CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FOR AFGHAN REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT WOMEN: A CULTURE-INFUSED CAREER COUNSELLING APPROACH

BY

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Campus Alberta Applied Psychology: Counselling Initiative
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certifies that she or he has read and recommends to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a final project entitled Career Development Services for Afghan Refugee and Immigrant Women: A Culture-Infused Career Counselling Approach submitted by Muneerah Dattadeen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Counselling.

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ABSTRACT
This final project addresses how mainstream career counsellors can better serve Afghan refugee and immigrant women with their career planning needs. This is accomplished by proposing a culture-infused career counselling services approach that is wholistic, client-centered, and culturally-sensitive to meet the unique needs of this particular population. A review and critique of the literature addressing the career development services available to Afghan refugee and immigrant women was conducted. The historical analysis of Afghanistan’s past events characterized by over 20 years of civil war provides an important context for the current issues facing Afghan women. Western mainstream career development theories pose problems for non-mainstream clients. Strengths and limitations of this project are examined coupled with recommendations for a future pilot project.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this Final Project to all of the Ismaili Muslim Afghan-Canadian women who have openly worked and shared with me their lived experiences and stories of traveling as refugees, from Afghanistan to Pakistan, to finally resettle in Canada. I will always admire and be inspired by their courage, strength, and the will to move forward to create a better quality of life for themselves and their families. I have had the great fortune to work with many of the Ismaili Muslim Afghan-Canadian women in my professional work as a career counsellor. I look forward to continue assisting many more from the second generation of Afghan-Canadian women with their career journeys in the years to come.
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<tr>
<td>ACPO</td>
<td>Afghan-Canadian Professionals of Ontario</td>
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<td>AIL</td>
<td>Afghan Institute of learning</td>
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<td>AWAI</td>
<td>Afghan Women’s Association International</td>
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<td>CAAP</td>
<td>Campus Alberta Applied Psychology</td>
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<td>CBC</td>
<td>Canadian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>CHI</td>
<td>Creating Hope International</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
<td>Center for Disease Control and Prevention</td>
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<td>CIWA</td>
<td>Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>DITPC</td>
<td>Directions for Immigrant in Trades and Professional Careers</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>IWED</td>
<td>Ismaili Women’s Economic Development</td>
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<td>NGO’s</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHR</td>
<td>Physicians for Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
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<td>SEP</td>
<td>Skills Enhancement Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>STARTTTS</td>
<td>Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors</td>
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<td>STF</td>
<td>Systems Theory Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>WEIP</td>
<td>Work Experience Program for Immigrant Professionals</td>
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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

Our 21st Century North American labour market is becoming increasingly multicultural and the practice of career counselling needs to reflect Canada’s cultural diversity (Leong & Hartung, 2000). “Currently one in nine Canadians is a member of a visible minority group. Immigration targets will lead to increasing number of visible minorities” (Arthur, Brodhead, Magnusson, & Redekopp, 2003, p. 2). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), globally there exist approximately 17 million refugees and displaced persons around the world. What is further alarming is that 80 percent of the world refugees are women and children (UNHCR, 2004; as cited by Beg, 2005). Historical events related to Afghanistan, including the terrorist attack in the United States on September 11, the subsequent bombing of Afghanistan, and the fall of the Taliban regime have forced increasing numbers of refugees to flee their homes and country to nearby bordering countries. Pakistan and Iran have become the place of first asylum for many, while other refugees have sought for more permanent asylum or resettlement in industrialized countries such as Australia, the Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Denmark, United States, and Canada (Lindgren, 2004). Afghanistan continues to be the largest country of origin of refugees under the UNHCR’s mandate. “At the end of 2005, approximately 1.9 million Afghan refugees were reported by 72 asylum countries, constituting 23 percent of the global refugee population… the proportion of female refugees tends to be around 50 percent” (UNHCR, 2006).
Over the years, Canada has welcomed many people from ethnic populations including refugees who are forced to flee to other countries and immigrants who choose to relocate for resettlement purposes. As a member of the Geneva Convention of 1951, Canada has responded to the crisis in Afghanistan by accepting large numbers of Afghan refugees, many of whom were women. According to the UNHCR statistics of February, 2005, approximately 15,000 Afghans had been granted refugee status in Canada (UNHCR, 2006). Moreover, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2002) statistics indicate that the largest number of refugees received into Canada in 2002 were from Afghanistan, totaling 2743 people (“Refugees in Canada: Fact & Fiction”, n.d.).

Exploration of the Problem

The historical analysis of Afghanistan’s past events characterized by over 20 years of civil war provides an important context for the current issues facing Afghan women. Having experienced civil war, Taliban rule, and gender apartheid many Afghan women became marginalized and oppressed due to the abuse of their human rights (Wali, Gould, & Fitzgerald, 1999). These events affected the lives of many Afghan refugee and immigrant women, including severe curtailment of women’s freedom of mobility, employment, and their right to education. On the other hand, Afghan women bring with them a long history of a rich, complex culture which needs to be understood based on their experiences and worldviews (“Afghans: Their History and Culture”, n.d.). Much of this Afghan historical background and culture is unknown to many North American mainstream counsellors. As well, it is possible that not all North American mainstream counsellors may have developed awareness
of their personal cultural influences and biases that impact their understanding of
their multicultural clients and client systems (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). There is a
need to develop and use a set of culture-infused counselling competencies designed
to better serve Afghan refugee and immigrant women in a culturally-sensitive
manner, as well as learn about the Afghan client’s background, values, and

Western mainstream career development theories and practices also need to be better informed in this increasingly global workforce, with the steady movement of refugees and immigrants from developing to developed countries. These theories have traditionally focused on socio-economic, and cultural factors that hold
traditional relevance for a small segment of the population, namely white, middle
class, European heterosexual men (Leong & Hartung, 2000). They also pose
problems for non-mainstream clients as they assume an individualistic, egalitarian society marked by social isolation and materialism (Leong & Hartung, 2000).
Mainstream North American career development theories have long been criticized for lack of applicability to diverse populations (Kerka, 2003). They need to explicate views of culture and provide direction for career counselling with a mosaic of people with diverse customs and cultures (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). Ethnic, racial, and cultural factors affecting refugee and immigrant women have been neglected by the Western framework of career development theories. “Theories are problematic when they are based on values that are not representative of the experiences of all clients…that emphasize individualism and the development of a separate sense of self” (Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen; as cited by Arthur & Collins, 2005, p. 22). Many have
been created and tested on limited sample populations questioning their application (Kerka, 2003). In contrast, Afghan culture places a strong emphasis upon being family-oriented, which includes extended family, and upholding values of collectivism. Traditionally, Afghans come from a patriarchal, family, and home-centered society. Yet like many other ethnic groups, Afghan refugee and immigrant women are not a homogenous group (“Afghans: Their History and Culture”, n.d.). Women’s issues and diversity of experiences are highly individual and differ strikingly by age and generation (Arthur & Merali, 2005).

Some models for effective multicultural career counselling and interventions are emerging to meet the needs of a more diverse population (Hansen, 2003) by recognizing these problems. Subsequently, there is a need for career counsellors to work wholistically from a culture-infused counselling perspective (Arthur & Collins, 2005). This can be achieved by implementing culture-infused career counselling principles and a systems theory framework in order to improve the vocational services offered in North America to Afghan refugee and immigrant women.

The final project addresses the question: How can mainstream career counsellors better serve Afghan refugee and immigrant women with their career planning needs? This is accomplished by proposing a culture-infused career counselling services approach tailored to this particular population.

Rationale

This final project was chosen due to the researcher’s direct work experience with this specific population. She believes that a culture-infused, wholistic, and client-centered career counselling approach that planned using Caffarella’s (1994)
interactive model of program planning, incorporating a systems theory framework (Arthur & McMahon, 2005), utilizing Magnusson’s (1995) five-step career planning process, and a culturally-sensitive working alliance model (Collins & Arthur, 2004) will better serve the career development services of Afghan refugee and immigrant women than the traditional approach. Presently, little is known about the career development needs of this cultural population, which in turn affects the effectiveness of career services intended for them. Much of the existing literature has focused on their forced migration, physical and mental health, and their temporary employment needs.

Canada continues to embrace large numbers of diverse populations from every major cultural group globally as part of our economic, social, and political policies (Arthur & Collins, 2005). The task of serving these populations is challenging as they might not comprehend or be committed to the basic values of a democratic society (Hansen, 2003). As well, engaging in a counselling relationship may be an entirely new experience for many Afghan clients, who may feel awkward at having to seek assistance outside the family as there are resources that can be called upon in cases of need within the extended family (Firling, 1988).

In addition, “the context in which career decisions are commonly made is dynamic: occupations are changing, society is becoming increasingly complex and multicultural, and individuals need to plan for diverging rather than converging career paths” (Magnusson, 1995, p. 1). Adopting a systems theory framework utilizing Magnusson’s five-step career planning process acknowledges these factors by including individual, social, and environmental/societal contexts. The unique needs
and worldviews of Afghan refugee and immigrant women are more likely to be met if they are empowered to understand their lived experiences within the context of environmental/societal influences (Arthur & McMahon, 2005).

**Summary of Final Project Document**

This final project is organized into five chapters with this introduction constituting chapter one. Chapter two briefly introduces the Afghan culture to provide for a basic understanding of Afghan values and worldviews, followed by a global literature review of the various career development programs and services catered for Afghan refugee and immigrant women. Chapter three describes the steps taken to create the culture-infused career counselling approach for Afghan refugee and immigrant women. Chapter four describes the culture-infused career counselling approach developed to assist Afghan refugee and immigrant women with their career development. Finally, chapter five provides a synthesis of the literature and implications of the proposed culture-infused career counselling approach for Afghan refugee and immigrant women, as well as discussing the strengths and limitations of the project.

**Definition of Key Terms**

For the purpose of this final project, the following key terms are defined as follows:

1. Asylee or asylum seeker: “A person who is residing outside his/her country of origin and cannot return due to a well-founded risk of persecution” (UNHCR, 2002; as cited by Lindgren, 2004, p. 10).
2. Career counselling: Includes services and programs designed to facilitate the individual’s development and their ability to make optimal choices regarding their roles in occupational, familial, and social structures (Ward, 1995).

3. Career development: “Describes both the total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance factors that combine to shape individual career behaviour over the lifespan” (Sears, 1982; as cited by Herr, 2001, p. 1) and interventions or practices that are used "to enhance a person’s career development or to enable that person to make more effective career decisions" (Spokane, 1991, p. 22; as cited by Herr, 2001, p. 1).

4. Constructivist career counselling: is “a philosophical framework for guiding the work of the counsellor and client” (Peavy, 1996, p. 11).

5. Culture: A concept where each individual selects, “consciously or unconsciously, the components of their experience, history, context, and relational affiliation that define who they see themselves to be...we define culture broadly to include ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other dimensions that are relevant for each individual (Arthur & Collins, 2005, p. 12, 16).

