helps immigrants from Mainland China to do well with changes affecting their work and what hinders them in that process? We also asked for a “wish list” regarding what they would have found helpful.

Method

In choosing a research method for this investigation the enhanced critical incident technique (ECIT) (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson & Maglio, 2005; Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio & Amundson, 2009) seemed to be well suited to what we were trying to achieve. The enhanced critical incident approach starts with contextual open-ended questions followed by the traditional critical incident technique (CIT) questions set forward by Flanagan (1954). The open-ended questions were asked to give the participants an opportunity to describe their work situations and the types of changes they have experienced as well as the impact of these changes on their lives. Next, the traditional critical incident technique was employed to elicit the helping or hindering factors that immigrant professionals experienced in their transition to living and working in Canada (Woolsey, 1986). In addition, we also asked a question that elicited a “wish list” from participants with regard to what would have been helpful if they had access to it. According to Alfonso (1997), the CIT questions are “designed to generate descriptive and qualitative data of an experience that is still mostly uncharted in the literature” (p.49).

Participants

We adopted purposive sampling to recruit participants for the current study. Postings and advertisements were placed at local community colleges or immigrant services agencies and the researchers’ phone numbers were provided. Other recruiting methods included word of mouth and “snowballing” - in which participants recommended other individuals who might be interested in the study.

Eleven Mainland China immigrant professionals volunteered to participate in the current study. All believed that they were doing well with changes that affected their work and also that they were successfully adapting. The criteria and specifications of the participants for the current study were as follows: (1) immigrated from Mainland China; (2) came to Canada within the last three years and were working within the last six months; (3) had skills/vocational training in their home country; (4) experienced changes that affected their work since immigrating to Canada; (5) felt they were doing well with the changes; (6) were able to communicate in English, and (7) were willing to talk about their experience of changes that affected their work within a confidential interview.

The participants included six women and five men. Their ages ranged from 26 to 42, with an average age of 36. All were married except one participant who was divorced. However, six were alone in Canada while their spouses were still working in China. The participants’ length of time in Canada ranged from six months to two and half years, with an average of approximately one year. All received higher education in China before coming to Canada. Three had master’s degrees and the rest bachelor de-

grees. All worked in their professions before coming to Canada except for one participant, who quit her job more than a year before immigrating to Canada. All of them now work in Canada. Among the seven who are working in their fields after immigrating to Canada, the average length of time in their profession in China ranged from 5 to 22 years with an average of 10 years. All held senior positions in China but after coming to Canada, they all started in entry level positions.

Data Analysis

Flanagan (1954) and Woolsey (1986) recommended the following three steps to analyze the data: (1) select an appropriate frame of reference; (2) formulate the categories of different themes; and (3) establish the proper level of specificity-generalizability in reporting the data and the findings. This framework was utilized to analyze the data for the current study. We chose the critical incidents that had a description of the incident, the context, why it was helping or hindering and the outcome of the incident. Wish list items were also coded in the same fashion. Applying an inductive approach (Woolsey, 1986), we grouped the incidents into categories in a progressive manner and made modifications, as needed, when new incidents were added.

Butterfield et al. (2005) outlined nine credibility checks to be used with an ECIT study. The current study followed these steps in the following manner: (1) An independent extraction of 30% of the incidents was completed by another graduate student familiar with the CIT method. There was 90% agreement. 2) The results of the data analysis were sent to the participants for cross-checking. All of the participants were reached for



a second interview. One participant requested that one incident be deleted and all the other participants agreed with the data analysis that had been conducted. 3) A UBC doctoral student served as an independent judge, she was given a randomly sample of 25% of the total extracted critical incidents and was asked to place those incidents into the tentatively formed categories. For the helping incidents, the initial matching rate was 90%, the matching rate for the hindering incidents was 85%, and for the wish list items it was 90%. According to Andersson and Nilsson's (1964) suggestions that an agreement of 75% or higher is sufficient, the level of agreement between the researchers and the independent judge was deemed satisfactory. 4) While categorizing the data, the point at which exhaustiveness was achieved was tracked. Exhaustiveness was achieved after the fifth interview, since no new categories were needed to accommodate incidents from the remaining six interviews. . 5) Two experts working in the field were sought to review the categories based on their

working experiences and both of them found all the categories appropriate and reflective of their experience. 6) Participation rates were calculated for each category. Borgen and Amundson (1984) suggested a participation rate of 25% for the categories to be considered viable. 7) Theoretical agreement was achieved by comparing the established categories to the current literature (Maxwell, 1992; McCormick, 1994). 8) To ensure adequate descriptive data, all the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Field notes were taken while conducting the interview. 9) A UBC professor listened to the third, seventh and tenth interviews to ensure the fidelity of the process.

