

Immigrants in Canada

Contexts and Issues for Consideration

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PRE-READING QUESTION

A lack of Canadian work experience is one of the main obstacles in securing employment for immigrants in Canada. How can career practitioners facilitate this for their immigrant clients?

Introduction and Learning Objectives

This chapter provides information about the history of the Canadian immigration system, characteristics of **immigrants** in Canada, and issues of importance for career and employment counsellors working with immigrants.

Newcomers to Canada originate from all over the world and settle as temporary or permanent residents. During the mid- to late-20th century most immigrants came from the United Kingdom and Europe. Changes in immigration policy after 1976 to encourage skilled workers and others who qualified as “economic class” led to a shift to migrants from Asia and the Middle East forming the majority. Career practitioners and employment counsellors need to understand the demographic and geographic trends of immigration to Canada in their consideration of Canada’s very diverse labour market, and to appreciate the challenges and difficulties immigrants face as they settle in Canada. These experiences are likely to affect the careers and employment of the immigrants.

At the conclusion of this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Describe the categories or classes of immigrants in Canada.
2. Understand the challenges immigrants face and the impact on their career and employment.
3. Summarize the four strategies newcomers use in interacting with Canadian culture.
4. Recognize the barriers for immigrating professionals to successful employment in their fields.
5. Comprehend how social justice issues impact immigrant employment experiences.

History of Canada's Immigration System

Canada has taken many different approaches to immigration since the 18th century. The Immigration Act (1869) and Dominion Land Act (1872) were the original frameworks for attracting migrants to Canada predominantly from Great Britain, Continental Europe, and the United States. Since World War II, Canada has adopted an increasingly expansionist immigration policy (Reitz, 2001). The stated purpose of immigration policy has been mainly to stimulate economic growth. For many years immigrants from Britain, the United States, and Europe were favoured because they were Caucasian, a practice later judged to be discriminatory (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). In 1967, the Canadian government introduced a points system whereby applicants received points for attributes such as education, skills, and ability to work in Canada's official languages (Reitz, 2001). The points system is still used, albeit with numerous revisions. Currently, the points system is designed to select "the best and brightest" individuals for migration to Canada (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003).

With the Immigration Act of 1976, three broad classes of immigrants were created: independents, selected through the points system based partially on skills; a family class for reuniting families; and humanitarian for refugees. A business class was added in the 1980s to attract investors and entrepreneurs. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act of 2001 replaced the 1976 Act and refined the criteria for acceptance into the economic class for skilled and business immigrants (Marenko, 2010). The intention was to facilitate entry of skilled individuals who could adapt more readily to the Canadian labour market. Today, immigrants are being accepted more for education, skills, and entrepreneurial potential and less for family reasons. This economic class of "independents" now makes up more than 60% of admissions.

After the 1970s, as a result of these changes in policy, the principal **source countries** of immigrants became Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). Under the new business class, many wealthy immigrants from Hong Kong brought billions of dollars of investment, mainly to the Vancouver area, in the 1980s. During the 1980s and 1990s, well-educated

professionals from Africa immigrated to Canada. Other African immigrants immigrated to Canada under refugee status.

❖ *Stop and Reflect*

How important is fairness in the process of making immigration decisions? For instance, should there be a right of appeal from a negative decision?

Should family reunification considerations overcome economic interests when selecting immigrants? For instance, should Canada exclude a close family member who has a disability from immigrating because the disability may pose an added cost to our publicly funded health or social services system?

Characteristics of Immigrants to Canada

People emigrate for a variety of reasons. Conditions in countries of origin, such as security risks and lack of employment, may create **push factors**. On the other hand, there are also **pull factors** that lead to migration, including opportunities to advance careers and to live and raise a family in a different political and social environment. Individuals migrating to Canada have a variety of temporary and permanent options.

Temporary Residence: Objectives and Classes

A **temporary resident** is someone whose entry into Canada involves a short-term stay, such as being admitted briefly as a visitor (citizens of certain countries must have a visa to visit or transit Canada), obtaining a work visa and finding temporary employment, or acquiring a student visa and attending a Canadian school (Figure 1). A new visa to allow parents and grandparents of Canadian citizens and permanent residents to visit was added in December 2011. Being granted temporary residence does not guarantee permanent residency — applying for permanent residency is a separate process.

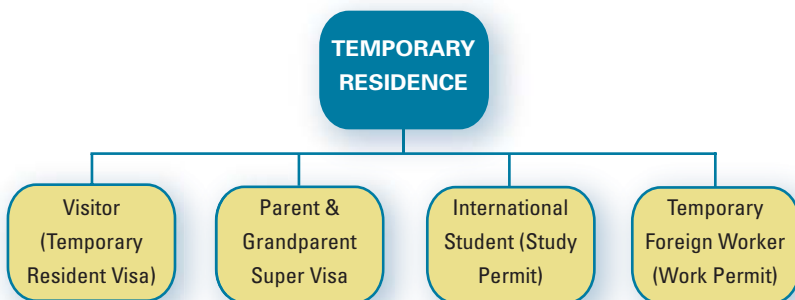


Figure 1: Conditions for Temporary Residence.