6. Culture-infused counselling: “Is the conscious and purposeful infusion of cultural awareness and sensitivity into all aspects of the counselling process and all other roles assumed by the counsellor or psychologist” (Arthur & Collins, 2005, p. 16).
7. Immigrant: Is a “person who has made a conscious decision to leave her/his homeland and come to Canada to rejoin family members already in Canada or applied to come for political or economic reasons” (Melnyk, 1989).

8. Multicultural client: A client who is identified based on “a wide range of identity factors: most commonly ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, mental and physical disability, socio-economic status, and age (APA, 2002; Corey, 2001; Pope-Davis et al., 2002; Sue et al., 1998; Sue & Sue, 2003) and sometimes language, education, or religious/spiritual orientation” (APA, 2002; as cited by Arthur & Collins, 2005, p. 13).

9. Refugee: Is a “person who leaves his/her country of origin or residence due to a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality or social or political ties” (UNHCR, 2002; as cited by Lindgren, 2004, p. 10).
CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

Career Development of Afghan Refugee and Immigrant Women

Introduction

As a result of the political turmoil that has occurred for over two and half decades in Afghanistan, increasing numbers of Afghan refugee families have migrated to developing and industrialized nations including Canada; the majority of them are women and children (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, n.d.). The 1996 takeover by the Taliban, a group of religious extremists, was one of the most recent assaults in Afghanistan’s long history of oppressive regimes. Under Taliban rule, the women in particular were subjected to harsh forms of governmental restrictions and deprivation of many basic human rights (Wali, Gould, & Fitzgerald, 1999). Women were banned from attending schools and work, denied access to healthcare, and confined to their homes.

The purpose of this literature review was to identify and critically review existing literature on the various forms of career development services, which were made available for Afghan refugee and immigrant women. Both the developing and industrialized nations were investigated globally where the majority of asylum and resettlement had taken place. The countries of Pakistan and Iran where a large majority of Afghans took refuge were examined. As well, industrialized countries such as Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Austria, Hungary, Denmark, Australia, United States, and Canada where resettlement for many Afghan refugees took place were also reviewed.
For information purposes, the literature review commences with a discussion of the Afghan cultural background and its history, and continues with a global review of research on the career development services available to Afghan refugee and immigrant women. A summary follows that captures the highlights of the literature reviewed and concludes with pertinent findings.

Afghan Cultural Background and History

One needs to understand the nature of the Afghan culture and its history in order to comprehend the lives and experiences of Afghan women. From diverse backgrounds, Afghan refugees bring with them a long history from a rich, complex culture (“Afghans: Their History and Culture”, n.d.). This is described by Firling (1988) as follows:

Life in Afghanistan is rugged, and each family member must contribute fully to ensure survival. Possibly, this demanding life has contributed to a conservative, closed society…Their religion, Islam is an integral part of Afghan life…It is the unifying thread that runs through an otherwise independent system of close knit families and clans…Each family member plays a role in the family’s economic activities…the major responsibility belongs to the men. The attitude of children for their father is always one of absolute respect (pp. 31-32).

Prior to the 1979 Soviet Invasion, Afghan women participated in public life but the number of female participants were relatively small and they were mostly from urban backgrounds. Women studied to become doctors, teachers, engineers, lawyers, and judges. However, looking after the family was still considered as their
primary responsibility. As a result, should work interfere with family obligations or belittle the male members’ status, the woman was forced to give up her work (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, n.d.). In urban centers, over 70% of teachers, 40% of doctors, and 50% of government workers were Afghan women (Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, 2006). But in rural areas women continued their traditional roles running the home and contributing to the household income by raising livestock, supporting agricultural production, and carpet weaving (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, n.d.).

Following the Soviet Era was the invasion of Afghanistan by the Taliban regime in 1996. Education for girls and boys became severely restricted. In particular, educating girls was forbidden. Secular education did not exist, and boys only received religious education. Female teachers were not allowed to work forcing many schools for the boys to be closed. Girls’ education was run privately through home schooling. The Taliban also outlawed women’s employment in other sectors, although some women worked in health clinics and hospitals, and through international agencies. However, the vast majority of women were forbidden to work outside the home (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2001). As a result, many Afghans fled as refugees to nearby countries, or resettled in industrialized countries.

After the collapse of the Taliban regime in 1999, Afghan women began to experience freedom (Moreau & Yousufzai, 2004). However, many gaps in their education and employment prevented them from upgrading their education and securing employment as their professions required new training and skills.
development (Lindgren, 2004). Even those who have resettled in industrialized countries have faced cultural and economic barriers to integration.

Cross-Cultural and Adjustment Challenges

Afghan refugees and immigrants, similar to other newcomer groups, have faced multiple transitional challenges in their host country. For newly arrived Afghans, primary issues have revolved around physical and psychological aftermath of war and economic hardship, as well as education of children and family members who have had limited or no previous education (“Afghans: Their History and Culture”, n.d.).

Generally, some of the documentation suggested that the health status of refugees and immigrants started deteriorating post migration (Beiser et al., 1988; as cited by Arthur & Merali, 2005). The recovery phase did not occur until several years after resettlement once linguistic, cultural, economic, and interpersonal changes had taken place (Health Canada, 1999; as cited by Arthur & Merali, 2005).

Afghan refugees coming from refugee camps in Pakistan had reported physical health issues such as diarrhea, acute respiratory infections, and measles due to malnutrition (“Afghans: Their History and Culture”, n.d.). In early 1998, the Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) undertook a three month study of women’s health in Afghanistan and 200 women from Kabul and refugee settings in Pakistan were interviewed. The PHR study revealed that the physical health of 142 (71%) of the Afghan women had worsened within the past two years and 106 (53%) described occasional times when they were denied medical care when seriously ill.

Immigrants and refugees may suffer distress of different types, of different intensity and for different periods of time. A large body of theory suggests that, because resettling in a foreign country is undeniably a source of stress, immigrant and refugees will have more mental disorders than the host country populations. Many of the studies in our survey of the world literature on migration support this belief (p. 1).

Immigrants and refugees have been known to experience stress if they have suffered trauma prior to migration, or if, after migrating, their needs for social support, language capability, and meaningful employment have not been met. When this stress is combined with certain personal characteristics, emotional problems may result. Many immigrants and refugees have been reluctant in using formal mental health services because of the stigma regarding mental disorders, as well as at times doubting the benefits of treatments they could not understand. Those who became clients were often dissatisfied with the treatment or terminated counselling prematurely.

For example, 30% of the people seen at mental health clinics dropped out after the first interview; the corresponding figure for ethnic minorities was 50% (Sue, 1977; as cited by Beiser, Wood, Barwick, deCosta, Milne, et al., 1988). Most
commonly the complaint was that mental health therapists did not provide culturally sensitive treatment (Beiser, Wood, Barwick, deCosta, Milne, et al., 1988).

Psychological problems have been particularly challenging for Afghan refugees who have experienced family members being abducted or killed and their homes being destroyed. There has been a high incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among Afghan refugees, as well as depression, anxiety, and psychosomatic symptoms of stress exacerbated by cultural conflict, family role change, isolation, financial; and loss of family, property, privacy, and social status (“Afghans: Their History and Culture”, n.d.). Decline in psychological adjustment have also resulted due to language barriers preventing access to health care, unemployment, underemployment, experiencing of racism and discrimination, and reactivation of previous trauma experiences (Arthur & Merali, 2005).

Specifically, Afghan women more than men have been affected due to war and cultural restrictions imposed upon them during the Taliban regime, when women were denied freedom of movement, access to healthcare, and education (Cardozo, Bilukha, Gotway, Wolfe, Gerber, & Anderson, 2005). The previously mentioned PHR study on women’s health also revealed high incidence of mental health issues common among Afghan women, 97% of them experienced major depression, 42% met the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder, and 21% had often experienced suicidal ideations (Palmer, 1998).

Moreover, in 2002, a national population-based mental health survey was conducted in Afghanistan by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The prevalence of symptoms of depression was 73%, symptom of anxiety was found
to be 84%, and of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was 48% for female and 32% for male respondents. Results of this population-based survey indicated a higher prevalence of mental illness among women than among men. However, cross-cultural differences not taken into consideration could have influenced the results of this study. Also, the instruments utilized were not specifically validated for this society and were not culturally-sensitive, but had been utilized on other post war populations (Cardozo, et al., 2005).

Upon their forced migration to host countries, Afghan refugees have continued to be at high risk of war and displacement, and later their experiences of settlement. Cunningham and Cunningham (1997) examined a sample of 191 refugees for incidence of psychological and medical symptoms, torture, and related trauma at Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) between 1988 and 1992 resulting in PTSD. In 2002, Afghan refugees comprised more than 12% of clients in the STARTTS program (Omeri, Lennings, & Raymond, 2006). However, this study did not reveal exact numbers of Afghan women versus men respondents.

*Career Development Services in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan*

As a result of the vast majority of Afghans fleeing to neighboring nations, education and training programs were developed for those who had taken refuge in refugee villages and camps. Sinclair (1990) described the limited programs offering education and training to out-of-school youth and adults within Afghan refugee villages. Vocational training and apprenticeship programs were offered to men through four month on-the-job training in carpentry, tailoring, masonry, auto
mechanics, radio repair, and handicrafts to improve income earning capacity. However, the author referred to Afghan refugee women as being disadvantaged and unable to pursue economic activity due to strict cultural enforcements preventing their mobility, unless tailoring instructors were sent to the camps to train them on sewing machines or carpet weaving looms were set up in their tents. Such programs were offered in the hopes of repatriation back to Afghanistan to assist with reconstruction efforts. A primary healthcare network was also established to train 4000 male and 2000 female community health workers to educate other refugee families on personal hygiene and sanitation. However, such training was available to a limited number of heads of households and the women were only provided with informal training to support their families (Sinclair, 1990).

On another note, a gender-specific case study on the economic reliance of Afghan refugee women in Pakistan focused on promoting economic self-reliant training programs versus traditional women’s activities. Bartering and selling of food rations, farming, employment in the local economy, employment with assistance agencies, learning a trade or starting a small business, and participating in formal income-generating programs were highly recommended for realistic occupational ideas towards successful employment (Schultz, 1994). The author argued for raising skill and literacy levels of Afghan refugee women who made up most of the refugee population to promote self-sufficiency. Many education, skills generating, and income-generating programs have failed to include the participation of women resulting in the slow progression of Afghan refugee women in Pakistan. Overall, Schultz (1994) had well-stated his argument to the international community in the
interests of improving the lives of Afghan refugee women in Pakistan and to consider long-term planning for providing client-centered career development services.