Results

The 11 interviews yielded a total of 116 helping incidents, 43 hindering incidents and 33 wish list items. These items were grouped into 7 categories.

**Category
1: Personality/Traits/Attitude**

This was the largest category with mostly helping incidents. The helping incidents focused on personality traits and attitudes that helped participants do well with change. Participants commented on being optimistic and positive, having self-confidence, being persistent, setting realistic goals, self-motivation, preparedness, honesty and ambition. One participant remarked that he would shine wherever he was, showing confidence in himself and his future. The positive impacts of possessing these personality traits and attitudes included helping participants continually learn new skills and stay on top of their professions, becoming more tolerant of other cultures, being willing to accept entry level jobs to pursue a longer-term goal, being able to reach out for help, having the ability to see past challenges and difficulties, and having faith and hope in their future. One participant expressed his determination and said: "I give myself half a year to find a professional job and I did it in three months." (HR generalist). The wish list category indicted that the participants

Table 1
Critical Incidents and Wish list Categories

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



wished for additional personality traits to help them deal with changes. Specifically, these included being more ambitious, having self-confidence, being more communicative and being more adaptive to changes. The main outcome of possessing these personality traits would have been a greater ability to deal with challenges at the beginning of moving to a new country, as illustrated by one participant's comment: "Say for example, (if better prepared), maybe I have a friend to help me rent or find a daycare so that I feel well prepared at the beginning after I get settled first". (Computer software engineer)

Category 2: Support from Family/Friends

The helping incidents in this category included incidents where participants spoke of their family and friends providing support and encouragement to help them to do well with change, having someone to listen to their stories, and getting advice and practical support. The positive impact of the relationships were creating positive influences in their lives, decreasing feelings of loneliness and isolation, relieving stress due to transition and going through changes, and expanding their networks to increase employment opportunities. One example of positive outcomes from a participant was that: "You've got to take it easy, yes, you can meet some difficulties but you have to take it easy. Family support is always safe, always there" (Business administration staff).

The hindering critical incidents were frustrations due to lack of support from family and friends, for example, being all alone in the new country, lacking a support network and not getting help from spouses in taking care

of young children. The negative impacts of these instances were loneliness, depression and emotional ups and downs which negatively affected their work lives and the transition process, as illustrated by a participant: "I have to support myself all the time so that's very difficult, sometimes I feel very lonely to making friends, ... and have no relatives, no family members here, that's very, very hard". (Computer programmer). The wish list items were incidents where participants expressed desires such as wanting more babies to expand their families.

Category 3: Taking Action

As with the first category, the majority of incidents in this category fell into the helping section. This includes trying to adapt to Canadian culture, obtaining local credentials, volunteering at local community agencies, conducting market research for job prospects, enrolling in courses for training and networking with people working in the same field. It was evident that participants initiated activities consciously with an intention to enhance their professional profiles and increase their chances of employment. As one participant put it, "By taking up a volunteer job, we can do something to express ourselves and communicate with other people." (Sales associate) The positive result of taking action and taking initiative included feeling a sense of greater control, learning how to situate themselves in the new country, building self-confidence, acquiring a better understanding of the work culture of the new country, and setting realistic goals. The wish list items were those in which participants pointed out actions they could have taken to help them do well with change. These included actions to improve their English,

to actively communicate with people working in their fields to develop professional connections, to earn a degree, to undertake re-training and establish close contacts with their communities. Participants believed that taking these actions would result in becoming more involved with the community and also increase their employment opportunities. One participant stated that "I can use the networking skills learned while in China to expend my social network here and look for opportunities." (Computer software engineer)