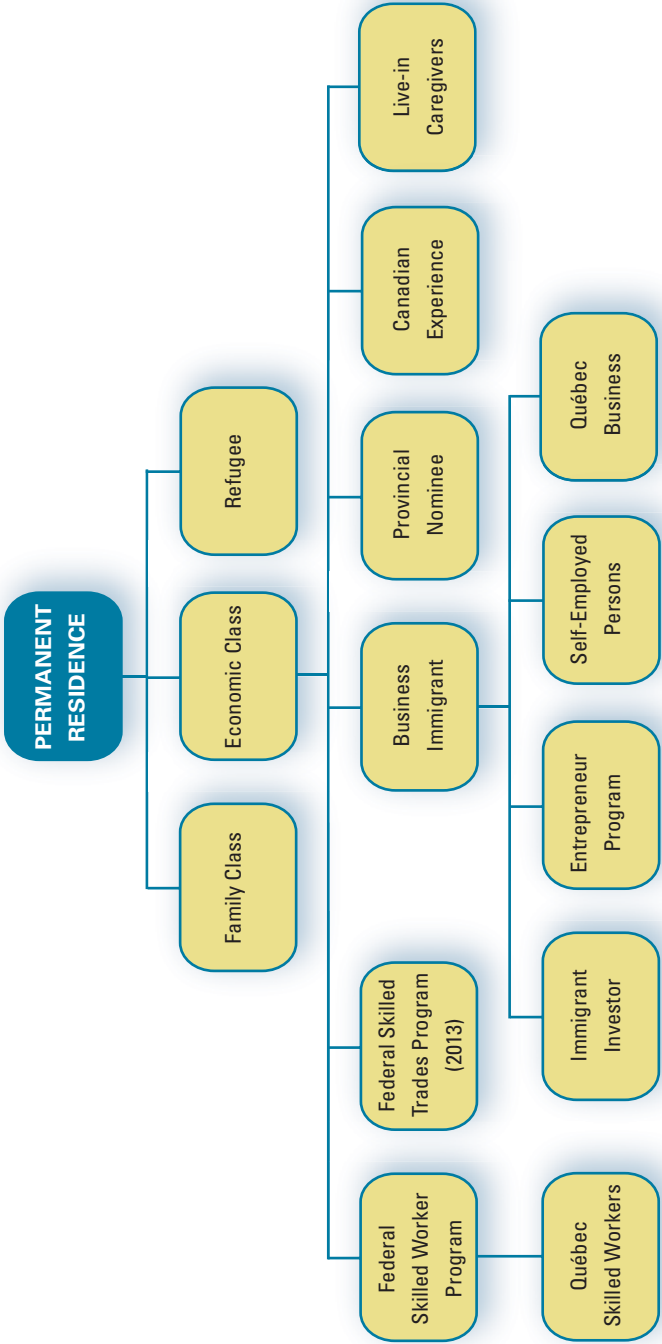


Figure 2: Permanent Residency Classes (as of 2013).

Permanent Residence: Classes

Canada offers individuals who wish to move permanently to Canada three broad categories for acceptance: family class — to be reunited with family members; refugee — for humanitarian reasons; and the economic class — for employment based on skills and business offering (CIC, 2005; Reitz, 2001). A **permanent resident** may work for any organization in Canada. (See Figure 2 above.)

Family Class

Family-class immigrants are individuals who are reuniting with close family members already established in Canada (CIC, 2005). Individuals can be sponsored by a close family member who is a permanent resident or Canadian citizen and who has committed to providing financial support during the settlement of the applicant.

Refugees

Refugees are individuals needing protection, and who fear returning to their home country. Small numbers of immigrants can also be admitted as “other immigrants,” a grouping that includes various special categories created for humanitarian and public policy reasons.

Economic Class

The economic class consists of several programs: the Federal Skilled Worker Program, the new Federal Skilled Trades Program, the Business Immigrant Program, the Provincial Nominee Program, and the Canadian Experience Class. Economic immigrants as a whole are admitted based on the likelihood of success in the Canadian labour market or in business (CIC, 2011).

- To be selected through the **Federal Skilled Worker Program** immigrants must have the education, experience, and abilities that will enable them to become financially established in Canada. Skilled worker immigrants and professionals wanting to settle in Québec must apply through an independent class known as Québec-selected skilled workers. This is because Québec establishes its own immigration requirements and selection process under the Canada-Québec Accord on Immigration (Gouvernement du Québec, 2000).
- In January 2013 the Federal Skilled Trades Program started to accept applicants with specific skills in the trades (and adequate English-language skills) to fill known labour shortages.
- The **Business Immigrant Program** was designed to attract experienced business people who will support the development of the Canadian economy. On July 1, 2011, the Business Immigrant Program was subdivided

to include the **Immigrant Investor Program**, the **Entrepreneur Program**, and the **Self-Employed Persons Program**.

- Investors are required to have a personal net worth of \$1.6 million and invest \$800,000.
- The Entrepreneur Program was designed to attract experienced business people who will own and manage businesses.
- The Self-Employed Persons Program seeks to attract individuals who have the intention and ability to become self-employed in Canada. In particular, self-employed persons are required to contribute to Canada's cultural, athletic, or agricultural sectors. For example, they may work as music teachers, artists, coaches/trainers, or farmers.
- Québec has its own program for selecting investors, entrepreneurs, and self-employed persons.
- **Provincial Nominee Program** by which a province or territory (except Québec or Nunavut) can nominate individuals with particular education, experience, and skills to meet specific local labour market needs.
- In 2008, the **Canadian Experience Class** was added to enable temporary foreign workers and international students living in Canada who have skilled work experience in Canada to become permanent residents.