Similarly, the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children have also advocated for improving the lives and defending the rights of refugees and internally displaced women, children, and adolescent. The Women’s Commission (2001) report on the rights, reconstruction, and peace for Afghan women and children post Taliban identified their issues of concern, opportunities and, obstacles for the return and reconstruction phase. Traditional income-generating projects for women such as embroidery and needlework had non-financial benefits. Integrating livelihood projects relating to agricultural production and raising livestock into the local economy was highly recommended. Educating refugee women on literacy prior to income-generating training, providing remedial education for those having gaps in their education, or providing non-formal education and livelihood training, were suggestions provided by the author. Methods to improve conditions for refugee and displaced women and their families had been discussed but no mention was made of implementation strategies.

Another qualitative study by Kakkar (2000) examined the participation and experiences of children, men, and women in varied educational settings in a temporary asylum within Pakistan. Three-quarters of the participants stated there was a lack of employment opportunities for Afghan refugees. Further, the jobs available were mainly in carpet weaving, machine repair, and construction. Women were encouraged to attend training as there was a demand for skilled labour jobs, so that they could earn income for the family. The lack of funding availability within the
current educational system for long-term planning was seen as the major barrier by program administrators. Overall, this study argued that the needs of Afghan refugees had not been met through educational services provided by government and non-governmental organizations in Pakistan. The author validated that unlike the western countries, third world countries could not afford to provide educational opportunities for Afghan refugees as integration was not a feasible option (Kakkar, 2000).

An exploratory case study on Afghan refugee women in Pakistan and Iran (Pazira, 2003) focused on socio-cultural changes in refugee women’s lives. Fifty women were interviewed from refugee camps and the suburbs in Pakistan and Tehran separately. The author’s findings indicated that the host country’s environment affected the daily lives of refugee women. In the suburbs of Tehran, Afghan refugees highly valued education. Most families wanted both their sons and daughters to be educated, as they viewed it as a necessity in life and a key towards a successful future. However, Afghan women within refugee camps had limited interaction and exposure to the host society and primarily viewed education as a method for the purpose of finding better economic opportunities, but not as a necessity for achieving other life goals. This study’s findings revealed that returning refugees were eager to receive education upon repatriation, but lack of long-term planning due to limited resources presented barriers (Pazira, 2003). The author’s recommendation to improve the quality of life upon repatriation was valid. Of note, however, the author’s position was potentially biased as she was an Afghan woman who had personally lived through the refugee experience.
Afghan Women’s Organizations

After the Soviet Invasion in the 1990s, many Afghan refugee women saw the need to become active in humanitarian response activities to aid other Afghan women. Many joined United Nations and other international organizations in Pakistan to develop women-centered projects in education, income generation, and health programs within refugee camps. Some Afghan refugee women established and taught in Afghan schools (Pourzand, 2004). Many women led non-governmental grassroots organizations (NGO’s) formed in 1989 that operated across the Afghan/Pakistan border, as well as in Pakistan refugee camps and in refugee communities in urban areas of Pakistan and Iran. Examples of such organizations included the Afghan Resource Centre and Afghan Women’s Welfare Development focusing on health, education, income generation, skills training, and relief distributions; Shuhada, covering health, education, home-based schools, income generation, and relief distribution; Afghan Women’s Education Center providing education programs for children, literacy for women, health services, and vocational training; and, Afghan Women’s Center designed to improve access for Afghan women to security, education, and healthcare (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, n.d.).

In addition, a number of networks run by Afghan women were identified that were used for advocacy, fund-raising, awareness, and project implementation. These groups included the Afghan Women’s Network, the Afghan Women’s Council, and the Revolutionary Association of the Women Afghanistan (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, n.d.). Other informal women’s
groups were also active, influential, and effective at community levels to organize income generation activities, literacy, mosque groups, Koranic education, or home schooling (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, n.d.).

Moreover, external organizations such as Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan with head offices in Canada also have had ongoing fundraising, education, and advocacy projects specifically for Afghan women residing in Afghanistan to ensure effective long-term sustainability of such programs. Projects focused on women’s health, employment, resettlement, education, and human rights education have been managed in partnership with some of the Afghan Women’s grassroots organizations mentioned above (Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, 2006). Afghan Women’s Association International (AWAI), established in 1992, assisted Afghan women residing in Afghanistan, Europe, Pakistan, and the United States. Projects included providing literacy, healthcare, and economic development.

In addition, Creating Hope International (CHI) has provided education and health assistance in a culturally sensitive manner to Afghan refugee groups and local groups of Afghans establishing grassroots NGOs. CHI has worked closely with the Afghan Institute of learning (AIL) with administration, budgeting, finance, and proposal writing. As a result, AIL has grown into a large, internationally recognized NGO with varied health and education services for both Afghan women and men (Creating Hope International, n.d.).

Many of the Afghan women NGOs have achieved substantial goals in a short period of time. They have provided career development services in developing
nations to empower and improve the quality of life of Afghan refugee women. However, many of these career development services offered in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan were widely variable to include on-the-job vocational training, English-as-a-Second language training, and Koranic education offered through Non-governmental Organizations and UNHCR. But they have been geared towards improving economic conditions of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran as nations, and have not been client-centered for the benefit of the women themselves as in some industrialized countries.

*Career Development Services in Australia*

Having reviewed the limited forms of career development services available to Afghan refugee women in third world nations of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran; it was also imperative to review the literature of career development services offered to Afghan refugee upon their migration and resettlement in industrialized countries. “In Australia, as in the United States and Canada, successful economic adjustment is a central tenet of immigration and refugee settlement policy” (Potocky, 1997; as cited by Waxman, 2001, p. 475). As a result, studies had been undertaken in these countries to identify the major predictors of immigrant and refugee economic adjustment.

A study was conducted on recently arrived refugees and immigrants in Australia representing three ethnic minority groups from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Bosnia (Waxman, 2001). Questionnaires were administered in the native language and results of the study revealed English language difficulty as the primary reason for unemployment. A significant relationship was found between English language
competency and the likelihood of being gainfully employed. Former financial status, prior work experience in the country of origin, having overseas qualifications recognized, or holding a university degree did not impact the current employment status or the inclination to look for work. Overall, Waxman (2001) recommended the following:

Career counselling with particular reference to qualification assessment should also be provided during the transition period. Without such changes, there will be continued un and underemployment of many highly trained and skilled entrants whose standard of human capital remains unappreciated…underutilized to the detriment of the individual entrant, his or her family and the economy (p. 496).

However, as the survey was administered by individuals of the same ethnic minority group as the participants, questioned the issue of neutrality and presence of potential cultural bias in the study. Also, out of 45 Afghan refugee registrants only one participated fully throughout the study which represents the opinion of only one individual.

Another qualitative research study conducted in Australia tracked the experience of two young refugee women exploring the role of leisure during post-migration, one of whom was of Afghan descent (Hall & Huyskens, 2002). The author referred to the acculturation process of refugees as being stressful due to the learning of a new language, culture, values, and securing economic independence. It was found that the process of acculturation and social integration positively inclined as female refugees participated in the economic well being of the
community. Employment enabled women to feel useful, it encouraged them to learn the English language as they contributed to the host country regaining confidence and self-respect (Hall & Huyskens, 2002). It was also found that during early resettlement, a heavy emphasis was placed on the need for paid work. Being unemployed affected the Afghan refugee woman’s long-term goals for professional achievement, as she was planning to continue studying medicine but was forced to consider a career in business instead (Holden, 1999; as cited by Hall & Huyskens, 2002). This case study further emphasized the need for provision of career development services during the resettlement process to assist with career guidance.

Overall, a combination of English language training and employment counselling services were provided in Australia for gainful employment towards economic self-sufficiency during settlement. However, the need for qualifications assessment of internationally educated immigrant women was recognized but was not as yet fully implemented.

Career Development Services in Germany, United Kingdom, and Czech Republic

Unlike most other countries, Germany did not offer asylum unless refugees were being persecuted by the ruling government of that country. As a result, Afghan refugees were not eligible for asylum in Germany because it did not recognize the Taliban regime that controlled 95% of Afghanistan. There are about 70,000 Afghans in Germany, one of the highest concentrations in Europe. Unlike other refugees in Germany, Afghans were not permitted to be deported due to United Nation’s sanctions against the Taliban (Roth, 2001).
A qualitative case study involving an Afghan family in Germany described the conditions which Afghan refugees experienced for years while awaiting to gain asylum (Roth, 2001). Basic needs were being met but living conditions were often less than ideal and travel was not permitted. Afghan refugee women were not eligible for higher education nor were they able to obtain necessary work permits required to be gainfully employed. Germany’s strict immigration policies have posed great challenges for Afghan refugee populations, where career development services have appeared to be nonexistent. There was also limited literature available in the English language on the Afghan refugee populations in Germany.

Generally, it has been found that the career development of immigrant and refugee women declines notably upon arriving in the new country, regardless of their existing qualifications and even after having qualifications accepted. This has posed major barriers for many immigrant and refugee women towards re-entering professional fields of work. The resettlement process needs to involve provision of vocational guidance and counselling to ensure that refugee and immigrant women develop goals which are both realistic and desirable to them (Clayton, 2005).

A qualitative study involving 120 women in four countries (Denmark, Germany, the Czech Republic, and United Kingdom) was conducted on refugee and immigrant women from the commonwealth countries (Clayton, 2005). However, research findings were primarily from the United Kingdom, as detailed results from other surveys were not available in English. Interview surveys conducted obtaining the women’s own stories suggested that employment rates of immigrant women in general were lower than those of other non-migrant women. Immigrant women also
presented a challenge for vocational guidance and educational institutions as well as English language fluency, international qualifications not being recognized, or missing as in the case of refugee women (Clayton, 2005).

The largest group of women in the British survey came from Africa, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Pacific. There were no records of Afghan refugee and immigrant women in this study. However, findings of this study revealed that provision of English language classes and guidance services in the United Kingdom existed but were inadequate for the needs of refugee and immigrant women due to shortage of resources. One of the biggest challenges faced was the frequent failure to place women at an appropriate course level for learning and progression (Clayton, 2005). This partly resulted due to shortages of resources, but primarily due to a bias that treated refugee and immigrant women “as blank slates and set them to begin again at the beginning” (Clayton, 2005, p. 235). All of the women interviewed had experienced this gender bias along with racial discrimination.

Moreover, German research highlighted the lack of access to labour market information and vocational guidance (Clayton, 2005). Denmark reported well-developed career development services for the integration of refugees implemented recently, but these services were provided in Danish language. Although refugees had career counsellors, they had no equivalent access to information and guidance. The Czech Republic was the least developed in career development services and posed the greatest challenge of developing adult education and guidance for its own citizens (Clayton, 2005). With reference to refugee and immigrant women, the author stressed that, “whatever stage she is at, vocational guidance plays a vital role in
order to help her assess her needs and assist her in choosing the most appropriate
course of action” (Clayton, 2005, p. 237). Several recommendations were made by
the author including that vocational guidance needed to be mainstreamed at all
levels universally, offering paths to education, training, employment, and self-
employment in a culturally sensitive manner (Clayton, 2005).