Category 4: Education/Credential/Work Experience

Hindering critical incidents made up the majority of incidents in this category. Many participants expressed frustration and disappointment when their education and work experience were not recognized in Canada. The impact of this included feelings of being disabled, incompetent and mistreated. Further, participants experienced feelings of loss, a sense of being outsiders, and even anger and resentment. Since employers did not recognize their education and professional experience, participants had to accept entry level positions. One participant told the researchers, "most employers only need you to have a local experience and, my experience in China was considered nothing, that is something bad and really bad." (Computer programmer)

The helping incidents in this category focused on experiences such as, having many years of work experience, being able to use transferrable skills and knowledge, and having multicultural company experience. The impact of having educational background and work experience included having increased confidence in dealing with change and



adapting quickly to the work role in Canada. Also, most importantly, many participants cited the experience of working in international companies in China as helping them in many aspects in their work lives, primarily in securing employment soon after landing in Canada. One participant reported that “my background working in a multicultural company in China helped me find the current job in Canada.”(HR generalist) Participants felt confident, less fearful, hopeful and optimistic and proud.

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

Category 5: Government/Community/Professional Organization Resources

The helping critical incidents in this category were those in which support and encouragement offered by government,

community and professional organizations helped participants do well with change. This included items such as building networks with professionals working in the same field, attending network meetings organized by professional associations, and receiving assistance from immigrant service agencies, government agencies and society at large. One participant felt “supported and encouraged by the local immigrant service agencies”. (Sales associate) The positive outcome of utilizing the resources from professionals, communities and governments were an informed and sound career decision-making process, learning job search skills and strategy, securing employment, receiving acknowledgement and encouragement, learning professional jargon, feeling welcomed and connected, and feeling increased energy to deal with their transitions.

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

Category 6: Work Environment

Helping incidents in this category were those in which participants expressed apprecia-

tion for having supportive work environments that enabled them to do well with change. In particular, supportive environments referred to friendly colleagues who were always willing to help, a relaxed boss who allowed employees to have flexibility in terms of schedule, holiday time and on-the-job training. A helpful working environment was crucial for the participants to develop a sense of trust, foster the spirit of team work and deliver high job performances. One participant believed that “my colleagues helped me a lot after I found my job. I do a great job in my field, but actually there are a lot of difference between China and Canada.” (Construction estimator)

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

The wish list items were those where participants expressed a desire for a better working environment to assist them in dealing with change such as friendlier colleagues at work, more help from management, better communication between employees and management, and more company-provided training opportunities. In this environment, participants expected to be happier, feel less lonely, have a sense of inclusion, and be more productive.



Category 7: Self-care

Not surprisingly, the focus of this category was on helping. The participants cited how self-care actions helped them do well with changes that affected work. The incidents involved going to see movies, having dinner with friends, cheering themselves up continually, and exercising outdoors. The anticipated outcomes arising from these activities included creating a diversion from thinking too much about work, maintaining a more balanced work and life style, keeping their spirits high, and having a safe refuge whenever they needed emotional and practical support. One participant explained that a regular physical work out “helped to distract me from thinking about work all the time and take a break”. (Logistics specialist)

Discussion

Present-day Mainland Chinese immigrant professionals are selected for immigration because of their education and experience. All participants in the current study received a college/university education and had worked in their trained professions before coming to Canada. The participants clearly stated that they were coming to Canada hoping to advance their careers in their professions. For this group of people doing well meant feeling happy, confident and competent to work in their trained professions. They also believed in the value of ongoing learning as a means for attaining happiness. This perspective is consistent with Zhu (2005), who stated that new Chinese immigrants did not emigrate because of hunger, ailments or avoiding war. In truth, both immigrant professionals and Canada as a country have expectations for the

immigrants to utilize their skills and education immediately upon their arrival in Canada (Alboim, 2002; Brower 1999).

In considering the categories of what helped and hindered them in doing well with changes affecting their work, the participants indicated that their attitude and the support they received from family and friends were very important.