Live-in Caregivers are foreign workers who have come to Canada to care for children, the elderly, or the disabled under a work permit. After two years they may apply for permanent residency.

Distribution of Classes

Since the year 2000, Canada has granted permanent residency to between 220,000 to 280,000 individuals each year (CIC, 2012). In 2012, Family-class immigrants made up about one quarter of all newcomers to Canada; economic-class immigrants were 82% of all newcomers, refugees constituted 9% of the newcomers; and the remaining 3% was made up of “other immigrants” (e.g., humanitarian and compassionate cases; see Figure 3).

During the same time period, skilled workers, along with their spouses and dependents, made up 57% of all economic class immigrants and 35% of all new permanent residents. The number of family-class immigrants has been fairly constant at around 65,000 in 2003 and 2012, while economic-class immigrants have increased (CIC, 2012).

Since the policy changes in 1967 that eliminated the preference for American and Western European immigrants, there has been a considerable shift in the source countries for newcomers (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). Although there is relative consistency in the top-source countries from year-to-year, there have also been some

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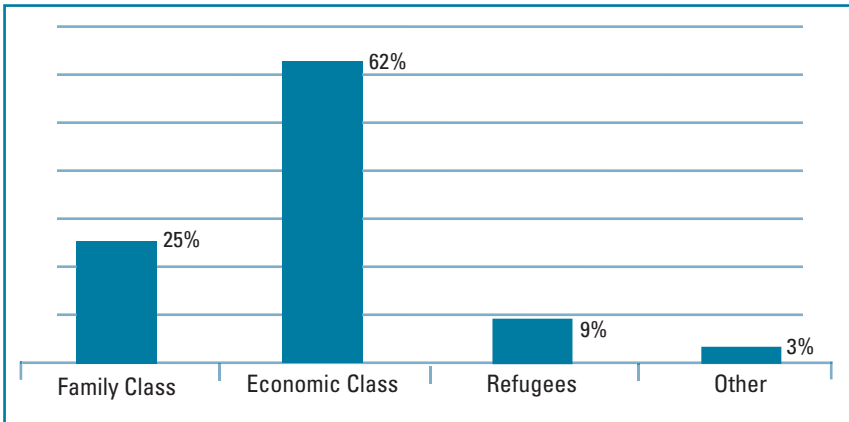


Figure 3: Immigration to Canada by Class in 2012.

large shifts, likely brought about by political factors. Hong Kong, for example, was the top source country in 1997, but the 46th in 2007 (CIC, 2009). In 2007, the top 10 sources, accounting for 52% of new permanent residents, were China, India, the Philippines, the United States, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Iran, the Republic of Korea, France, and Columbia (CIC, 2009). In 2012, China, Philippines, India, and Pakistan made up 44 % of the total (CIC, 2012). From 2003 onwards, the majority of immigrants to Canada has originated from Asian nations.

Settlement Location

The vast majority of immigrants settle in Canada's three largest cities, Toronto, Vancouver, and Montréal (CIC, 2005). Between 1996 and 2001, 73% settled in these "big three" cities, whereas only 27% of the Canadian-born population resides in these cities. Figures from 2011 showed that 63.4% of Canada's immigrant population lived in Toronto, Vancouver, or Montréal, with Toronto having the largest share (37.4%) (Statistics Canada, 2013). There is some differential distribution, with immigrants from Western Europe and the United States more likely to settle in smaller cities and other areas of Canada compared to immigrants from other countries. Generally speaking, newcomers tend to settle in a location where they have friends and/or relatives (Statistics Canada, 2005a).

Age, Gender, and Religion

Almost one half (47%) of immigrants arriving between 1996 and 2001 were between the ages of 25 and 44, whereas only 30% of the Canadian-born population fell within this age group (CIC, 2005). The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC), which surveyed about two thirds (169,400) of newcomers arriving from

October 2000 to September 2001, found that the vast majority of new skilled worker immigrants were between 25 to 44 years old, especially the principal applicants (89%; Statistics Canada, 2005a).

The overall gender distribution of newcomers to Canada is approximately equal to the Canadian-born population, with just over one half of all immigrants being women (CIC, 2012). Based on LSIC findings, 77% of principal applicants in the skilled worker category are male, and 75% of spouses and dependents of skilled workers are female (Statistics Canada, 2005a).

In terms of religion, while Christianity is still the most common religious affiliation of newcomers (43%), there were significantly higher proportions of Muslim (18%), Hindu (6%), Buddhist (4%), and Sikh (5%) affiliations among immigrants arriving between 1996 and 2001. In comparison to the Canadian-born population, non-Christian affiliations are represented by 1% or less of the population (CIC, 2005).

Education

Levels of education differ significantly between immigrants and the Canadian-born. Twenty-one percent (21%) of all immigrants and 36% of those who immigrated between 1996 and 2001 have obtained a university degree, compared to 14% of the Canadian-born population (CIC, 2005). In 2012, 20.1% of immigrants 15 years or older had a bachelor's degree or above, and 37.8% of the principal applicants in the economic class (CIC, 2012). Although part of the difference in educational attainment can be attributed to rising education levels over time, immigrants as a whole are more educated than the Canadian-born population.