Overall, a wide variety of career development services were in the process of
being implemented for immigrant women in the United Kingdom and Denmark,
unlike Germany and the Czech Republic. These services consisted of English
language training, employment and self-employment, as well as limited career
counselling which included provision of vocational guidance towards the
development and implementation of long-term and short-term career/employment
goals. However this goal setting in many cases was not realistic or desirable for
many of these refugee and immigrant professional women.

Career Development Services in United States

The United States’ educational system was not originally designed for adults
who could not read or write. However, in the past decade a small number of school
systems have developed programs for newcomers to address academic, linguistic,
and cultural orientation needs for a limited period of time prior to entering the English
as a Second Language (ESL) program. Some school systems have developed
alternative high schools for adult learners for employment preparation or adult basic
education programs ("Afghans: Their History and Culture", n.d.).

An ethnographic research study on the community participation of Afghan
refugee women for successful implementation of community health programs was
conducted in California (Lindgren, 2004). The author mentioned other examples of community programs that had also proven successful during the resettlement phase for Afghan refugees, such as education and literacy. This was due to the development of a local Afghan community in Freemont, California where other previously settled Afghan members of the community assisted those who were in the transition phase of resettlement. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both Afghan women and men involving their storied experiences of resettlement in the United States. The Afghan women in particular highly participated in community programs as compared to Afghan men, and proved to be more successful in educational and literacy programs (Lindgren, 2004). However, Young Afghan women also spoke of their struggles in adjusting to the educational system and being accepted in school. Afghan refugees had very few resources available to them to facilitate their resettlement transition. Information on services for refugees was available, but it was American and not Afghan. “Prior to women’s involvement in the community, there was limited culturally appropriate resources available to Afghans, and community-based research demonstrated that there were a lot of unmet needs in the community” (Lindgren, 2004, p. 102).

Overall, the author concluded that Afghan refugee women had less difficulty with their resettlement adjustment than the Afghan men in the United States. Afghan refugee women had strong participation within their own Afghan community, as they created Afghan organizations such as Afghan Women’s Association International (AWAI) with head offices in California. Later, the Afghan Coalition was established which carried out community-wide educational programs, including English classes
and tutoring, and collaborative advocacy community projects such as women’s support groups (Lindgren, 2004). The above study discussed the existence of culturally sensitive career development services available for Afghan refugees and immigrants during the resettlement process. However limited resources were made available and not all Afghans were able to access these community developed programs.

Overall, the career development services offered in the United States to Afghan refugee and immigrant women were varied and consisted of language instruction for newcomers during settlement, ESL, academic upgrading, and various other community programs such as tutoring and advocacy self-help groups.

*Career Development Services in Canada*

“Canada is a nation founded on cultural diversity…immigration has changed the landscape of Canadian society so that it is one of the most diverse nations in the world” (Arthur & Merali, 2005, p. 333). However, career development services in Canada have often been developed with a white middle-class audience in mind. They have not always taken into account that many Canadians are from different cultural backgrounds and that they may have different values and beliefs (Melnyk, 1989). In North America the career counselling relationship has carried the assumptions which are unique to this culture that individuals are basically self-directed and have the freedom to make individual choices. However, many refugees and immigrants hold different beliefs about career decision-making, as well as about personal identity and decision-making autonomy (Melnyk, 1989).
Afghan-Canadian and other women’s associations. In Canada, several Canadian non-profit organizations have been developed since 2001 to assist Afghan refugee women in Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as those who have migrated to Canada. Afghan Women’s Organization (AWO) is a non-profit organization assisting Afghan refugee and immigrant women and their families in Canada, refugee camps abroad, and in Afghanistan (Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, 2006). AWO has promoted settlement of Afghan refugees in the Greater Toronto area with all aspects of adaptation and integration into Canadian society. AWO has provided settlement and personal counselling services, literacy classes, support groups, community employment training programs, and advocacy. However, there has been no mention of direct assistance to provide career planning or vocational development services for Afghan refugee and immigrant women apart from job search assistance, nor the availability of year-end reports documenting success of their programs.

The Afghan-Canadian Professionals of Ontario (ACPO) is an independent, voluntary, non-profit organization, promoting higher education among Afghan-Canadian students, community, and other immigrant and refugee populations residing within Canada (Afghan-Canadian Professionals of Ontario, 2002). ACPO has been successful in developing a mentoring program to provide professional guidance in diverse fields of higher education to students and Afghan members. However, this service provision has only been offered locally in Ontario, and no mention has been made of the success of their programs.
The Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association (CIWA), established in 1982, assists with the integration of immigrant and refugee women, girls, and their families in the Canadian community (Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association, n.d.). CIWA has provided settlement and integration services, language training, family services, skills training and employment services, as well as volunteer and community development. Within the skills training and employment division, CIWA has provided employment counselling, pre-employment and employment enhancement workshops such as networking breakfast meetings, resume clinic, job interview skills, life skills training, accounting and computer training, along with labour standards workshop (Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association, 1982). Also, upon interviewing Suma Balasubramanyan, Family Services Manager at CIWA, it was determined that between April, 2006, and March, 2007, a total of 111 Afghan refugee and immigrant women in Calgary had accessed the above mentioned services through CIWA. However, follow-up and program evaluation of success rates of services needs to be conducted at the end of their financial fiscal year before a year-end report can be made available (S. Balasubramanyan, Personal Communication, February 16, 2007).

In addition, having worked directly with the Ismaili Muslim Community in Calgary, Alberta, assisting Afghan Ismaili refugee and immigrant families with resettlement and career development services; the researcher has come to gather first-hand information about their service provision in assisting members of her own religious cultural community. Specifically, the Ismaili Women’s Economic Development (IWED) is a mentorship program for Afghan refugee and immigrant
Ismaili, Muslim women assisting with increasing skills and education to meet realistic career goals. Employment and self-employment assistance is also provided to contribute to their family income. Upon follow-up with the IWED program supervisor, Samira Haji, the program has been operating successfully and solely by volunteers in Calgary, Alberta, which has been informally evaluated internally in the form of quarterly report writing. No external formal evaluation has been conducted as yet, but the majority of the Afghan refugee and immigrant women participants in the IWED program have enrolled successfully in various educational training programs after provision of career counselling services, or have become successfully employed or self-employed in their fields of work (S. Haji, Personal Communication, February 27, 2007).

The Skills Enhancement Program (SEP) also developed by the Ismaili Muslim community in Canada, is set up within five major cities across the country. The SEP has assisted Afghan refugee and immigrant Ismaili Muslims empowering them to acquire better skills and knowledge to become gainfully employed, as well as provide opportunities for future growth within a culturally sensitive environment (Ismaili Muslim community, 2005). SEP has assisted to improve one’s educational standards towards development of a career path, which in turn assisted with raising the financial standard of living of the family. Services provided by SEP include culturally-sensitive one-on-one career and employment counselling, which includes labour market information, workplace ethics and employment standards, resume critique and preparation, interview skills, external agency/program referrals, networking with employers, self-employment assistance, and program funding
information. A formal evaluation was recently conducted on SEP services in October, 2006, by external members of the Ismaili, Muslim community. SEP has been successfully meeting its program objectives, but needs to incorporate a formal evaluation process to effectively measure the outcomes of the program. The services provided by SEP have been successfully delivered to the Afghan community, as they have been culturally-sensitive and client-centered to meet individuals’ cultural as well as career/employment needs (Ismaili Muslim community, 2007).

Another major group of Afghan newcomers in Canada who lack adequate information and career development services are the immigrant professionals with international qualifications and experience. Many are trained professionals who have frustrated with the lengthy and expensive qualification process in the Canadian system (Beg, 2005). A qualitative study of Afghan refugee women resettling in Canada explored Afghan women’s experiences of cultural, economic, and social integration (Beg, 2005) was conducted. There were 10 semi-structured interviews conducted, utilizing a feminist approach of storied experiences with Afghan women from three Canadian cities. Most of the participants stated that education in Canada offered for themselves and their children many opportunities towards a better quality of life, but that financial and other available resources were limited. Six out of the 10 women interviewed expressed serious concern for their lack of English language skills as a barrier to securing suitable employment and enhancing self-confidence to communicate needs. Five out of 10 participants were teachers with degrees in education but could not obtain Canadian equivalency certification as they lacked
Canadian experience and held gaps in their employment resulting in loss of professional status (Beg, 2005). More than half the women interviewed had plans of action for achieving certain realistic goals as immigrant professionals with international qualifications, but were experiencing frustration and challenges in their career paths to upgrade or pursue higher education due to English language communication barriers, lack of Canadian work experience, as well as the lengthy process and financial costs for upgrading their education. Overall, the author’s recommendations included provision of increased language training, financial assistance for retraining, and fostering of mentoring programs for refugee and immigrant women (Beg, 2005); all of which refer to the need for career development services for Afghan refugee and immigrant women.

The Canadian federal and provincial governments are now recognizing and implementing specific programs and services to assist immigrant professionals to re-enter into their professional fields of work. This deal ensures that the federal government will reduce some of the red tape and speed up the immigration process in order to streamline immigration in Alberta, a province which is in grips of a labour shortage. For example, a new pilot project will expedite the entry of some foreign health-care professionals who have applied to work in Alberta (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2007). Other recently government-funded programs and services that have been awarded to Bow Valley College in Calgary, Alberta to assist new Canadian immigrant professionals to restart their careers include Directions for Immigrants in Trades and Professional Careers (DITPC), Work Experience for Immigrant Professionals (WEIP), and Placement Services for Immigrant
Professionals (Bow Valley College, 2007). All of the above programs and services have been evaluated in 2007 by government stakeholders as successful programs, and contracts have been renewed for further services.

A wide variety of career development services have been provided, and are continually being implemented to offer quality services to Afghan refugee and immigrant women in Canada through Afghan-Canadian and other women’s organizations, as well as the federal and provincial governments. These consist of settlement and personal counselling services, literacy classes, support groups, mentorship, international qualifications assessment, community employment/self-employment counselling/training and work experience programs, as well as advocacy.