In spite of these challenges and hardships, the immigrant professionals in the current study reported themselves as doing well with changes. Woo (1989) drew the conclusion in his research that a world view and “adaptive mentality” helped his participants to deal with the challenges of moving to a new country. An “adaptive mentality” includes being prepared for change, being ready to tolerate hardships, and being able to focus on long-term goals. Shih (2005) also underscored the importance of a helpful attitude as a strategy. Consistent with Woo’s and Shih’s findings, participants in the current study stressed positive attitude and self confidence as important factors that help them deal with challenges.

Within the “Personality/Traits/Attitude” category, all of the participants mentioned being positive, being prepared for changes, and having a long term goal that helped them to do well.

Research has stressed the importance of accessing resources and receiving support from family and friends to enable immigrant professionals to deal with challenges (Ngo, 2001; Shih, 2005; Zhu, 2005). Similarly, participants in the current study cited the use of community resources to help them get started. Within the “Government/Community/Professional Associations Resources” category, 36% of participants be-

lieved it was important to have access to these resources.

Within the “Taking Actions” category, participants mentioned networking and a proactive approach. Within the “Support from Family/Friends” category, participants emphasized supportive relationships with family members and friends.

Within the “Taking Action” category, participants spoke of initiatives such as re-training, taking courses, working at volunteer jobs and networking, anticipating that they would be able to transfer learned skills and education and contribute to the new society. Their experiences are consistent with Salaff et al., (2002) and Bai (2007) who claim that immigrant professionals from Mainland China are trying everything they can to contribute to the Canadian economy.

Regarding the category Education/Credentials/Work Experience, participants highlighted having joint venture work experience, which is another factor in making current Chinese immigrant professionals different from previous generations of Chinese immigrants. In the current study, 5 of the 11 participants had joint venture experience before coming to Canada. This finding is similar to Salaff & Greve (2003), who reported that 20 of 28 participants working in Mainland Chinese professional or semi-professional jobs already had joint venture experience prior to immigrating to Canada.

The downward job mobility experienced by the Mainland Chinese immigrant professionals is highlighted in the literature (e.g. Salaff, et al., 2002; Zong, 2004) and was also an experience for many of the participants in the current study. Prior to coming to Canada many of them held senior positions, and for those who found jobs related to their fields within two years, all started



from entry level positions. Ngo (2001) and Basran and Zong (1998) highlight the frustration and disappointment for immigrant professionals when they are denied job opportunities because they lack Canadian work experience. The “Education/credential/Work Experience” category provided a snapshot of this challenge. Ninety-one percent of the participants mentioned their disappointment when a lack of Canadian experience was the only factor preventing them from gaining employment. One participant said, “they just do not believe that I can do the job because I do not have local experience, but I have been doing this for years in China. They won’t listen”.

Within the “Government/Community/Professional Organization resources” category, participants articulated a wish for additional opportunities to gain Canadian work experience. Another significant challenge faced by immigrant professionals is non-recognition of foreign-earned credentials. Within the “Education/Credential/Work Experience” category, participants spoke of feeling a sense of uselessness or loss, even anger and resentment when employers did not recognize their credentials.

The findings in the current study can also be viewed through the lens of Bridges’ (1991) transition model. This model asserts that people go through three stages – an ending zone, a neutral zone and new beginning zone. In the ending zone, individuals experience a departure from the old reality, familiar activities or old roles. When discussing changes in their lives, participants in the current study mentioned that they had to give up old assumptions, values and self perceptions. Some participants appeared to be in the neutral zone where they struggled

between old and new realities. Several participants worked in survival jobs not related to their fields and therefore felt confused and uncertain about the future. When entering a new beginning stage, an individual develops a sense of belonging. Even though all the participants claimed they were doing well with change, most did not say they felt settled, a sign of the new beginning stage.

Practical Counselling Implications

The current study provides examples of immigrant professionals handling change well (from their perspective) and therefore offers important practical implications. First, the majority of participants mentioned that being prepared helped them to do well, especially starting their preparations before coming to Canada. In light of this finding, immigrant professionals may benefit from career-oriented counselling services while still in their home country. They could be offered in a field office in their country or even through online courses. They could include labour market information workshops and individual counselling sessions to help them navigate the Canadian labour market or educational/training online information to create an individualized economic integration plan.