Migrant Personality

Boneva and Frieze (2001) proposed that individuals who choose to immigrate tend to display particular personality traits and values, known as the “**migrant personality**,” which distinguishes them from those who prefer to stay in their home country. Those who choose to leave tend to be more work oriented, have higher achievement and **power motivations**, and have lower affiliation motivation and family orientation. The finding that language proficiency and youth are two of the most important factors in the economic success of immigrants seems to fit with the personality traits identified by Boneva and Frieze, especially in terms of career orientation and **achievement motivation**.

The migrant personality characteristics may apply for the skilled workers and economic classes, but may not be the case for other categories of immigrants. Refugees, for example, are motivated by the need to ensure the safety and survival of their families.

❖ *Stop and Reflect*

1. Consider the differences and similarities between a temporary and permanent migrant to Canada. How might the similarities and differences between the two types of migrants affect the approach taken in offering career services?
2. Given that approximately 50% of immigrants to Canada are between the ages of 25 and 44 years, what are the implications for career work?
3. What are some push and pull factors in migration that may influence career decisions for immigrants?

Challenges Immigrants Face That Affect Career and Employment

Immigrants to Canada of all types and countries of origin have some common challenges and experiences. These pertain to (a) the phases of settlement, (b) the process of acculturation and adaptation, (c) language issues, and (d) the impact of the point system on employment success. Practitioners who work with newcomers need to be aware of these experiences and challenges, and how they may impact career and employment.

Phases of Settlement

Immigration is a series of steps beginning with the move to Canada, obtaining employment, and joining in social and political participation (McIsaac, 2003).

According to Mwarigha (2002), there are three major stages of settlement: initial, middle, and final. The initial stage of settlement begins with meeting immediate needs, including food, clothing, shelter, orientation, and initial language instruction. Newcomers are helped by settlement agencies, cultural communities, and their families and friends. In the middle stage of settlement, immigrants require assistance with accessing employment, education, health care, housing, legal assistance, and advanced language instruction. The goal of the final stage of settlement is equal participation in Canada's economic, cultural, social, and political life.

Mwarigha (2002) argues that immigrants benefit most from services in the first two stages of settlement. Although the most barriers to settlement occur in the second stage, most programs focus on meeting immigrants' needs during the first stage (Mwarigha, 2002). Unfortunately there is a lack of understanding of immigration as a process and of the varying needs of immigrants as they move through the three stages.

Acculturation and Adaptation

Acculturation and **adaptation** are unavoidable aspects of the immigration experience. Berry (2001) describes acculturation as the process that occurs when cultural groups

come into contact with each other and the resulting effect of the interaction on primarily the non-dominant group. Adaptation refers to changes that occur as an individual or group responds to external demands from the new culture (Berry, 2003). Adaptation may involve changing to blend in with the environment or attempting to change the environment (Berry, 2003). Cultural adjustment can be scary and destabilizing for newcomers, particularly if many of the norms and expectations are very different from the culture in their home country. Immigrants often fear losing their cultural identity, customs, and language (Arthur & Merali, 2005).

According to Berry (2003), newcomers to Canada must decide on the amount of contact they will have with other cultures, and how much of their own culture they want to retain. The strategies newcomers utilize can take four different forms:

1. Separation (i.e., avoiding interaction with other cultures and total maintenance of one's original culture).
2. Assimilation (i.e., frequent interaction with other cultures and loss of one's original culture).
3. Marginalization (i.e., avoiding interaction with other cultures and loss of one's original culture).
4. Integration (i.e., frequent interaction with other cultures and maintenance of one's original culture).

The strategy of integration, also known as biculturalism, is linked to positive adjustment, adaptation, and good mental health outcomes. However, integration also requires that certain conditions exist in the host society, such as the shared value of cultural diversity, low levels of prejudice, and a sense of attachment to the host society among all groups and individuals (Berry, 2003).

Language Issues

The ability to speak an official language is widely considered one of the most important predictors of successful economic and social integration (Tolley, 2003). Language issues can be a major barrier for immigrants (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Lee & Westwood, 1996). As well, language difficulties can contribute to higher accident rates where the workplace is more hazardous (Health Canada, 1999). In a survey of immigrants six months after their arrival in Canada, almost all skilled worker principal applicants (99%) reported they were able to speak English and/or French (Statistics Canada, 2005a). However, 13% of skilled worker principal applicants cited language barriers as a serious problem when trying to find employment, which may suggest their official language skills were not fully developed. Furthermore, language instruction tends to focus on vocabulary for conversational language rather than the technical language skills that are required by skilled workers. This situation further limits the

opportunities for highly educated immigrants to obtain appropriate language training that could increase their chances for employment.

Points System and the Provincial Nomination System

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

Obtaining work in Canada is often difficult for immigrants because they lack prerequisite Canadian work experience (McIsaac, 2003). Skilled worker principal applicants most frequently cited lack of Canadian work experience as the most serious problem they encountered as they sought employment (Statistics Canada, 2005b). Therefore, immigrants can face the classic catch-22 in finding a job: They seek jobs in order to obtain Canadian experience, but their lack of Canadian experience is cited as the reason they cannot get a job (Arthur & Merali, 2005; Khan, 2007).

Foreign Qualifications Recognition

Lack of acceptance or recognition of their foreign work experience or qualifications is cited as the second most frequent problem by skilled workers (Statistics Canada, 2005b). Immigrants are unable to determine the status of their credentials until they arrive in Canada (Khan, 2007; McIsaac, 2003). Foreign education has been increasingly devalued, resulting in a shift in perception about immigrant education and skills (Reitz, 2001). Research has shown that education and work experience attained abroad are considerably discounted in the Canadian labour market (Alboim, Finnie, & Meng, 2005; Reitz, 2001). Khan (2007) argued that “credentials are an instrument used by the dominant class to restrict access, privileges and opportunities for the subordinate classes” (p. 64).