Review of Culture-Infused Career Counselling Approach

Mainstream North American career development theories have long been criticized for lack of applicability to diverse populations (Kerka, 2003). According to the literature, in order to address the diverse nature of the North American population a Systems Theory Framework (STF) should be used to incorporate Afghan refugees and immigrant women’s needs and worldviews. “STF is an integrative theory that recognizes the important contributions of all career theories” (Arthur & McMahon, 2005, p. 215). STF has been suggested by a number of researchers as useful in multicultural career counselling, as it can be flexible and yet meaningful for clients whose career development experiences are regarded as unique within each individual’s system (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). In the career counselling process, “STF provides a map to guide career counsellors as they
encourage clients to fill in the details and reality of the map through the telling of their career stories" (McMahon & Patton, 2003; as cited by McMahon, 2005, p. 32). Systems theory framework (STF) of career development provides for an eclectic theoretical foundation augmenting multicultural career counselling to consider the client’s unique needs and worldview. “Although the individual is central to the framework, it may be customized to accommodate clients whose career development occurs within either individualistic or collective cultures…STF accommodates the aspects of culture that are relevant for each client” (Arthur & McMahon, 2005, p. 210). STF has specifically been applied to the career development of women as part of a minority group, and is explained as a multiple systems of influence by Arthur and McMahon (2005) as follows:

At the heart of the STF is the individual system, comprising a range of intrapersonal influences, such as gender, interests, age, abilities, personality, and sexual orientation…depicted representing its subsystems…the broader contextual system comprises subsystems, specifically the social system…family educational institutions, and peers… and environmental/societal system…such as geographic location, historical influences, and globalization….the dynamic interaction that occurs within and between systems is accounted for by the process of influences of recursiveness, change over time and chance…the broader system of time is represented in the STF as a circular depiction outside that of the environmental/societal system that emphasizes the nonlinear nature of an individual’s career development and the integral role in assisting individuals to
recognize the influence of past experience on present life and future ambition…Unexpected or chance events, generated within the broader system but not anticipated by an individual, may profoundly influence career development and indeed identification with a particular culture, such as immigration to another country (pp. 212-214).

Overall, STF as a metatheoretical flexible framework for multicultural counselling allows for the examination of various cultural influences in career development that are unique to each individual client (Arthur & McMahon, 2004).

In addition, Magnusson’s (1995) model of the five processes of career planning is seen as useful in meeting the unique needs of Afghan refugee and immigrant women in a dynamic and increasingly complex multicultural society, as it is “one that attends to issues of client uniqueness and personal meaning” (Magnusson, 1995, p. 4). These five processes of career planning include initiation, exploration, preparation, and implementation. It is during the initiation process that an effective counselling relationship is to be established between the counsellor and client, and the client becomes engaged in the counselling process. The counsellor informs clients of the career planning process, builds a trusting relationship, and fosters hope envisioning their future career goals and aspirations (Magnusson, 1995). Cultural sensitivity is implemented through respect, understanding and awareness of the client’s cultural values and worldviews.

The exploration phase of the career planning process involves information-gathering of the client’s interests, values, and skills through both formal and informal assessments as well as occupational information sources (Magnusson, 1995). An
increased number of informal constructivist career counselling assessment tools, such as interviewing and story-telling (Peavy, 1996) are more effective for exploration purposes. Many formal career assessment tools have not been culturally-sensitive to suit the cultural needs of ethnic clients.

The decision-making phase of the career planning process involves using formal strategies to assist the client to confirm a choice (Magnusson, 1995). Involving other family members in the decision-making process may be more cultural sensitive to the client's needs, as she may hold strong to collective cultural values. The counsellor can empower the client to take responsibility and, perhaps, involve the family members to assist her with decision-making.

The preparation phase of the career planning process involves the development of an action plan with the client detailing particular objectives and goal attainment, identifying specific steps to be taken by the client, and how these steps will be evaluated and reported with potential timelines (Magnusson, 1995). It is imperative to involve the client as much as possible in the development of the action plan as a contractual agreement by both the client and counsellor. Client's cultural values and worldview need to be considered here as well, since the plan may involve participation of other family members.

The implementation phase of the career planning process involves the client carrying out the developed action plan. It is imperative for client support, feedback, and monitoring of progress to take place. The client is empowered to be independent in taking action while the counsellor provides professional support and guidance (Magnusson, 1995).
Magnusson’s (1995) processes model has also been widely utilized successfully with varied groups, including Native Canadians, street youth, inmates within correctional institutions, and with adults experiencing transition (Magnusson, 1995). Afghan refugee and immigrant women would greatly benefit from Magnusson’s model, as it takes a non-traditional approach to career counselling. It is cyclical in meeting their unique multicultural needs for planning their career paths during times of economic uncertainty and rapid change.

Moreover, counselling needs to be culture-infused whereby there is “the conscious and purposeful infusion of cultural awareness and sensitivity into all aspects of the counselling process and all other roles assumed by the counsellor” (Arthur & Collins, 2005, p. 16). Culture needs to be acknowledged in the counselling process between client and counsellor for developing a strong working alliance and to build an effective counselling relationship of trust and collaboration to achieve positive outcomes. The professional practices of career counselling need to be culturally-sensitive and specific toward the particular client population with whom the counsellor is working. “Failure to include cultural dimensions will likely introduce a barrier, both between the counsellor and client and between the purpose of the interaction and the outcomes attained” (Arthur & Collins, 2005, p. 16). The utilization of “a culture-infused counselling practice model will provide as a general framework for multicultural counselling competence” (Arthur & Collins, 2005, p. 34) to work effectively with Afghan refugee and immigrant women. This will emphasize the practice of embracing cultural awareness and sensitivity within the counselling process.
Incorporating and integrating a working alliance construct into the counselling process with multicultural clients is crucial for building rapport and a positive working relationship beginning upon initial contact with the client. According to Hiebert and Jerry (2002):

The working alliance is an organizing construct used to describe and define a relationship between a counsellor and client characterized by an effort by both client and counsellor to work collaboratively. This process is marked by three components: mutually agreed upon setting of goals…determining of tasks to reach those goals, and a relationship of mutual trust and respect (p. 1).

The building of trust in the Afghan client will involve extra effort and time due to the unsettling experiences of being a refugee, as well as the tendency of being uncertain of strangers poses barriers to the building of a trusting relationship (Firling, 1988). A collaborative alliance needs to be built, whereby the client is actively involved throughout the course of counselling in taking responsibility towards positive change by collaborating in the decision-making process. Both client and counsellor are seen working mutually together to identify and set realistic goals, develop interventions and problem-solve solutions (Bachelor, 1995). Development of a culturally-sensitive working alliance will be crucial by considering both cultural self-awareness of one’s own personal assumptions, values, and biases; as well as acknowledging and comprehending cultural awareness of the client’s worldview (Collins & Arthur, 2004). The counsellor will need to realize that for Afghan refugee and immigrant women to move effectively through the counselling process without
early termination, they will have to do so from acknowledging their own Afghan cultural heritage from position of strength and security (Firling, 1988). Afghan refugee and immigrant women are conditioned by their culture to be discreet in the company of strangers, thereby understanding their cultural values, experiences, and worldview is imperative to the success of establishing a counselling relationship (Firling, 1988).

Summary

There is a scarcity of studies that have been conducted on the post arrival experience of refugees in receiving countries. Physical and psychological health issues have posed as primary concerns upon their post-arrival to host countries, apart from education and career development services for Afghan migrants arriving into host countries. Limited culturally sensitive resources and services have been available to promote physical and mental well being.

Limited short-term vocational training programs were available and offered to Afghan refugee and immigrant women within developing nations of Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan to assist the refugee women with improving their quality of life by focusing on literacy, healthcare, and economic development in the hopes of repatriation and reconstruction efforts. Career development services for Afghan refugees and immigrants within Australia were also limited during the resettlement period resulting in unemployment and underemployment (Waxman, 2001). Studies conducted in the United Kingdom suggested lower rates of employment among refugee and immigrant women, limited vocational guidance and English language fluency, all of which have resulted due to lack of adequate career development.
resources. While Denmark reported well-development of career guidance services for the integration of refugees, these services were only provided in Danish.

The United States’ educational system designed academic, ESL, and cultural orientation programs for newcomers to address adult basic education. Studies conducted in the U.S. on the Afghan migrant population portrayed struggles experienced in adjustment to the educational system due to the availability of limited resources. (“Afghans: Their History and Culture”, n.d.). Career development services in Canada also revealed the development of cultural-oriented, academic, ESL, and settlement programs to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population. These programs included literacy, employment training, and career guidance services. Ongoing challenges exist for refugee and immigrant professionals to work in their professional fields of work in Canada (Beg, 2005). However, both federal and provincial governments in Canada have commenced implementing programs to assist professionals with international credentials gain Canadian work experience to re-enter the workforce (Canadian Broadcast Corporation, 2007).
CHAPTER III – PROCEDURES

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to design a career counselling approach for refugee and immigrant Afghan women post-arrival in Canada. A critical review of the literature and research studies on Afghan refugee and immigrant women was done of relevant studies from developing and industrialized nations. These studies were selected based on where the majority of Afghan refugees had resettled in order to identify programs that have proven effective for this population. A detailed description of how these program elements were integrated into a culture-infused career counselling approach for Afghan refugee and immigrant women is described in this chapter.

As well, concepts and career counselling models utilized to design this integrated culture-infused career counselling approach were taken from the following Campus Alberta Applied Psychology (CAAP) courses: CAAP 605-Developing a Working Alliance, CAAP 621-Foundations of Career Development, and CAAP 607-Equity and Diversity Issues in Counselling.

Literature Review Methodology

The search process for gathering research material focusing on Afghan refugee and immigrant women included accessing various on-line databases available at the University of Calgary library through the Campus Alberta Applied Psychology website. Databases searched included Academic Search Premier, ERIC, PsycINFO, and PsycARTICLES. In addition, Proquest, Canadian Periodical Index, and Canadian Research Index were also searched under dissertations and
thesis, women’s studies, and Canadian studies. Keywords used included: Afghan, refugee, and women; Afghan, refugee, and Canada; Afghan, refugee, and Germany; Afghan, refugee, and Pakistan; Afghan, refugee, and Iran; Afghan, refugee, and United States; Afghan, refugee, and United Kingdom; Afghan, refugee, and Netherlands; Afghan, refugee, and Australia; Afghan, refugee, and Austria; Afghan, refugee, and Europe; Afghan, career, and United States; Afghan, career, and Canada; Afghan, women and United States; Afghan, women, and immigrants. Overall, there was a scarcity of studies available on the arrival experiences of recently arrived refugees in receiving countries.

Research studies in many countries, such as Germany, Denmark, and the Czech Republic, where resettlement of Afghan refugees has occurred, were unavailable in the English language. Therefore, further research was conducted on the World Wide Web using the search engine Google Canada (www.google.ca) to locate relevant research related to the establishment of various women’s organizations and career development services available globally for this population.

In addition, two informational interviews were conducted with local women’s organizations in Calgary that provided information on specific services available to Afghan refugee and immigrant women. Suma Balasubramanyan from Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association (S. Balasubramanyan, personal communication, February 16, 2007), and Samira Haji from the Ismaili Women’s Economic Development (S. Haji, personal communication, February 27, 2007) both have had direct experience working directly with Afghan refugee and immigrant women. Both women kindly offered their time and assistance to provide valuable information.
Culture-Infused Career Counselling Approach Development

The review of literature on the career development services available to Afghan refugee and immigrant women post-arrival was combined with concepts and models from the three CAAP courses taken by this researcher to design a culture-infused career counselling approach which is wholistic, culturally-sensitive, and client-centered. The development of this culture-infused career counselling (Arthur & Collins, 2005) approach was done by utilizing the first five of the eleven elements of Caffarella's (1994) Interactive Model of Program Planning. As well, a system's theory framework (Arthur & McMahon, 2005), Magnusson's (1995) model of the five processes of career planning, and the modified culturally-sensitive working alliance model (Collins & Arthur, 2004) that incorporate culture-infused counselling was used.