The current study’s results also may shed light on the existing training programs that help immigrant professionals in their settlement and career exploration. The participants in this study self-identified as successfully dealing with changes, yet in the category of “psychological impact”, negative emotions outnumbered positive ones. This suggests a need for counselling support for these individuals. Besides job search skills and career

explorations for immigrant professionals, emotional support should also be part of the curriculum. The categories from the current study could be used as point of discussion in assisting immigrants to consider the importance of attitude, support, taking action, adapting their credentials to the Canadian work situation and environment, effectively utilizing government and other resources, and the importance of self-care, as well as other issues that the discussion may bring to mind. Counsellors could suggest ways to normalize negative feelings such as isolation, homesickness, and depression. Support groups could be formed to foster a sense of community. The participants in the current study mentioned a desire to have more contact with their local communities. Programs in the community could be established to help foster closer interactions. Even initiating a home-stay may be an effective starting point. Also, several participants mentioned they found it very hard to manage their households while working or seeking employment. Practical education and help in such areas as cooking, household management and even shopping would be beneficial.

Lastly, it would be helpful to set up language programs that would not just teach basic English skills but also provide instruction in the professional jargon and effective communication skills for job seeking and work place language competency. These programs would help to ensure immigrant professionals improve their English while boosting their chances of finding work that fits with their fields of interest and skill.

Conclusion

The researchers undertook this research study with a



sense of urgency to give voice to immigrant professionals from Mainland China. We were motivated by stories of successful immigrant professionals who have not only survived in a new land, but also thrived and are embarking on a new and fulfilling chapter in their lives. This study attempted to understand their experiences from a strength-based perspective.

The current study is of value because the Canadian economy is facing a skills shortage and the lack of information that may help immigrant professionals integrate into the Canadian labour market is an issue of key concern. Additionally, the study also responded to a need for further understanding a highly visible minority population's economic integration into Canada (Zong, 2004).

This study highlighted barriers and strategies that immigrant professionals from Mainland China employ to overcome individual and structural challenges, provided information on the personality traits and attitudes that facilitate successful economic integration and underscored the importance of networking and preparation by individuals dealing with change. Similarly, these new immigrant professionals from Mainland China are very different from their predecessors, and may go through a different acculturation process.

Limitations and Future Research

As is always the case, this study has its limitations. First, the researcher is an immigrant professional from Mainland China. She may have assumed an innate understanding of the immigration experience of the study's participants. However, she did her best to acknowledge

this subjectivity and be cognizant of its existence while interviewing the participants as well as when conducting the subsequent data analysis and its reporting.

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

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

The last limitation stems from the use of the English language for conducting interviews. English is not the first language for all the participants, and they have been in Canada for a very

short period. Their abilities to describe their experiences in English may preclude them from articulating a full and complete picture of their experiences.

The current study has increased the understanding of factors that help immigrant professionals to succeed and those that hinder success. Notably, some participants were successful in finding jobs directly relevant to their profession in just a few months. It raises a question as to why some people can successfully integrate into the Canadian labour market in a relatively short period of time. What helps or hinders the process? Future research can be done to explore if those categories hold up or new ones arise? The current study's results can be utilized as a starting point for discussion in focus groups to determine if these categories depict a true picture of their experiences, and therefore could be representative of a larger population. A longitudinal study also could more exhaustively examine the factors that help or hinder immigrants to integrate into the economy over time. This information is of crucial importance to assist immigrant professionals who are awaiting immigration to Canada. It can help them have more realistic expectations and to plan accordingly. Also, further study would better inform the development of new programs and services in such areas.

Also, future studies might explore the fact that some immigrant professionals experience little or no change and therefore perceive little or no psychological impact after immigrating. Although this sample is too small to draw any reasonable conclusions, the result could hint that - with increasing globalization, information sharing, and convenient transportation - talented, highly educated professionals may



freely choose to immigrate for better opportunities and self-actualization without going through the significant psychological adjustment faced by virtually all immigrants 50 years ago. Further research is needed to test this hypothesis.

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