Many professions in Canada, such as medicine, engineering, and teaching, are regulated by professional self-regulating bodies that stipulate the requirements individuals must meet to be part of the professional body and practise in the profession. The requirements are generally designed with the assumption that individuals have received their education in Canada. Since many professional bodies are not

well equipped to appropriately evaluate foreign education and credentials, this tends to result in a devaluation of foreign qualifications. Many immigrants require additional years of education to meet certification standards to work in their profession in Canada (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Those individuals who want to make up for educational “deficiencies” may find it difficult to acquire the appropriate education and/or experience. For example, Peirol (1996) reported that foreign-trained medical doctors must write licensing exams and complete an internship in order to become licensed in Ontario. Although every Ontario medical school graduate is guaranteed an internship after passing the licensing exams, only 24 of up to 500 foreign-trained physicians were able to participate in such internships each year.

Professional immigrants routinely face these types of difficulties as they attempt to work in their premigration occupation, regardless of the reputation of their educational program, years of experience, and premigration standing in the field. It is not uncommon to hear stories of immigrants who were well-respected practitioners in their field, yet unable to work in their profession in Canada (Choudry, Hanley, Jordan, Shragge, & Stiegman, 2009). It is not only immigrants who suffer as a result — Canada loses by failing to utilize the skills and knowledge of its new citizens. If the foreign education and **credentials** of immigrants were recognized, between \$3.4 and \$5 billion would be added to the Canadian economy every year (Conference Board of Canada, 2004).

A newcomer’s self-worth is often tied to occupational status (Canadian Task Force on Mental Health, 1988). The various delays encountered in returning to the workforce may lead to a loss of skills and decreasing confidence in abilities. If immigrants choose to continue in their premigration occupation, they are often faced with the reality of retraining, which may mean virtually starting over (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2005). This can be frightening, confusing, and overwhelming, particularly for older immigrants (Lee & Westwood, 1996). If immigrants are not integrated into their premigration profession within three years of arriving, they are unlikely to return to it at all (Galabuzzi, 2005).

Employment Experiences: A Question of Social Justice

Since 1975 there has been a steady decline in the employment status and earnings of immigrants (Reitz, 2001). Several years after their arrival, immigrants in the past were able to match or even surpass the earnings of their Canadian-born peers (McIsaac, 2003). However, it appears that this is no longer the case, as more recent cohorts of immigrants have struggled to keep pace, even several years after migration (Schellenberg & Hou, 2005). In addition, other indicators of economic well-being, such as unemployment and poverty levels, paint a similarly bleak picture (Reitz, 2001).

Unemployment and **underemployment** are major concerns of immigrants (Galabuzzi, 2005). The unemployment rate of immigrants has gradually increased,

and the gap between the unemployment rates of the Canadian-born compared to immigrants is continually widening (McIsaac, 2003). Six months after arrival, 75% of skilled worker principal applicants indicated having problems finding employment (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). In 2007, the unemployment rate among working-age immigrants was 6.6%, compared to the rate of 4.6% among Canadian-born individuals (Statistics Canada, 2008).

The discrepancy is more striking when comparing university-educated immigrants and Canadian-born individuals. In 2006, the unemployment rate among immigrants who immigrated in the previous five years with a university degree was 11.4%, nearly four times the rate of 2.9% for Canadian-born individuals with university education (Statistics Canada, 2007).

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

Immigrants face a paradox in obtaining work, in that they may be considered underqualified for high-level positions because of a lack of Canadian work experience, language barriers, or other reasons; however, they are also not hired in lower-level positions because they are considered overqualified (Arthur & Merali, 2005). This paradox, among other reasons, has resulted in disproportionate numbers of immigrants in low-paying, part-time, temporary, insecure, high-risk employment with poor working conditions (Galabuzzi, 2005). While some immigrants do obtain gainful employment, university-educated immigrants are vastly over-represented in low-skill occupations such as taxi drivers, security guards, and janitors (McIsaac, 2003) and high-risk occupations such as those in the manufacturing and construction industries

Supporting Employers Embracing Diversity (SEED)

by Lara Shepard

SEED is a diversity program to enhance cultural diversity in the workplace. Its HR Toolkit "offers support services to employers in activities related to recruitment planning, training and workforce maintenance."

SEED offers ideas and approaches to employers for solving diversity issues. SEED also facilitates collaborations between management, Human Resources, and employees.

SEED website has a complete virtual guide to diversity management: <http://www.embracingdiversity.ca/>.

(Health Canada, 1999). The marginal status of immigrants in the workforce also makes them prone to exploitation (Canadian Task Force on Mental Health, 1988).

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2005), the education of recent immigrants has not been fully utilized. Despite rising education levels among immigrants over the years, the gap between the wages of immigrants and Canadian-born individuals is ever widening, including immigrants with university education and knowledge of an official language (McIsaac, 2003). Data indicates that between 1980 and 2000, the income of recent male immigrants dropped 7%, whereas incomes increased by 7% for Canadian-born males (Galabuzzi, 2005). For university-educated immigrants, the drop in earnings was even greater at 13%. In 2000, individuals who immigrated between 1986 and 1995 earned about 80% of the Canadian-born worker's average income, while individuals who immigrated between 1996 and 1999 only earned about 70% (CIC, 2005).