Caffarella's Model

Caffarella’s (1994) Interactive Model of Program Planning for adult learners was utilized and applied to plan the culture-infused career counselling approach. It provided a non-linear, flexible guide for practice and an overall solid framework for planning programs (Caffarella, 1994). However, only five out of the eleven components of Caffarella’s Interactive Model were chosen for application to plan this proposal, as this final project offers only an approach and not a completed program for the target group. “In many situations, program planners need to use only selected parts of the model…” (Caffarella, 1994, p. 35). The following five components were utilized for application: Establishing a basis for the planning process; identifying program ideas; sorting and prioritizing program ideas; developing program
objectives; and formulating evaluation plans (Caffarella, 1994). Both internal and external contextual factors for planning, as well as structural supports were identified. Program ideas were generated from the global literature review conducted on Afghan refugee and immigrant women, which were sorted and prioritized utilizing Kaufman and Stone’s (1983) criteria system (Caffarella, 1994). Program objectives were developed and set as guidelines providing description, rationale, and evaluation for each. Finally, both formative and summative evaluation procedures were identified for implementation for the culturally-infused career counselling approach.

Establishing a Basis for the Planning Process

Caffarella (1994) identifies two essential elements for establishing a basis for program development as follows: 1. Becoming knowledgeable of both the internal and external contextual factors for planning, including structural aspects, the people, and cultural milieu; and 2. establishing a solid base of supports for planning, such as the organization’s mission statement, standard policies and procedures, and financial resources.

Internal contextual factors. Bow Valley College is a community educational institution operating for 40 years providing ESL, academic upgrading, and other industry-specific certificate training programs, catering to diverse adult learners. Specifically, Bow Valley College’s vision and mission statement is as follows.

The Bow Valley College vision is to be an innovative world-class college, rooted in communities, enabling people to learn a better living…our mission where people live and work. Bow Valley College will contribute to the vitality
of communities and the strength of the economy through innovative adult education programs and services which equip people for successful living, life-long learning and work in a global, knowledge-based economy...we are one of Alberta’s most cost-effective colleges...among the lowest per capita grant recipients of public post-secondary institutions in Alberta. Bow Valley College serves more than 11,000 learners each year throughout Southern Alberta. For years, Bow Valley College has been providing skills development programs to highly educated immigrant professionals by using a variety of instructional techniques. We have incorporated essential skills in our training and this has helped ensure that more than 96 per cent of our graduates secure employment in their field (Bow Valley College, 2007).

In addition, Bow Valley College is board-governed and decisions about educational programs within the educational institution are made primarily through a formal, hierarchal chain of command in a collaborative and democratic manner.

Individualized counselling sessions have been selected for this proposed culture-infused career counselling program rather than group, as individualized sessions with multicultural clients can be more effective. A strong working alliance needs to be developed between the client and counsellor to create an environment of safety, trust, and prevent premature termination of counselling. Many multicultural clients may be reluctant to disclose personal information or share family concerns in front of others as it clashes with their cultural values (Corey & Corey, 2006). Also, the majority of the counselling services offered at Bow Valley College to multicultural students are presently provided on a one-to-one basis.
However, some group work has been suggested for incorporation into this program to provide an avenue for supportive interaction, and collective feedback to one another in familiar patterns. Group work can allow members to gain power, strength, and support from collective group feedback (Corey & Corey, 2006). The proposed process for referral to group workshops will be done face-to-face with the existing multicultural agency program coordinators such as CIWA, who presently provide mentoring programs, network breakfast meetings, pre-employment and employment workshops to aid immigrant professional women. As well, referrals have been made in-house within existing programs that service immigrant professionals holding international qualifications within Bow Valley College. Two examples of such programs are Directions for Immigrants in Trades and Professional Careers (DITPC) and the Work Experience Program for Immigrant Professionals (WEIP).

The option of two additional sessions are to be offered after the eighth-week session to those participants who would like to have any family members participate as part of this program. The Afghan family is a model of unity and solidarity, the father and sons of the family hold ultimate authority in almost all matters pertaining to the group (Firling, 1988). “Due to the cultural importance of family bonds for many immigrants and refugees, family counselling appears to be a natural extension of program planning” (Arthur & Merali, 2005, p. 353).

In addition, a daycare funding grant is provided to those clients who are unemployed or under-employed and require care for young pre-school children. The subsidy has been provided to qualifying clients for locating nearby daycare facilities
during counselling sessions. Presently, government-funded programs at Bow Valley College providing daycare funds are managed in this manner.

Afghan refugee and immigrant participants involved in this proposed program need to be able to communicate in the English language without the assistance of an interpreter. An English Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) of 4 or more in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension is a requirement for participants to successfully move through this centre’s counselling process. The assessment for CLB is done in-house at Bow Valley College by the existing ESL department.

*External factors.* External factors that involve the wider community also need to be addressed when planning programs (Caffarella, 1994). “An increasingly global economy and the steady stream of immigrants and refugees from developing to developed nations have prompted many changes in our conceptions of career (Leong & Hartung, 2000, p. 212). The provision of career development services need to reflect Canada’s cultural diversity.

Afghan refugee and immigrant women and their families upon arrival to their host country have experienced physical and mental health issues due to war conditions including trauma, torture, and the resulting Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, which need to be addressed when program planning (Cardozo, et al., 2005). Gaps in education, training, and work experience of Afghan refugee and immigrant women in particular also need to be considered (“Afghans: Their History and Culture”, n.d.).

Traditional mainstream North American career development theories have not recognized non-dominant cultural views nor successfully provided direction in career
counselling for culturally diverse clients. Magnusson’s (1995) model has been developed on North American values and may be viewed as biased if it is not modified to be culturally-sensitive to meet the needs of multicultural populations. However, the 21st century workplace is constantly changing and complex, which “demands a dynamic system for career planning interventions; one that attends to issues of client uniqueness and personal meaning” (Magnusson, 1995, p. 4). Afghan refugee and immigrant women hold diverse needs, cultural values, and worldviews that need to be considered within the career counselling process. A wholistic, client-centered, culturally-sensitive culture-infused career counselling approach is required to meet this population’s needs. Clearly, the need for career planning for all age groups and cultures is more important than ever. “Along with evolving organizational structure changes will come a work force that is more diverse in terms of culture and gender” (Zunker, 1998, p. 308).

Building structural support. “It is important to establish a firm base of support for planning and conducting educational programs...the structural support that program planners need to build depends primarily on how central the educational function is to the organization...” (Caffarella, 1994, p. 49). Bow Valley College is a continuing education community college for adult learners whose major function is to provide in-house educational and training programs to the community at large. The college has been supporting a generic approach, but is quickly moving towards provision of culturally-sensitive programming to meet the needs of the growing multicultural population of students attending Bow Valley College. However, a solid
Identifying Program Ideas

According to Caffarella (1994), “program ideas surface from a number of sources – people, responsibilities and tasks of adult life, organizations, and communities and society in general – and are generated in both formal and informal ways” (p. 78). The sources utilized for generating ideas towards this culture-infused career counselling approach are research materials, information from the Internet, and from conducting interviews with expert resources on this target population.

Research materials. The global literature review described in Chapter two suggests that the following program ideas need to be incorporated into this project, which includes:

- Provision of vocational training and English language training programs, including on-the-job training in carpentry, tailoring, masonry, auto mechanics, construction, radio repair, handicrafts, and carpet weaving;
- Bartering and selling of food rations, farming, employment in the local economy, employment with assistance agencies, learning a trade or starting a small business, participating in formal income-generating programs, educating refugee women on literacy prior to income-generation training, providing remedial education for those having gaps in their education, career counselling with particular reference to qualification assessment provided during the transition period to limit
both under and unemployment of immigrant professionals;

- Provision of increased language training programs, financial assistance for retraining, and fostering of mentoring programs for refugee and immigrant professional women;

- Vocational guidance services mainstreamed in a culturally sensitive manner at all levels offering paths to education, training, employment, and self-employment;

- Cultural orientation, vocational guidance in language of origin, vocational education, recognition of their international qualifications, mentoring, culturally sensitive student support services, adequate assessment procedures to ensure that women are placed at the correct level, and opportunities for work experience and placement in the new country;

- Development of programs for newcomers to address academic, linguistic, and cultural orientation needs for a limited period of time prior to entering the English as a Second Language (ESL) program; provision of alternative high schools for adult learners for employment preparation or adult basic education programs; and

- Provision of mentorship programs and professional guidance services in diverse fields of higher education; culturally-sensitive one-on-one career and employment counselling sessions including labour market information, workplace ethics and employment standards, resume critique and preparation, interview skills, external agency/program
referrals, networking with employers, and program funding information.

*Internet.* A thorough research of various reputable Internet websites of non-profit organizations was conducted. Internet information from CIWA, ACPO, Afghan Women for Women, UNHCR, AWAI, Creating Hope, Afghan Women’s Organization, and Women's Commission suggest that English language and employment training programs, as well as health and advocacy programs also need to be included.

*Interviews.* As outlined previously, interviews were also conducted with Suma Balasubramanyan and Samira Haji to gather program ideas suitable for refugee and immigrant women. It is suggested that the following ideas be incorporated into the culture-infused career counselling approach:

- Pre-employment and employment enhancement workshops including networking breakfast meetings, resume clinic, job interview skills, life skills training, accounting and computer training, and labour standards workshops.

CIWA’s family services program manager Suma Balasubramanyan, discussed these specific employment counselling, pre-employment, and employment enhancement workshops taking place at CIWA to assist refugee and immigrant women. An interview was also conducted with the IWED program manager, Samira Haji, who discussed the provision of mentorship programs for Afghan refugee and immigrant Ismaili, Muslim women to assist with increasing skills and education for meeting realistic career goals; as well as employment and self-employment assistance.
Sorting and Prioritizing Program Ideas

Caffarella (1994) discusses the sorting and prioritizing of program ideas as follows, “Generating ideas for educational programs is usually not enough...people need to sort through these ideas to determine which of them make sense in terms of planning an educational program...they need to decide which idea or ideas should have priority in the planning process” (Caffarella, 1994, p. 83). Program ideas were generated, selected, and prioritized as program content for the culture-infused career counselling approach for Afghan refugee and immigrant women. Kaufman and Stone’s (1983) criteria system was utilized (Caffarella, 1994). Each program idea was ranked from one (highest) to 20 (lowest) resulting in the following list of prioritized program ideas:

- Provision of culturally-sensitive individualized career counselling
  weekly sessions required to gather client information through conducting of formal and informal career assessments, developing an action plan outlining specific steps to implement, learning how to research occupational and labour market information as part of the career decision-making process, and discuss weekly progress and challenges;

- For clients holding training or employment gaps, the counselling sessions would focus on providing information and referral on academic upgrading programs to complete high school courses or GED, computer and accounting training programs, and financial assistance information workshops;
• Referral to mentorship programs for immigrant professionals; information and to English language training programs (ESL), vocational training programs in various trades such as carpentry, construction, and auto-mechanics made as required; information and resources for self-employment programs on starting small businesses was provided to those who were planning to pursue operating/owning their own business; and

• For clients focusing on finding employment, provision of individualized or referral to small group pre-employment and employment enhancement programs was made to networking breakfast meetings, resume clinic, job interview skills workshops, labour standards and employment safety.

The above program ideas were ranked and considered based on their application to systems theory framework, considering a multiple systems of influence involving the individual, social, and environmental/societal systems (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). Program ideas were also planned and provided in a culturally-sensitive and client-centered manner, infusing culture throughout the entire counselling process (Arthur & Collins, 2005). As well, Magnusson’s (1995) five processes of career planning were also considered in the above program ideas. Finally, the culturally-sensitive working alliance model was also utilized towards the development of a strong working alliance between the client and counsellor (Collins & Arthur, 2004).
Developing Program Objectives

According to Caffarella (1994), “program objectives provide clear statements of the anticipated results to be achieved through an educational program...they can serve as concrete guidelines for developing transfer-of-learning plans, as benchmarks against which programs are evaluated, and as the foundation of instructional plans” (p. 100). Three specific program objectives were developed to be attained by program participants during the eight to 10-week proposed program. These objectives were determined based on the information gathered from the global literature review conducted on the career development services of Afghan refugee and immigrant women, and are described in Chapter IV.

Formulating Evaluation Plans

Summative program evaluation is a process used to determine whether the design and delivery of a program was effective and whether the proposed outcomes were met. Formative evaluation of the client's success is critical to assess the impact of the experience on the members and to assess the counsellor's effectiveness. Evaluation is a continuous process beginning in the planning phase, as well as throughout the entire program, i.e., formative evaluation, and concludes at the follow-up phase of the group (Caffarella, 1994). This evaluation may be pulled together as a report utilized for the purposes of accountability and information sharing with program stakeholders, colleagues, and supervising staff (Amundson, Borgen, Westwood, & Pollard, 1989). Evaluation for this culture-infused career counselling approach is to be conducted by systematic or formal evaluation, as well as through informal and unplanned evaluation procedures throughout the program.
Most program planning models advocate for formal or systematic process of evaluating programs. However, informal and often unplanned evaluation opportunities are also very useful. As with systematic evaluation, these informal evaluation strategies can be used prior to the start of group, during the group, or even after the group has been completed (Caffarella, 1994).

Systems Theory Framework

Incorporating a systems theory framework (STF) utilizing culture-infused counselling concepts, embraces culture allowing career practices to become culturally relevant. In turn, Afghan refugee and immigrant women are empowered to explore their unique contexts at various levels, constructively and practically, in the career development process (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). Simultaneously, STF inspires career counsellors to competently develop a multicultural mindset to meet consumer needs (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). During the exploration phase of the career counselling process, both counsellor and client collaboratively work together to identify then discuss the client’s individual, social, and environmental/societal systems. As well the dynamic interaction occurring within and between these systems is elaborated. The counsellor utilizes STF as a map to guide the career counselling process, while the client is empowered to fill in the details of her lived experiences through story-telling (McMahon & Patton, 2003; as cited by McMahon, 2005). Patton and McMahon’s (1997) visual diagrams of each system will be utilized in the above counselling process as a point for discussion in a step-by-step fashion (McMahon, 2005). Patton and McMahon’s (1997) STF was integrated into this
proposed culture-infused career counselling process in Chapter IV as part of program objective one.

*Magnusson’s Model and Culturally-Sensitive Working Alliance*

Magnusson’s (1995) processes of career planning model incorporating the culturally-sensitive working alliance model (Collins & Arthur, 2004) provides as an added benefit to the career planning process. The basis of a culture-infused career counselling approach is the development of a strong culturally-sensitive working alliance between client and counsellor. In the career planning process this is pertinent in order to ensure successful counselling outcomes. The initiation phase of Magnusson’s (1995) model of the processes of career planning highlights the importance of developing an effective counselling relationship. This works towards developing a strong working alliance for motivating clients to take action in the career planning process. By focusing on the culture-infused counselling working alliance, counsellors consider and respect the unique needs of multicultural clients (Arthur & Collins, 2004). Magnusson’s (1995) five processes critical to effective career planning were integrated into this proposed culture-infused career counselling approach in a cyclical step-by-step manner as part of program objective one and three, which are described in Chapter IV. This was done in order to provide the career process focus and content to assist with effective career decision-making. These processes are: initiation, exploration, decision-making, preparation, and implementation.
Summary

In this chapter the methodology for gathering information for the literature review is described. These first five elements of Caffarella’s (1994) Interactive Model of Program Planning were utilized to develop this culture-infused career counselling approach: establishing a basis for the planning process; identifying program ideas; sorting and prioritizing program ideas; developing program objectives; and formulating evaluation plans. As well, how STF (Patton & McMahon, 1997), Magnusson’s (1995) five processes of career planning, culture-infused counselling framework (Arthur & Collins, 2005), and the culturally-sensitive working alliance model (Collins & Arthur, 2004) were integrated into the proposed program approach was described.
CHAPTER IV - PRODUCT

A Proposed Culture-Infused Career Counselling Approach for Afghan Refugee and Immigrant Women

This chapter describes the wholistic, culturally-sensitive, client-centered career development approach that has been designed specifically to meet the needs of Afghan refugee and immigrant women who have resettled in Canada. A detailed description of the proposed program follows and utilizes the first five elements of Caffarella's (1994) interactive model of program planning.

This proposed culture-infused career counselling program has been planned for future facilitation in-house at the Bow Valley College, Centre for Career Advancement in Calgary. This proposal specifically describes an individualized culture-infused career counselling approach that entails one-to-one weekly 60-minute sessions with Afghan refugee or immigrant women for an eight to 10-week period. It is proposed that a follow-up one hour session be provided one month after the end of the eight to 10-week program to discuss/evaluate client progress and modifications. Weekly individualized counselling sessions have been kept to a one hour time frame to allow for some intensive work without causing fatigue to either party during the counselling session. This is also the existing centre policy. Frequency and duration of counselling sessions depend on the counsellor's style and the type of clientele one is working with (Corey & Corey, 2006).

The following program objectives are to be attained by program participants during this eight to 10-week proposed program. An overview of this culture-infused career counselling program has been provided in Table 1.
Program Objective One

Description and Rationale. This program assists individual clients to explore their individual, social, environmental/societal systems, and gather career-related information through the process of formal and informal assessment. Exploration is the first of the five processes in Magnusson’s (1995) career planning model, and includes gathering of client information through both informal and formal assessment. When utilizing different assessment tools with Afghan refugee and immigrant women, it is important to assess if any cultural bias is present in the assessment process.

Story-telling, narrative, and informational interviewing as informal constructivist career assessment tools are considered more culturally-sensitive than formal trait-and-factor assessment tools such as Holland’s Self-Directed Search. The author believes that there are no social norms involved when using non-standardized informal assessment tools, instead they are more wholistic and client-centered catering to the cultural needs of diverse clients. Constructivist career counselling assessments are meaningful activities approaching the individual as a whole being, to “work directly with the client’s own perceptions and personal meanings, often given in the form of stories, metaphors, narratives and dialogue” (Peavy, 1996, p. 12).

However, some standardized assessment tools, such as Myers Briggs Type Indicator personality assessment, Strong Interest Inventory, and Career Cruising have been incorporated for the purposes of gathering occupational and career information with the client. These formal assessment tools have to be used with
caution taking into consideration the Afghan refugee and immigrant woman’s culture and worldview, as they have norms that have been compared to the North American populations which may pose cultural conflict when used with non-dominant populations. A systems theory framework is incorporated as information is gathered via a multiple systems of influence. Through conducting a cultural interview with the client, story-telling and narrative techniques are to be utilized as a way to talk about each of these layers within each system. The client’s multiple systems of influence and the dynamic interaction between and within the systems are to be addressed. Namely the individual, social, and environmental/societal systems are to be discussed referring to Patton and McMahon’s (1997) graphical diagrams of the individual client system, as well as the client and counsellor’s therapeutic system (see Appendix A and B).

*How objective will be addressed.* The first three weekly sessions are to be spent on Magnusson’s (1995) Initiation stage to secure meaningful engagement towards an effective counselling relationship. As well, both formal and informal assessment tools will be utilized for exploration and information-gathering purposes. Culture-infused career counselling approach methods will be incorporated as follows. The counsellor will review the different standardized and non-standardized methods of assessment to be utilized with the multicultural client in a methodical and culturally sensitive manner respecting her worldview. The counsellor will also develop cultural awareness of her own value system as well as respect and be culturally-sensitive towards the client’s value system and worldview as client information is gathered. The counsellor will take the time to learn about the Afghan
client’s culture and worldview by connecting with settlement and immigrant-serving agencies to understand the immigration histories, settlement process, and cultural needs of Afghan refugee and immigrant groups (Arthur & Merali, 2005). A culturally-sensitive working alliance (Collins & Arthur, 2004) develops between the client and counsellor, and a safe and trusting relationship is built during the initial sessions of counselling (See Appendix C). “Effective culture-infused career counselling requires counsellors to expand the traditional range of competencies for professional practice to include specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to cultural competence” (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue & Sue, 2003; as cited by Arthur & Collins, 2005, p. 16). This is accomplished as the counsellor develops her own cultural awareness of personal assumptions, values, and biases; as well as understanding the client’s worldview (Collins & Arthur, 2004). Also, by being genuine and sharing one’s own experiences with the client will strengthen the working alliance between the client and counsellor (Firling, 1988).

Evaluation of objective. This objective is to be evaluated formatively based on the amount and usefulness of the information gathered, and by regularly checking-in with the client to get a snap-shot of their learning. The client keeps a log of her learning and shares her weekly progress as a follow-up with the counsellor. Cultural-sensitivity and respect needs to be acknowledged relating to the client’s comfort around reflecting their learning through journaling on a weekly basis. The client is asked whether keeping a written record of her reflections through journaling poses a conflict with her own cultural values.
Program Objective Two

Description and Rationale. The program provides information and resources to clients on how to access labour market information on various careers, occupations, and industries. The literature review revealed that Afghan refugee and immigrant women did not have the skills required to access labour market information in order to make informed career decisions. By teaching them how to access labour market information and resources, clients may be empowered to make career decisions independently based on the information gathered. Labour market information accessing skills may be provided individually or in a group workshop format.

How objective will be addressed. The fourth weekly counselling session focuses on teaching clients how to access labour market information. The counsellor will utilize various websites and other resources to demonstrate and discuss either in a group workshop or individually, depending on the client’s comfort zone, in a culturally-sensitive manner to ensure that informed career decision-making occurs by the client during the third stage of Magnusson’s career planning process.