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

Employment tends to be a good indicator of overall immigrant adjustment (McIsaac, 2003). Participation in the Canadian labour market is essential for immigrants to successfully integrate, to feel a sense of belonging, and to form their identity within the Canadian context (Galabuzzi, 2005). The employment-related experiences of immigrants are predictive of adaptation and psychological well-being (Aycan & Berry, 1996). More specifically, immigrants' unemployment has been associated with feelings of alienation, acculturative stress, adaptation problems, negative self-concept, anger, frustration, chronic stress, and other health problems (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Canadian Task Force on Mental Health, 1988; Grant & Nadin, 2007; Health Canada, 1999; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). These findings indicate that employment offers purpose, status, and identity, and helps individuals establish social relationships (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Thus, because social interaction plays a vital role in helping immigrants adapt to Canadian society, unemployment hinders the process of acculturation. Conversely, when immigrants' employment status and income improves, it tends to lead to a greater sense of competence, success, and improved social interaction.

Expectations Meet Reality

Often a primary reason for immigrating is to improve employment opportunities (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). It can be very destabilizing to the individual when these expectations are not met. Research has indicated a link between mental health

and the congruence of expectations and reality, either positively associated with life satisfaction, or negatively associated with depression (Murphy & Mahalingam, 2006). Unmet expectations “results in frustration, alienation from a familiar working environment, erosion of skills, and ultimate loss of human potential to the Canadian economy” (Canadian Task Force on Mental Health, 1988, p. 30).

The immigration process can be hard on the individual who is expected to make many adjustments. People may suffer immense disappointment when expectations and dreams are obstructed. Hopes and expectations may help motivate some immigrants to quickly adjust to their new surroundings (Lee & Westwood, 1996). However, individuals often find adjusting to Canadian culture and employment more difficult than they anticipated. Immigrants who have difficulties in the adjustment process may, in turn, experience a sense of inadequacy (Lee & Westwood, 1996). While immigrants may anticipate short-term unemployment or underemployment, longer-term unemployment and underemployment tend to have a greater detrimental impact (Health Canada, 1999).

Khan and Watson (2005) proposed a four-stage model to encapsulate the immigration experiences of skilled Pakistani women in Canada. In *Stage One, Seeking a Better Future*, participants identified their premigration dreams, hopes, and goals. *Stage Two, Confronting Reality*, describes how, shortly after immigrating, the women were forced to confront the reality of their situation and their limited options. Overall, the women described a severe discrepancy between premigration hopes and postmigration experiences, with some individuals reporting that they felt misled. Individuals lost financial stability, professional status, and self-confidence, and felt uprooted, and without support. In *Stage Three, Grieving and Mourning*, individuals discussed anger and frustration with their current situation, as well as homesickness, family problems, and culture shock. *Stage Four, Adjusting*, included a sense of appreciation for parts of Canadian life and society such as free education and health care. As well, participants’ plans to upgrade their education in Canada increased their feelings of hope for the future.

Racism and Discrimination

Immigrants to Canada during the past 30 years are far more likely to be visible minorities. Of those who arrived in the 1990s, 73% were visible minorities (McIsaac, 2003). The cross-cultural adjustment of newcomers to Canada is greatly affected by the attitudes of individuals already residing in Canada, especially when newcomers are perceived as competition for limited jobs (Lee & Westwood, 1996; Palmer, 1996). Research suggests that, controlling for education, gender, and language ability, visible minority immigrants tend to earn less than non-visible minority immigrants (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2005).

While immigrants are consistently overrepresented among individuals of low

economic status in Canada, visible minority immigrants tend to be the poorest group (Kazempur & Halli, 2001). Further, poverty rates are higher among immigrants compared to non-immigrants of the same ethnic origin (Kazempur & Halli, 2001). These findings indicate systemic discrimination based on both race and immigration status. In addition, skilled worker immigrants reported feeling discriminated against by Canadian employers (Grant & Nadin, 2007). Research has also established a link between perceived discrimination and depression (Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999). Conversely, Aycan and Berry (1996) noted that some immigrants may blame failure to obtain employment on discrimination as a coping strategy. For career practitioners, understanding the reality and detrimental effects of discrimination as a barrier to finding employment is an important factor in career and employment counselling with this population.

Feelings of Loss

Feelings of loss frequently accompany major changes in the lives of immigrants. When individuals move to Canada, the losses they experience can outweigh the positives they gain. According to Lee and Westwood (1996), difficulties with recognition of credentials and finding employment frequently lead to feelings of loss. They explain that “being lumped with other unskilled workers is extremely disheartening to immigrants who are accustomed to maintaining professional identities” (p. 35). Skilled immigrants can also face loss of professional identity due to the devaluation of their foreign credentials. Additionally, the social and professional networks that once validated their professional identities cease to exist. After arriving in Canada, immigrants may find themselves a minority for the first time, losing their dominant-group status. Other significant losses include financial stability, lifestyle, professional status, culture, social support, and self-confidence (Khan & Watson, 2005).

Physical and Mental Health

The immigration screening process tends to result in what has been termed the “healthy immigrant effect” (Health Canada, 1999). Despite the superior health of newcomers on arrival, immigrant health generally begins to decline. This decline has been linked in part to various barriers to accessing health care, including language and culture (Kramer, Tracy, & Ivey, 1999). The experience of immigration also seems to have negative effects on the health of newcomers, with Health Canada (1999) stating that “sufficient research was found to warrant inclusion of the experience of immigration itself as a central determinant of health for recent immigrants” (p. 28). The stressors of immigration may be one reason for the deteriorating health of immigrants (Khan & Watson, 2005) as the mental health of immigrants, when

excluding refugees, has been found to be equal to that of Canadians (Health Canada, 1999). Unemployment, however, seems to be related to a decline in immigrant mental health (Health Canada, 1999). Likewise, employment-related concerns and financial difficulties have been linked with mental health concerns among Chinese immigrant women (Tang et al., 2007).

Gender Issues

Adjustment difficulties are common among immigrant women. This group may be considered “triple disadvantaged” as a result of being women, immigrants, and often minorities (Wittebrood & Robertson, 1991). They frequently end up working in poorly paid, low-status jobs. Overall, immigrant women are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than Canadian women (CIC, 2005; Health Canada, 1999). Khan and Watson (2005) found that immigration tended to negatively impact families, with marriages in particular weakening under the stress of Canadian settlement.

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

❖ *Stop and Reflect*

1. Given the changing ethno-cultural make up of immigrants to Canada, what can career practitioners do to ensure they are well prepared to work with immigrants?
2. What role can career practitioners play in raising awareness regarding the barriers to employment that immigrants may face in Canada?

Summary

Immigrants to Canada come from over 200 countries, with the Asia Pacific region as the largest source at close to 50%. In the last decade, the largest proportion (roughly 60%) of new permanent residents has immigrated via the economic class and they mostly settle in large urban centres. Most skilled worker immigrants are between 25 and 44 years of age and tend to be highly educated and career driven.

The demographic and geographic trends in Canadian immigration have relevance to the career development profession. Specifically, they highlight the increasing diversity of employees in the workplace and the need for understanding the settlement and integration challenges and opportunities faced by immigrants.

As immigrants settle in Canada, they encounter a variety of challenges, such as adjusting to a new culture, discrimination, and loss. They may have to learn a new language or improve their language proficiency. Employment is crucial to successful settlement, but many immigrants, including skilled worker immigrants, encounter difficulty in obtaining suitable employment. A lack of Canadian work experience is one of the main obstacles in securing employment. Another barrier is the lack of recognition of individuals' foreign education and work experience, which often complicates the transition into their premigration professions. Immigrants frequently experience feelings of loss during settlement and problems obtaining suitable employment can exacerbate these feelings. Immigrant women and couples may encounter additional problems after relocating, such as having to renegotiate gender-roles. For some immigrants, the multitude of challenges and stressors during settlement results in declining physical and mental health. In the end, career practitioners need to be aware and understanding of the issues immigrants face when settling in Canada in order to offer this population more effective supports and services.

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Glossary

Acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological change following contact between cultural groups and their individual members. The acculturation process implies mutual influence between members of the two cultures or groups.

Achievement motivation is the drive to pursue and attain goals. An individual with achievement motivation wishes to achieve objectives and advance up on the ladder of success. Here, accomplishment is important for its own sake and not for the rewards that accompany it.

Adaptation involves psychological adjustment and social adjustment and refers to the success of adapting to a new culture by participating in the local culture, learning the language, making friends, and enjoying life.

Affiliation motivation is the need for relationships and to relate socially with people. Persons with affiliation motivation perform work better when they are complimented for their favourable attitudes and co-operation.

Business Immigrant Program follows the principles of a mentor-mentee relationship to help newcomers from different cultural backgrounds integrate into the business community. Experienced professionals from the local business community will be matched with immigrant entrepreneurs.

Canadian Experience Class was introduced as an immigration class in 2008 to allow temporary foreign workers or recently graduated international students working in Canada to apply for permanent residence.

Credentials typically refer to formal learning and education (e.g., professional designation, degree, or diploma) required for regulated professions (e.g., engineering, trades, and medicine). However, this emphasis on formal learning has resulted in non-regulated occupations being largely overlooked.

Entrepreneur Program seeks to attract people with business experience who have the intention and ability to actively manage a Canadian business that will positively impact the Canadian economy and create employment opportunities for Canadian residents.

Federal Skilled Worker Program selects immigrants as permanent residents based on their education, work experience, knowledge of English and/or French, and other criteria that have been shown to help them become economically established in Canada.

Immigrant Investor Program seeks experienced business people to invest in Canada's economy and become permanent residents. Investors must show that they have business experience, have a minimum net worth of C\$1,600,000 that was obtained legally, and invest \$800,000 into the Canadian economy.

Immigrants choose to leave their countries of their own free will to make a new life elsewhere. They can return to their home country at any time and count on protection from that country's government.

Migrant personality refers to specific traits, values, and a set of motives that characterize the personality of people who desire to immigrate versus people who are willing to stay in their native country. Those who want to resettle in another country have higher achievement and power motivation but lower affiliation motivation.

A **permanent resident** is a person who has been allowed to enter Canada as a resident, but has not become a Canadian citizen. People seeking to immigrate to Canada on a long-term basis may apply for permanent residence.

Power motivation is the drive to influence people and change situations. Power motivated people wish to create an impact on their organization and are willing to take risks to do so.

Provincial Nominee Program is a program for those persons who immigrate to Canada and have the skills, education, and work experience needed to make an immediate

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economic contribution to the nominating province or territory. They are ready to establish themselves successfully as permanent residents of Canada.

Pull factors and **push factors** refer to the motives to migrate. Incentives that attract people away are known as pull factors, while circumstances encouraging a person to leave are known as push factors. Push factors include not enough jobs, few opportunities, famine/drought, loss of wealth, poor medical care, and other unfavourable conditions. Pull factors might be job opportunities, better living conditions, political and/or religious freedom, better medical care, security, and other advantages.

Self-Employed Persons Program is aimed at applicants who demonstrate that they have relevant artistic or athletic experience that will allow them to be self-employed and make a significant contribution to the cultural and sporting life of Canada. Relevant experience consists of at least two years of experience of self-employment in the arts or athletics, or participation at a world-class level in art, culture, recreation, or sport activities, as listed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Source countries are the countries that the immigrant and refugees left to come to Canada.

Temporary resident is a person who has permission to remain in Canada on a temporary basis. This category includes visitors such as tourists, people visiting family, or people attending meetings or conferences, and temporary workers including seasonal workers and students.

Underemployment refers to being employed at work that does not permit full use of one's skills and abilities. This could mean working fewer hours than desired, doing jobs that require less skill, and working less intensively than able or willing to work.

Discussion and Activities

Discussion

Class Discussion Questions

It is important that career practitioners take care to not only educate immigrants about Canadian norms and customs, but also to facilitate discussions about the immigrants' cultural norms with regards to the job search process, culture of work, communication, and interpersonal relationships. Discuss.

Personal Reflection Questions

1. Read Roberta Neault's article, entitled *The Immigrant/Expatriate/Repatriate Experience: International Work in a Global Economy*, retrieved from <<http://www.counseling.org/resources/library/vistas/2007-V-online-MSWord-files/Neault.pdf>>.

The author uses the term “global careerists.” What does she mean by the term? What are the unique career challenges they face? How can career practitioners provide the unique support required by global careerists?

2. What skills, tools, or knowledge do you need in order to enhance your impact as a career practitioner working with immigrant clients?

Career Practitioner Role Questions

1. Career practitioners should be knowledgeable about premigration and postmigration challenges that impact immigrants' psychosocial adjustment to a new culture. What are some of the premigration issues faced by immigrants? What are some of the postmigration challenges? Why is it important for career practitioners to collaborate and work in interdisciplinary teams to assist with the complex premigration and postmigration issues that impact immigrants' psychosocial adjustment and adaptation?
2. Immigrants face numerous political, social, and systematic obstacles as a result of migrating to a different country. It is essential that career practitioners work with immigrant clients to promote fair and equal treatment and equivalent access to resources and opportunities. What are some steps that you can take to incorporate culturally responsive approaches, social justice, human rights, and cultural empowerment into your practice?
3. Explore the program “The Skills Connect for Immigrants Program,” which is open to all unemployed or underemployed recent immigrants who have at least intermediate English language skills (<<http://www.mosaicbc.com/employment-programs/working/skills-connect-immigrants-program>>). What skills will you need to develop to help a client like Alena profiled on the website?

Activities

1. Imagine that you are working with an immigrant who feels that there is no hope in obtaining employment. As you work with this client you realize that you and the client are too focused on limitations and challenges. You decide to focus on the client's assets. What types of assets would many immigrants have? To start you off: Many new Canadians speak a number of other languages.
2. Interview a career practitioner who works with recent arrivals to Canada. What are some career strategies used when working with new immigrants?
3. Interview an immigrant to Canada. Ask for a description of the world he/she came

from — for example, family, community, or school — and ask how this world has shaped his/her dreams and aspirations.

Resources and Readings

Resources

Websites

- British Columbia. Skills connect for immigrants. <<http://www.welcomebc.ca/skillsconnect>>.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2010). *Planning to work in Canada? An essential workbook for newcomers* (Cat. No.: Ci4-10/2011E-PDF). Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada. This workbook is for people who are considering moving to Canada or who have recently arrived. The book helps new immigrants gather information about living and working in Canada. <<http://www.credentials.gc.ca/immigrants/workbook/index.asp>>.
- Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions. Looks at how cultural values influence the workplace in Canada. <<http://geert-hofstede.com/canada.html>>.
- Ontario WorkinfoNet. *Newcomers/Immigrants*. <http://www.onwin.ca/english/index.cfm?fuseaction=user_group&usergroup=2>.
- University of British Columbia. *Certificate in Immigration: Laws, Policies and Procedures*. <<http://cstudies.ubc.ca/immigration-professional/certificate-in-immigration-laws-policies-procedures/>>.
- The Centre for Intercultural Communication (CIC) offers programs and services to develop intercultural awareness, understanding, and skills for today's increasingly global academic and business environments. <<http://cstudies.ubc.ca/intercultural-communication-diversity-and-immigration/>>.

Video

- Working in Canada. *Building futures in Canada 14/20: Immigrants and newcomers*, This video profiles the stories of 20 newcomers and immigrants to Canada who talk about why they chose Canada, where they decided to settle, the challenges they faced, the sources of help they received, and so on. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJWDqGckP10>>.

Supplementary Readings

- Alberta Employment and Immigration. (2010). *What works? Career-building strategies for diverse groups: A counsellor resource. Immigrants*. Retrieved from <http://alis.alberta.ca/pdf/cshop/whatworks/ww_immigrants.pdf>.
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