Evaluation of objective. Both formative and summative evaluations are to be conducted throughout the program to measure client learning and progress by checking-in with the client.

Program Objective Three

Description and Rationale. This program assists individual clients with designing an initial meaningful and realistic action plan for implementation towards their career journey. The Preparation and Implementation stages of Magnusson’s
model involve developing and implementing an action plan. A step-by-step action plan is to be developed collaboratively by both client and counsellor, respecting the client’s cultural values and worldview. The counsellor will “effectively infuse culture” (Arthur & Collins, 2005, p. 16) at each step of the action plan acknowledging and respecting the client’s cultural background, while developing and integrating multicultural counselling competence of developing awareness and understanding as part of her or his professional counselling practice.

How objective will be addressed. The last few weekly sessions focus on preparation and implementation of the action plan where both the client and counsellor work collaboratively on developing an initial action plan highlighting specific steps towards the client’s long-term and short-term career goals; and implementation towards formal career decision-making process. These two final processes form part of Magnusson’s (1995) career planning model. It is at these two stages of Magnusson’s model that multicultural clients will be empowered by the counsellor, and also have the option of involving some of their close family members to assist with their career decision-making action plan development in a culturally-sensitive manner with the aid of the career counsellor.

Evaluation of objective. This objective is to be evaluated based on quality of the individualized action plan developed with the client, as documented on an Action Plan worksheet. This worksheet is to be re-examined and reviewed during the follow-up session which takes place one month after the end of the eight to 10-week program. After carefully reviewing progress notes made in the client’s journal, as
well as checking-in with the client via a cultural interview; modifications to the action plan may be made as required.

Informal evaluations are to be conducted in the following manner. The counsellor talks to two other colleagues who review the content and format of the proposed program to provide direct and honest feedback. At the end of weekly counselling sessions, a few participants are randomly selected to identify their reactions to the program, as well as during check-ins at the beginning of each counselling session. Feedback received is to be utilized and action to be taken on what has been learned (Caffarella, 1994). At the end of the program, participants are asked to fill out an overall program evaluation form to gather information on session content and process, the career counsellor's skills, logical arrangements, and the overall program. All formal evaluations are to be developed using simple and easy-to-understand English language. The questions are to be directed to the client satisfaction of the service provided. It is administered in a culturally-sensitive manner by an outside member and be submitted anonymously into the evaluation box provided in the meeting room. The formative evaluation are also reviewed and discussed with the staff involved in program planning and modifications to the program will be made based on the client feedback. During the one-month follow-up session, the counsellor checks-in with the client for feedback on the progress of her action plan via her learning reflections journal.
Table 1

*Overview of Culture-Infused Career Counselling Program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore individual, social, and Environmental/societal systems. Gather</td>
<td><strong>Informal assessments:</strong> Story-telling, narrative, informational interviewing</td>
<td><strong>Formative:</strong> Check-in weekly with client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>career-related information</td>
<td><strong>Formal assessments:</strong> Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Strong Interest Inventory, Career Cruising</td>
<td><strong>Summative:</strong> Client to keep a learning log of weekly progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide information and resources on how to access labour market</td>
<td>Various websites (eg. ALIS) and other resource materials (booklets, handouts) to be provided, demonstrated, and discussed</td>
<td><strong>Formative:</strong> Check-in weekly with client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(individually or in group)</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Summative:</strong> Client to keep a learning log of weekly progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design initial meaningful and realistic action plan collaboratively between</td>
<td>Highlight specific steps towards long-term and short-term career goals</td>
<td><strong>Summative:</strong> Client to document progress of action plan steps on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>counsellor and client</td>
<td></td>
<td>Action Plan Worksheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Formative:</strong> Check-in weekly with client to identify client reactions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

66
Summary

A proposed culture-infused career counselling approach has been described in the form of an eight to 10-week individualized program designed for Afghan refugee and immigrant women utilizing the first five elements of Caffarella’s (1994) Interactive Model of Program Planning. Program ideas were generated from the literature review previously conducted and were prioritized and ranked according to highest to lowest importance. Specific objectives were identified and described utilizing Magnusson’s five processes of career planning, coupled with how each would be addressed integrating culture-infused career counselling principles and practices implemented by the career counsellor and the objectives evaluated. These program evaluations included both summative and formative forms of assessment. It is anticipated that this proposed program will take place initially, at Bow Valley College. However, clients are also to be referred to group workshops to CIWA, Momentum, and other immigrant-serving agencies that provide culturally-sensitive programming. A system theory framework, Magnusson’s processes of career planning, culturally-sensitive working alliance model, as well as purposely infusing culture into the career planning process were all integrated into the design of this culture-infused career counselling approach for Afghan refugee and immigrant women.
CHAPTER V

Synthesis and Implications

Introduction

This chapter discusses the implications of the culture-infused career counselling approach proposed in this project in terms of its applications to different counselling settings, and how it may be generalized to other cultural populations. As well, its impact, limitations, and ways to improve the project are examined. Specific suggestions for further development of this approach are offered.

Impact of Project

This culture-infused career counselling approach designed for Afghan refugee and immigrant women uses a systems theory framework (STF). It incorporates culture-infused counselling concepts and utilizes Magnusson’s (1995) career planning processes within a culturally-sensitive working alliance to offer a wholistic approach in meeting the unique needs of the targeted group. As a result, this final project takes a non-traditional stance to the typical North American career counselling program by acknowledging and respecting the client’s unique cultural worldview. This is accomplished by creating a safe, trusting, and respectful environment within the counselling process. As an added benefit, this systematic approach allows for the inclusion of other family members in the counselling process. “Due to the cultural importance of family bonds for many immigrants and refugees, family counselling appears to be a natural extension of program planning” (Arthur & Merali, 2005, p. 353).
The flexibility and adaptability of this approach also allows it to be tailored to meet the unique needs of various other collective cultural populations by using Caffarella’s interactive model. Her model for planning programs is generic and therefore can be used for any specific cultural adult population (Caffarella, 1994).

The researcher believes that the program approach described in this project will result in increased members of Afghan refugee and immigrant women in Calgary accessing career assistance outside of their family environment, because this counselling approach engages the client in a strong working alliance of mutual trust between the client and counsellor. For the same reason, this approach should also reduce the instance of the client prematurely terminating the counselling process (Arthur & Collins, 2005).

Limitations of Project

The cultural-infused career counselling approach presented in this final project also has its limitations. This proposed project has not been fully developed as a program or actually piloted with this target client group. This can be achieved by applying additional relevant elements of Caffarella’s (1994) interactive model of program planning. These elements would include: preparing for the transfer of learning, designing instructional plans, determining program formats/schedules/staff needs, preparing budgets and marketing plans, coordinating facilities and on-site events, and communicating the value of the program.

Once the program is fully developed, it then needs to be piloted and evaluated with Afghan refugee and immigrant women. The evaluation should include measures of effectiveness of client reaching her long-term and short-term career
goals, and continuing with the counselling process without termination. The use of culturally-sensitive attitudes and behaviour by the counsellor also needs to be evaluated.

Any further development of this program must also involve the knowledge and expertise of Afghan refugee and immigrant women themselves, since they are the experts on their own lived experiences (Peavy, 1996). Afghan women and their community leaders should be asked to identify program ideas and relevant issues that may not be addressed in this final project. This can be accomplished by interviewing individual Afghan women prior to the pilot program, as well as those who participate in the pilot program to determine what worked, as well as did not work.

Any further development of this project should also be undertaken in collaboration with professionals having relevant experience with this target population from the fields of cross-cultural communication, adult education vocational programs, and immigrant settlement service agencies to develop a genuinely cultural-sensitive and client-centered program. Counsellors from immigrant-serving agencies (commonly members of immigrant groups they serve) engage in ongoing needs assessments as they interact daily with their clients (Arthur & Merali, 2005). Having a diverse and multidisciplinary group of planners working together can aid in developing a comprehensive program by ensuring that all pieces of the puzzle have been addressed.

Future empirical research on Afghan refugee and immigrant women’s career development in North America needs to be conducted in order to ensure the
development of more culturally-sensitive, client-centered programs. “The major theoretical constructs in career have not been tested or re-tested adequately, with culturally diverse groups” (Leong & Brown, 1995, p. 173; as cited by Leong & Hartung, 2000, p. 219). In addition, systems theory framework (STF) as it is applied to career development issues is relatively new. In support of this position, “STF’s application to multicultural counselling at a theoretical level suggests that further investigation of its application to practice is warranted” (Arthur & McMahon, 2005, p. 219).

It is also important to note that career counsellors are not able to realistically serve all refugee and immigrant populations, particularly at the stage of settlement where numerous issues have to be considered. Their role as culturally-sensitive career counsellors in working with refugee and immigrant populations is to assist them in building support networks, to act as a cultural broker and provide information on immigrant-serving agencies and programs, and to work with them to assist in the resettlement process. Career counsellors can also become social advocates in the interest of the client with language and cultural barriers (Arthur & Merali, 2005). “Counsellors must have specialized knowledge about the cultural norms that influence the experiences of these populations and must be considerate of interventions that keep individuals connected to their family and community resources” (Arthur & Merali, 2005, p. 355).

Summary

The development of a non-traditional, culturally-sensitive, client-centered and systematic approach to career development for Afghan refugee and immigrant
women has been described in this final project. This author believes that such an approach would be particularly effective in the provision of career development services for Afghan refugee and immigrant women. The potential impact and limitations of this project have been highlighted, as well as ways to improve and further develop the project. Further development of this proposed approach should include its implementation and evaluation as a pilot project with Afghan refugee and immigrant women in order to validate its effectiveness with this population.
REFERENCES


http://www.abcounselling.ored.net/student/index.html


Appendix A

Systems Theory Framework of Career Development
Appendix B

The Therapeutic System
Appendix C

The Working Alliance as a Conceptual Framework for Multicultural Counselling
Sandra Collins and Nancy Arthur (2004)

The model presented in Figure 1 incorporates the core multicultural counselling competency domains into the overall counselling process, using the working alliance model as the organizational construct. The basic framework for the working alliance draws on the work of Jerry, Hiebert, and Collins (2003). The working alliance forms the foundation for the counselling process and the means for translating cultural self-awareness and awareness of the client’s culture into a process designed to facilitate movement from where the client is now to where the client would like to be, emphasizing the client-driven nature of the process. The working alliance provides the mechanism for optimizing responsiveness to client needs within the context of their particular cultural experience.

Figure 1. The Working Alliances as a Foundation for a Culturally-Responsive Counselling Process.

Focusing on the working alliance helps counsellors to consider the unique needs of culturally diverse clients. It also helps counsellors to bridge modalities of helping clients through the counselling process. As with the other core domains of multicultural competency, the cultural-sensitive working alliance can be broken down into specific multicultural competencies, which are defined at this more micro level according the dimensions of attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills.