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Career Building Among Asian American Immigrant Community College Students in Nebraska: A Phenomenological Study

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CAREER BUILDING AMONG ASIAN AMERICAN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

COLLEGE STUDENTS IN NEBRASKA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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University of Nebraska, 2018

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Asian Americans are becoming the fastest growing minority group, and enrolling at community colleges at a faster rate compared to 4-year institutions. In Nebraska, they represent approximately a quarter of the community college student population, comprise 2.3% of the state's population, and 7% of the state's workforce.

Despite their increasing numbers, very little is known about Asian Americans in the community college, including issues related to workforce transitions. Within a social cognitive career theory framework (SCCT), this qualitative study explored what career building means to Asian American immigrant community college students in Nebraska. Asian Americans in community colleges are typically invisible in discussions about underrepresented populations in higher education, especially in new settlement states like Nebraska. Scholars argue that this invisibility is primarily due to the model minority myth, which assumes that Asian Americans belong to a homogenous, successful, genetically superior group that does not need support (Ching & Agbayani, 2012; Museus & Park, 2015; Nadal, 2011; Suzuki, 2002). By uncovering salient factors affecting Asian

American immigrants' meaning of career building, findings of this study offer important implications for research and practice for this population.

Twenty one foreign-born Asian/Asian American students participated in this study to describe their experiences about building careers at two community colleges in Nebraska. Findings revealed four overarching components representing the core of building a career: opportunity. Opportunity is realized through three essential processes of Leaning (seeking support), Leveraging (learning from immigrant experiences), and Leading (self-direction). Additionally, the interplay of person, context, and work knowledge variables were consistently highlighted in participants' experiences, supporting literature that emphasizes the importance of context in career transitions of immigrant college students of color. Participants also experienced challenges due to their immigrant or financial status, rather than their race. Support from bilingual counselors and ethnic communities were critical in career building. Implications for research include the consideration of job-matching, context, and generational perspectives and racial self-identification in the development of career theory for Asian Americans.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter One

Introduction

The United States has historically been known as a nation of immigrants (Smith & Edmonston, 1997). There are currently 42.4 million immigrants in the United States, comprising 13.2% of the nation's population (Brown & Stepler, 2016). Between 2010 and 2030, it is predicted that immigrants and their children will account for all workforce growth, and will comprise 18% of the total labor force (Lowell, Gelatt, & Batalova, 2016).

Nationally, recent immigration trends show that Asians were becoming the fastest growing immigrant population, with an increase of 72% between 2000 and 2015 (López, Ruiz, & Patten, 2017). Further, Asians and other immigrant groups were settling less in historically immigrant states like California, New York, and Texas, and more in the South, Mountain West, and Midwest regions (Pew Research Center, 2015; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). These were states that previously had little to no exposure to international migration before 1990 (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Population growth among Asians varied across Asian groups, but the fastest growth was from South Asian countries like Bhutan, Nepal, and Burma (López et al., 2017). The Asian immigration trend has also been observed in Nebraska, a Midwest state. Information from the U.S. Census and the University of Omaha Center for Public Research found that the rate of Asian individuals in Nebraska was growing by an average of 1,800 per year since 2010, making them the fastest growing group in the state (Tobias, 2015). According to A. Lim from the New American Economy, the vast majority of the increase in Asian American

growth in Nebraska was due to an influx of Asian immigrants (personal communication, September 1, 2017).

Despite national and state trends in Asian immigration, little is known about this population, especially in discussions involving higher education (Museus, 2014), immigration policy (Gouveia, 2006), and the workforce (Wu, 2014). Due largely to the model minority myth that depicts them as a homogenous, successful, and problem-free group (Nadal, 2011), Asians are frequently associated with high employment rates and graduation rates. However, these reports mask the issues of the different sub-groups of this large and vastly diverse demographic (López et al., 2017). Certain Asian sub-groups like the Hmong, Burmese, and Vietnamese are more likely to come from low-income households, and have among the lowest rates of occupational and educational attainment compared to other Asian groups and the general population (Museus, 2014; Teranishi, 2010). Further, 62% of Asians were currently employed or seeking employment, but they experienced longer periods of unemployment compared to Whites and Hispanic/Latinos (Wu, 2014). Education and employment are also challenges to recent and large arrivals of Asian refugees from Bhutan and Burma, as these populations have some of the lowest rates of English proficiency (López et al., 2017).

Higher education serves as an opportunity for immigrants to successfully integrate into American society and become productive citizens (Kim & Diaz, 2013). Immigrants attend community college more than any other type of higher education institution (Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). Community colleges play an important role in the achievement of educational and occupational goals by offering

affordable education, flexible schedules, and open admission. Nationally, Asian Americans are enrolling at 2-year community colleges at a faster rate than at 4-year institutions (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2010). Certain Asian sub-groups such as the Hmong, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians are more likely to enroll at community colleges than at 4-year institutions (Teranishi, 2010). In Nebraska, community college enrollments among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) rose by 1% between 2003 and 2013 (Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, 2015), though this rate is expected to change exponentially over the next few years with the recent increase of Asian populations in the state.

Previous research on immigrant community college students has focused on the difficulties of undocumented students seeking financial aid (e.g., Gonzales, 2009; Gray, Rolph, & Melamid, 1996), transferring to four-year institutions (e.g., Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Vernez & Abrahamse, 1996), and assessing their educational needs (e.g., Brickman & Nuzzo, 1999; Conway, 2010). Studies that compare immigrant students to the native born have also been conducted on areas such as college participation (e.g., Hagy & Staniec, 2002), and resiliency and persistence (e.g., Conway, 2009; Horn, Nevill, & Griffith, 2006). Overall, these studies suggest that immigrants in community college have critical needs that impact their college experiences and degree completion.

Research examining immigrant student populations in the university setting has steadily increased in the past 15 years (Kim & Diaz, 2013). However, researchers offer a myriad of reasons to increase research efforts on student immigrant populations in

community colleges (Kim & Díaz, 2013; Szelényi & Chang, 2002; Teranishi et al., 2011). Among these reasons is the need to disaggregate data pertaining to immigrant college students in order to reveal the diversity in, and better understand the specific needs of, immigrant student populations. Second, there are a number of studies on native born, minority, and underrepresented populations. But little attention has been given to minority immigrant populations (Poon, 2014). Third, there is a need to better understand how certain demographic variables (e.g., race/ethnicity, immigrant background) and factors in higher education (e.g., institution, faculty, peers) support and impact college experiences and educational outcomes. Lastly, there is a need for rich, textured descriptions of immigrant students' experiences in community colleges – colleges that are well positioned to provide postsecondary education and training for recent immigrants.

Purpose of the Study

Given the increasing numbers of Asian immigrants in new settlement states in recent years and the need to understand how certain factors impact outcomes among more diverse populations in higher education, the purpose for the present study was to explore what building a career means to Asian American immigrant community college students in Nebraska. Through their experiences, the study aimed to uncover salient personal and environmental/contextual factors influencing career decisions, and how those factors affected their journey towards achieving career goals. Findings can elucidate the career transitions of a population typically invisible in discussions in higher education (Museus, 2014) and the workforce (Wu, 2014), in a state that is only recently

becoming an immigrant resettlement location (Bump, Lowell, & Pettersen, 2005), and where Asians are currently the fastest growing immigrant group (Tobias, 2015).

Significance of Study

  This study holds particular significance to the individual Asian American immigrant seeking a community college education as a way to a build meaningful career in a new country. Especially for immigrants who arrive as adults, a common issue is the risk that their qualifications, skills, and work experience earned in their native country will not be recognized in the United States. The non-recognition of skills and qualifications obtained from foreign institutions is a major barrier to employability and career development, causing immigrants to make decisions such as change careers, retrain or recertify for new job skills, or settle for available jobs that render them underemployed (Duleep & Sanders, 1993; Koert, Borgen, & Amundson, 2011; Tibe-Bonifacio, 2005). Previous research suggests that immigrants experience stress during migration, adjustment, returning to previously-held careers (Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008), and coming to terms with starting over again (Mojab, 1999). This study can provide insight on how such experiences influence the career outlook and career development among Asian American immigrants in a community college context.

  The study also offers important implications for career development practices within and beyond community college contexts. As higher education plays a larger role in immigrant integration (Kim & Diaz, 2013), this includes preparing them well for increasingly complex jobs in a more modern economy (Carnevale & Smith, 2013; Torres

& Rhoads, 2006). Findings of this study can inform practices in teaching, career counseling, and community engagement that acknowledge cultural and contextual factors in the career transitions of Asian American immigrant community college students. At the community college level, findings of this study may be valuable for instructors, career and behavioral counselors, student affairs professionals, and community partners (e.g., employers, non-government community organizations) who are interested in better understanding and facilitating Asian American community college students' career transitions.

Career and career development theories emphasize the importance of matching the individual's aptitudes, interests, goals, and aspirations with the characteristics of an appropriate "career" where career is a tangible concept that includes occupational characteristics, specific work tasks that exist aside from the "person" who accomplishes the tasks, and occurs in a given work environment (i.e., the workplace). This study is also expected to confirm or disconfirm the importance of matching individual needs with career opportunities for those aspiring to a career and, especially, for Asian-American community college students in Nebraska. Theoretically, the findings of this study can also inform further research that seeks to generate a much-needed career development theory appropriate for Asian Americans (Leong & Serafica, 1995).

Finally, the study addresses the lack of career development research focusing on one of the most under-researched populations in higher education today. Many studies examining Asian Americans career development in higher education have been conducted in large universities in established immigrant states (e.g., Kim, 1993; Poon,

2014). The lack of attention to this population's career issues in less-researched contexts can lead to the perpetuation of the model minority myth, and increased invisibility in discussions related to higher education, immigration policy, and the workforce.

Research Questions

This qualitative study asked a central question: For Asian American immigrant community college students, what does it mean to build a career? Two sub-questions guided the researcher to formulate a response to this central question:

RQ1: What are the experiences of Asian American immigrant community college students in choosing a career?

RQ2: How do Asian American immigrant community college students describe experiences of preparing for a career?

Assumptions

In this study, there were three assumptions. First, it was assumed that context affected the meaning of career building. Environmental/contextual factors such as family, the job market, availability of courses in college, etc. were assumed to greatly influence the participant's decision-making processes in building a career.

Second, it was assumed that interview questions were understood by participants and they were able to communicate their experiences in English. Given that participants were currently students at a community college, it was assumed that they had passed basic assessments in English-speaking proficiency.

Third, it was assumed that participants had chosen a career to pursue and build towards. However, it was also possible that participants may not have had a specific job

in mind at the time they were interviewed. It was also possible that the job or career they had chosen and were building towards was not their personal choice. Regardless, it was assumed that participants were at least able to articulate these issues in relation to what building a career means for them.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are important and defined as used in this study.

Asian American—The U.S. Census Bureau defined "Asian American" as "people with origins in the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Subcontinent" (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, 2012, p. 2). Unless specifically stated, literature had used the term "Asian American" to mean "Asian American and Pacific Islander" or AAPI, because research sometimes did not intentionally disaggregate this Census-assigned category. In this study, the term "Asian American" and "Asian" were used interchangeably and focused on individuals of Asian descent, which included those who originated from Census-assigned categories (i.e., Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Subcontinent), as well as non-Census assigned categories the participant self-identified with (i.e., other regions in Asia). The study excluded international students and Pacific Islanders.

Immigrant—In this study, the terms "immigrant" and "foreign born" were used interchangeably to refer to persons with no United States citizenship at birth. Immigrants included naturalized citizens, green card holders (legal permanent residents, or LPR), refugees, asylees, and the unauthorized (Zong & Batalova, 2016). Persons on temporary visas, such as international students, tourists, and temporary workers, are technically non-

immigrants (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, n.d.), and were thus excluded from the population in this study.

First-generation immigrant—First-generation immigrants are those born and socialized in another country and immigrate to the United States regardless of age of arrival (Rumbaut, 2004). This study focused on community college students born in an Asian country and immigrated to the United States regardless of the age of arrival.

Community college students—In this study, the term "community college student" referred to those enrolled specifically at Metropolitan Community College or Southeast Community College, both 2-year institutions in Nebraska.

Career—Traditionally, the term "career" was conceived as a collection of jobs held over a person's professional lifetime (Patton & McMahon, 2014). In this study, the term "career" was used interchangeably with "job" and "work" (Richardson, 1993). It adopts a more protean perspective (Hall & Las Heras, 2009), one in which an individual makes their own meaning of work in their lives (Richardson, 2000), and construct it according to the contexts in which he/she is the center of (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

Career building—In this study, "career building" was used interchangeably with "career development" to connote a non-linear, continuous process of career-relevant events involving personal, environmental, and chance factors that together shape the career of an individual (Brown & Lent, 2013; Sears, 1982). Consistent with a protean perspective, individuals were seen as self-organizing, active systems which continually leveraged past experiences and used them to position for future opportunity as individuals

deemed fit (Amundson, Parker, & Arthur, 2002). In this study, career building involved two activities:

- Career choice—defined in this study as a specific intention, or the determination to engage in a particular field to affect a particular future outcome (Bandura, 1986; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Expressed career choices, plans, decisions, and aspirations are all essentially goal mechanisms (Lent et al., 1994). In this study, an expressed career choice referred to a specific job, work, or profession (e.g., "I want to be a teacher"), or field (e.g., "I want to work in agriculture"), that individuals intended to pursue.

- Career preparation—defined in this study as specific activities taken in and out of the community college to prepare and build skills for the chosen career (e.g., taking classes, volunteering, self-learning, reading, networking, practicum, internship). Related to career preparation are the concepts career construction (Savickas, 2002), and career building (Redekopp & Day, 1999), to refer to individuals identifying the competencies needed for work and learning across the lifespan. Career building is suggested to be more useful than career planning, especially "in an environment where an individual needs to take charge of short term goals and continuous decision making, building on previous life/work activities with a direction in mind, and allowing all the while for discovery while pursuing something else" (Redekopp & Day, 1999, p. 276).

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter One introduced the present study, its purpose, and its context. In Chapter Two, related literature on Asian American immigrant community college students and their career development are reviewed and discussed. Related theories of career choice and preparation are also reviewed, in order to inform the conceptual framework of the study. In Chapter Three, methods of conducting the study and data analysis are outlined. Chapter Four describes the findings of the study. Chapter Five further discusses the findings vis-à-vis related literature, as well as outlines implications for research and practice.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter reviews relevant literature that informed the present study. Four related bodies of literature were reviewed. First, a brief overview of the profile of Asian immigrants was given to provide a background of the study. Second, literature on Asian American college students was reviewed, with a focus on their general experiences in universities and community colleges. Third, literature related to career development among Asian American college students was reviewed, including the importance of Asian Americans in Nebraska as a new settlement state. Finally, theories related to career choice were reviewed, so as to inform the conceptual framework.

Asian Immigrants

Asian immigrants are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, projected to surpass the number of Hispanic immigrants to comprise 38% of the foreign-born population by 2065 (Pew Research Center, 2015). As of 2015, an estimated 16 million individuals identify as Asian-alone in the US, of which approximately 69% are foreign-born (U.S. Census, 2015a). In combination with other races (i.e., those who identify as Asian as well as one or more other races), there are a total of 18 million Asian Americans, making up 6% of the total US population (Pew Research Center, 2013). The largest represented groups today are Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese (Pew Research Center, 2013), while the fastest growing groups since 2000 are the Bhutanese, Nepalese, and Burmese (López et al., 2017).

The United States Census Bureau defines "Asian American" as "people with origins in the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Subcontinent" (Hoeffel et al., 2012). In addition, Pak, Maramba, and Hernandez (2014) note that while people with origins in Central Asia (e.g., Armenia, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan) often self-identify as Asian, it is not common for those from West Asia or the Middle East (e.g., Bahrain, Iraq, and Yemen) to self-identify as Asian. In 1990, the U.S. Census had 10 categories of the Asian American ethnic group. By 2010, the number of categories had doubled to 20. Appendix A shows the racial and ethnic groups of Asian Americans as categorized and recognized by the U.S. Census Bureau as of 2010.

In the 1970s, the U.S. Census Bureau combined the Asian American category with Pacific Islanders to create one Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) category still used today (Hune, 2002). Assigned racial groups are continually shaped by academic, social, and political factors, and revisited by the U.S. Census Bureau every 10 years (Teranishi, Lok, & Nguyen, 2013). Asian Americans are diverse not only in ethnicity, but also in socioeconomic status, culture, language, religion, immigrant status, educational background, and generation in the United States (Hune, 2002). Due to the striking diversity of this large group, Asian American and AAPI researchers have advocated for the disaggregation of data describing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders for more accurate reporting in the Census and for research and informational purposes (Museus, 2014; Pak et al., 2014; Teranishi et al., 2013).

The historical context of immigration plays an integral role in understanding the development of Asian American college students (Museus, 2014). Even the patterns of

migration vary across Asian ethnic groups. The first major wave of Asian immigrants occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries, when Chinese, Korean, Asian Indians, Japanese, and Filipinos first arrived to help develop the West as laborers and small business owners (Chan, 1991; Hune, 2002). After the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, the second wave saw the same groups of Asians arrive for purposes of family reunification, and to find work as skilled professionals and unskilled laborers. In addition, over 1 million Vietnamese, Laotian, Hmong, and Cambodian refugees were admitted to the United States after the passage of the 1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). To date, current immigration policies allow the continued pattern of family reunification and employment-based immigration for largely the same ethnic groups. However, Asian refugee groups have become more diverse to include refugees from Bhutan, Burma, and West Asia.

Although migration movements have changed in recent years (Jones, 2012), Asian immigrants mostly settled in cities and states with traditionally long histories of immigrant resettlement, such as California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas (Bump et al., 2005). The six largest Asian groups tend to gravitate towards cities and states with established ethnic communities (Hoeffel et al., 2012). Los Angeles was, and continues to be, a gateway and resettlement city for the Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, and Vietnamese. In contrast, there are large populations of Asian Indians in New York, and Japanese in Honolulu. In recent years, evidence of smaller, but growing groups have also been noted, such as the Hmong in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and Cambodians in

Massachusetts, as well as a more dispersed pattern of the larger Asian ethnic groups across the Midwest and the South (Jones, 2012).

Asian Americans in Higher Education

Of the approximately 20 million college students enrolled in the fall of 2015, approximately 7% are Asian American and Pacific Islanders or AAPI (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). The number of AAPI students enrolling in college has increased from 2% in 1976, to 7% in 2014. This translates to roughly 1.4 million AAPI college students in the United States today.

It is a common misconception that Asian American students only attend 4-year, primarily private, highly selective, and elite universities. On the contrary, most AAPI attend public two-and-four-year institutions (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2008). Of the AAPIs in higher education in 2005, about 47% were enrolled at community college (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2010). In this sense, Asian American students in higher education have been a visible population nationally, yet they are excluded in broader discussions involving higher education research, policy, and practice (Museus, 2014). Previous research has found that Asian American college students are excluded from opportunities, resources, services, and discussions that are focused on underserved populations of color, due to assumptions that Asian Americans are genetically superior and do not need support (Ching & Agbayani, 2012; Museus & Park, 2015; Suzuki, 2002).

From a critical perspective, the lack of research on Asian Americans in higher education may be due to the pervasiveness of the model minority stereotype. The "model minority myth" is a stereotype that assumes that Asians in America are generally well-educated, successful, career-driven, and law-abiding citizens (Nadal, 2011). This "success" is due to: (a) the perception that Asian Americans do not experience barriers (e.g., racism) that prevent them from achieving upward mobility, and (b) their inner drive and work ethic (Yoo, Burrola, & Steger, 2010).

While being viewed as a model minority may seem to be positive, this stereotype can actually be misleading, and even harmful. The myth creates a picture of a homogenous group and does not account for the vast diversity within the Asian American population. It also contributes to the invisibility of this population in higher education research due to the assumption that Asian Americans are problem-free and do not need support (Museus & Kiang, 2009). Society also places Asian Americans as models to which other groups of color should aspire (Yu, 2006). Contrary to studies that portray Asian Americans as "problem-free," Asian Americans do experience stress and mental health problems in college, but are more reluctant to seek help due to the stigma, cultural expectations, and pressure to live up to the stereotype (Kim & Lee, 2014).

The model minority stereotype is typically associated with the perception that Asian Americans are "forever foreigners." This is a form of microaggression that assumes that all Asian Americans are foreigners or foreign-born and cannot possibly be "real" Americans (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). The "forever foreigner" microaggression is manifested in statements from individuals such as "Where are you

from?", or "You speak English well" regardless of the Asian American's citizenship status or birthplace. If the model minority myth was true, Asian Americans would not have issues with finding employment after college. However, researchers who conduct discrimination audit studies imply that the forever foreigner stereotype is prevalent among Asian American college students as they transition to the workforce. Banerjee, Reitz, and Oreopoulos (2017) conducted a study in Canada about the discrimination that occurs when hiring job applicants with Asian (i.e., Chinese, Indian, or Pakistani) names. Given the exact information in their curricula vitae except their names, job applicants with Asian names were 28% less likely than applicants with English names to be called for an interview. This fact did not change even if the first name was changed to an English name. The main reason for not getting callbacks was that recruiters assumed that applicants with Asian names would have more trouble communicating in English in the workplace.

The findings of the Banerjee and colleagues (2017) study were similar to that of Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik, and Jun (2016), who examined "resume whitening" techniques among Asian American college students seeking jobs. Kang et al. (2016) found that Asian American college students were advised by their career counselors to "whiten" their resumes (e.g., adopting an English first name, adding an English name to their given name, or omitting foreign experience from their resume) for better chances of getting an interview. Upon applying these techniques, the applicants received significantly more callbacks from employers. In addition, Asian American participants wanted to convey to employers that it was relatively easy for them to assimilate, thus "whitening" their

resumes. They wanted to sound "less Asian" and "more American" in efforts to at least score an interview and to show that they could fit in with their White counterparts in the workplace. The findings of both Banerjee et al. (2017) and Kang et al. (2016) imply that Asian American students still experience difficulties in their college-to-career transitions due to factors such as hiring discrimination.

In addition to stereotyping, another reason for the lack of research on Asian Americans in higher education is that the term "Asian American" poses challenges to researchers, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to better understand this large and diverse population in higher education. The term "Asian American" was borne out of political movements in the 1960s to promote solidarity against racist social structures and encourage the well-being of their communities (Museus, 2014). Conclusions derived from lumping together Asian American and Pacific Islander ethnic groups can be misleading (Museus, 2014). Because of aggregated data, AAPIs appear to be successful in higher education and in employment, thus they are not often discussed nor classified as an underserved population. However, certain Asian ethnic groups severely lag behind in terms of educational and occupational attainment, often associated with socio-economic status. Hmong, Cambodian, and Laotian Americans have higher rates of unemployment compared to other Asian ethnic groups and the overall U.S. population. These groups are frequently compared to the more "successful" Asian ethnic populations, such as the Chinese, Asian Indians, and Koreans (Museus, 2014).

Asian American students in four-year institutions. Much like growing research on immigrant college students, a wide range of topics have been examined

among Asian American college students in 4-year institutions. Research addresses college choice and major (e.g., Song & Glick, 2004; Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004), traditional notions of resilience (e.g., Chen, Gunderson, & Seror, 2005), intergenerational conflicts (e.g., Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008), perceived racism and academic performance (e.g., Yoo & Castro, 2011), and mental health (e.g., Kim, Kendall, & Cheon, 2017).

Over time, the higher education experience has been examined in more specific Asian ethnic groups, such as among Chinese Americans (e.g., Huang, 2006), Asian Indians (e.g., Brettell & Nibbs, 2009), Korean Americans (e.g., Kim, 2004), Hmong Americans (e.g., Xiong & Lam, 2013), and Filipino Americans (e.g., Maramba, 2008). In addition, many studies have started to examine Asian American students beyond the first generation (Kim, 2004; Maramba, 2008). Comparative studies involving Asian American students and other minority groups have also been conducted (Saenz, Ngai, & Hurtado, 2007; Simpson, 2001; Tang, 2002). A summary of studies examining Asian Americans in 4-year institutions is provided in Appendix B.

Despite growing research on Asian Americans in higher education, it is noted that much of this research is conducted among students in 4-year universities. There are still very few studies that examine Asian American students specifically in community colleges. The next section further elaborates on existing literature on Asian American students specifically in community colleges. It is noted that existing literature tends to refer to aggregated terms to describe this demographic group. The terms often used in the literature are Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Asian Pacific

American (APA). Due to the lack of literature describing only Asian Americans, the review of literature will include studies that describe Asian Americans, AAPIs, and APAs.

Asian American students in community colleges. The National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (2010) gives an overview of the demographic profile of AAPIs at community colleges. According to this report, AAPI enrollments at public 2-year colleges are increasing at a faster rate than enrollments at 4-year institutions. Eighty percent (80%) of AAPIs attend community colleges in just 8 states, a majority of which are concentrated in California, Hawaii, and New York. Compared to AAPIs in 4-year institutions, a majority of AAPIs in community college are considered non-traditional students in that they are older and attend college part time. In addition, certain Asian American subgroups such as the Hmong, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians are more likely to enroll at community colleges than at 4-year institutions (Teranishi, 2010). These groups from Southeast Asia are overrepresented among those who have much lower rates of educational and occupational attainment, and more likely to come from low-income households compared to other Asian American groups and the total national population (Museus, 2014).

As previously mentioned, little attention has been given to examining Asian American students in community colleges. In a literature review of Asian Pacific American (APA) students in community colleges, Lew, Chang, and Wang (2005) noted that there were only 8 pieces of literature used for their review. Among the articles and dissertations reviewed were research studies that examined academic achievement and

course completion rates among Asian ethnic groups (Nishimoto & Hagedorn, 2003), the experience of transferring from community college to 4-year institutions (Kiang, 1992), and an analysis of how community colleges serving AAPIs were reported in national data (Laanan & Starobin, 2004).

Based on Lew and colleagues (2005) literature review, a number of recommendations were made in an effort to better serve the needs of APA students in community college, including, but not limited to (a) having culturally-sensitive staff and counselors, (b) providing AAPI immigrants access to targeted programs similar to those for Latino immigrants for English language needs, (c) offering courses in Asian American and ethnic studies as a way to support APA students' desire to learn about their histories and identities, and (d) collecting more information that disaggregates APA ethnic groups, immigrant generations, and international student categories.

Other studies that examined Asian Americans in community colleges found that Asian Americans had some similarities with the general community college population, but with notable differences in terms of educational goals, and their reasons, influences, and barriers in attending community college. In North Carolina, Asian American community college students were similar to the general population in that they were mostly female, attended college close to home, came from middle and lower-income families, and were employed full time or part time (Yang, Rendon, & Shearon, 1994). Notably, Asian Americans differed from the general community college student population in that Asian students had higher educational goals and attended community college to become more cultured. Challenges to pursuing higher education also differed.

For the general student population, feelings of being too old to return to school, or the lack of time, desire, and energy to attend community college were reasons not to pursue higher education. In contrast, Asian students stated that job and home responsibilities, the cost of college, inconvenient course times, and time required to complete program all prevented them from pursuing college. The strongest influences for Asian students to enroll at the community college were friends and family.

More recently in Los Angeles, Wang, Chang, and Lew (2009) broadened Yang et al's (1994) profile of Asian American community college students. Wang et al. (2009) stated that Asian Americans in community colleges were mostly recent immigrants who had received at least some high school at another country. Although 20% of recent Asian immigrants had finished some form of college in a foreign country, these students still had difficulty navigating college systems in the United States. In pursuing college, many Asian American students viewed English as a Second Language (ESL) as an obstacle to achieving academic goals. Students were also more likely to pursue higher educational goals if at least one parent had finished college (Wang et al., 2009).

More recent studies continue to explore the different facets of the community college experience for Asian Americans. In Hawaii, Orsuwan (2011) found that the integration into community college life is felt differently among AAPI ethnic subgroups depending on their socio-economic status, race, and cultural and historical backgrounds. Lui (2013) found that more than half of AAPIs enrolled at a large Midwestern 4-year institution were transfer students from community college, and that the average AAPI transfer student experienced transfer shock evidenced by a drop in grade point average

(GPA). In San Francisco, Han and Pong (2015) found that Asian American community college students were willing to seek help to maintain their mental health, but were reluctant to do so from mental health professionals due to stigma and cultural barriers associated with keeping public appearances.

In discussing the participation of AAPI community college students in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), Maramba (2013) argued that AAPIs were being portrayed as model minorities who were overrepresented and already successful in the STEM discourse, leading to misunderstandings about the AAPI group as a whole. As a result, STEM studies often compared AAPI and White populations with low representations of Latino, African American, and Native American populations. A summary of studies examining Asian Americans in community colleges is provided in Appendix C.

Despite progress in research on Asian American students in community colleges, it is clear that there is still much more to explore about this significant segment of the college population (Lew et al., 2005; Museus, 2014; Pak et al., 2014). The next section describes existing literature on the career choice and preparation of Asian American students.

Asian Americans and Career Development

The career development of different immigrant, underrepresented, minority, and ethnic groups has been widely researched. There have been efforts to explore aspects of the career development of minority and ethnic groups (e.g., Ali & Menke, 2014; Hackett & Byars, 1996; Yakushko et al., 2008), the career development of immigrant women

(e.g., Koert et al., 2011; Sethi & Williams, 2015), as well as among ethnic and immigrant college students (e.g., Stebleton, 2012; Teng, Morgan, & Anderson, 2001).

Although career development aspects of Asian Americans have been explored (e.g., Fouad et al., 2008; Leong & Chou, 1994), there are currently no studies that explore the career development experiences of Asian American community college students. However, existing literature on the career development of Asian American students in 4-year institutions may provide some insight for this study.

Early research has examined aspects of career development of Asian American college students. In choosing college majors, Asian American college students have been found to be more attracted to occupational activities that were logical, analytical, and non-personal in nature, and less attracted to occupational activities that involved forceful communication and interpersonal influencing (Leung, Ivey, & Suzuki, 1994). In assessing career attitudes, Filipino students were found to be less vocationally congruent than other Asian Americans, and Asian American students reported significantly less career-mature attitudes than Caucasian students (Luzzo, 1992). Carter and Constantine (2000) built on Luzzo's (1992) study by stating that Asian American college students who were career-mature were more likely to have high awareness attitudes, and were more realistically informed about the ethnic and race issues related to career development and the workplace.

Aside from descriptive and comparative research, other studies have also explored Asian American college students and the contextual factors surrounding career development. In these studies, the family has been found to heavily influence the Asian

American college student to choose traditional occupations, regardless of his/her personal career interests (Poon, 2014; Roysircar, Carey, & Koroma, 2010; Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). Among Asian Americans, "traditional" or "typical" occupations were perceived to be stable, lucrative, prestigious, and often related to the STEM, business, or health professions (Poon, 2014; Song & Glick, 2004). Parental or family pressure for first- and second-generation children to choose and succeed in such jobs may be more connected to their immigrant status rather than cultural values (Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007). The pressure to succeed is communicated to their children based on the parents' experiences of migration, poverty, and inequality (Poon, 2014). Family pressure when making career decisions has also been found to be a source of intergenerational conflict among Korean American second-generation college students (Kim, 1993). Although the majority of the research suggests that family had a large influence on career choices, Song and Glick (2004) did not support this finding using the National Education Longitudinal Study (NE-LS88) data.

Poon (2014) found that the career decisions of second-generation Asian American college students were also strongly influenced by their fellow Asian American peers, by perceived racial inequalities and stereotyping in the workforce, and by experiencing racial isolation in non-traditional majors like fine arts and humanities. These students reported that their Asian American peers had questioned the students' decision to major in a non-traditional field. As a person of color and a minority, students also wondered how they would be treated if they worked in non-traditional occupations.

Other studies explored the influence of self-efficacy and acculturation in the career development of Asian American college students. Self-efficacy is an individual's perception of own capabilities to handle particular barriers or obstacles (Bandura, 1997). It is suggested that acculturation, or the cultural changes that takes place as a result of contact with culturally dissimilar people and social influences (Gibson, 2001), mediates self-efficacy levels in Asian Americans and their career decisions (Poon, 2014). Studies show that the more acculturated the Asian American college student, the more likely he/she is to choose an atypical profession and to challenge the STEM occupation stereotype compared to the less-acculturated (Roysircar et al., 2010; Tang et al., 1999). However, a high level of acculturation does not necessarily lead to a high level of self-efficacy, which, in turn, is assumed to influence career decision making. In examining first- and second-generation Asian Indian college students, Roysircar et al. (2010) found that even if the second-generation college students were more acculturated and preferred non-science majors, they still chose to major in math or science, due to the heavy influence of their first-generation parents to take science-math majors. In addition, Kelly, Gunsalus, and Gunsalus (2009) found that self-efficacy did not influence career choices among Korean American college students. Rather, career choices were strongly influenced by anticipated rewards and outcomes associated with the various career paths in science and non-science majors. A summary of studies examining career choice and/or development and related aspects among Asian Americans is provided in Appendix D.

Nebraska: A New Settlement State

A majority of the studies on Asian Americans in higher education were conducted in states with large immigration populations and long histories of immigrant settlement, such as California and Hawaii (e.g., Maramba, 2008; Orsuwan, 2011). Over the past 20 years, however, the fastest immigration growth occurred in the Southern and Midwest regions of the United States that had relatively small immigrant populations prior to the 1990s (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). This migration trend in the South and the Midwest has been observed among Asian American immigrants as well (Museus, 2013). The 19 states in these regions are called "new settlement states," or those with an immigration growth of over 100% since the 1990s (Bump et al., 2005).

Nebraska is 12th of the 19 new settlement states, having experienced a growth of 165% in the foreign-born population between 1990 and 2000 (Bump et al., 2005). Between 2000 and 2010, Asians were the third fastest growing minority group in Nebraska (Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity, 2015). Since 2010, however, Asians surpassed Hispanics/Latinos in growth rate, becoming the fastest growing immigrant group in Nebraska (Tobias, 2015). The trend is attributed to an influx of Asian immigrants, with significant growth observed in the Lincoln and Omaha metropolitan areas (A. Lim, personal communication, September 1, 2017). Asians comprise 2.3% of the state's population (U.S. Census, 2015b). One in nine Nebraskans are of Latino or Asian descent (American Immigration Council, 2015). The three largest Asian groups – Vietnamese, Asian Indians, and Chinese – account for more than half of

the Asian-alone population in Nebraska (Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity, 2015).

Little is known about the Asian American participation in Nebraska's workforce and economy. In 2007, it was reported that over 2,000 Asian-owned businesses had created over 5,000 jobs and contributed over $400 million in sales and receipts in the state (American Immigration Council, 2015). In a pending report from the New American Economy, A. Lim (personal communication, September 1, 2017) shared that in 2015, Asian American immigrant households in Nebraska earned more than $697 million in income, and paid more than $132 million in federal income tax, and $59 million in state and local taxes. Asian Americans in Nebraska spent $505 million in local businesses and communities. Nationally, Asian Americans with a bachelor's degree or higher were mainly employed in the health, education, information technology, and professional sectors, while those with less than a bachelor's degree typically held jobs in the service sector like personal appearance workers, cooks, cashiers and maids (A. Lim, personal communication, September 1, 2017).

In profiling the larger immigrant group in Nebraska, it is reported that as of 2016, immigrants comprised 7% of the state's workforce, and 60% of the working-age foreign-born were employed (New American Economy, 2016). As observed nationwide, immigrants in Nebraska were overrepresented in either high skilled or labor-intensive occupations. Immigrants also played a large role in maintaining Nebraska's key industries such as in manufacturing and healthcare (New American Economy, 2016).

According to a report compiled by the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (2015), the rate of AAPI enrollments in Nebraska community colleges had increased by 1% between 2003 and 2013. Of the approximately 40,000 students enrolled in community colleges in Nebraska in Fall 2015, 26% identified as Asian (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System College Data, 2017). Although Asian Americans graduate from postsecondary institutions at generally higher rates compared to other minority groups (Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, 2015), there is no information available about what they majored in and what careers they eventually pursued.

To date, little attention has been given to Asian American community college students (Museus, 2014), especially those living in new settlement states such as Nebraska. The experiences encountered by Asian Americans in regions where Asian Americans are not densely represented may be considerably different compared to those of Asian Americans living in larger, more urban, and more traditional immigrant gateway cities such as Los Angeles (Wang et al., 2009).

Theories of Career Choice

The discussion of previous studies examining career choice and preparation among Asian American college students necessitates a review of existing career choice theories. This section briefly reviews related career choice theories, which in turn will inform the conceptual framework of this study.

Person-job perspectives.

The work of Frank Parsons. One of the earliest and most influential contributions to career theory is the work of Frank Parsons (1854-1908). In his book *Choosing a Vocation*, published in 1909, he discussed that career selection involved a process of self-assessment, knowing industry requirements of the job and the worker, and the congruence between individuals and occupations.

Parsons (1909) is considered the father of vocational guidance for his dual contribution to career theory. The first contribution is the logical positivist worldview. This worldview posits that individuals choose a career/occupation based on (a) what they know of themselves (e.g., skills, education), (b) what they know of the job or work they were interested in (i.e., work knowledge), and (c) understanding the relationship between self-knowledge and work knowledge (i.e., true reasoning). Though Parsons (1909) did not elaborate on what he meant by true reasoning, theorists today understand it as the cognitive processes involved in selecting careers (Patton & McMahon, 2014), and the congruence, fit, or match between the individual and the occupation (Patton & McMahon, 2014; Zunker, 2011).

Parsons's second contribution to career theory is the constructivist worldview. This worldview acknowledges the contextual, interpersonal, and intrapersonal concerns of the individual (e.g., family, health, financial situation) as part of self-knowledge and influential to career selection (O'Brien, 2001). Parsons also valued personal agency and the individual's capacity to reflect and decide on his/her career. At the time, the constructivist worldview did not gain as much recognition as the logical positivist

worldview. Nevertheless, Parsons is credited as a pioneer in the development of the field

of career assessment, individualized approaches to career counseling, and advancement

of social justice through career development work (O'Brien, 2001).

Parsons's work serves as a blueprint in the basic understanding of career selection

and planning (Lent & Brown, 2013). It considers what individuals need to do and have in

order to succeed in a particular industry. The importance of work knowledge is

especially vital to career planning and preparation (DeBell, 2001). Parsons's work paved

the way for later theories to elaborate on the "matching" between an individual's

characteristics and job characteristics as an important process in selecting careers. A

brief overview of such theories is discussed next.

Trait and factor theory. Built upon Parsons's logical positivist worldview in the

1900's, trait and factor theory posits that career selection involves matching an individual

to a job so that their needs will be met and their job performance will be satisfactory

(Zunker, 2011). The "matching" is through objectively measuring and testing an

individual's traits and matching it against the job characteristics (or factors). A match of

individual's traits and job factors is thought to predict successful job performance. Trait

and factor theory is the foundation of many psychometric assessments that profiles an

individual's personalities, interests, and abilities against job requirements (Patton &

McMahon, 2014).

Trait and factor theory positions career decision-making as a cognitive process,

where decisions are made based on objective data (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

However, critics of the theory state that there is little consideration given to subjective

and contextual influences in career decision making (Sharf, 2013). In addition, it views career choice as static, one-time, linear event (Zunker, 2011). It does not account for the individual's growth and changes (e.g., in values, interests, skills, and personalities), the changing job requirements in the world of work today, or the ability of a person to adjust to the work environment (Sharf, 2013; Zunker, 2011). Such issues are important in understanding the career development of today's workers.

Theory of vocational personalities and work environments. Also influenced by Parsons's logical positivist worldview is the theory of vocational personalities and work environments, developed by John Holland in 1959. The theory posits that career choices are made when individuals seek work in environments that are compatible with their personalities (Holland, 1985). It is assumed that people in similar jobs will have similar personalities. The "match" is made through classifying people and environments according to six broad types of the individual's personality. The typology is a means of predicting not only the career choices of individuals, but also how easy it is for them to choose, how happy they will be in their career, and how well they will perform in their work (Nauta, 2013). Although the matching perspective remains central to the theory, the theory implies that there is an interactional process between people and environments, wherein people move in and out of environments when they perceive it "as no longer optimal" (Spokane, Luchetta, & Richwine, 2002, p. 379). Thus, the theory is thought to be more interactionist than matching and is discussed as a major proponent of person-environment fit perspectives (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

Psychodynamic model of career choice. This theory posits that people choose a career based on whether or not they will derive enjoyment from it (Bordin, 1990). These decisions are influenced by a person's childhood experiences (e.g., biologically or culturally determined gender roles, socialization, level of parental support or nurturance) as well as other factors that affect personality (e.g., economic, geographic). In making career decisions, individuals assess themselves to gauge the possibilities of job success based on intrinsic satisfaction, which may include "curiosity, power, and nurturance" (Bordin, 1990, p. 114). This theory is considered a move towards a constructivist approach in conceptualizing choice (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

Values-based theory. This theory posits that people choose a career based on the matching of a person's cultural and personal values, and skills, with that of work values (Brown, 1996). It considers the element of non-Eurocentric cultural values as critical to career choice and development. The theory also acknowledges the life roles that a person plays outside of work, how work and life roles interact in career decision making, and the congruence of life and work roles in career success.

Contemporary perspectives. Since Parsons's time, the world of work has changed considerably, and continues to change, due to industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and immigration (DeBell, 2001). These changes bring increased complexity to understanding the job, the worker, and career development. Theories that emphasized the person-job match approach received critical views due to its narrow perspectives (Sharf, 2013; Zunker, 2011). Thus, more contextual, developmental, and

integrative theories emerged in an effort to understand the complexity of career development today. A few such perspectives will be briefly discussed next.

Developmental-contextual model. Proposed as a meta-theoretical framework, this model posits that an individual's career choices change over time as contextual elements change (Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenberg, 1986). The model proposes that there is a dynamic interaction between a person's relational network (e.g., family, peers) with contextual factors such as education and social policy. It is a critique on the idea that career choice and development was a linear, universal, and unchanging event. The developmental-contextual approach also advocates for the person's ability to purposefully and actively interact with his/her changing contexts when making career decisions.

Anne Roe's formula for occupational choice. This formula suggests that in making career choices, contextual variables are important and that the relative importance of these variables may change over time (Patton & McMahon, 2014). It implies that an individual's priorities change over time, and these priorities influence career decisions. Roe distinguished between a number of variables (e.g., family background, learning and education, gender, marital situation, personality, and interests) to determine the degree of control an individual had over them (Lunneborg, 1997). The formula consists of assigning weights to the variables to determine the interactions between the variables and to account for age-related differences over time (Roe & Lunneborg, 1990).

Opportunity structure theory. This theory posits that career choices are a function of the opportunity structures available to the individual. According to Roberts

(2009), "opportunity structures are formed by the inter-relationships between family origins, education, labor market processes, and employers' recruitment practices" (p. 355). Essentially, the theory explains that career choices are made based on the interaction of push factors (e.g., how an individual's family and education are structured) and pull factors (e.g., how job markets are structured). Compared to the middle and upper classes, Roberts (2012) noted that career choice is limited particularly among the working class and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds due to differing opportunity structures. For example, an individual may exercise personal agency to choose a career path, but this career transition may be challenging or not occur at all due to his/her attendance at a poorly funded educational institution, or the career requires advanced formal credentials. In contrast to the concept of choice, opportunity structure theory is largely discussed from human capital and social mobility perspectives.

Social learning theory of career decision making (SLTCDM). This theory was first developed by Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Jones (1976) by adapting Bandura's (1977) social learning theory to the field of career studies, as well as extending the concept of person-job congruence. It proposes that in making career decisions, individuals first learn about themselves, their preferences, their skills, and the world of work through direct and vicarious experiences. The theory takes into account four categories of factors that influence career decisions: (a) genetic endowment and abilities (e.g., gender, appearance); (b) environmental events outside the individual's control (e.g., the educational system); (c) direct and vicarious learning experiences that result in a response that shapes the career path; and (d) task approach skills that result from the first three

influences (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). Task approach skills are emotional predispositions and cognitive and performance abilities that are formed as individuals make generalizations about his/her abilities and the world of work (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996).

A recent development related to this theory is a discussion on planned happenstance. It suggests that individuals' development of task approach skills is determined by where and to whom they were born, the characteristics they were born with, and the availability of vicarious learning experiences (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999). The concept of planned happenstance is similar to Roberts's (2009) opportunity structure theory, as both focus on social class origins as strong influences of career transitions.

Central to social learning theory of career decision making theory is learning: the availability of learning experiences, lifelong learning, and actions taken upon learning. It advocates personal agency such that individuals are encouraged to expand their interests and continually prepare themselves for the changing world of work (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). Thus, proponents of this theory do not believe that person-job/environment fit perspectives are applicable anymore due to the constantly changing and complex nature of the world of work today (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996).

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT). Developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), this theory is presented as a unifying framework for bringing together common elements identified by previous career theorists. The aim of SCCT is to develop constructs and concepts to bridge differences and incomplete conceptualizations in

existing career theory (Lent et al., 1994). According to a major review of career development theory done by Hackett and Lent (1992), SCCT is an answer to a call for constructing integrative theories that brings together conceptually related constructs (e.g., self-concept, self-efficacy), common outcomes found in career theories (e.g., stability, satisfaction), and relationships of seemingly diverse variables (e.g., interests, abilities, needs).

SCCT is a derivation of Bandura's (1986) revised social cognitive theory, informed by Hackett and Betz's (1981) self-efficacy theory, and by Krumboltz's (1994) learning theory (Patton & McMahon, 2014). It focuses on how interests, abilities, and other relevant variables interrelate, and the specific manner in which personal and environmental factors influence career decisions. Specifically, it explains how social cognitive variables (self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals) interact with individual variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity), environmental issues, and learning experiences in the context of career decision-making. The individual is central to the three interlocking processes – how career and academic interests develop, how career choices are made and enacted, and how performance outcomes are achieved. As such, SCCT embraces the constructionist view of the individual as an active shaper of his/her own life, within the constraints of personal, environment, and contextual factors (Patton & McMahon, 2014). SCCT has been used as a framework to examine school-to-work transitions (Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 1996), and aspects of the career development of various minority and ethnic groups including African American women (Hackett & Byars, 1996), Asian American college students (Tang et al., 1999; Kelly et al., 2009),

Latino youth (Ali & Menke, 2014), and immigrants and refugees (Shinnar, 2007;

Yakushko et al., 2008).

Figure 1 illustrates the variables presented in SCCT.
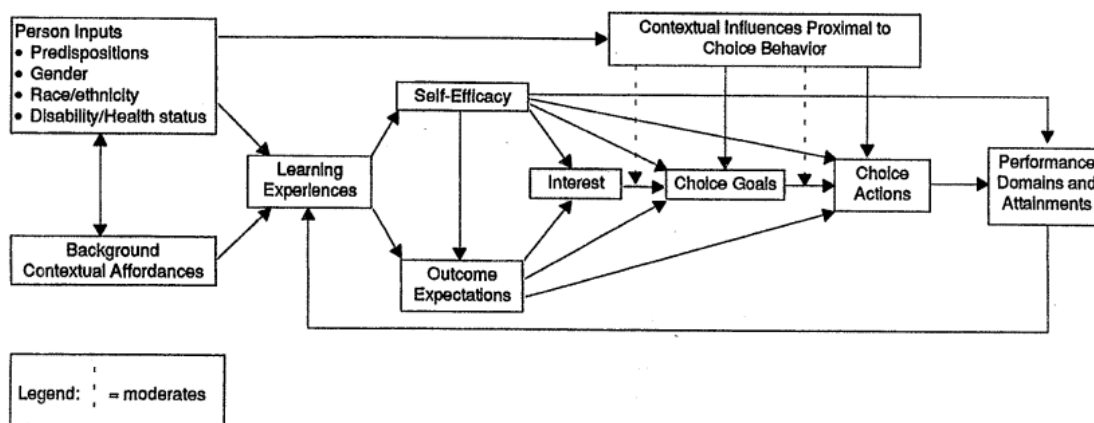
Copyright 1993 R.W. Lent, S.D. Brown, and G. Hackett

Figure 1. Person, contextual, and experiential factors affecting career-related choice

behavior (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994)

The components of the theory are briefly discussed below. According to Lent and

colleagues (1996), there are two levels to understanding SCCT. First, social cognitive

person variables are three intricately-linked variables through which individuals regulate

their own behavior: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals.

- Self-efficacy is an individual's judgment of own capabilities to organize and

    carry out courses of action required to achieve designated types of

    performances. Self-efficacy is acquired through learning experiences (e.g.,

vicarious learning), personal accomplishments, social persuasion, and physiological states.

- Outcome expectations are beliefs about the outcomes of performing a particular behavior. Outcome expectations are also acquired through direct and vicarious learning experiences.

- Personal goals are the individual's intentions to engage in a certain activity to produce a particular outcome. Setting goals help people organize and guide their own behavior and sustain it despite setbacks and challenges. Goals are reflected in constructs such as career plans, aspirations, decisions, and expressed choices.

SCCT also emphasizes the relevance of other person variables. The influences of race/ethnicity, gender, age, and socio-economic status on career interests, choice and performance are posited to operate through self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1996).

The second level to understanding SCCT is that it has three interlocking segmental processes:

- Educational and vocational interests (how career and academic interests develop). SCCT suggests that self-efficacy and outcome expectations about activities both influence career and academic interests (Lent et al., 1996). In other words, people will form a lasting interest in an activity when (a) they believe they are good at it, and (b) they expect the activity to produce desired outcomes. Similarly, people will dislike or avoid activities if they don't feel

competent in performing it or expect negative outcomes from it. The more interested a person is in the activity, the more likely goals will be formed in order to increase or sustain involvement in that activity (Lent et al., 1996). This process occurs in an ongoing feedback loop, reinforced by positive experiences, or revised after failed or negative experiences. Lent et al. (1996) state that this process repeats itself continuously throughout the lifespan, although it is most fluid up until late adolescence or early adulthood, where interests tend to stabilize. Any change in interests in later years may depend on factors such as initially preferred activities becoming restricted (e.g., job lay-offs), and exposure to potent learning experiences that enable them to expand self-efficacy and scope of activity (Lent et al., 1996). Ability is also an important factor in interest development, albeit mediated by self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Patton & McMahon, 2014). For example, a woman may be good at dancing, but she must believe that she is good at it, and also believe that dancing is worthwhile, before dancing is developed as an interest.

- Career/Occupational Choice (how career choices are made and enacted). SCCT posits that choice is a function of interests and interest-supporting activities and environments (Lent et al., 1996). However, choosing a career does not always reflect interest, nor are environments always supportive. SCCT highlights self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and contextual influences that mediate interest and choice. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2000)

identify two types of contextual influences that support or hinder career

development processes and which may be viewed negatively or positively:

- ➤ Distal/background influences help shape interests and affect career-related

  expectations. Examples of distal influences are opportunities for skill

  development, role models, and quality of academic support.

- ➤ Proximal/immediate influences have direct, more potent effects on

  people's choices/decisions about career and education. Examples of

  immediate influences are discrimination in hiring, financial support,

  collectivistic cultures, family involvement, and acculturation.

- Career/Occupational/Academic Performance (how performance outcomes are

  achieved). In SCCT, Lent et al. (1996) define performance as the level of success

  achieved and persistence at an activity or career despite setbacks (e.g., academic

  retention, job stability). The interaction between ability and the three social

  cognitive variables is critical. Again, this process occurs in a feedback loop.

  Success and persistence are assumed to be influenced by ability, self-efficacy,

  outcome expectations, and performance goals. Experiences where activities are

  mastered help to promote development of skills and in turn, increase self-efficacy

  and outcome expectations in a dynamic cycle. In addition, the context within

  which people develop their skills, efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations are

  influenced by other variables such as educational access and family norms (Lent

  et al., 1996).

In summary, earlier career theories heavily emphasized the matching process between person and job characteristics. Overall, these theories had a focused explanation of how and why career choices were made (e.g., values-based, for intrinsic purposes, or a match of personality with work environments).

While earlier theories focused on the content of career choice (e.g., job or person characteristics), more contemporary theories have adopted a broader approach to account for the increasing complexity of the individual and the world of work. According to Patton (2008), "in today's world, people change jobs several times in a lifetime, and career choice is only one aspect of a broad array of career challenges to confront. Career theories need to be appropriate for the complexity of individuals living in a complex world" (p. 133). Thus, theories incorporating adaptive, constructivist, systemic, developmental, and contextual perspectives have emerged to understand the complexity of career development today. This is evidenced by theories which have a temporal and developmental aspect, as well as situations beyond the individual's control. These theories suggest that career choices are made and changed over time due to a change in priorities (e.g., occupational choice theory), or as the person's context changes (e.g., developmental-contextual theory), or depending on the opportunities available to the individual (e.g., opportunity structure theory). Broader and more integrative theories have also emerged, such as SCCT and SCLTDM, to account for more flexibility in explaining career choice and development. Both SCCT and SLTCDM are considered integrative frameworks because both theories recognize that there are a large number of

factors that influence career choice and development. They also incorporate learning processes based on the outcome of experiences.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework draws on theory, research, and experience (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). It is a model that frames a research study, and is expected to be continually revised as findings and new insights emerge from the research. It illustrates the relationships among the variables/concepts the researcher intends to investigate. It also serves as a theoretical and methodological foundation for the development of the study and how the findings will be analyzed.

From the number of theories that offer explanations of how and why career choices are made, this study was primarily interested in how the interrelationships of personal and contextual components influenced participants' meaning of career building. It is expected that the meaning of building a career will be complex, thus broad and more flexible perspectives were more appropriate to account for this complexity. For this reason, the conceptual framework of this study drew on major components of Social Career Cognitive Theory (SCCT) and Parsons's work, as well as the literature review and the researcher's basic knowledge and experiences on the topic.

Based on the literature review, earlier studies had assessed Asian American college students to determine the type of occupations they would be most suited for (e.g., Leung et al., 1994). This is reflective of the approaches based on Parsons's work to match person and job/environment characteristics. More recent studies suggest that context plays a large role in the career decisions and development of ethnic, minority, and

immigrant populations (e.g., Poon, 2014; Roysircar et al., 2010). SCCT, in particular, has been found to be applicable in examining career choice and development among minority, ethnic, and immigrant groups, as well as college students. SCCT serves as an integrative and broad theoretical foundation that (a) bridges common elements from other career theories, and (b) incorporates personal characteristics, and social, cultural, environmental, and other contextual factors in making career decisions.

While SCCT considers the employment market as a strong influence in career choice, the theory says little about the knowledge of the career or job itself as an influence in career choice (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Thus, Parsons's work is a relevant addition to supplement SCCT. Parsons's work is not a theory per se, but it is broad in that it serves as a blueprint to describe the importance of self-knowledge and job/work knowledge before choosing and preparing for a career. In his book, *Choosing a Vocation*, a self-knowledge assessment includes a reflection on context (e.g., family, financial resources) as well as an inventory of skills and education. The reflection on context did not receive as much recognition as the logical positivist component that is the foundation of many assessments used for career-matching today. The consideration of job or career knowledge as essential to career choice and planning supplements SCCT. Thus, both SCCT and Parsons's work were used together as main foundations to the conceptual framework. In alignment with the constructivist worldview of this study, both theoretical frameworks acknowledge meaning-making and personal agency in making career decisions.

The researcher's basic experiences and work with immigrant populations also informed the conceptual framework. Based on these experiences, there may be instances where the immigrant student did not have a choice per se in his/her career. Rather, he/she might have chosen and built a career that was most readily available, temporary, outside of his/her interests and abilities, and in consideration of a number of socio-economic and political factors. Immigrant history, background, and status have not been fully explored in previous career development literature, but they are assumed to be salient in the career decisions of the population of this study.

Based on the theoretical foundations, literature review, and researcher's experience, the conceptual framework of this study took into account three overarching, dynamic categories that may have influenced participants' meaning of career building:

- Personal characteristics – refers to 3 areas stemming from the individual participant:

  ➢ demographical factors (e.g., ethnicity, age, immigrant status)

  ➢ psychological factors (e.g., self-efficacy)

  ➢ cognitive factors (e.g., interests, abilities, learning from experiences)

- Contextual influences – refers to social, economic, political, cultural, and other environmental factors that influence career choice and preparation (e.g., family, financial situation, culture, educational institution, immigration policy). These contexts can be either proximal/immediate or distal/background influences to career decisions.

- Job/career knowledge – refers to what the participant knows about the job/career itself. It is assumed that the individual will have an idea about what a career in a particular field will entail prior to choosing and preparing for it.

Figure 2 serves as a conceptual framework in informing the co-constructed meaning of career building for Asian American immigrant community college students. This conceptual framework has three layers:
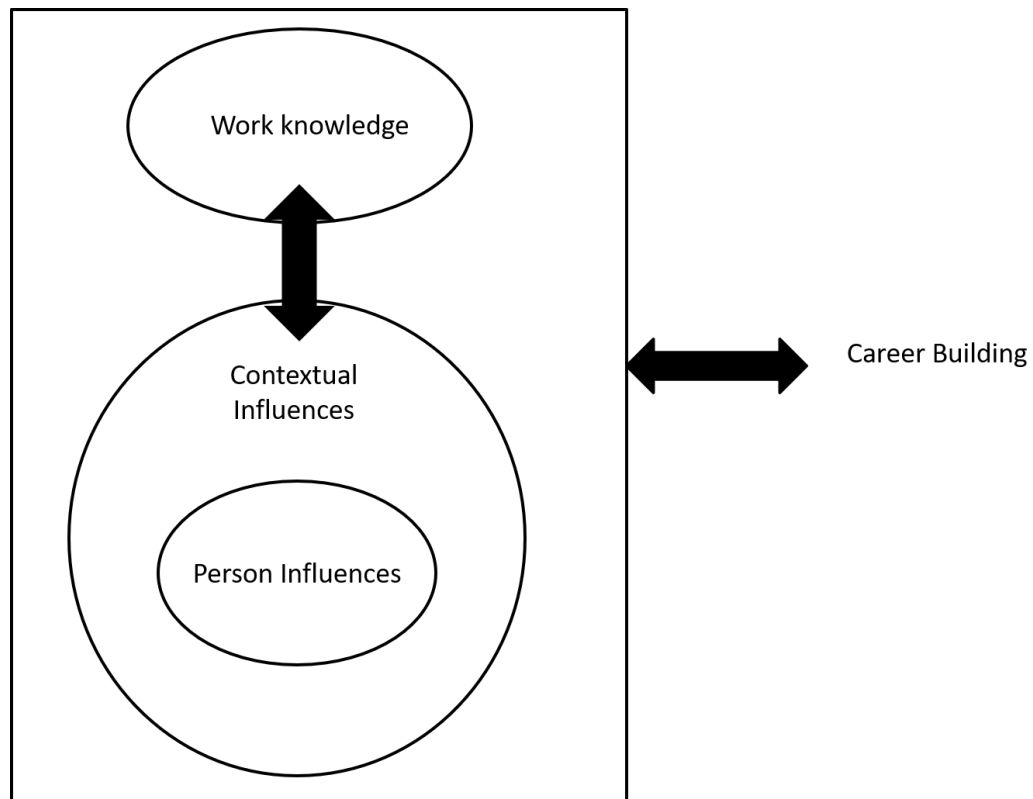
Figure 2. Conceptual framework of factors involved in career choice and preparation.

First, this framework proposes that the dynamic interrelationships of person and contextual factors influence the process of choosing and building a career. The meaning of career building may be influenced by the person's characteristics or predispositions, such as age, race/ethnicity, gender, immigrant status, pre-migration schooling and history, and level of self-efficacy. Proximal/immediate contexts have direct and more potent effects on choice and preparation, such as financial support, family involvement, level of acculturation, and job availability. Distal/background contexts help shape interests and affect outcome expectations, such as opportunities for skill development, the quality of academic support, and socio-political climates.

Second, the double-headed arrow above the person-context circle suggests that the knowledge of the career/job interacts with person and context factors. The person takes into account what the job/career will entail and assesses it alongside person and context factors.

Third, the double-headed arrow connecting both work knowledge and the person-context circle proposes that there is a dynamic, interdependent relationship between career choice, preparation, contexts, and work knowledge. The meaning of career development can be complex as students may find themselves deciding or changing their career choice after they have already begun preparing for it due to a number of person and contextual factors. They may also change their minds as soon as they know about or experience the job/career itself.

Summary

In summary, the existing literature shows that a wide range of research has been conducted on the Asian American student experience in higher education – from resilience and persistence, to mental health issues, and college choice. There has also been progress in understanding the different Asian ethnic groups within the larger AAPI category, as well as differences in generational status.

Despite the research progress examining Asian American college students, a great majority of the studies continue to examine university students, and were conducted in cities with relatively large Asian American populations, particularly from the West Coast (e.g., Leung et al., 1994; Maramba, 2008; Poon, 2014; Wang et al., 2009; Xiong & Lam, 2013). A better understanding is needed of how Asian Americans attending community colleges conceptualize careers and build them. How do Asian Americans choose careers? How do they prepare for them? What do these experiences in building careers mean for them? These are the main questions to be answered in this research.

It is important to pursue this line of research given that (a) Asian Americans are currently the fastest growing immigrant group in the United States and in Nebraska (López & Bialik, 2017; Tobias, 2015); (b) Asian American immigrants are among the 7% that comprise the Nebraska workforce; (c) as much as 45% of the nation's AAPI college enrollment are in the community college sector (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2010); and (d) Asian American community college students are more likely to come from more modest backgrounds and face significant challenges (Museus, 2014). This study may bring more visibility to the

diverse Asian American population in Nebraska and produce more authentic understandings of their career building experiences in this increasingly significant segment of higher education.

With growing numbers of Asian Americans in higher education, there is an urgent need to understand this population and respond to their needs and interests (Museus, 2014). Specifically, there is a lack of research attention directed towards the career development of Asian American college students (Poon, 2014). Thus, this study aims to address the gaps in the literature and explore career building among Asian American first-generation immigrant students in Nebraskan community colleges.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research paradigm used in the study, the research strategy, the researcher's role, the methods of conducting the study and data analysis, and the limitations of the study.

Constructivist Worldview

Because the answers to the research questions are based on participants' interpretation of career building, a constructivist paradigm was adopted for this study. A researcher with a constructivist worldview assumes that knowledge and reality are socially and multiply constructed (Mertens, 2010). Individuals try to understand the world in which they live and work by developing subjective meanings of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). How individuals understand and make meaning of the world emerges from interactions with others, and within historical and cultural contexts. In a constructivist paradigm, reality is co-constructed between the researcher and the participants, and shaped by their individual experiences (Creswell, 2013). The goal of the constructivist researcher is to interpret the complexity of these meanings and experiences from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 2000), while acknowledging that this interpretation is shaped by their own personal backgrounds (Creswell, 2013).

Constructivism is the traditional foundation for qualitative research because it aims to interpret individual experiences (Creswell, 2013). Constructivism is often the paradigm used in studies that aim to understand and interpret multiple views through a

hermeneutical, dialectical, phenomenological, contextual, or grounded theory approach (Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2010). In qualitative studies that have examined career development among immigrant college students, examples of those that used a constructivist/interpretative paradigm include examining the cultural and contextual factors influencing the meaning of work for adult Black African university students (Stebleton, 2012), and considerations in career choices among second-generation Asian American university students (Poon, 2014).

While constructivism may be an appropriate paradigm for addressing the research questions in this study, it has its disadvantages. For instance, because the assumption is that reality is socially and multiply constructed, some concepts such as minority and diversity may mean different things to different people in different contexts (Mertens, 2010). Stebleton (2012) for example, noted that his findings on the meaning of work for adult Black African immigrant university colleges should not be generalized to other students of the same demographic in other universities. Second, language and communication are central to the research process, interaction with participants, resulting data, and interpretation (Hennink, 2008). Cross-cultural research with an interpretative paradigm can become complicated if the meanings attached to words, descriptions, and expressions of a different language and sociocultural context of participants are not familiar to the researcher, who is trying to co-construct reality with the participants. For example, Stebleton (2012) used the term "work" instead of "career", because "work" was more relevant to his African participants. Also, his participants had to have at least a moderate level of conversational English to be eligible for the study, but it was possible

that certain meanings and descriptions of lived experience could have been lost in the participant's translation from his/her dialect to English. Third, participants are often asked broad, general, and open-ended questions, so they can construct the meaning of a situation as they understand it (Creswell, 2013). This could become tricky for researchers who are trying to understand specific experiences. For example, Poon (2014) noted that she had to define the term "racial micro-aggression" to her participants at the beginning of the study. As a result, her participants' responses may have become biased towards this definition.

Research Strategy

To examine the meaning of career building for Asian American immigrant community college students, this study used a qualitative design, particularly the hermeneutical phenomenological approach. Rooted in the works of philosophers Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), hermeneutic phenomenology is essentially a method of reflection on the basic structures of the lived experience (van Manen, 2014). This approach focuses on "the situated meaning of a human in the world" (Laverty, 2003, p. 7), and views people and the world as "inseparably related in cultural, in social, and in historical contexts" (Laverty, 2003, p. 8). According to Heidegger and Gadame, "meaning was found as we are constructed by the world while at the same time, we are constructing this world from our own background and experiences" (Laverty, 2003, p. 8). Thus, they believed that it was impossible to bracket or set aside personal biases and assumptions. Rather, they were embedded and essential to the interpretation of lived experience (Laverty, 2003). Advanced as a

research method by Canadian educator Max van Manen (1997, 2014), hermeneutical phenomenology is also known as descriptive-interpretative phenomenology, because the researcher aims to describe the experiences as well as interpret the meanings participants attach to those experiences.

There are advantages to using a hermeneutical phenomenological approach in this study. First, it is the appropriate strategy because it addresses the aim of the proposed study, which is to explore Asian American immigrant community college students' interpretation of career building. Qualitative methods have been used in previous studies that have examined the perspectives of Asian American college students on varied topics (e.g., Xiong & Lam, 2013). With the exception of Poon's study (2014), a majority of studies that specifically examined aspects of career development of Asian American college students used a quantitative approach (e.g., Kelly et al., 2009; Roysircar et al., 2010; Tang et al. 1999). Thus, a phenomenological approach to understanding how Asian American college students interpret what it means to build a career can contribute to this gap in research methodology.

Second, qualitative studies allow researchers the flexibility in sampling size decisions. Qualitative studies prioritize repeating themes or data saturation rather than data extension, as important in quantitative studies (Mertens, 2010). As a rule of thumb, phenomenological studies recommend interviewing between 5 and 25 participants (Polkinghorne, 1989), and often multiple interviews with the same individuals (Creswell, 2013).

Third, the hermeneutical phenomenological approach honors the concept of embedding theoretical orientations, biases, assumptions, and personal background of the researcher in the co-construction of reality with participants (Laverty, 2003; van Manen, 2014). Thus, the researcher can acknowledge that her being an Asian student in Nebraska has value in the co-construction of the reality of career development of Asian and Asian American college students in Nebraska.

There are also disadvantages to using a qualitative, hermeneutical phenomenological approach. Due to the multiple, subjective meanings given in specific contexts, findings and implications may be limited to Asian American immigrant community college students in Nebraska. Conducting cross-cultural studies can also be quite tricky due to differences in language and insider perspectives. Interviews with participants who are not confident with their English skills can become challenging. As noted earlier, language and communication are central to the research process, interaction with participants, resulting data, and interpretation (Hennink, 2008). The authentic meanings attached to words may be lost in the process of communicating in English as a second language. In addition, the fact that the researcher is Asian can be seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage. It is an advantage if the participant perceives the researcher as an insider, or someone who is familiar with, socialized to, or shares the same cultural, linguistic, and ethnic characteristics as the participant (Liamputtong, 2010). The researcher's race is a disadvantage if the participant perceives the researcher as an outsider. Even if the researcher shares the same race as the participant, other factors such as the researcher's ethnicity, language, graduate student status, being an

international student, or having a different religion can affect interaction of the participants and authenticity of the resulting data.

The research strategy for this study also used theory to help guide and inform the research process. Typically, qualitative research designs do not explicitly contain a theoretical orientation to reduce experiences to a universal essence, as is the case in transcendental or descriptive phenomenology (Creswell, 2014). However, theory can be used in qualitative designs, two ways of which were appropriate for this study. First, a theoretical lens can help frame a study (Creswell, 2014). In this case, the conceptual framework served as guide for the researcher as to what issues may be salient in the career choice and preparation of Asian American immigrant community college students. The conceptual framework incorporated components from social cognitive career theory and the person-job match perspective, as well as literature review and the researcher's work and experience.

Second, theory can be strengthened with the addition of experiential or phenomenological meaning (van Manen, 2014). The person-job match approach has historically paved the way for the development of career assessments, and social cognitive career theory has contributed to the understanding of immigrant student career development. Using both approaches as lenses to better understand specific populations (e.g., Asian Americans) in specific contexts (e.g., Nebraska community colleges) through phenomenology can help enrich theory.

Role of the Researcher

As an Asian graduate student in Nebraska, I realize that my personal and professional experiences, biases and assumptions may influence the research process. Here, I summarize some of these biases and assumptions stemming from personal or professional experiences that may have influenced the research process and interpretation.

First, I understand what it is like to be perceived as a model minority and a perpetual foreigner. Growing up in the Philippines and the Fiji Islands exposed me to a multicultural society, and I don't really recall any experiences related to racial issues. In fact, I was not really aware of ethnic diversity, microaggression, and stereotyping until I arrived in the United States to pursue a doctoral degree. Since my first year in the doctoral program, I have been told that I "spoke English well," and that "statistics should come easy for you." At out-of-state conferences, I would tell people I was from Nebraska, and they would follow up with "Where are you originally from?" These statements were never taken offensively, and I used to think it was normal. But the more I observed, and read, and talked to people, the more I realized that race and color were very real issues in the United States. For foreign-born Asian immigrant community college students, these issues may also be deeply affecting their perceptions of themselves and their place in their new community.

Second, I assume that context always plays a role in an individual's decision-making. When I first started thinking about a career, my parents didn't pressure me too much in following in their footsteps in the medical profession. Taking their advice, I

majored in psychology, because I was interested in people. While in college, I dreamed of being an educational psychologist. After college, I switched jobs about three times: from being an elementary school guidance counselor, to human resources manager, to currently, a scholar in leadership in higher education. The switching was due to lots of factors – bad bosses, institutional problems, financial security, expanding interests, opportunity for career growth, etc. I always thought that the need to excel was both a cultural and familial factor. I have had health issues in the past due to stress and overwork in the pursuit of excellence. In terms of preparing for each job, I had switched from a Masters program in counseling psychology to organizational psychology to align with my new job in human resources, and now I am pursuing a doctorate in leadership in higher education. Although job positions have changed, I perceive my career development as non-linear but continuous, and still related to human development, albeit in different contexts. The notion that context plays a role in decision-making is reflective of the theories I have chosen to inform this study. I assume that the participants in this study have their own experiences with career choice and preparation depending on past and current events and in specific personal, institutional, migration, racial, and/or cultural contexts.

Third, I chose to approach this study with a culture-sensitive perspective in consideration of the participant demographic. The position I take as a researcher in this study is one who is respectful of their diverse backgrounds, and one who may share the experience of what it is like to be an Asian adult studying in Nebraska, to be stereotyped as a model minority and a perpetual foreigner, and at some level, to deal with a new

career in a foreign land. There are things about me that I may share with participants, such as living far away from friends and family, and dealing with financial constraints. In this sense, participants may perceive me as an insider, someone who understands their experiences as newcomers to America. There are things about them that we do not have in common, such as religion. Regardless, as a researcher, I want to learn from them, since I do not know what it is like to go to a community college, or to be a first-generation immigrant, or having to choose and prepare for a career based on the current climates and contexts that are salient to the participant.

Lastly, broadly speaking, my worldview is somewhat dialectic, such that I ascribe to the positive features of the constructivist, transformative, and pragmatic paradigms (Johnson, 2017). This dissertation is but a small, although important part of my research agenda, which is focused on human resource development, employability, and career transitions of adult immigrants. Thus, I aim to conduct research that provides practical recommendations (pragmatic) to both people involved and systems/structures. This means describing multiple realities (constructivism), including perspectives from certain types of immigrants (transformative). My approach to research is heavily influenced by my personal context as a scholar-practitioner in the social sciences. My former job as a human resource development professional gave me the opportunity to work with people from diverse professional, cultural, socio-economic, and industry backgrounds with the mutual goal of facilitating change beneficial to people and systems. Thus, context, collaboration, and process are important to me. This also most likely explains why I tend

to gravitate toward using "grand" theories like the socio-ecological or systems frameworks to inform the research process (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2015).

Setting

The present study was conducted in Nebraska, a state that has been experiencing an influx of Asian immigrants (Bump et al., 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014; Tobias, 2015). Asian American community college students were recruited from two community colleges in two cities in Nebraska. Although there are a total of six community colleges in the state of Nebraska, Southeast Community College (SCC) and Metropolitan Community College (MCC) were chosen for the study based on the statistics that 90% of the total Asian American community college student population in Nebraska were enrolled in these two institutions as of Fall 2015 (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System College Data, 2017).

Information gathered from both institutions and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) showed that in Fall 2016-2017, SCC had 412 students who identified as Asian, comprising approximately 4% of the SCC's student population. MCC had 951 students who identified as Asian, comprising approximately 6% of MCC's student population. Figure 3 below shows the race/ethnicity profiles of students at both institutions.
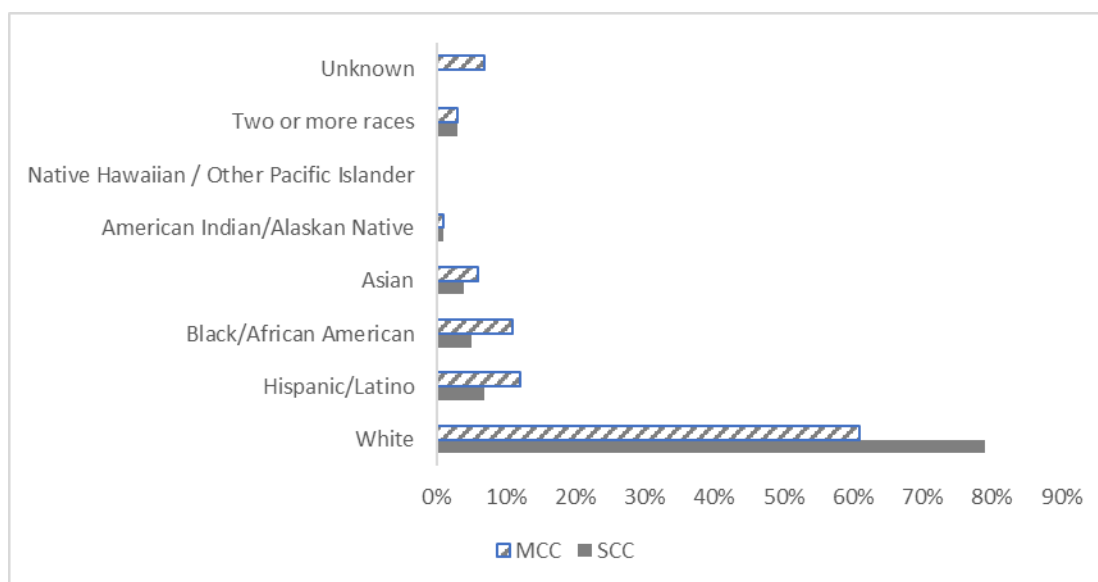
Figure 3. Student race/ethnicity profile of SCC and MCC.

Fifty-two percent (52%) of SCC's Asian students were between 20 and 24 years old, while 57% of MCC's Asian students between 22 and 34 years old. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of Asian students were in academic transfer programs at MCC, while 36% of Asian students had undeclared programs at SCC. Figure 4 shows the types of programs Asian students were in at both institutions.

In both institutions, there were more students who studied part-time than full-time. Beyond undeclared majors, Asian students at SCC were taking majors in Arts and Sciences, Communications and Information Technology, Business, and Health Sciences. In contrast, Asian students at MCC were enrolled in English/ESL, Math and Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Information Technology, and Humanities and Arts.
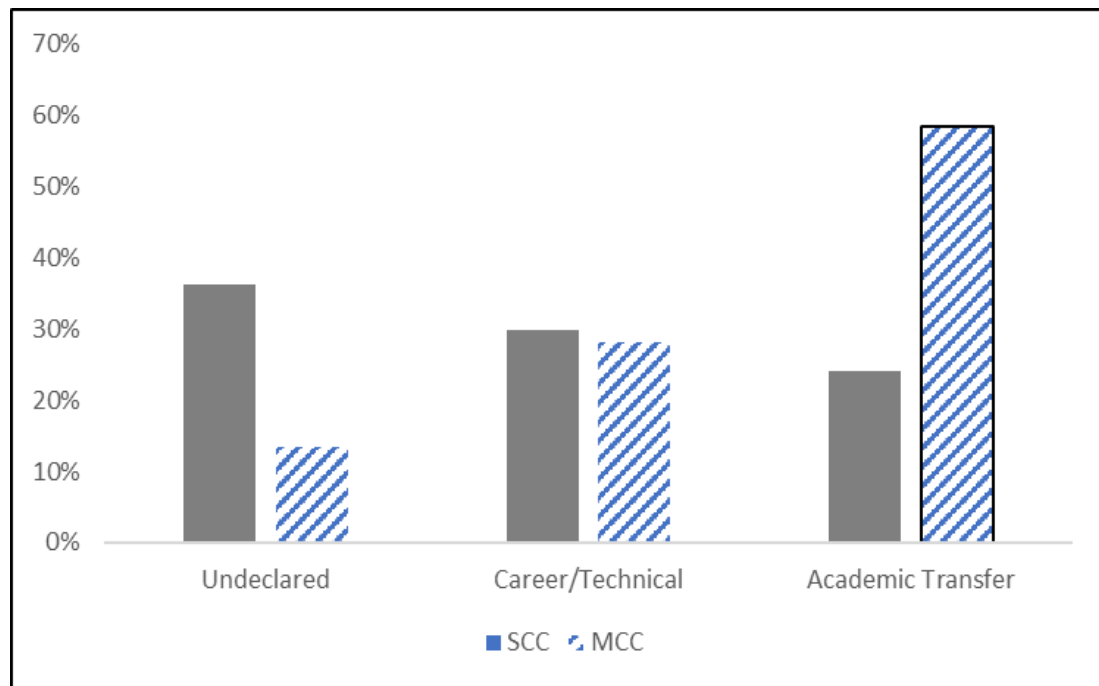
Figure 4. Program profile of Asian students at SCC and MCC.

Participants

The present study was concerned about the meaning of career building for Asian American immigrant community college students in Nebraska. Thus, the primary sources of data were from a purposive sample of multiple individuals who fit all of the following inclusion criteria: (a) at least 19 years old, (b) identify as Asian or Asian American, (c) identify as first-generation (foreign-born) immigrant or refugee, (d) identify as either gender, (e) currently studied at Southeast Community College (SCC) or Metropolitan Community College (MCC) in Nebraska, (f) at any stage in their studies (ranging from non-credit, to first year, to graduating), and (g) pursuing a community college education in any major for career purposes (e.g., attain a 2-year

degree, continuing education, transfer to 4-year institution, etc.). This study yielded a total of 21 participants: 11 from MCC, and 10 from SCC. Participants were interviewed only once, and received $10 in cash as incentive for their participation.

Sampling and Recruitment

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institutional Review Board approved this study on June 2017 (see Appendix E). Both snowball and purposive sampling were used to recruit participants. Snowball sampling occurred between June 2017 and April 2018. In snowball sampling, I asked personal and professional contacts (e.g., friends, co-workers) to pass along information about the study. Further snowball sampling occurred such that once participants were interviewed, I asked them to pass along the information to anyone else they knew, were eligible, and may be interested to participate.

Purposive recruitment did not start until September 2017 in order to coincide with the beginning of the community college Fall quarter. From September to December 2017, I shared recruitment efforts for this study along with an external grant, of which I became co-principal investigator, focusing on similar topics and participants. The principal investigator of the grant and I drafted a letter to SCC's Institutional Research Office requesting for their assistance in emailing currently enrolled students who identified as Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, or Middle Eastern. In this letter, we invited students to take part in the grant study, included information about participant eligibility, and whom to contact if they were interested (see Appendix F). SCC approved the research efforts for both the dissertation and the grant project in late November 2017 (see

Appendix G). From the recruitment efforts of the grant study, eight students who met the criteria for the dissertation were selected for the present study.

Also in November 2017, MCC's Institutional Research Office approved my request to recruit students from their institution for the dissertation alone (see Appendix H). MCC also assisted in inviting currently enrolled students (who identified as Asian) to participate in the dissertation study on my behalf (see letter Appendix I). With continued recruitment efforts for the dissertation study alone, 3 students from SCC and 10 students from MCC were added to the study, bringing the total to 21 participants.

Data Collection

Consistent with phenomenology and the principles of conducting culturally-sensitive research, data were collected in the following ways.

Demographic survey. Once participants contacted me to express interest in participating in the study, he/she answered a survey either online (for email, instant messaging, and phone/video call interviews) or in person just before the face-to-face interview. The survey included an online version of the informed consent that participants could read and then agree to participating in the study by electronic signature. The survey collected demographic information about participants such as age, ethnicity, and college major (see Appendix J). The survey gave a demographic profile of the Asian American immigrant community college students who participated in the study.

Interviews. The primary method for data collection in phenomenological studies is the interview (Creswell, 2013). However, in consideration of culturally-sensitive practices, and to strive for participant trust and comfort, participants in this study had the

following options to be interviewed: face-to-face (either individually or in small groups), phone or video call, or online (instant messaging or email). Initially, the only interview options were face-to-face or phone/video call interviews. During the recruitment process however, my personal contacts communicated that some students were interested to participate but were too "shy" to meet in person or by phone. Thus, I requested additional IRB approval to include online interview options (email and instant messaging) to accommodate such students (see Appendix K).

van Manen (2014) states that "people are more inclined to remember and tell their life stories when the surroundings are conducive to thinking about these experiences" (p. 315). For this study, participants chose the setting and time most convenient and comfortable for the interview. Of the 21 participants, 11 chose to be individually interviewed face-to-face. Four (4) of these face-to-face interviews were held at the community college where participants attended, 6 chose to be interviewed at local universities in their area, and 1 chose to be interviewed at her home. The face-to-face interviews were always held in private, quiet settings, in places like empty classrooms or meeting rooms at the said educational institutions, or semi-private settings like a café or seating area on campus. In phone/video call interviews, participants chose to either be interviewed at home or a reserved room on campus using their own laptops.

In addition to the 11 who chose to be interviewed face-to-face, 5 participants opted for a phone/video call, 3 chose to email their answers, and 1 chatted with me via instant messaging. All face-to-face and phone/video call interviews were audio-recorded

and lasted no more than 1 hour. The interview via instant messaging took 4 hours to complete, while participants were asked to email their answers within 1 week.

The process of obtaining participant consent prior to the conduct of the semi-structured interviews varied depending on whether the interview was face-to-face, or via phone/video call or online. In face-to-face interviews, I first discussed the consent form with the participant, where I gave information about the study, clarified any questions the participant had, and asked permission from him/her to audio-record the interview (see Appendix L). After the consent form was signed, a copy was given to the participant to keep. The participant then completed the demographic survey, and the interview would follow. Participants were asked to choose a pseudonym to use during the interview. After the interview, the $10 incentive was given to the participant, along with a recruitment flyer, and an encouragement to tell anyone he/she might know of who would be interested in the study to contact me.

Prior to interviews involving phone/video calls, email, or instant messaging, I first sent the participants a link to a Qualtrics survey, which contained both the consent form and demographic survey (see Appendix J). Participants were encouraged to read the consent form and email me their questions prior to the phone/video call, email, or instant messaging interviews. If they agreed to participate, they electronically signed their names on the Qualtrics form, and proceeded with completing the demographic survey. They also had an option to download a printed copy of the consent form from Qualtrics. Once participants completed the online demographic survey, they emailed me to arrange a meeting via phone/video call or instant messaging, or I would reply by emailing them

the list of the interview questions. Prior to conducting phone/video call and instant messaging interviews, I always asked participants if they had any questions about the study. After the interview, I requested for their mailing address, so I could send, in a sealed envelope, their $10 incentive, a recruitment flyer (see Appendix M), and a note to invite their friends to participate in the study.

In conducting phenomenological interviews, van Manen (2014) offers several guidelines. Phenomenological interviews begin by being a personable researcher, one who builds a rapport with the participant prior to opening the topic of research. Interviews are not rushed, and the researcher can share personal experiences to help interviewees clarify thoughts. The focus of the interview is a rich and detailed description of the lived experience, with enough concrete stories about situations or events to caution against over-interpretation. In the semi-structured interviews in this study, participants were asked about what building a career meant for them. They were asked to provide detailed descriptions about their experiences in choosing and preparing for their careers at the community college. These descriptions included examples about opportunities they've received, challenges they've faced, and the various socio-economic, personal, institutional, and political context in which their decisions and experiences were based on and continued to be influenced by. They were asked what these experiences mean or have meant for them. Follow up or clarification questions were brought up as needed, regardless of the type of interview. Refer to Appendix N for the interview protocol.

Data Analysis

Audio files of the interviews were professionally transcribed by a transcription company. IRB approval was obtained prior to sending the company the audio files (see Appendix O). After transcriptions were obtained, I removed all identifying information about the participants, such as replacing names with pseudonyms. All de-identified transcripts were uploaded to Dedoose, a web-based application that analyzes qualitative and mixed methods data, to help organize codes. Demographic survey responses were also downloaded from Qualtrics as an Excel file and transferred to Dedoose, to help organize demographic information about the participants.

Coding. Coding is an analytic process wherein labels are assigned to give symbolic meaning to descriptive or inferential information (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). In hermeneutic phenomenology, the data analysis process is a co-construction of the data with participants (Laverty, 2003). The basic structure of the phenomenon is created by "treating the texts as sources of meaning" (van Manen, 2014, p. 320) and organizing themes supported by significant statements. This basic structure also includes the researcher's personal assumptions and philosophical bases from which interpretation occurred (Cotterill & Letherby, 1993; Laverty, 2003). The final product of a phenomenological study is a reflective writing of the themes or an essence description, one that includes historical meanings of the experience, how these meanings affect participants individually and socially, and examples of how the essence is manifested (Laverty, 2003; van Manen, 1990; van Manen, 2014).

Although van Manen suggests a three-step reflective process in data analysis that involves wholistic, selective, and detailed reading, he also encourages authors to create or combine approaches to organizing and reporting data (van Manen, 1990). Thus, in this study, I used a reflective process and more structured coding techniques to organize data in such a way that they align with my conceptual framework, answer my research questions, and create a foundation from which the meaning of what it is like to build a career can be derived.

In the first phase of data analysis, I organized data using deductive coding. Deductive codes are derived from a "start list" of codes that are based on the conceptual framework, list of research and interview questions, and key areas the researcher brings to the study (Miles et al., 2014, p. 81). Combining deductive coding and van Manen's wholistic reading approach, I first read through the transcripts repeatedly to try to attend to the whole story. While reading through the transcripts, I wrote down what I perceived were key areas as well as any observations from my interview with each participant. I also used the conceptual framework, interview questions, and research questions as guides as I read through the text. In this first phase of coding, I labeled texts with holistic codes and structural codes (Saldaña, 2016). In holistic coding, I applied a single code to a large unit of text to temporarily capture a broad concept and from which sub-categories can still be developed. In structural coding, I categorized segments of significant statements into conceptual phrases that relates to a specific research or interview question. In addition to deductive coding, I was also open to inductive coding, where

topics that may be of significance but were not pre-determined by a start list may emerge from the data (Miles et al., 2014).

The goal of the second phase of data analysis is to re-analyze and re-organize first level codes into a smaller list of broader categories or concepts (Saldaña, 2016). For second level coding, I used focused coding technique, where I further categorized the coded data based on potential conceptual similarity. Focused coding is used to develop major categories of the data (Saldaña, 2016). The repeated process of reading through the text for significant statements, and re-organizing and re-coding continued until final codes were yielded to best represent the participants' experiences.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Three strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the study. The first was to get feedback from participants about the representation of their responses, also called member checking (Creswell, 2013). This is appropriate because the purpose of a hermeneutical phenomenology with a constructivist paradigm is to co-construct reality with participants. Participants can validate if the themes generated from the interview (Miles et al., 2014), accurately represented their interpretations and meanings of career development. Other phenomenological studies have used member checking to validate their findings (e.g., Poon, 2014; Vapor & Xu, 2011).

During the interview and coding process, I noticed patterns in the experiences of the participants, and the participants themselves. In consulting the literature, Rumbaut (2004) suggested that certain patterns were noted that further defined the foreign-born immigrant: the first generation (those who arrived as adults), the 1.25 generation (those

who arrived as teenagers), the 1.5 generation (those who arrived as children), and the 1.75 generation (those who arrived before they were five years old). In member checking, at least two representatives from each generational category were chosen and emailed a summary of emerging themes generated from their own responses, with the request to see if the themes chosen by the researcher represented their answers well. Only five responded, gave positive feedback, and with no further comments about the emerging themes.

The second way this study was validated was through triangulation, or using corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme (Creswell, 2013). One of these sources was from what van Manen (1997) calls a "collaborative discussion" or "hermeneutical conversation" with peers to help generate deeper insights and meanings (p. 100). Much like a peer review, or interrater agreement in quantitative studies (Creswell, 2013), the purpose of a collaborative discussion is to "test" and strengthen one's work through the examination, articulation, omission, addition, and reformulation of themes (van Manen, 1997). Other phenomenological studies have used some form of collaborative discussion with peers to help critique, clarify, and validate themes and findings (e.g., Thomé, Esbensen, Dykes, & Hallberg, 2004; Yao, 2014). Thus, the researcher discussed with two colleagues and peers who identified as Asian first-generation immigrants to gather their insights on the texts and generated themes.

The third way this study was validated was for the researcher to clarify and explicitly name any biases, assumptions, and influences that may have shaped the research process (Laverty, 2003). This is done at the beginning of the study so that

readers understand the position of the researcher and any biases that may have influenced the approach to the study. For example, Poon (2014) stated that her personal and professional experiences as a second-generation Asian American and student affairs professional may have informed her research design and interpretation. In addition, Laverty (2003) advises that researchers keep a reflective journal that will assist them in the process of reflection and interpretation. This positionality is incorporated in the section Role of the Researcher, where I explicitly inform readers of my biases, assumptions, and thoughts that may have influenced the process of interpretation.

Delimitations and Limitations

Participant criteria. The study explored what building a career means to Asian American immigrant community college students in Nebraska. The study focused on those who were born outside of the United States, regardless of age of arrival. The reason for focusing on the foreign-born and no age limit is that the study also took into account the relevance of pre-migration history and age of arrival as part of the context of shaping careers. Socio-developmental contexts have been found to be salient among immigrant generational cohorts in processes of adaptation and social mobility (Rumbaut, 2004). Findings of the study may not be representative of those born in the United States (i.e., second-generation immigrants and beyond).

Data sites. Collecting data from only two sites may have biased the findings of this study towards Asian Americans from those specific locations. Since 90% of the total Asian American community college population is enrolled in MCC and SCC, this figure is representative of the Asian American community college student population in

Nebraska. However, these two sites are considered large, 2-year institutions with a total student enrollment of approximately 15,000 and 9,000, respectively, as of Fall 2015 (Carnegie Classification, 2017); and located in the top two largest cities in Nebraska with a total population of approximately 450,000 and 250,000, respectively, as of 2015 (U.S. Census, 2015b). The findings of this study may be limited to Asian Americans who study in larger community colleges in urban settings, and may not capture the experiences of the other 10% dispersed across the smaller community colleges in Grand Island, Norfolk, North Platte, and Scottsbluff.

Recruitment and data collection. The snowball and purpose methods of recruitment were used in this study. Although the snowball method is regarded as an appropriate way to recruit participants and can be effective especially in cross-cultural research (Liamputtong, 2010), the disadvantage is that snowballing can result in participants who resemble each other too much that diversity is limited (Eide & Allen, 2005). Examples of such similarities are ethnicity, acculturation levels, college major, and gender. In the present study, two participants of the same ethnicity resulted from snowball methods. Although their career goals were different, they had similar backgrounds and reasons for attending community college.

To be as culturally responsive as possible, data collection methods had to be expanded halfway through the recruitment process to include email and instant messaging as options for interview. Some of the participants were interested in being interviewed, but preferred email or instant messaging, stating that they were too shy for a face to face or even phone interview. Email enables interviewing those who are shy,

and/or cannot express themselves well speaking versus writing especially in a second language (Meho, 2006). Private instant messaging resembles oral interviews such that it allows for synchronous interaction, yet offers a level of privacy and anonymity (Kazmer & Xie, 2008) that may be preferable compared to a face-to-face or phone/video call interview. As a result of the three email interviews, follow up questions and clarifications took a longer process, due to having to email back and forth at least twice per participant. In addition, email interviewing may not be as comprehensive as face to face, phone/video calls, and instant messaging interviews.

English language proficiency. Participants who were just learning English could hold an informal conversation, but not well enough for them to fully articulate abstract concepts such as describing what it was like to build a career at the community college. I would see them struggle to find the right words in English to describe what they really wanted to say, oftentimes resorting to gestures, drawings, examples, or clues from me to help in communication. Language and communication are powerful tools in cross-cultural research, as participants and researcher both try to co-construct reality and meaning (Hennink, 2008). Having a translator as an option during interviews would have made the participants more comfortable and more communicative.

Career clusters. Seven participants alone majored or had career goals in health sciences, while the rest of the participants had career goals dispersed across the fields of information technology, transportation, community services, agriculture and food resources, and business. Participants majoring in other career clusters like art/design,

humanities, and construction would have given a wider picture of the varied careers

Asian Americans pursued at the community college.

Chapter Four

Findings

Participant Profile and Summaries

Table 1 gives a demographic profile of the participants at the time of interview.

In this section, a summary of each participant's background will be provided.

The summaries include how they came to be in the United States and Nebraska,

motivations behind pursuing a community college education, and what the journey of

building a career has meant for them.

Ace. Ace is 23 years old and currently majoring in General Studies at MCC. At

18 months old, he was adopted from an orphanage in New Mexico, by a couple who are

Nebraska natives. He has two brothers who are also adopted from different countries.

He currently lives at home with his family in Omaha while he completes his community

college education. Ace identifies as Central Asian, based on a DNA test he had taken.

Ace had attended private school and was expected to follow the traditional high

school-to-college route, but he opted to join the army after high school instead. He was

inspired by his adoptive father, who was in the army reserves at the time. He tried to

attend a university in Lincoln, but felt he was not ready to commit to a major, and

dropped out after his first semester. After a deployment in Iraq, he decided to return to

school and focus on a career in emergency management. His experiences in the army as

a military policeman had made an impact on his decisions to pursue a meaningful and

purposeful career. He compares his life to those he has encountered while deployed

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Age at Arrival	Gender	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Community College	Education level at arrival	Student Status	Employment Status
Ace	23	1	M	Central Asian	S	MCC	No schooling	FT	E
Amy	31	< 1	F	Laotian	M	MCC	No schooling	FT	U
Bree	26	3	F	Vietnamese	S	SCC	No schooling	PT	E
Gaia	41	26	F	Asian Indian	M	MCC	Post grad	FT	U
Hope	22	21	F	Iraqi	S	SCC	High school	FT	E
Jack	53	9	M	Thai	M	MCC	Elementary	FT	E
Jenna	24	20	F	Filipino	Sep	SCC	College degree	FT	E
Jess	21	20	F	Vietnamese	S	SCC	Some college	FT	E
Kevin	21	14	M	Karen	S	MCC	High school	PT	E
Lenny	27	14	M	Vietnamese	M	MCC	Elementary	FT	E
Mae	26	< 1	F	Hmong	S	MCC	No schooling	PT	E
Matt	36	32	M	Afghanistan	M	MCC	Some college	PT	E
MJ	20	14	F	Filipino	S	SCC	Elementary	FT	E
Pia	37	21	F	Filipino	Sep	SCC	Some college	FT	E
Pink	50	16	F	Korean	S	SCC	High school	PT	U
Tai	41	38	F	Japanese	M	SCC	College degree	PT	E
Tara	20	12	F	Nepali	S	MCC	Elementary	FT	E
Wali	35	30	M	Pakistani	M	MCC	Post grad	FT	U
Yanek	20	18	M	Iraqi	S	SCC	Elementary	FT	E
Yasmin	22	6	F	Chinese	S	MCC	Elementary	FT	E
Yvonne	29	28	F	Japanese	M	SCC	Post grad	FT	E

Note. Gender: F = Female; M = Male; Marital Status: S = Single; M = Married; Sep = Separated; MCC = Metropolitan Community College; SCC = SCC Community College; Student Status: FT = Full-time (12 or more credit hours per term); PT = Part-time; Employment Status: E = Employed; U = Unemployed.

overseas, and as a sign of gratitude for the opportunities he has received, wants to pursue a career that focuses on saving lives.

Amy. Amy is 31 years old and currently taking courses at MCC with plans to transfer to a university to major in accounting. She was born in a refugee camp in the Philippines before resettling in Chicago with her family. She met her husband in Nebraska, while staying there with a friend prior to being deployed in the military. After the military, she and her husband continued to stay in Omaha due to job opportunities afforded to her husband, and to raise her children.

Amy identifies as Laotian, and although she was 20 days old when she arrived and practically grew up in the United States, her parents feared assimilating the family into the American culture. Amy recalls growing up in impoverished and crime-ridden neighborhoods in Chicago, and being isolated from the world as her parents refused to integrate them into society. Like Ace, she was pressured to enter college after high school even though she was not ready, and dropped out after a year. Amy believes that her culture and upbringing made an impact on her decisions to pursue a career in accounting. Influenced by their own experiences in Laos, her parents pressured her to pursue lucrative careers, and Amy also did not want her children to experience poverty like she did in Chicago. Moreover, she was raised in a strong collectivistic culture, one where she was expected to make career sacrifices for the good of the family. Amy confesses that her main passion was pathology, but had to forgo that dream in lieu of being a wife and mother, and a quicker means to establish financial stability.

Bree.   Bree is 26 years old and attends SCC where she is completing pre-requisite courses for nursing school. She was born in Vietnam and moved to Nebraska with her family when she was 3 years old.

Bree's journey to a nursing career was non-linear. She had majored in advertising for 3 years at a university in Lincoln, attended 2 other universities, and took a 2 year hiatus away from school before deciding to take medical assisting at SCC. At SCC, her teachers encouraged her to pursue nursing. In addition to her teachers' encouragement, she was drawn to a nursing career due to a number of experiences in her life. She had first thought of a career in the medical field when her father passed away when she was 17 years old. Bree said that the event traumatized her so much that she took a long time to recover. While she grieved, she dropped out of college, worked part-time as a phlebotomist where she observed nurses at work, and she went through a journey of self-discovery where she became more aware of what made her happy. For Bree, being able to study at the community college meant a second chance at a new career and finding her path towards independence.

Gaia.   Gaia is 41 years old and lives in Omaha with her husband and son. She is currently taking general courses at MCC, so she can transfer to a university in Omaha and pursue a computer science degree. She arrived in the country from India in 2008 when her husband acquired an employment visa.

Gaia completed her masters in journalism in India, but due to visa restrictions, she was not allowed to work upon arrival in the United States. In addition, her husband's job required him to travel frequently in the country, so she could not pursue her education

until they were more settled in Omaha. Although she understands that her career decisions revolved around keeping the family intact, and she is now allowed to find work, Gaia is frustrated about the time lost to resume her career, and that she had to start from the beginning with computer science due to perceptions that jobs in this field are more lucrative. She also has concerns about the current socio-political climate and what that would mean for the future of adult immigrants like herself and her husband, as well as competing with younger individuals for entry level jobs. At the moment, Gaia's decisions to return to school and eventually pursue a career in computer science are primarily driven by the need to secure financial stability for her family.

Hope. Hope is 22 years old and is completing transfer courses at SCC. She came to Nebraska one year ago with her family as refugees from Iraq. Before resettling in Nebraska, she and her family had lived in a refugee camp in Kurdistan for two years, where she learned some English and finished her high school education.

Hope's goal to become a medical doctor and join Doctors Without Borders stems primarily from her refugee experiences. She recalls people dying at the refugee camp where she had lived, because there were few treatment options and doctors. For her to become a doctor means leveraging on her experience and a chance to help others in such situations. Her parents are supportive of her decisions, although they are a little concerned about finding ways to pay for a medical education. Hope says she still feels the effects of the trauma from her experiences as a refugee, in addition to encountering culture shock and language difficulties at school. She is also worried about the country's acceptance of refugees and what that would mean for her and her family. Despite these

challenges, she is grateful for the support given by the Yazidi community in Lincoln and is driven to achieve her goals.

Jack. Jack is a 53-year old army veteran returning to school to complete an associate's degree in automotive technology at MCC. When he was nine years old, he came to the United States from Thailand with his Thai mother, American stepfather, and two younger brothers. They first settled in Louisiana, then Jack moved to California with his stepfather after his parents divorced, joined the army after high school, and finally settled in Nebraska where he and his wife have family. Jack identifies as Thai, but admits that he has not been in touch with his culture and has forgotten how to speak the mother tongue since he was a child.

Like Bree, Jack's journey towards a career in automotive technology was non linear. He was first drawn to the military because his stepfather was in the Air Force, but could not get in as a military policeman as intended because he was in the process of acquiring citizenship. Instead, he became a medical lab technician for the army reserve. He completed college and part of his masters in nursing while in the army, but after retirement, he decided to make his passion for cars from being just a hobby to an actual career. Jack says that at his age, he had already fulfilled his obligations to his country and his family. Returning to school was a chance to accomplish something for himself. After completing his degree, Jack says he plans to work with a friend who owns a business fixing or customizing cars.

Jenna. Jenna is 24 years old and completing pre-requisite courses at SCC for nursing school. She had met and married her husband while in the Philippines, and he

brought her to Nebraska. While in Nebraska, she decided to pursue nursing, even though she had already earned a college degree in tourism in the Philippines.

Jenna admits that she was drawn to nursing due to peer pressure. Her husband, friends, and family encouraged her to pursue nursing. Jenna also says that as a Filipina, she assumed that caregiving and compassion were two traits that were naturally associated with the ethnicity. She has since grown to like nursing, attracted by the number of career options within the field, job demand, and potential for financial stability. She is grateful for the opportunity to start a new career path in a community college in Nebraska, but does not see herself staying in the state, due to her plans to travel frequently.

Jess. Jess is 21 years old and has been in the country for one year. Originally from Vietnam, she arrived in the country with her parents to reunite with family. She and her parents initially settled in Houston, then Jess moved to Lincoln to live with her aunt and attend community college, stating that higher education was more affordable in Nebraska compared to Texas. She is taking transfer courses at SCC so she can later complete a degree in nutrition at a 4-year university.

Prior to arriving in the country, Jess had majored in English at a local university in Vietnam. Her dream was to be an interior designer, but changed her mind after learning how competitive and stressful the field was. She did not decide on nutrition as a potential career path until she took an elective class at SCC. Deciding to build on the interest, she did her own research on the field and talked to an SCC advisor. As an immigrant, Jess admits that she struggles with language, culture shock, and finding ways

to be self-sufficient. She worries about her parents, who are unemployed, refuse to learn English, and prefer to stay in Houston where there is a larger Asian community. Jess compares herself to international students, who seem to have their own community and social supports, whereas immigrant students do not have the same benefits. She is concerned that her low language skills might be a hindrance to pursuing a career in nutrition, thus she has applied for a part-time job and tries to learn at home in the attempt to improve her social and communication skills. As an only child, Jess thinks that building a career is a chance to be financially stable, so she can eventually take care of her parents.

Kevin. Kevin is 21 years old and is pursuing an Associate's degree in Criminal Justice at MCC. He arrived in Nebraska as a refugee when he was 14 years old. He identifies as Karen, who are an ethnic group from Burma.

Kevin's aspiration to be a police officer someday stems primarily from his experiences as a refugee resettling in Omaha. He recalls that people with refugee backgrounds had difficulties communicating in English, and many did not know the law. Kevin feels a sense of purpose and duty in helping the people in his community with regard to law enforcement. He also feels that being Karen has a bit of influence to choose a career in this field, as the Karen are a peaceful and harmonious people. His parents are concerned about the dangers associated with the job, and at times Kevin has second thoughts about the job based on how difficult it might be. Despite these doubts and some academic challenges in school, he feels positive that he can reach his goals with the support of his family and the Karen community.

Lenny. Lenny is 27 years old and lives in Omaha with his wife and 3 children. He was born in Vietnam and arrived in the United States when he was 14 years old. He settled in Nebraska when his mother remarried a Nebraska native and moved to Omaha.

Lenny is currently an account executive at a casino but his dream is to be a high school history teacher. His plan is to finish some courses in MCC then transfer to a university and major in education. He says he was interested in math and computer in high school, but changed his mind after he went to college and became more interested in history and education. He was encouraged to pursue education by his mother, who instilled the value for education. Lenny says that he is grateful for the freedom and opportunity that the United States has afforded him. For instance, he had dropped out of a marketing major at a university at 18 years old, and was still able to return to school to pursue an education career. He says he would not have been able to do that if he had stayed in communist Vietnam, where creativity and social mobility were limited. Despite challenges balancing work and family life, he is confident in his ability to achieve his goals and find a teaching job in Nebraska.

Mae. Mae is 26 years old and is completing a professional certificate specializing in immigration policy at MCC. She identifies as Hmong, and was born in a refugee camp and was three months old when she arrived in United States. She first settled in Wisconsin with her family, where she completed her education including a bachelor's degree in social work. She moved to Nebraska because MCC was only a handful of colleges that offered a certificate in immigration policy. Mae believes that her current

experiences as a social worker and the certificate will open more opportunities for her to work in immigration courts.

Due to her desire to help people, Mae initially wanted to be a teacher until she learned about social work. Her background as a refugee resettling in Wisconsin may have also influenced her motivation towards the helping professions. She recalls being inspired by the social workers and human service organizations that helped families like hers adjust to society during the first few years of resettlement, and wants to be able to do the same with her career. Mae is concerned that she does not speak Spanish, which will limit her job opportunities in the future. She does not see herself staying in Nebraska after completing her certificate, as she believes there are more immigration jobs available on the West coast.

Matt. Matt is 36 years old and hails from Afghanistan. He is currently pursuing an Associate's degree in network systems and administration at MCC. He arrived in Nebraska four years ago with his wife and three children on a special immigrant visa, which is granted to individuals who had served as translators for the United States military in combat zones.

Matt currently works as a corrections officer while studying full time for his degree. He says that this job and his two previous jobs in sales are only temporary means to financially provide for his family and education, as his dream has always been to work with computers and information technology. He says that he had wanted to pursue information technology in Afghanistan, but was unable to because of the war and finding alternative employment for survival. Matt admits that he had encountered challenges

upon arrival – his family had to learn English, he was the sole breadwinner, etc. – but these were trivial compared to the hardships they experienced in Afghanistan. He is also relieved that Nebraska has been welcoming to him and his family, especially when people realize he has worked with the U.S. Army. He believes his experiences and degree would be valuable in the United Nations, where he wants to continue to help those in need. For Matt, to be able to go to college and build a career in information technology means an opportunity to finally pursue his lifelong dream.

MJ. MJ is 20 years old and is currently taking transfer courses at SCC so she can eventually major in accounting at a university. When she was 14 years old, her mother brought her to Nebraska from the Philippines on a family reunification visa.

MJ says she was drawn to accounting due to her interest in math, the desire to help her family prepare their taxes, and the perception that accounting will be a lucrative career. Her family had wanted her to take up nursing, but they also support her decision to be an accountant instead. Cultural values also have an influence on her career decisions. MJ says that being Filipino means keeping the family together and financially helping the family even beyond graduation. Growing up as an immigrant in the United States has also shaped her career perspectives. Compared to her more carefree life in the Philippines, MJ says she became more goal-oriented and focused on what she wanted to do after completing high school in Nebraska.

Pia. Pia is a 37-year old mother of three. She just started pre-requisites for nursing at SCC. She was one year into her engineering degree at a university in the Philippines, when she got married and moved to Nebraska at the age of 21.

Pia had always wanted to be a nurse but her role as a wife and mother took priority in her first few years in Nebraska. She recalls that as a teenager, she was inspired by how the nurses at the hospital cared for her grandfather, who eventually died of liver cancer. In Nebraska, however, she was discouraged from pursuing nursing because she had observed how nurses were badly treated at a local hospital. She then pursued a degree in healthcare management at a private university in Nebraska, and worked at a nursing home. However, after separating from her husband, she decided to get back on the nursing track. She believes that more opportunities would be available for her if she had both healthcare management experience, as well as a nursing degree. As a non-traditional student in the community college, Pia struggles with balancing work, school, and being a single parent. Beyond financially providing for her children, however, Pia feels a sense of pride and purpose if she eventually became a nurse.

Pink. Pink is 50 years old and is currently pursuing a certificate in medical assisting at SCC. She has been in the United States since she was 16 years old, when she first arrived from South Korea with her family. They first lived in New York, and after returning to South Korea with her family for a brief period, Pink returned to the United States to pursue a career.

Pink's goal is to be a nurse, but her initial steps toward this career did not begin with nursing in mind. Her family had pressured her to find a job preferably in the health or medical sciences, as these fields were not only perceived as lucrative, but also suited for immigrants whose English was their second language. Pink began studying sonography at a health science university in Nebraska, but failed her academics. Then

she took radiologic technology at SCC, but dropped out because she heard that radiologic technicians were finding it difficult to get jobs. She switched to pre-nursing courses at SCC, but failed those too. She has since been successful with medical assisting, but plans to try nursing again afterwards. As an older student who has been at the community college for a while, Pink is not qualified anymore for financial aid, and worries about paying for school as she is currently unemployed. She is also concerned that her English may not be good enough to find a good job in the future. She is determined to move forward with her nursing degree, as she believes that nursing will give her a more financially secure future.

Tai. Tai is 41 years old and is originally from Japan. She arrived in Lincoln with her husband three years ago, when her husband found a job opportunity. She is currently taking English as a Second Language classes at SCC, but plans to take business courses after that as she hopes to open a shop that specializes in energy healing.

Before moving to Lincoln, Tai worked in a publishing company in Japan for 15 years. It was only when she moved to Lincoln that she reflected on what she wanted to do with her life. Ever since her father had passed away a decade ago, she began to take an interest in energy healing, so she began researching on what requirements were needed if she were to become an energy healer. Tai says her husband is not totally on board with the career detour – she has to prove to him that she can earn just as much as she did when she worked in publishing. She feels that learning English at SCC will help her with these career plans someday, as she needs to communicate well with clients and read legal documents. Tai is grateful for the chance to explore these career opportunities

in America. Compared to Japan, where there is little room for failure, America is where she "can start again."

Tara. Tara is 20 years old and currently completing an Associate's degree in nursing at MCC. She and her family were refugees from Nepal, and she was 12 years old when she first arrived in Nebraska.

Like Hope, Tara's journey towards a nursing career is deeply impacted by her refugee experiences. She recalls the loss she felt when her father died in Nepal from an unknown disease, the dire health conditions in her country and in the refugee camp where she had lived with her family before resettling in America, and the responsibility of taking care of her sick mother and their close-knit community. Tara knew early on that she had wanted to be a nurse and her decision has not wavered, despite the financial and academic challenges she continues to experience in school. In addition to the desire to help her family and community as a nurse, Tara is determined to secure financial stability to avoid experiencing the hardships she and her family had experienced as refugees.

Wali. Wali is 35 years old and is currently pursuing a professional certificate in information technology at MCC concurrent with a graduate level certificate at a university in Omaha. He had worked at an Omaha-based non-governmental organization (NGO) back in his hometown in Pakistan, then got sent to work in Omaha, but was not able to return due to the conflict associated with his affiliation with the American NGO. Now an asylee, he has not seen his wife and three children in five years.

Wali's plan to pursue a career in data analytics emerged from his experiences as a former social worker. Although he has a Master's in computer science, he was doing

social work at the American NGO in Pakistan, then at another NGO in Omaha. While there, he wanted to find better ways to compile reports on refugees and immigrants beyond Excel. When grant funding was cut and he lost his job, Wali decided to leverage both his computer science education and social work experience and pursue data analytics. Wali has mixed feelings about making a life in the United States. Although he is grateful to have been granted asylum and a federal scholarship to return to school, he is frustrated that the process to bring his family from Pakistan to Nebraska is taking too long as a result of what he perceives is an unfriendly White House administration. In the meantime, Wali's ultimate goal is to do well in his studies and become marketable so as to provide for his family, whether that will be in America or elsewhere.

Yanek. Yanek is 20 years old and currently completing an Associate's degree in pharmacy at SCC. He was 18 years old when he and his family first arrived in the United States as refugees from Iraq. They first settled in Arizona, where Yanek completed his high school education and learned English before moving to Lincoln.

Only in his first quarter, Yanek is still getting used to studying at SCC. He wants to be a pharmacist someday, but says he does not know how to get there or what other options he has in the field. His parents had wanted him to pursue medicine, but Yanek has somewhat convinced them that pharmacy will be less expensive and be just as lucrative. He is drawn to pharmacy because he has always enjoyed chemistry, and because he found out that pharmacists earn sufficient income. Yanek admits that he does face challenges with regard to paying for school, communicating in English, and navigating college, but these were trivial compared to the hardships he and his family had

faced as refugees. In addition, Yanek takes pride in the fact that he is one of the few refugees he is aware of that pursued college. For Yanek, the road to a career is motivated by financial security for himself and his family.

Yasmin. Yasmin is 22 years old. She was born in China and arrived in the United States with her mother and American stepfather when she was 6 years old. They first settled in Iowa before making Omaha their permanent residence. She is majoring in education at a university in Omaha, concurrently taking transfer courses at MCC.

Yasmin's goal to be a middle school teacher was not linear. In high school, her mother had wanted her to pursue one of the STEM careers, as they were perceived to be financially stable. Yasmin did not take to the science courses, and tried pre-law instead in the university. She also worked at a law firm but switched to history and education after finding law too competitive. Her choice to switch from pre-law to history and education stemmed from her desire to learn more about her roots as a Chinese-American. She also reflected on how her grandmother was also a teacher, how influential her teachers had been thus far, and the learning experiences she received as a part-time teaching assistant at a middle school. Building a career in education means continuing to learn and provides a similar role model to future students.

Yvonne. Yvonne is 29 years old and has been in Nebraska for one year. She is pursuing a professional certificate in Geographic Informational Systems (GIS) at SCC. She moved to Lincoln from Japan with her husband, who was assigned to work at a company in Lincoln.

Yvonne's plan is to find a job that uses GIS. She first took an interest in it in high school, when she first saw the Lord of the Rings movie. She marveled at the scenery and architecture of houses and buildings featured in the movie, fascinated at how culture was reflected in those structures. Although Yvonne has a Master's degree in civil engineering and architecture, and several years of work experience under her belt, she had found it difficult to land a job in Lincoln. She guesses it is because her work experience, degree, and university were not familiar to recruiters, so she decided to obtain a certificate that would be recognized by Americans. SCC offered GIS (which was already familiar to her) as well as English classes, at a low cost. She is concerned about her English skills when applying for jobs, but seeks extra help from a literacy NGO in Lincoln in addition to her English classes at SCC. Yvonne knows she can just stay home and raise her future children, but she is determined to put her skills to good use, meaningfully contribute to society, and continue learning.

Key Processes related to the Meaning of Career Building

Based on varied experiences in building a career, participants explained that, essentially, building a career is about opportunity. This opportunity is further represented by four components – building a career means the opportunity to: (a) start over, (b) be of purpose, (c) achieve financial stability, and (d) keep improving. This opportunity can be realized through three key processes: leaning, leveraging, and leading. In the following sections, participants describe their experiences and unpackage how these processes essentially contribute to their interpretation of opportunities for building a career.

Leaning: "Sometimes I need more information." The "leaning" process refers to participants' descriptions and reflections of the social variables influencing them towards certain careers, the types of support they rely on, the various sources from which these supports come from, and other supports they seek in their career journey.

Social influence. This section describes participants' experiences with the people who played a role in influencing or inspiring them towards career choice. Except for Jack and Yvonne, all the participants experienced a variety of social influences steering them towards a certain career, whether they be from family, peers, high school teachers, or people in their community.

For instance, Jenna finished a tourism degree in the Philippines, but upon arrival in the U.S., she was swayed by what her family and friends told her about the nursing career: "All my cousins, my sisters, my aunts are all in medical fields. They're all taking nursing, they're, "Why don't you take nursing?" I'm like, "Okay." They said it's good money." Hope and MJ said that their parents were generally supportive of their career decisions, despite some initial pressure to pursue careers perceived to be easier, more lucrative, or more stable. When asked if her parents had wished another career path for her, Hope replied:

> Maybe they say like nursing is easier, or study anything like, my mom would say, "Study something easier because this would take a lot of your time, and make you busy all the time." [I said] no, I'd like to stay in this program. They agree with me, because while I'm liking what I do, they like it just so. (Hope)

Talking to former graduates influenced Pink to drop her radiology program and think of alternatives:

I took one quarter in that program and I dropped out myself because that time, the job market for radiologists, was very not in good condition. So, people who completed the program didn't get a job for many years. I heard it from somebody who graduated the program. (Pink)

In high school, Yasmin was inspired by influential teachers and wanted to be role models like them. Tara appreciated the initiative her high school English teacher took in speaking to her about the nursing program at the community college:

My English teacher came to us and she gave us the flyer and then I see that they have a nursing program here at [community college]. Also, they are providing the scholarship for those who are going into the medical field, engineering, some other careers. After I get a scholarship the people from the scholarship who work there, they came to our school and talked about it, what kind of program they have in [community college] and what kind of nursing program. I get to know from them. (Tara)

Nebraska context. All 21 participants mentioned that Nebraska was a great place to live while studying at the community college. Participants like Ace, Amy, Jess, and Yasmin shared that it was good to stay near family while they attended community college, for purposes of financial and/or social support. Mae chose her respective community college because of quality higher education, saying: "I am currently pursuing the Immigration Laws, Policies and Procedures Certificate and [community college] is one of the only colleges that offers the certificate."

Many participants like Kevin, Lenny, Matt, and Jack appreciated the excellent quality of life and job opportunities where they lived: "I came to Nebraska because here we have more jobs and the city it not too big or small like other states. Nebraska is easy to find the job and help student well for the education" (Kevin).

Participants raised very few issues about living and studying in Nebraska. Gaia and Tara mentioned that the harsh winter weather at times made it difficult to travel by

public transportation, relying on friends who had cars to help them to and from classes.

Pink stated that the limited schedules of the bus system made it difficult for her to attend

night classes. She did not own a car nor was she employed, so paying for taxis was

stressful for her:

> Living in New York City you don't really need a car to drive. Here you need a car. I used to ride the buses here. Sometimes if there was a class that finished around 9:00pm, something like that, with a science lab. Sometimes they have evening classes from 7 to 9 or 9:30. The bus schedule, the last bus is 7:30. If I take it, I have to take a taxi cab which was expensive. So, I was stressed out. I was expecting less amount of money for my taxis a week, [but] twice a week for taxis. (Pink)

When asked if they would stay in Nebraska after completing their community

college education, responses were more mixed. Six participants said they would move

for varied reasons, including better job opportunities elsewhere for their respective

careers, or reuniting with other family outside of the state. For instance, Tara had few

family members in Nebraska, and although she liked it, she knew she needed to move to

Pennsylvania, where she and her family would find more support:

> My brother-in-law and sister are the only relatives here. All of our family are in Pennsylvania so we're going to live near to them. Whenever we need some help, if you have relatives near to us then they can help you. For example, my brother-in-law is the only one who drives. Whenever we have an appointment he has to get out of the job and take some time off and then come to take us to the hospital. That's become a huge problem for us. If we move near to our relatives he doesn't need to be everywhere. Other people can help us too. There's the reason we are moving. (Tara)

Sources of support. Participants described the sources of support that helped

them while they attended college. These support sources included the financial, social,

and educational support received from employers, community organizations, local and

federal agencies, and the community college.

Participants with refugee backgrounds such as Kevin, Tara, and Hope, mentioned the social support given by members of their local refugee communities:

> I also get a support from Karen community and church. They support me and tell me to go to college and get your education, but they always encourage me for that. They can't help me with the money, but they encourage is enough for me. (Kevin)

In my memos, I also observed that the student organization that referred me to Kevin was associated with the local Karen church. I noted that club leaders and senior members would extend social support through social media, often meeting with current college students and community college transferees to help them with job, college, or scholarship applications.

Working students like Bree and Pia received support from their employers, who would often give them flexible schedules or sponsor their education:

> Then I received a scholarship from the company. So, I just decided to go back to school and enroll at [community college] and take their prerequisite classes for nursing program. The company that offered me the scholarship is the hospital. So they said once I get done, I get my license agreed, then I can work for them. (Pia)

Others sought support from local and federal agencies outside of the community college to help advance their education. In addition to her English classes at her community college, Yvonne worked on her English for an extra hour each week with a tutor from a local literacy center. As an army reservist, Ace was happy that the military covered 100% of his tuition fee. Wali was able to receive a scholarship from the Department of Labor because he had an I.T. background:

> It's from Department of Labor. This is solely for those people who have their I.T. background or who have I.T. education but they are not working in I.T. or they are unemployed. I qualified for that a category because being a Master's in Computer Science and I was working for a non-profit, that was not my related

field of study, and I think I make lots of money and in social work, there is no money. There's lots of satisfaction you get. I qualified for that program and the other reason why I qualified for that program because I was laid off not because of my fault, and because there was no funding. So, those conditions were perfect for me to qualify for that scholarship. So, they decided to pay all of my fee and I said, "Well, that's okay. I have enough money saved that I could survive for a year or so just to take the full opportunity of the scholarship." (Wali)

Community college support. In general, participants were pleased with the

support provided by their respective community colleges. Flexible work schedules,

friendly classmates, small class sizes, and helpful instructors were among the most often

cited reasons they were satisfied with their community college. Participants also cited

vast opportunities for skill development on campus:

> I have participated in independent studies in order to have a more realistic feel for what a job in my career will be like. I recently just did an independent study on immigration and families. I, along with my professor and another student looked at the effects of the immigration system on families. We looked at the process of obtaining legal residency and what deportation does to a family. (Mae)

> The community college provides resume and mock interviews to help me better prepare myself for when the time comes. [Community college] has strong ties with [university] and the university representative—accounting field—provides opportunities to attend various accounting events to network and ask questions on the nature of the job and its environment. (Amy)

To successfully transition into their chosen careers, however, participants sought

to improve their soft skills, and get more work-related experiences outside of the

classroom. For example, as an aspiring police officer, Kevin thought it would be good to

learn about people from other cultures and backgrounds, as well as communication skills.

As someone without relevant I.T. experience, Matt hoped that he would be able to find

internships soon that would fit well with this 60-hour work week:

If I can get some classes and if I could get some internships, at least they say, okay, two days a week, so I can work my job. If I have, in this quarter, if I could take one class and two of those days I could do internship, that'll be a big thing. (Matt)

Challenges. Although the general sentiment was that the participants were happy with the support the community college provided, there were a few areas they wished could be improved.

Academic advising. Academic advising in particular seemed to be problematic for Hope and MJ:

When I see the advisor, they don't always help me, like sometimes they will say, "We don't understand, you have to go to [university] and ask them, because we don't know this information." Sometimes I need more information. (Hope)

I was disappointed, so I went home. I think that might actually be the fall before that I skipped one quarter because I didn't know what to take, I already asked for advice and I was doubtful at the time, "I don't know what to take." The person didn't know as well, so I skipped one quarter that I didn't go to [community college]. Since then I don't ask for advice anymore. I try to find my own courses which is kind of hard, but I should try more to find someone else that's better. (MJ)

Financial support. Another major category was the need for financial support. Except for Jack and Lenny, participants worried about their financial situation and paying for school. Mae, who worked full time as a social worker, said she paid for everything out of pocket, because she already had a bachelor's degree and therefore did not qualify for any financial assistance. At 50 years old, Pink wished there was financial aid available for older students like herself. Because of financial challenges, three participants said they were not even able to afford health insurance. Wali had been without health insurance for over year since he was laid off:

I don't have health insurance and that's something maybe when I join this internship, I'm hoping that I will get health insurance. So, right now, it's been a year and a half I'm without health insurance. But it's been like five years. I never get sick once, so I'm hopeful that . . . I try to maintain a healthy life, but you never know.

Lack of awareness of services. Tara, who was hunting for part-time jobs, did not seem to be aware of any services that would help her find scholarships for when she transferred to a university:

I feel like they should have an organization that could help with scholarships, but I don't know if they have it here or not. Some people have financial difficulties like our family. If I did not get scholarships, I could come to [community college] because FAFSA will help, but I can't go to [university] because it is very expensive. They should help us to find scholarships and they should provide us some information. (Tara)

More guidance on academics and careers was also needed, but again, it is possible that participants lacked the awareness that such services were already offered at the community college. Only in his first quarter of academics, Yanek was sure he wanted to be a pharmacist, but was not sure how to get there:

I want to be a pharmacist but I don't know what steps I should take in order to be a pharmacist. Sometimes I decide to be a teacher, a chemistry teacher for high school then I can continue to be a pharmacist and work on it, go to school. So, I don't know what to do next. I'm confused. I don't even know if I have a counselor. (Yanek)

Similarly, students like Yvonne were aware of a website for finding jobs, but preferred to receive face-to-face help in the job search process:

After finishing the program, I hope they would help me to find some job. I'm not sure if they have a service of checking my resume or supporting system for my finding a job. I know there is a website for finding jobs, but I don't know if there is some tutors or some other persons for finding jobs. (Yvonne)

Family. For six participants, family was perceived as challenging to career building. At his father's insistence, Yanek was not only forced to give up a scholarship opportunity from a university in Arizona to be with family in Nebraska, but continued to be pressured to pursue medicine despite wishes to be a pharmacist instead. In Jess's case, her elderly parents were not receptive to learning English and finding jobs, making her concerned about finances:

> I applied for a scholarship but I think we'll be fine with the help of the government. I try to get my parents to work as they learn the language. They cannot speak English. My parent is like, no we give up learning. They can't. I'm concerned about the job opportunities. My parents, I worry for them. We can still handle for at least a few months but I don't know after that, they have to work and I have to work. (Jess)

Leveraging: "I don't want the same lifestyle." The "leveraging" process refers to participants' descriptions of and reflections on their immigrant backgrounds, how the experience of being an immigrant has affected their lives, and how they have used these experiences to guide their career paths.

The 1 – 1.25 immigrant experience. A pattern started to emerge from the data as participants described challenges they encountered as a function of their immigrant background. Participants like Bree and Ace were foreign born and arrived in the country before they were five years old, making them the 1.75 generation (Rumbaut, 2004). This numerical designation refers to their status as being between first and second generation. Members of this subgroup are typically socialized in the new culture, have no memory of their birth, nor have salient experiences in their childhood that influenced their later years. Participants like Jack and Yasmin, who arrived between 6 and 12 years old and are considered the "true" 1.5 generation (Rumbaut, 2004), learned how to read and write

in their mother language, but the effort to maintain cultural aspects is largely influenced by their upbringing in the new society. Participants like Pink, Kevin, and MJ were considered the 1.25 generation, arrived as teenagers, and have experiences closest to first generation immigrants like Gaia, Hope, and Matt.

Issues related to language, socio-political climates, non-recognition of past education, and renegotiating careers were most observed among 14 out of 21 participants, categorized as 1 to 1.25 generation immigrants, and for whom English was not widely spoken in their origin countries. These issues were found to have an unfavorable impact on academic experiences and career transitions.

Language. For the six participants who were still improving their English, tasks like studying, communicating, and applying for jobs became tricky. Academically, Yanek wished there were more bilingual tutors he could go to for help. Hope, who was in her first year in community college, struggled with learning scientific material critical to her plans to be a medical doctor:

> Like my first quarter I was translating half of my books. But I not feel better, I still don't understand everything, like in my chemistry class, like when we are taking tests if there are a lot of Math I will do good, if I will have to write definition and like these things, I struggle. Still I don't understand everything. Sometimes while instructors they will explain something, I say, "What are you talking about?" like I don't understand everything in English. You know like in a school they have a lot of those hard words, like science words, so I don't understand them. (Hope)

Jess was unable to relate and bond with her instructors and classmates because of language challenges, saying: "Language is a big challenge. I sometime don't understand the joke of my professor's joke. Yeah. Everybody laughing and I don't. I didn't because I don't understand."

Pink was worried about what how her thick accent would limit her job prospects. Yvonne had difficulties both in following the class and applying for jobs due to her limited English skills:

> One of my challenges is definitely English, as you would imagine. Because, everything is done by English. So sometimes, especially taking your time, or . . . most of the students is, of course, American, so teachers or students speaks very well, normally, and fluently. So it's very far from where my standing is. To follow the classes was a little bit difficult for me. Resume or cover letter should be written in English [too], you know? And I try to write the right way, but I know there are some unfamiliar ways of using maybe. . . . Sometimes it's not good for business, or it's not appropriate for the interview or the documents. So, I'm not sure if they felt it's okay or not. Yes I am worried about that. (Yvonne)

In my memos, I noted that Tai, Yvonne, and Yanek had the most difficulty communicating in English. They would make the effort to get their messages across to me by gesturing with their hands, pausing mid-sentence to ask for a prompt ("How do you say. . . ?"), or giving examples of a concept if they were unfamiliar with the proper English term. All three had been studying English less than 3 years.

Socio-political climate. Four of the first-generation immigrant participants described their experiences trying to build a career in a country that appeared to have mixed feelings towards immigrants. Matt recalled that people have so far been friendly towards him, more so after knowing that he had worked as a translator for the U.S. military, saying: "So far, anywhere I went, they knew that I worked with the US military for 10 years. They just came and shake my hand and say, "Thank you." And hug me."

Hope said that people in Nebraska had always been friendly towards her family, but worried about the overall perception of the country towards refugees with the current administration. When asked how these perceptions would affect her job prospects in the

future, she said that there could still be a chance where people would not be open to

hiring refugees:

> It will not be like, I feel like Trump will not be the president like forever. I hope another one if they can would be better, I hope. I mean you don't feel good when the president of the country that live doesn't like you. It's really not a good feeling. There are still some people but not everyone likes refugees. Some people are scared from refugees, they think they are dangerous but for my community I see the people they have a lot of genocides and every time some other people would kill not they don't fight, so it's really peaceful and even Muslims not everyone is bad. There is a lot of nice people and they are Muslim there. I don't understand that when they should look at inside of people no, if some people of my religion or my community they are bad that doesn't mean everyone is bad. Not all the refugees are bad. (Hope)

Both Hope and Wali have family members left behind because of current

immigration policies restricting immigrants from certain countries. Wali was especially

frustrated that his application to bring his family over from Pakistan had been pending for

the past five years, making him re-think his decisions to continue to study and work in

Nebraska:

> I have three kids and a wife, and they're back in Pakistan. So, the immigration system is something that . . . I did all the documentation and everything. There is nothing on the paper point of view, but that's the only thing; that they are from Pakistan, being a Muslim country, and the administration right now not much friendly. So, that's another big thing which the U.S. is going to give you an answer. The embassy has no answer why they are not issuing them a visa, which is another hard point in my life that I am struggling with this. They might be thinking that if I could go back. The thing is when I get enough experience over here, I might move to maybe the Middle East, but I really want to get experience before I move to another country, where I could be more marketable, but I am also hopeful that they would respond. But I will see how much this will go on and how much time I have to stay away from my family.

Even Wali's career choices were affected by immigration policy. Visa

restrictions with cyber security jobs led him to study data analytics instead, saying:

"Those are the things, that especially getting into cyber security, some internships from

Department of Defense that was offered at [university], but then there was written that

this is only for U.S. citizens."

In Gaia's case, her concerns revolved around perceptions about immigrants taking

over jobs:

> I feel that a lot and that is really frustrating because I'm not doing anything against
> any local here. In fact, I have so many friends, and then I'm not going to take
> anybody else's job. I just do what I deserve and even I pay the taxes too. I'm living
> here for close to thirteen years now, except for few ups and downs back and forth
> India and Europe. So what makes somebody else think that I'm not equal to
> someone who's living here? So, [employment authorization documents] would
> definitely help. But I don't know, there's political reasons and the government
> system, I have no clue. It's crazy even . . . it's hard.

Non-recognition of past education. Three of the first-generation immigrant

participants experienced some educational roadblocks upon arrival. Hope graduated

from high school in Iraq, but these credits were not accepted at the community college,

resulting in her repeating the same courses. Similarly, MJ was in her third year of high

school in the Philippines, but had to start again from the beginning because her courses

"did not fit" the U.S. school system:

> When I was still in the Philippines I was already in third year high school going to
> be second semester. In the middle of our grading of second grading period there I
> have to go here in the U.S. I didn't finish high school there. I got here I was 14,
> they said the classes I took in the Philippines doesn't really fit into the courses
> here, the system, so I went back as a first-year high school.

Yvonne felt that she was unable to find a job because her university was not

familiar in the U.S.:

> At the first time I came here, I wanted to work immediately. So I looked for
> something I can do with my Master's Degree or some engineering skills. But it
> was very difficult to find a job, or find an opening job. Even if I found some job,
> it's very difficult to get good answers from them. So I thought, "Oh, you know, a
> Japanese degree is very different from American's one." Well, they probably don't

know my university. So I felt it is better to get American certificate or degree or anything in America or in Lincoln. So, I decided to study to get some certificate recognized from Americans.

Renegotiating careers. Four of the first-generation immigrant participants had to re-think their career paths upon their arrival in the country. Matt was happy to change careers, since he did not want to be a translator anymore and felt his skill set would not be useful in his current situation. Yvonne had a difficult time looking for employment with her original degree, and instead took it as a personal challenge to learn something else but still related to her profession at the community college. Wali was a social worker when he arrived and wanted to continue in the profession but returned to his educational roots when he lost his job.

> I just changed my mind recently, last year, because I was a social worker when I lost my job. Basically, at that time, I was moving to get a degree in social work. I was planning to get into [university], so when I became a coordinator with that organization, then I thought, what will be the next? Then, I see my education and skillset, I thought, well, if I'm going to be the next level from coordinator, I should have the appropriate education that would help me to go further. So, I was planning to get into [university] and do my degree in social work or MPA, like that stuff, so that could help me with my work, but then all of a sudden, the new administration came and they decided to mess with the immigration system and they stopped this and I lost my job and then I said, "Okay, it's time to. . . ." You know how you sometimes take a u-turn? I decided to. I want to get back to I.T. where I think I belong because I studied.

Gaia felt the most affected about renegotiating her career, as she was not allowed to work upon arrival due to visa restrictions. Her education and work experience had been in journalism back in India, and not being allowed to work in the U.S. and taking a career detour was frustrating and mentally tiring for her.

> And after coming here, I realized that I could not work because I was on different visa. I don't like being dependent on anyone, that's all. I really hate being a dependent, but somehow that kind of lifestyle has been forced on me. I started my

career all over again right after I moved, and it will be almost eight years before I get a job in the new one. New area, right? I had to inch along, and then taking something new, that is learned here, and then I'm going to start something on that, is kind of a little tiring sometimes mentally.

Cultural values and race/ethnicity. When asked how race/ethnicity or culture might have played a role in building their careers, responses were inclined towards explanations of how cultural values, as associated with race, ethnicity, or immigration, shaped their career decisions. Seven (7) out of 21 participants were vocal about how cultural values were influential in shaping their career building experiences. The emphasis on family and education were perceived to be a function of a combination of being Asian, being of a certain Asian ethnicity, and being an immigrant. For example, MJ compared the expectation of children in the United States with the cultural expectations to provide for herself and her family:

> Here we learned that graduated high school that child, kid, son, daughter moves out of the parents' house and find your own way. Then to me as a Filipino, we stay together and help the family always. Help me more to a career that I know I can support myself and then help the family.

Growing up, Yasmin and Lenny's parents emphasized the value of education. Yasmin attributed this emphasis to being Asian:

> Education, I think, a lot of Asian households they are regarded as a really important thing, mainly for student life. Getting good grades, studying hard was always a big part of my life. [My mom] always really emphasized education too. I did do some extracurricular activities, but, yeah school is always the number one priority.

In Lenny's case, the value of education was further motivated by the perception that education was the key to social mobility, as compared to his country:

> It was probably the drive to have an education pushes me a little harder to go back to school. My mother always was the one who pushes me the hardest. Probably

being in America and seeing all the freedom and opportunities that constantly circle around me. . . . I grew up in a communist country. They brainwashed all the kids and there is no room for creativity. There is pretty much no social mobility. When you are poor, you stay poor no matter how hard you push in life. When you are rich, you are rich forever without even lifting a finger.

Three participants connected perceived ethnic traits and career building. For Tai and Yvonne, the value of hard work was associated with being Japanese and an asset to the workplace:

Well, I think most Japanese people are very hard workers, I think. So it can be a very strong point of working. When I first starting at the city office in York, the supervisor was surprised to know that I'm a very hard worker. So, I think it can be a very good point for Japanese, or being Japanese. (Yvonne)

Jenna stated that her career choices were influenced by the belief that becoming a nurse came naturally to Filipinas:

Being Filipina, we're all caring. I would say it influenced me a little bit because I'm caring. I think as Filipinos. So, they say Filipinos are good nurses. I'm like, "Oh yeah, I do agree." We have that compassion, I think. That what makes us good nurses.

Bicultural acculturation. Bicultural acculturation occurs when there is an effort to maintain and value one's own culture, roots, and pre-migration skills and backgrounds (González, Haan, & Hinton, 2001; Szapocnik & Kurtines, 1980; Wong-Rieger & Quintana, 1987; Yakusho et al., 2008). The bicultural acculturative process facilitates positive career paths for immigrants and refugees through the acquisition of cultural knowledge and skills important in thriving in new cultures and environments (Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Yakushko, 2006).

Participants' efforts to assure that their own cultures would co-exist with the American culture were quite evident for the participants who arrived as adults, like Wali,

who insisted on "sticking with your roots" and have an open mind: "If you want to be fake, that's where I think you break apart, so stay with your roots and just enjoy what America is offering you without any fear."

Despite being brought to America as young children, Amy, Mae, Tara, and Yasmin were still very aware of their cultural backgrounds, largely due to their parents' efforts to keep culture alive in their upbringing through food, language, and education. Yasmin was 6 years old when she first arrived in the country, but her mother was influential in their continuing to speak in their native language, and learning about Chinese and East Asian history, which Yasmin eventually planned to teach. Amy's experience with acculturation, however, came at a later stage, as it was her parents' need for their family to strictly hold on to their culture. Her parents' refusal to assimilate the family or even co-exist with the American culture eventually steered her towards initially joining the military as an adult:

> I would like to clarify that fear of assimilation to the USA stems from news reporting a lot of violence and irresponsible citizens. My parents held on to their culture because they were afraid that if we assimilated then we would become irresponsible and seeking trouble. In their eyes, assimilating to the USA culture was the destruction of a family unit. I moved to Milwaukee due to disagreements with my mother. Then later I was on my own, independent and free and began experiencing life and cultures around me without my parents shielding me. But part of me was missing something, it was the structure in which my parents created. I felt lost for the first time I was independent. I signed up for the military.

Culture can also be lost upon migration, as was the experience of three participants. Ace was aware of his immigrant background but did not make an effort to translate the culture of his Central Asian ethnicity to his life now nor towards his career choices. Jack and Bree, both brought to America at 9 and 3 years old respectively, stated

that they never really thought about their race/ethnicity, culture, or immigrant

background as being influential in their lives or careers. Raised by a Thai mother and an

American step-father and being the only Asian child in his Alabama school in the 1970s,

Jack asked to change his Thai name to an American name: "So people would stop asking

questions." He had since forgotten how to speak Thai, and was not introduced to other

Asian communities as a child. For Bree, she insisted that it was life experience that

influenced her career decisions, not her ethnicity, culture, or immigrant background: "I

live in America and if I did tell them I'm Vietnamese American that answers their

question of where are you from. [Being Vietnamese American] doesn't have anything to

do with my career choice. It's more life experience than anything."

   Learning from immigrant experiences. Except for Bree and Jack, participants

reflected on their lives before and after immigration, and leveraged on their experiences

to increase self-efficacy for pursuing career goals and their career paths. Refugee

experiences from eight participants were especially powerful, with recurrent themes of

resiliency and choosing careers that gave them the ability to help those like them. Matt

recalled life-threatening situations growing up and working with the U.S. Army as a

combat translator, stating that surviving these experiences had only made him more

determined to pursue his goals:

> I remember we lived in caves for weeks because I was so little kid. And then
> going through all these other war and stuff. I grew up with those. When I came
> here, there were organizations telling me, "Do you have PTSD?" No. I don't have
> because I grew up there. It was a little hard mentally because that you were going
> away from your family, your mom, your brother, your sister. You have no
> relatives here. You don't know anyone. I saw the hugest challenges, I faced
> bullets. I saw people got shot and killed right beside me or in front of me or

behind me. [But] I'm here. I'm committed. I'm happy. I'm thankful. As long as I have a job that I can pay my rents and bills, I am not demotivated. I'm ready to go.

Tara remembered living in a refugee camp and wanted to pursue a career that would help her escape poverty as well as help her country:

> We need to depend on donations for food. Sometimes they provide us clothing too. It is really difficult to be in Nepal. I don't want the same lifestyle. I see me becoming a nurse and working here with patients in the hospital. Also helping my community as well and then I want to go back to Nepal and work there for maybe five or six years and then treat people there the way they treat here.

For Mae and Kevin, their community experiences upon arrival also had an impact on their career paths:

> Growing up my family was on a lot of state benefits and went to several food pantries. I had always admired the people who helped my parents fill out forms or helped out at the food pantries. When I got older, I wanted to help others just like how people had helped my family. (Mae)

> The other experience I have [here] is because there is many different people came from the same country like me, they didn't know English and some of them didn't know the law. Sometime they need help, but they don't know what to do. They want to ask help for Law Enforcement, but they can't speak English. I want to make a different and to help the people that came from other country that didn't know English. (Kevin)

Amy considered more than her immigrant background before deciding on her career goal. She also factored in how flexible and lucratively stable the job would be long-term:

> The financial stability and flexibility were top requirements for me in choosing my career path. However, growing up in a low-income high-crime rate neighborhood has affected the childhood I want my son to experience. Although I have been blessed where my family and I are able to live in safer neighborhoods without any social strife, I still am afraid of being forced back to a high-crime neighborhood if I do not choose a lucratively stable career. Although my husband has a stable and growing career, I do not believe we are immune to financial ruins in any form.

Leading: "Responsibility falls on the student." The "leading" process refers to participants' descriptions and reflections of directing their own career paths, including accounts of taking their own responsibility for career building, learning from other persons or from work experience, navigating their own career paths due to personal interests or perceptions about the job, or finding ways to build or acquiring the skills needed to meet career requirements.

Reflecting on the past and present. This section describes participants' experiences of active reflection on their personal skills and abilities, and previous and current work experiences influential in their career decisions.

Personal interests. Thirteen participants chose careers based on personal interests, skills, capabilities, and the inherent love for learning. For instance, Jack, Matt, and Wali had taken courses in their respective fields of interest in their earlier years. As a teenager, Pia had been interested in nursing. Despite the jobs they took since then that were unrelated to their original interests, life had a way of bringing them back to their true passions.

> I decided, well, I like cars. And, I'd race as a hobby. So, that's why I'm here at [community college] going through their program. When I was growing up and got my first car. I was always into making a car go faster, racing and stuff. It's always been an interest since growing up. (Jack)

> I studied some very initial classes back in Afghanistan. I studied initial IT, so we learned Microsoft Office. Then we started doing hardware and installation and stuff. So I liked computer from the beginning, but the problem was that I didn't have much time to study and to go to college. (Matt)

In Gaia's case, it was her love for learning that helped her pursue a career she had no personal interest in:

I love to learn a lot of stuff. It's not just the computers, because I developed the habit of learning something every day, ever since I started doing my master's in journalism. I have a crave for learning, so learning computer science is not going to kill me. Even though it is not the great area of interest, still I love learning. I'm all about learning.

Previous and current work experiences. Except for Tara and Kevin, who had never been employed, participants at some level reflected on what they learned from their previous and current work experiences, and how these have shaped their career journeys. Bree had originally wanted to be an emergency medical technician (EMT), but after working part-time as a phlebotomist where she worked alongside nurses, she became attracted to the profession and took a career detour towards nursing. Before returning to school, Ace was in the army. In addition to learning life skills there, he became attracted to rescue-related professions after becoming a military policeman.

I joined the army as a military policeman. At the time I joined, I didn't really know what that was or what it entailed or what kind of job it was. So I just jumped in, but I found out they do a lot of things that civilian police do plus a lot more like maneuver support, corrections, humanitarian aid, things like that. So I thought it was a very cool job and it was very fulfilling to me, you know. I'm glad I joined as a military policeman. That's what opened up the door for that kind of profession.

Upon arriving in Nebraska, Jenna initially had no interest in nursing, but was encouraged to pursue nursing by her family. At her current part-time job, however, she discovered that she liked nursing and was good at it, reinforcing her decisions to become a nurse.

From my work experience too, I've learned a lot. Probably that's why it's easier for me to be in clinicals because of my work experience at the assisted living facility. I work at [name of facility] too, it's a rehab facility and nursing home; I've worked in nursing homes. I've really learned a lot. I feel like real life experiences are the best teacher.

Pia and Yasmin's reflections about their jobs at the time made them take a detour towards their current career paths:

I was initially a pre-law history major, and I worked at a law firm as a runner for about two years before I decided I didn't want to work in law. That environment was really competitive, I would say, and I did not like that. So I went back and looked at it and noticed that I did all these teaching jobs, since I was 16. That's what I kind of lean more now towards as a career choice. (Yasmin)

Previous and current work experiences have also given participants the opportunity to develop the soft skills and technical skills perceived to be important for future careers:

I think public speaking skill and people skill are quite important in education. I learn them when I am working as a marketer. I deal with a lot of people on a daily basis. I also think leadership skills are very important. I held various leadership roles in my company and I think that will help me tremendously when I make the transition into teaching. (Lenny)

Self-direction. This section describes participants' experiences of actively directing their own career paths after reflection on the self, and past and present learning experiences. The process of taking the initiative to navigate their own career paths often involved reflecting on their unique situations, continuously learning from their experiences, and having a positive attitude towards addressing challenges. They mentioned a number of self-directed strategies to help themselves achieve their educational and career goals, including learning strategies at school, finding ways outside of the college environment to improve themselves, and researching future job requirements.

Learning strategies. Sixteen (16) participants stated that they preferred to learn on their own, even if some of them were aware of services that the community college

provided. The use of technology for educational purposes emerged as a useful way to

learn on their own. For example, Pink, Hope, and Jess used a variety of ways to improve

English skills and increase their confidence in using English, including Google

Translator, listening to podcasts and audio books, and recording themselves speak and

playing it back. Tara and Matt used YouTube and other online platforms for guidance on

specific topics, like chemistry or Microsoft applications.

> I actually haven't worked anywhere in IT, but I have always had a computer,
> working on things, creating things on my own. Mostly I have found online
> trainings on how to use OneNote, how to use Microsoft Project, Publisher,
> Outlook, these things. Great tools. (Matt)

Others joined, or planned to join, private organizations that could help develop

skills perceived to be important to their future careers. To address the lack of relevant

work experience, Matt planned to look for internships at private I.T. companies. Yvonne

and Tai joined the local chapter of Toastmasters, a club that helped members improve

skills in public speaking, leadership, job interviewing, communication, and presentation.

Wali registered in a local academy that offered management training for information

technology professionals.

> I'm also doing another which is Omaha I.T. Leadership Academy, that's a class
> for one day a month for a whole day; on Friday of every month. I'm part of that.
> So, I'm fully immersed in education and getting the skills that I think I need those
> so that I become marketable.

Amy perceived she was gaining important soft skills by being a full-time student

and mother, stating that she was learning time management, flexibility, resourcefulness,

and communicating with her instructors. By being active in her local community and

talking to other Indians on campus, Gaia said she was learning about job opportunities

and transferable skills:

> Talking to other Indian students gives me a lot of insight about what kind of job opportunities are available right now. About what employers expect out of employees and grad students in the current job market. Even though a company interview is going to help me, but then what really is wanted? You know, like the way how things should be approached. I am also the concert secretary for [community organization], taking care of the publications department there. Maybe if I'm going to be taking a technical writing job in the future again, the communications, the newsletter that I'm creating here they just keep me in touch with that.

Perceptions of the job. Eleven (11) participants found out more about the job by

doing their own research on the field itself and before mapping out their career paths.

Pink, Jenna, Pia, Bree, and Tara perceived that nursing was not only in demand, but also

offered a lot of options within the profession, and had high earning potential:

> Some people told me you get a job right away after graduation and the salary of nurses is really good. Not so bad for a single woman, I have to support myself. There is also other chance, there were some other opportunities for nurses. You don't have to be in the clinical setting, you can be in administration, you can be in research, you can be in some other areas if you don't want to see blood, there's other things. (Pink)

Matt, Yanek, Wali, Amy, Gaia, and MJ were also attracted to the stability,

earning potential, and ease of employment that their chosen professions offered: "I found

out that data analytics and cyber security . . . those two are the hot fields for the next

decade and so I decided on work both side" (Wali).

Having a positive attitude. Despite experiencing a range of challenges and

concerns about their future careers, seventeen participants expressed hope, optimism,

openness to new experiences, determination, motivation, commitment, and positivity in

their career journeys.

I've been pursuing this since 2009, and now I'm back again. So, I would really never give up. I'm still too young. Right now, it's the only thing that gives me focus on what I needed, focus to keep going to reach my goal is I know this is short term. I only do this for two years. I keep putting in my mind that eventually my life will be so much better once I get my nursing degree. But, for now, I just need to be patient." (Pia)

When I came here, it's just my wife not knowing English, not able to drive, not able to do even grocery. I did everything. I worked. I studied. I did all sorts of bills, grocery, everything. Now, it's a challenge to work 60 hours. But I am very committed to support my family, and I am committed to do my education. There are challenges, but I ignore them. (Matt)

I have thought that I would never be able to get out of my journalist career at one point. But then life has also taught me that, no, you can do it. I understood that. I mean our capability expands, that's what I think. We underestimate our capability normally, just because everything else is good at the current situation. (Gaia)

Six participants perceived that career goals could be attained based on hard-earned education, experiences, and skills. Lenny, Ace, Wali, and Pia were particularly confident that their skills and experiences would help them easily reach their career goals. When asked if his ethnicity or immigrant background would specifically influence his career goals in the future, Ace replied:

I don't believe it will. I don't think it has a whole lot of bearing on what. . . . Let me put it this way. I think my skills, my education and my. . . . I guess you could call it my efficacy or my grit has a lot more bearing than anything that I would identify as. I think that's much more important.

Dynamic Relationships among Person, Context, and Work Knowledge Variables

All of the participants' statements reflect the types of variables that influenced the processes of career building. As examples of the interplay of person, context, and work knowledge variables, participants like Amy and Matt intentionally aligned personal interests, capabilities, and needs with work experiences and job perceptions.

> Accounting is a career that won't diminish easily, depends on technological advancement. Due to its diversity and stability, it complements well with my decision. I excel in Math and Science subjects and the career parallels with my strength. Also, I've have a lot of experiences involving "checks and balances" in career and personal environments. (Amy)

Amy's statement served as an example of how person, context, and work knowledge variables manifested in these processes leading to the meaning of career building. By saying that Accounting was a career that had longevity, diversity, and stability reflected her knowledge on what the career was about (work knowledge). She aligned this knowledge with her abilities in Math and Science (personal), and the fact that she has had relevant work experience in the past (context).

> I choose networking and IT because I want to work on a computer and be hands-on, work with my hands. And the other thing, IT is a growing industry. For I don't know, for unclear year you have better job security if you have a degree in IT. IT is getting globalized and we're everywhere. It's expanding so rapidly. It's more like the job market will be way wider than any other major. (Matt)

Matt said he liked hands-on work with computers, and better job security with I.T. jobs, reflecting interests and needs (personal). He aligned personal interests and needs by choosing an I.T. career, which he perceived was becoming more globalized and ubiquitous in the job market (work knowledge).

Overlapping Processes

Beyond examining the interplay of variables in the participants' descriptions, further connections were made between the variables and the leaning, leveraging, and leading processes. The following three experiences particularly highlighted the dynamic interplay between variables and processes.

> Maybe it might limit a little bit my search for jobs means for example as a CNA I see many other minority people; some people from Africa, Asia, Southeast Asia,

from Japan, China, whatever. People who speak even from Eastern Europe who speak with accents. So, it kind of limits because I have to find a job that might be okay for people who speak their language is not English. I wouldn't go, for example to school to be a lawyer because they are usually more Americanized. (Pink)

In this account, Pink perceived that her limited English (person), which was a function of her immigrant background (context), might limit her job prospects. She had already decided to take a career path that she knew (work knowledge) would not require a lot of English (Leading).

At the first time I made my portfolio and resume and cover letter one of my American friend checked mine. But after starting to find a job, I think one year has been passed, so I revised it so many times and it is very difficult to check every time. So, yeah, recently, I have made with my own checking. . . . So, I'm not sure if it's very good or not. (Yvonne)

Similar to Pink, Yvonne perceived that her limited English (person), also a function of her immigrant background (context) inhibited her confidence in applying for jobs. The fact that she used to depend on a friend to help check her resume alluded to the need for continued support in career transitions (Leaning).

As I became older, I was "forced" to go to college right after graduating from high school, even though I knew I was not ready. Careers that my parents wanted me to pursue were doctor, accounting, lawyer, or engineering. These were careers that made a lot of money. Having to deal with famine and realizing labor trades won't bring security, made them push me towards money making careers that were specialized and highly sought internationally. I only lasted one year [before joining military]. (Amy)

In Amy's experience, there was a perceived lack of support from her family (Leaning) to pursue what she wanted. Because her upbringing was influenced by her parents' own experiences (context), Amy's eventual decision to pursue Accounting may

have been influenced by strong messages of pursuing careers with high earning potential (Leveraging).

The Meaning of Career Building

The final product of a phenomenological study is a reflective writing of the themes (van Manen, 2014), one that includes historical meanings of the experience and how these meanings affect participants individually and socially (Laverty, 2003). Four overarching essential components together represent the participants' joint lived experience of building a career. For Asian/Asian American immigrant community college students, the lived experience of building a career essentially means opportunity – to start over, to be of purpose, to keep improving, and to achieve financial stability. Each component is supported by a description of significant statements and direct quotes from participants.

The opportunity to start over. Building a career means having a chance to integrate what participants already knew in a related field, or start from scratch by taking advantage of the resources available to them. Starting over means realizing that where they are now, either by choice or not, is much better compared to where they came from and they have the option to navigate their own career paths. For others, starting over is about getting a second chance to explore and develop life-long interests.

Pia, for instance, had started college in the Philippines, put her career on hold to become a wife and mother upon arriving in the U.S., then resumed her education with a healthcare management degree. Still, she wanted to continue on to a nursing career.

When asked how her life and career had changed since she arrived in the country, she stated:

> I think the resources out there had an influence to pursue my nursing degree because of the grants or if you file for financial aid, if you want to. That's the reason why I decided to pursue my career goals. If you work so hard, if you look around get some information out there, get educated in what you needed to get done, and how to be successful in each of your career goals. But then, it's for me if you're very resourceful. And you work hard on it, I think you can build a good life here.

The words "grateful" and "freedom" were frequently mentioned by at least six participants, particularly in the context of what they perceived were unlimited opportunities now compared to their lives before. As an asylee of war-torn Pakistan, Wali was grateful for the chance at freedom, stating:

> I think that somebody coming from my background, our country Pakistan, you see lots of opportunity over here that really help you to grow a person that what you want to be, but there are also lots of challenges. It's up to a person which path he's going to adopt. So, in my part, I just get the good part of my culture, and get a good part of the American life. I couple it together and I think I can become successful; that America is the land of opportunity and the land of law. Nobody's going to intimidate you or get your rights. People come in from our country, when they see the freedom over here, freedom for everything.

Others like Lenny, Jack, Matt, Bree, and Mae already had work experience under their belts, but building a career for them was about finally taking the opportunity to start over and explore and develop a life-long interest. The jobs they took prior to pursuing their passion were temporary and done out of necessity. For example, Lenny embraced the chance to work in marketing at the time. He was able to benefit from the job both financially and in gaining work experience, and felt it was time to explore his initial dream – to be a teacher:

I have already built a career in marketing. It personally does mean a lot to me. It showed that I have a capability to do great thing. Right now, though, I just want to go in another direction. Following your dream like they say. Honestly, the money was good and the hour was flexible. I also took advantage of a career move that felt into my lap.

The opportunity to be of purpose. Building a career means having a sense of purpose. Participants described their career journeys as the opportunity to be contributing members of society, a role model to others, putting talents and skills to good use, and to feel a sense of achievement or fulfilment.

Tai had worked with a publishing company in Japan for 15 years, but when her father died of cancer, she wanted to pursue energy healing to help others just like him:

> The work in publishing company is very good for me, how to work. But I'm not good at organized paper. Of course, do my job, I have to do neatly, and clean, but my life purpose is I'm very good at energy healing. Of course, I have a very long education for this, that is why I have to do this. Anyway, I'm really good at because at Lincoln, the woman who had her heart operation, and then I do long distance healing. Her doctor said to her, that was a year ago, it's too fast to heal. Then, this is my tutor's best friend, so I want to do something. I asked my tutor if the woman want to get out long distance healing, I can help. Then, yes. I did. Even though the break neck, but she's recovering quickly. I am very good at this one. I have a skill. Originally, I have a skill, so that is why I want to use in my life. This is my gift.

Though he is not sure yet what specific career in rescue management he would like to pursue, Ace expects it to be fulfilling and meaningful:

> There's really no telling what I want to do but I do have an expectation to find a fulfilling career, to really just be successful in whatever I do and to be a good steward of the society. I believe I have a mindset and some skills that I can apply to help people out in a certain way and that way would be preserving life. The most important thing for me would be to have a purposeful and meaningful career.

The opportunity to achieve financial stability. Building a career means becoming financially stable and being able to meet family or personal needs. Influenced

by impoverished backgrounds and the need to meet family and personal needs, some participants chose what they perceived as lucrative jobs to meet personal and familial needs. It was observed that all ten of the first-generation immigrant participants chose to pursue what they perceived as lucrative careers in business, health sciences, and information technology. Career goals for the 1.25 through 1.75 generation were dispersed across what they perceived as lucrative (i.e., accounting and nursing) or comparatively non-lucrative jobs in government, education, and automotive services. Nursing was the most common career goal, cited by 5 out of 21 participants.

When asked what building a career meant for him, Yanek replied: "Building career, it's about money, to be honest with you. I want to make $95,000 per year." He explained that he wanted to spend it for himself, and buy a house for his parents and brother, who continued to financially support him through community college so he could save the earnings from his two part-time jobs for university later on.

The opportunity to keep improving. Building a career means continuing to learn, improving themselves, and developing skills for a career. Building a career is about self and professional growth. After retiring from the military, Jack returned to community college at age 53, to learn more about his passion for cars:

> I just like to learn more about it, so I know how to do it. It goes back to self-satisfaction, and I have an interest. So, I don't have to, "Hey, how do you do this? How do you make this go faster." I can do it on my own, go from there. I like it, and enjoy doing it even though it might not pay as well. That doesn't really matter to me.

For others like MJ and Amy, continuing to develop soft skills on their own was perceived to be an investment for their future careers in accounting. For her own

personal and professional development, MJ took psychology and computer classes even though she knew they would not transfer to the university:

> I am taking different courses that I know are not transferrable. I'm just taking it for my own personal good like the computer. It doesn't count for the university but it's helping me, this computer doesn't have to be for accounting only. I also took a psychology class just to know how you view someone or what you think, how you should think. (MJ)

Displaying qualitative data in a graphic format is a way to efficiently and succinctly organize data and to show how relevant pieces connect or relate (Dey, 1993). Authors of other hermeneutical phenomenology studies have used illustrations to portray or represent key aspects of their data, such as how individual processes and nurse qualities are associated with spiritual nursing care (e.g. Carr, 2008), how the balance of two attitude categories represent the motivation of geriatric nurses (e.g. de Guzman et al., 2009), and how shared attitudes, beliefs and influences contribute to the concept of quality nursing (Charalambous, Papadopoulos, & Beadsmoore, 2009). Similarly, the present study offers a graphic representation of its key findings.

Figure 5 below depicts the three key processes (leaning, leveraging, and leading) related to the meaning of building a career. The overlapping circles suggest that these processes often occur in a dynamic manner within career building experiences. The circles with dotted lines illustrate the tendency of these processes to be exposed to the interrelationships between person, context, and work knowledge variables. The dotted line, double-headed arrows between person, context, and work knowledge variables illustrate the interrelationships between them in impacting the processes and meaning of building a career.
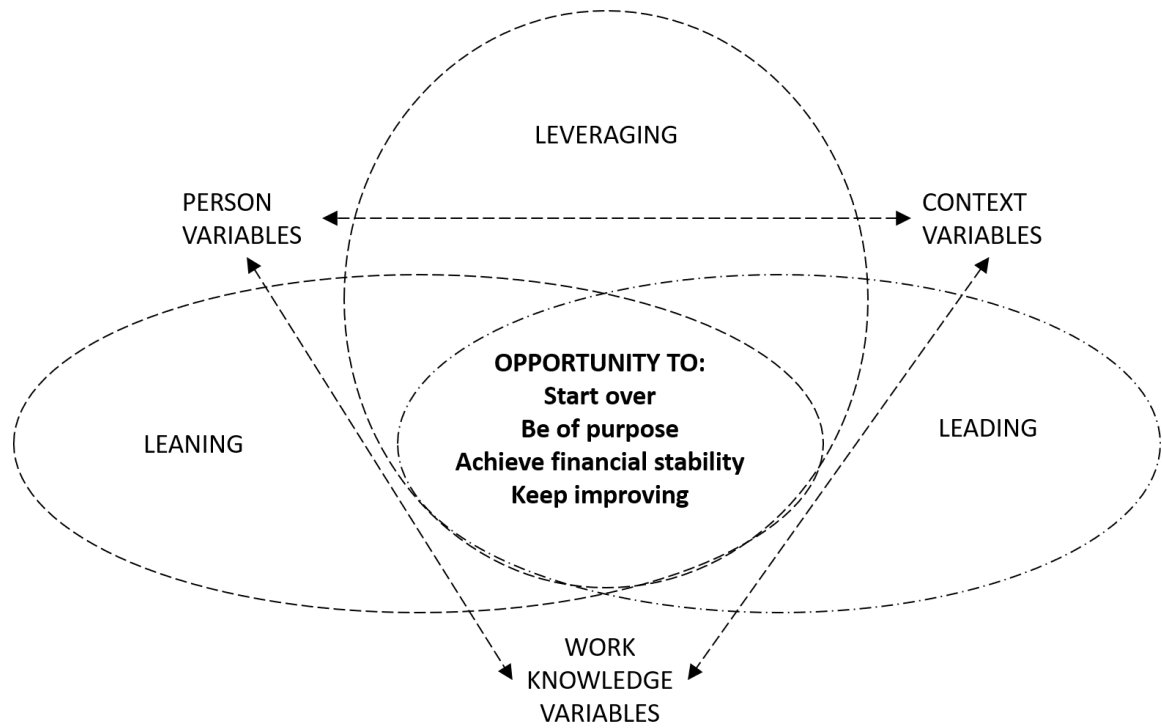
Figure 5. Processes and variables related to the meaning of career building.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The purpose for this study was to explore the meaning of career building among Asian American immigrant community college students in Nebraska. Despite varied career building experiences, four components jointly capture one core theme that illustrates the meaning of career building: opportunity. The three processes of leaning, leveraging, and leading help unpackage the underlying interrelationships between person, context, and work knowledge variables thought to shape the meaning of career building. This study contributes to literature focused on the career development of Asian American immigrant students in the community college, bringing attention to a population typically excluded in higher education discussions.

Participants of this study discussed the factors that influenced career choice and preparation. In making decisions about what careers to pursue and how to prepare for them, participants highlighted the importance of job knowledge, and the social and financial support beyond the community college. Participants also talked about how their cultural and immigrant backgrounds influenced their career journeys. Personal agency was a way to persist and move forward with career goals, as participants continually learned from their experiences and took control of their career paths.

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the findings and relates them to themes in existing literature. Much of the findings overlap in answering the two research questions, which are: (a) What are the students' experiences in career choice? and (b) How do students describe experiences in preparing for a career? For example,

financial support was considered prior to entering community college, and continues to be a need while studying. Therefore, the discussion will be organized by the three key processes (leaning, leveraging, and leading) that answer the central question: What does it mean to build a career? Within these three processes, the person, context, and work knowledge variables found to be important in shaping experiences will be highlighted. The chapter concludes with implications for research and practice.

Leaning: The Role of Support in Career Building

"Leaning" primarily describes the context variables that facilitate or challenge career choice and preparation. Participants found the following context variables helpful in providing social support as they built their careers, including high school teachers, college instructors, academic and career advisers, and ethnic or local community organizations. Participants also sought financial support from their parents, employers, federal agencies, and the community college. Findings pertaining to instructor and teacher support seem to be consistent with other studies, particularly where instructors' encouragement was associated with improved academic performance (Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992).

The Nebraska context was also influential since all the participants seemed to be satisfied with their respective cities and community colleges. The good quality of life, low cost of living, affordable education, availability of jobs, and immigrant-friendly attitudes were some of the most helpful reasons why participants chose to live in Nebraska and study at their community college. With regard to community college support, three areas of concern were mentioned – the lack of financial support, the lack of

awareness of support services, and the inconsistent quality of services (specifically academic advising). The lack of financial support is, overall, a common issue for community college students, with over 70% of students in public 2-year colleges applying for financial aid whenever they could (Ma & Baum, 2016), as well as first-generation immigrant and refugee college students (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). The lack of awareness of services, however, appeared to be manifested among participants who had very specific needs, like bilingual career and academic guidance and scholarships for university upon transfer. The inconsistent quality of academic advising was experienced by three participants in their first year, one of whom dropped out for two quarters because of frustration and confusion.

Family. Family was perceived as both a support and a challenge in career building. In previous research, family has been shown to be influential in the career choice of Asian American college students, albeit depicted unfavorably. Family was found to heavily influence Asian American college students in choosing traditional careers regardless of his/her personal career interests, and be a source of inter-generational conflict (Kim, 1993; Poon, 2014; Roysircar et al., 2010; Tang et al., 1999). In the present study, 15 out of 21 participants chose careers perceived to be "lucrative" or "traditional" – careers related to the STEM, business, or health professions (Poon, 2014; Song & Glick, 2004). However, only 2 participants recalled being persuaded by family to choose these professions regardless of his/her personal interests. Although other participants discussed career choice with their families, they insisted that they were not

forced into career choices. Rather, participants reflected on their personal interests and experiences before freely and willingly aligning their interests with their career path.

A possible explanation for this finding is the composition of participants in this study compared to those examined by studies in 4-year universities. For instance, Roysircar et al.'s (2010) study examined both first and second-generation Asian Indian immigrant undergraduate students with an average age of 20 years old who came from middle and upper-class backgrounds. In contrast, the first-generation immigrant participants in this study varied in age, level of education, and marital status, generally came from impoverished backgrounds, and had varied work and immigrant experiences by the time they began community college. This implies that foreign-born Asian American immigrant community college students have a strong sense of agency in making their own decisions as a result of these varied characteristics.

Another possible explanation for the finding is how family influence was understood by the participants. Five participants shared how a parent or relative's poor health, death, or inability to find employment made them first think about their career goal. The participants with children talked about their motivation to have a good career for their children's future. In both cases, participants were not forced by family to choose career paths, but their experiences with parents, relatives, and children may have had implicit influence nevertheless.

A missing environmental component in Social Cognitive Theory, from which a part of this study's conceptual framework is based on, is career supports, or variables that facilitate the formation and pursuit of career choices (Lent et al., 2000). This study

contributes to literature by finding that social and financial support beyond the community college is important for Asian American immigrant community college students as they build careers.

Leveraging: Learning from Immigrant Experiences to Guide Career Paths

"Leveraging" is about reflecting and learning from immigrant experiences for personal and professional growth. The career outlook and career building experiences of the 14 participants who arrived at 13 years old or older (1 to 1.25 generation immigrants) largely contrasted with the 7 participants who arrived at 12 years old or younger (1.5 and 1.75 generations). The frustration felt over having to start again with a new career because educational credentials were not accepted, or because of employment visa restrictions continues to be a pervasive issue among adult newcomers, and experienced more commonly among women (Balgamwalla, 2014; Duleep & Sanders, 1993; Koert et al., 2011; Tibe-Bonifacio, 2005). Career transitions were also affected by socio-political climates, manifested through jobs discriminating against non-U.S. citizens, and selective attitudes towards refugees and immigrants. Xenophobia and discrimination are among salient proximal environmental factors affecting career development of adult newcomers (Yakusko et al., 2008).

Studying, job hunting, and building rapport with classmates and instructors were twice as challenging for participants still improving their English skills. English language deficiencies can make academic activities such as taking written tests, listening to lectures, and completing assignments very challenging, issues that were found to be common among immigrant and refugee college students (Kanno & Varghese, 2010).

This study builds on existing literature by finding that linguistic challenges also occur in career transitions, such as career guidance, applying for jobs, and job interviewing.

Regardless of immigrant generation, participants reflected on their cultural values and how these have shaped their career paths. The bicultural acculturative process, or the effort to adapt to U.S. cultures and behaviors while continuing to value their own culture, appeared to be manifested among participants who arrived as adults, or were raised by parents who intentionally kept cultures alive through food, language, and education. Participants focused on the positive cultural influences on building careers of being Asian, such as the values of hard work, family, and education. There were also some accounts of losing their own culture, implying that they have completely assimilated to the U.S. culture. Previous research suggests that the more acculturated immigrants were, the more likely they were to seek out skill development opportunities, which in turn increases self-efficacy in co-existing with new cultural environments (Yakushko et al., 2008).

Few participants in this study saw any connections between their race/ethnicity and career building. What was more salient to them were how cultural values and immigrant experiences shaped their educational and career paths. Among Asian American working adults, race/ethnicity was not influential in their career decisions, although they described discrimination and the pressure to be a model minority in the workplace. It is possible that the role of race was not clear, and thus less salient, for some Asian Americans not because of color-blindness, but because they might not have acknowledged experiences of racism or that racial dynamics continue to exist for them

due to a traditional Asian value of not making waves (Chen, LePhuoc, Guzman, Rude, & Dodd, 2006).

Participants reflected on their pre- and post-migration experiences, and how they learned from them to guide their career paths. The experiences from which participants have learned were often beyond their control, such as being forcibly displaced due to war, being brought to the country by their parents as children, or being unable to work due to restrictive immigration or educational policies. The life circumstances in which they happened to live – then learn – from those experiences is what Mitchell et al. (1999) call chance or happenstance. An element of social learning theory, happenstance is when individuals experience unpredictable events from which opportunities for positive or negative learning can occur. There is a level of personal agency in the participants' descriptions, as they had learned from these experiences to take action, such as choose a career, or gain strength from the experience. Currently, there is little available research describing immigrant/refugee college students and learning from immigrant experiences in choosing career paths. However, in a similar study, Morrice (2013) found that informal learning enabled adult refugees in the United Kingdom to develop cultural competence to better adapt to their cultural environments.

Leading: Using Self-Directed Strategies to Achieve Career Goals

"Leading" is about directing one's own career path, and connecting interests, skills, and capabilities (personal) with actual and/or vicarious learning experiences (context) and job perceptions (work knowledge). Consistent with SCCT's view that the individual is an active shaper of his/her own life (Patton & McMahon, 2014), participants

in this study found ways to navigate and address educational and career issues on their own.

In general, participants preferred to learn on their own, characteristic of self-reliance and independence. They also matched personal attributes (e.g., being good with math), with context (e.g., work experience), and perceptions about how the job will meet personal and family needs (e.g., escape poverty). From their own research or experience, all participants had some knowledge about what their future careers would entail, thus they took responsibility in preparing for it by excelling in school, or seeking more opportunities for skill development beyond the community college. The finding that personal interests were considered in career building contrasts with studies that suggest that interests had little to do with career choice among Asian American college students (Tang et al., 1999).

Despite reporting setbacks, the participants' positive attitudes towards career building are reflective of a strong sense of efficacy and personal agency. Their self-efficacy is strengthened through positive outcomes of their experiences and personal accomplishments (Lent et al., 1996). The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher goals individuals set for themselves, and the firmer the commitment and persistence to meet those goals (Bandura, 1989). Through this self-efficacy comes the agency to take control and direct their own career path. Among Asian American college students, it was found that self-efficacy impacted career interest and choice (Tang et al., 1999), implying that students tended to choose careers they were confident about and interested in. Similarly, in this study, the participants' self-efficacy, as manifested by determination,

motivation, persistence, and positivity, reflect confidence in their abilities to build a career despite setbacks.

Overall, it is clear how person-context variables play a role in the meaning of career building. The findings of this study are similar to those of another study conducted with employed Asian Americans. Fouad et al. (2008) examined the factors influencing career decision-making among twelve employed adults who identified as late first-generation and second-generation immigrant Asian Americans. Fouad et al.'s participants reported similar person-context influences when making career decisions, such as social factors (e.g., family, culture, and role modeling) and work experiences. However, half of Fouad et al.'s participants experienced racial discrimination in the workplace, such as being discouraged to give ideas, and having to work harder due to the pressure of representing their race in their profession. In contrast, participants in the present study did not report any experiences of discrimination due to race, which implies that racial discrimination may not be as pervasive in the community college environment as in the workplace.

Career Building is about Opportunity

Four components jointly represented the essence of career building for Asian American immigrant community college students in Nebraska: opportunity. Building a career means using the processes of leaning, leveraging, and leading for the opportunity to: (a) start over, (b) be of purpose, (c) achieve financial stability, and (d) keep improving. In addition to highlighting person-context variables important in career building, participants' descriptions of how decisions change over time, matching personal

interests with job or work environments, taking advantage of available opportunities, and learning from experiences support more contemporary career theories with broader approaches for explaining the increasing complexity of the individual and the world of work.

Several studies have been conducted on careers and career development from phenomenological perspectives, yet they typically examined individuals who have completed schooling and are already in the workforce (e.g., Amundson et al., 2010; Omeri & Atkins, 2002). Career development professionals play a vital role in successfully transitioning individuals from school to work (Stebleton, 2012), especially at the community college where more immigrant students attend compared to any other type of higher educational institution (Teranishi et al., 2011).

To date, only one study has been found that explored the meaning of career-related aspects among immigrant minority students in higher education. Stebleton (2012) used a phenomenological approach to explore the meaning of work among Black African immigrant students at a 4-year university, with implications specifically for career counseling. Among Stebleton's participants, the meaning of work was shaped by contextual factors (related to pre-migration, resettlement, and poverty among others), family and community expectations, and evolving identities from worker to student. Gender role expectations and discrimination were salient factors, although there was no explanation on how discrimination was experienced by the population. Stebleton's findings are similar to that of Asian American immigrant students at the community

college, placing greater emphasis on the importance of context in understanding the career transitions of immigrant college students of color.

Unpacking the Model Minority Myth

One reason for examining the experiences of Asian immigrant community college students is to determine if the model minority stereotype is manifested in their career building experiences. The model minority stereotype is the over-simplified perception that Asian or Asian Americans are generally a "problem-free" homogenous group, do not experience racial discrimination, and are usually successful in their academic or occupational endeavors (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Nadal, 2011). Scholars note that the model minority myth is the reason why Asian Americans are left out of equal opportunity discussions in higher education (Suzuki, 2002). The model minority myth is complex and multi-faceted and has many misconceptions associated with it (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Wing, 2007). For purposes of this study, however, findings will be discussed in three relevant areas: (a) Asian Americans are all the same; (b) Asian Americans do not face challenges; and (c) Asian Americans do not seek or require support.

The first misconception is that Asian Americans are all the same. Participants in this study were clearly not all the same. They differed in their demographic profiles (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, immigrant and socio-economic backgrounds) and in their career choices and reasons for attending community college. Even ethnic groups from East and South Asia (e.g., Korea, China, Japan, and India), who were assumed to be less likely to enroll in community college due to a higher socio-economic status (Teranishi, 2010) were represented along with groups from Southeast Asia (e.g., Vietnamese, Laos,

Thailand, and Philippines). Another generalization about Asian students is they all excel in math and all value education (Wing, 2007). In the present study, excelling in math was only true for Amy and MJ. While the cultural value of education was associated with better paying jobs for some participants in the present study, others perceived education or going back to school as a way to continue learning and keep improving.

The second misconception is that Asian Americans do not face challenges like other groups of color. The findings of this study also debunked this notion, as participants clearly did have challenges. However, the challenges they encountered were not due to their race, ethnicity, or minority status, as other studies have suggested (Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000). Indeed, participants in this study did not experience discrimination or marginalization due to race, even when asked. Rather, they described challenges that were financial or academic in nature. More recent immigrants experienced linguistic challenges, and perceived discrimination or marginalization due to their immigrant status, such as not being allowed to work due to visa restrictions, or difficulty applying for jobs due to being a non-U.S. citizen or unfamiliar credentials obtained from foreign countries.

There are few discussions about how immigration, race, ethnicity, and culture are connected (or not) within the model minority myth, although some scholars tended to lump them together when challenging Asian stereotypes (e.g., Wing, 2007).

The third misconception is that Asian Americans do not seek or require support. It is assumed that because Asian Americans infrequently use resources, they do not need support. The findings of the study also debunked this notion, as participants did require

and seek support, usually related to social, financial, and academic support, and career guidance. Further, previous research suggests that Asian American college students tended to use greater problem avoidance and social withdrawal strategies to cope with personal challenges compared to Caucasian American students (Chang, 1996). Participants in this study did mention the preference to address challenges on their own, which does not necessarily mean they avoided their problems. It was also possible that they were simply unaware that the support they needed already existed, or found it more helpful to rely on familiar structures of support like family or ethnic communities outside of the community college.

Closely related to the issues of support and coping is how some of the participants tended to focus on cultural values instead of race when talking about building careers. Previous studies have implied that positive cultural values associated with the Asian race/ethnicity, such as hard work and family connectivity, have been used to cope with adversity in order to achieve academic and economic success (Lee, Wong, & Alvarez, 2009). The same can be implied for some of the participants in this study – cultural values were more salient to them as they described what building a career meant to them.

These findings contribute to the increasing attention given to the realities of the diversity of the Asian population in higher education, especially in less-researched states like Nebraska. Based on the findings, the following implications for research and practice are made.

Implications for Practice

To date, there are no studies found that have explored the meaning of career building among Asian American community college students. Inquiring about what career building means to Asian American immigrant community college students might be a way to understand the person-context variables and processes important and relevant to this population, as well as inform tangible ways to understand and help them with certain aspects of building a career.

On-campus support. Community colleges in Nebraska are well-positioned to provide the needed support for Asian American immigrant students. As a new settlement state (Bump et al., 2005), and consistently ranked among the top ten refugee resettlement states per capita since 2008 (Radford, 2017), Nebraska and its community colleges are generally well-perceived by participants based on their experiences. This indicates the capabilities of the state and its higher education institutions to take care of its immigrant students. From a broader perspective, it implies that Nebraska community colleges continue to play an influential role in successfully transitioning Asian immigrant students into the workforce.

The career building experiences of immigrants are influenced by factors different from U.S. born citizens (Yakushko, 2006). Recent immigrants and students in their first year of community college mentioned that due to their limited English skills, it would be good to have bilingual tutors or counselors to help with academics and job applications. They also needed more information on where to get work experience and internships relevant to their majors.

Career advising. Both SCC and MCC already have career offices that help current students with writing resumes, job interviewing skills, and job placements. However, it is unclear if they make an effort to let first year students know that career services exist. It is also unclear if the counselors are bilingual, or possess the cultural competence to advise recently arrived immigrants and refugees. Culturally competent career counselors understand that recent immigrants and refugees may not be familiar with the world of work in the U.S. (Stebleton, 2012), and/or feel stress from migration, adjustment, and starting over (Yakushko et al., 2008). Counselors can help immigrant students with career-related activities such as their career options, where to find internships and other skill development opportunities, and how to improve their job interviewing and resume writing skills (Yakushko et al., 2008). For participants with restricted employment and educational opportunities due to immigration restrictions, counselors can also help students recognize and take opportunities within the participants' control.

Academic advising. Career and academic advising should go hand in hand, especially for students who want to ensure that their community college course credits transfer to their chosen universities. Again, academic advising is available at SCC and MCC, but based on participants' descriptions, the quality of academic advising was inconsistent. Some of the participants received the help they needed, while others encountered advisors who lacked the knowledge to properly guide them to the correct courses. High-quality advising is critical to immigrants in community colleges due to their unique needs (Teranishi et al., 2011).

Financial support. Participants also mentioned the need for financial support while they were in school, and upon transfer to universities. Some of the participants have searched and used financial aid and scholarships provided by both the college and other external sources. Others do not know where to find opportunities for financial support. If not being done already, academic advisors can refer them to appropriate sources for financial aid opportunities, including inquiring at the university students want to transfer to.

External support.

Partnerships. Community colleges may also consider partnerships with local businesses, federal, and non-government sectors to provide scholarship, internship, and/or work experience opportunities for the student. Such examples of collaborative partnerships have been found to be beneficial for the participating student, the community college, and the business or organization (Kisker & Carducci, 2003).

Employers. Employers have been found to be supportive in the career building of the participants by providing flexible work schedules. In addition to receiving financial support, recent immigrant students gaining relevant U.S. work experience can improve human capital by learning more about the U.S. work culture, practicing their English skills with co-workers, contributing to achieving the goals of their employer, as well as building social capital for future career transitions.

Ethnic communities. Participants with refugee backgrounds cited the critical academic and job transition support received from their established ethnic communities. Established immigrant and refugee students and workers can help newer members of

their community as language and cultural interpreters and by providing them with support and access to academic and job information that would otherwise be unavailable to new arrivals (Beaman, 2006).

Implications for Research

Career theories.

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT). SCCT has proved to be a useful and relevant framework in examining career building experiences among Asian American immigrant community college students. As a contemporary integrative theory, SCCT emphasizes a broad approach for explaining career development, with less emphasis on classical job-matching perspectives. However, the findings of the present study show that the job-matching perspective is still important for some Asian immigrant students in community college. In choosing and preparing for their careers, participants matched and built on their personal skills and interests (e.g., "I am good at math", or "I like working with my hands"), with career choices (e.g., "I chose pharmacy because I like chemistry"), job/career perceptions (e.g., "Pharmacy will make me a lot of money"), and personal or familial needs (e.g., "I want to provide for my family"). Future studies combining SCCT with job-matching perspectives might provide deeper insight to the career experiences of populations similar to Asian immigrant community college students.

The college experiences of the foreign-born based on their age upon arrival to the U.S. is also an underexplored topic in studies using SCCT as a framework. In a study exploring the educational aspirations of Mexican American high school students, it was found that there were no generational differences across immigrant generations (Flores,

Navarro, & DeWitz, 2008). For the sub-categories of the first-generation immigrant, participants' career outlooks may differ based on age on arrival and the influences of acculturation or assimilation (Rumbaut, 2004). Future research using SCCT as a framework can integrate developmental perspectives like Rumbaut's (2004) life stages and generation cohorts to examine the salience of age on arrival within the foreign-born generation, and how that impacts perceptions of building a career among immigrant students in community college.

The findings of this study add to the growing literature on the career development of minorities and immigrants using SCCT as a framework (e.g., Ali & Menke, 2014; Hackett & Byars, 1996; Kelly et al., 2009; Shinnar, 2007; Tang et al., 1999; Yakushko et al., 2008).

Asian American career development theory. The findings of the present study offer two broad areas for consideration in the development of a much-needed career theory for Asian Americans. First, Leong and Serafica (1995) indicated that there was a need to address the differing issues associated with generational status. In the present study, the different levels of the first-generation emerged, indicating that there were indeed differences in career development even within the first-generation immigrant category.

Second, research on Asian American career development should be investigated with an interdisciplinary perspective, one that combines sociological, economic, and psychological theories, as much of the career development research thus far focuses on the latter (Leong & Serafica, 1995). The broad and integrative approach of SCCT used

as a guide in the present study addresses this issue, as it highlights the influence of context variables such as the community college, federal and local organizations, and immigration policy in career development. Research can still be expanded within these two areas to include a more detailed analysis on the non-linear career paths of recently arrived Asian immigrants and how these experiences challenge conventional theories of vocational development (Leong & Serafica, 1995).

Race/ethnic identity and career. Another area for future research is to explore the term "Asian" and "Asian American," and how Asian racial and/or ethnic identity affects the meaning of career-related constructs. The term "Asian American" still poses a challenge to researchers, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to better understand this large and diverse population in higher education (Museus, 2014). Further, there must be a clear distinction between racial identity, ethnic identity, and cultural identity, even if there are overlaps and interplay among the three concepts (Helms & Richardson, 1997).

Race/ethnic identity was not the central focus of the present study, but nevertheless, participants saw its weak connections to career decisions. In addition to examining race/identity, there is a need to further investigate Asian self-identification and its links to career decisions and development. The present study focused on individuals of Asian descent, which included those who originated from Census-assigned categories (i.e., the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent), as well as non-Census assigned categories the participants self-identified with (i.e., other regions in Asia). The four participants from non-Census assigned categories shared experiences of being confused at times when answering demographic surveys, and using the "White" or

"Asian" category to for utilitarian purposes. From their perspective, they believed they were Asian because geographically, their countries are part of West and Central Asia, their countries are often included in international sporting events involving Asian countries, and the participants were eligible to apply for financial scholarships open to Asian students. Yet, the U.S. Census excludes their countries from the list of countries under the Asian demographic.

Research on Asian American community college students. Little attention has been given to Asian American community college students (Museus, 2014). The present study contributes to increased research efforts on this population, especially those living in new settlement states such as Nebraska. Wang et al.'s 2009 study of the degree aspirations of 5,000 Asian Pacific American students from urban and highly diverse community colleges in Los Angeles is one of the very few studies conducted on the population in recent years. Much of the findings of the present study parallel those of Wang and her colleagues, in terms of the reasons for choosing community college - the location, the low-cost education, to take transfer courses, and to get a better job. Many students in her study arrived as adults and struggled with English. In addition to these reasons for attending, the present study found that Asian students in the two Nebraska cities were more diverse, not all were recent immigrants, that support from ethnic communities was important in their educational and career goals, and that they perceived their respective city to be generally immigrant-friendly. The present study addressed Wang et al.'s recommendation to examine Asian American community college students in under-researched states.

Refugee immigrant students are not often reported in other studies on Asian American community college students. Eight (8) out of 21 participants in the present study had refugee backgrounds. Career building dynamics and supports may differ for refugees, as they have come involuntarily and are among the most disadvantaged of the immigrant groups. Future research can focus on Asian refugee immigrant community college students in Nebraska and other under-researched refugee resettlement states, as their experiences may be even more different from the non-refugee, foreign-born Asian immigrant. According to a Pew Research Report, Nebraska ranked number one in resettling the most refugees per 100,000 residents in 2016 (Radford & Connor, 2016), and continues to be a top resettlement location for recent refugees from Asian countries like Burma and Iraq since 2008 (Radford, 2017).

Given the opportunity to conduct a follow up study with the same participants in five years, it would be interesting to discover how processes, variables, and the meaning of career building would change over time. Career building is a continuous process, and participants may have transferred to 4-year universities, taken specialized education or training, or transitioned to the workforce in five years. The passage of time may have elicited changes in individuals, contexts, and opportunities. What would career building mean by then? What would be the relative importance of the processes and variables related to career building? How were career expectations met or not met? These are some of the questions that would be asked in a follow up study to gain further insight on the career building of Asian American immigrant community college students.

Conclusion

A key part of career development work is the search for meaning in one's life (Schultze & Miller, 2004). Within the uncertainty that dominates their lives, Asian American immigrant students take comfort in the fact that building a career offers opportunity, hope, and control. The process of choosing and building meaningful careers is rarely a straightforward process, and the interplay between person-context continues to be critical in shaping their career perspectives.

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Appendix A

Racial and Ethnic Categories of Asian Americans

Racial and ethnic categories of Asian Americans listed in alphabetical order.

1. Asian Indian
2. Bangladeshi
3. Bhutanese
4. Burmese
5. Cambodian
6. Chinese
7. Filipino
8. Hmong
9. Indonesian
10. Japanese
11. Korean
12. Laotian
13. Malaysian
14. Nepalese
15. Pakistani
16. Sri Lankan
17. Taiwanese
18. Thai
19. Vietnamese
20. Other Asian

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

Appendix B

Summary of Studies Examining Asian Americans in 4-year Institutions

Summary of Studies Examining Asian Americans in 4-year Institutions

Study and Method	Participants/Sample	Topic	Key Findings
College Choice and Experience			
Kiang (1992) Qualitative	Firs-generation Asian immigrant community college students (Northeast)	College experience	College experiences of Asian immigrant and refugee students at an urban public university is characterized by struggle and survival rather than success through complex issues of identity, alienation, changing relations and gender roles.
Kim (2004) Qualitative	Second-generation Korean American college students	Participation in religious organizations	Participants tended to associate with those similar to them and joined specific ethnic religious organizations compared to multi-racial religious organizations
Maramba (2008) Qualitative	Second-generation Filipina American college students	Negotiation of home and college environments	Family influence, gender differences, and identity development were associated with college experiences
Saenz, Ngai, & Hurtado (2007) Quantitative	Asian American, African American, Latino, and White college students	Cross-racial interactions across race	Asian students who studied with diverse peers in pre-college environments, receive support for diversity education, and participate in diversity co-curricular activities are more likely to have positive cross-racial interactions in college
Simpson (2001) Quantitative	Asian American, African American, Latino, Native Americans, and White college students	Racial differences in factors influencing academic factors	For Asian American students, the more English courses taken in high school, the greater likelihood of majoring in a technical program rather than liberal arts
Song & Glick (2004) Quantitative	National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) database	Factors impacting choice of college majors among Asian American college students	Chinese, Filipino, and Southeast Asian women more likely to choose more lucrative college majors than White women
Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough (2004) Quantitative	Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) freshmen survey database	College choice outcomes among different sub-groups of Asian Pacific American college population	Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans were more likely to attend selective and private institutions. Filipinos and Southeast Asians more likely to attend low-cost 4-year public colleges near their homes.
Xiong & Lam (2013) Qualitative	Hmong college students (West coast)	Barriers and success factors of Hmong college students	Barriers include navigating college environment, financial and cultural issues, and lack of experience with counseling support. Survivor's mentality from refugee parents was a key finding in participants' worldview.

Study and Method	Participants/Sample	Topic	Key Findings
Mental Health and Acculturation			
Chen, Gunderson, & Seror (2005) Qualitative	East Asian immigrant students	Notion of resiliency	Strong cultural beliefs in the values of education and family support were closely related to students' resilience
Huang (2006) Quantitative	Female Chinese immigrant college students	Cultural values, family conflict, and perceived stress	There is a direct relationship between adhering to Asian cultural values and high perceived stress
Kim, Kendall, & Cheon (2017) Quantitative	Asian American college students (Pacific Northwest)	Mental health and help-seeking behaviors	Racial microaggressions were associated with distrust of individuals from mainstream culture (cultural mistrust), which in turn significantly lowered well-being.
Tsai-Chae & Nagata (2008) Quantitative	Second generation Chinese and Korean college students	Asian values and intergenerational family conflict	The more discrepancies between Asian values, the more parent-child conflict. Discrepancies in family norms were associated with mothers, while fathers were associated with career/educational issues
Race and Identity			
Brettell & Nibbs (2009) Qualitative	Second generation South Asian college students	Identity construction	Identity is constructed through engaging in ethnic festivals on campus, and self-reflection on integrating with ethnic culture
Yoo & Castro (2011) Quantitative	Asian college students (first and second-generation immigrants)	Relationship of perceived racism and academic performance	Perceived racism negatively associated with academic performance for first-generation immigrant students. Perceived racism increased academic performance of the second-generation immigrant students.

Appendix C

Summary of Studies Examining Asian Americans in Community Colleges

Summary of Studies Examining Asian Americans in Community Colleges

Study and Method	Participants/Sample	Topic	Key Findings
College Choice and Experience			
Lui (2013) Qualitative	Asian American and Pacific Islander transfer students in college (Midwest)	Transfer and academic progress of transfer students	AAPI transfer students experienced transfer shock as manifested in a drop in grade point averages
Nishimoto & Hagedorn (2003) Quantitative	Transfer and Retention of Urban Community College Students (TRUCCS) database – nine urban community colleges in Los Angeles	Factors of persistence and retention among Asian Pacific American community college students	Academic achievement is the sole significant factor for explaining persistence and retention. Sense of belonging, age, overcoming challenges, socialization, or having children in the home were not significant.
Orsuwan (2011) Quantitative	Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, and White community college students (Hawaii)	Academic integration of Asian American and Pacific Islanders	Academic integration on the college experience of Filipino and Japanese students was different from other groups in the study. Race has a moderating effect on students' college experience views
Wang, Chang, & Lew (2009) Quantitative	TRUCCS database - Asian Pacific American community college students (Los Angeles)	Reasons for attending and degree aspirations	Reasons for attending were to get a college degree, a better job, learn English for work, and for financial reasons.
Mental Health and Acculturation			
Han & Pong (2015) Quantitative	Asian American community college students (San Francisco)	Stigma, acculturation, and help seeking behaviors	Large percentage of students in study were willing to seek help for mental health issues. Stigma and shame are strong deterrents to help seeking behaviors
Student and College Profiles			
Laanan & Starobin (2004) Quantitative	National Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) database	Identifying Asian American and Pacific Islander-Servicing Institutions (AAPISIs)	Twenty three community colleges had at least 25% AAPI student population, all were located in Hawaii and California.
Yang, Rendón, & Shearon (1994) Quantitative	North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) database - Asian and Asian American community college students North Carolina)	Asian community college student profile	Asian community college students tended to be female. The goal of those in continuing education was to improve basic skills. Strongest influences to attend college included family, recruiters, and high school personnel.

Appendix D

Summary of Studies Examining Career Choice and/or Development

among Asian Americans

Summary of Studies Examining Career Choice and/or Development Among Asian Americans

Study and Method	Participants/Sample	Topic	Key Findings
Fouad et al., (2008) Qualitative	Asian American employed adults (first and second-generation immigrants)	Variables influencing career choice	Seven factors influenced career choice: family, culture, external factors, career goals, role models, work values, self-identity.
Leong & Chou (1994) Integrative review		Role of ethnic identity and acculturation in vocational behavior	Possible to combine models of Asian American ethnic identity and acculturation with African American racial identity models to guide further research on vocational behavior.

4-year college students

Carter & Constantine (2000) Quantitative	Black and Asian American college students	Racial/ethnic identity attitudes, career maturity, and life role salience	Career-mature Asian American college students were more likely to have high awareness attitudes, and more realistically informed about the ethnic and race issues related to career development and the workplace.
Kim (1993) Qualitative	Second generation Korean American college students (San Francisco)	Career choice	Family pressure when making career decisions was found to be a source of intergenerational conflict
Kelly, Gunsalus, & Gunsalus (2009) Quantitative	Korean American college students	Social cognitive predictors of career goals	Instead of self-efficacy. career choices of students were strongly influenced by anticipated rewards and outcomes associated with the various career paths in science and non-science majors
Leung, Ivey, & Suzuki (1994) Quantitative	Asian American and European-American college students	Career aspirations	Asian Americans tended to choose realistic and investigative occupations, while Euro-Americans were more likely to consider artistic, enterprising, and convention occupations.
Luzzo (1992) Quantitative	Asian American and Caucasian college students	Differences in career development based on ethnicity and social class	Asian American students reported significantly less career-mature attitudes than Caucasian students

Study and Method	Participants/Sample	Topic	Key Findings
Poon (2014) Qualitative	Second generation Asian American college students (West coast)	Career choice, immigrant and race experiences	Themes related to career choice: peer networks, racial isolation in non-traditional careers, perceived racial inequalities in labor market, and family expectations
Roysircar, Carey, & Koroma (2010) Quantitative	Asian Indian college students (first and second generation immigrants)	Influence of culture on science and math preferences	Second-generation Asian Indians had lower preferences of science majors, higher engagement with mainstream American culture, and lower perceived prejudice from Whites compared to their first-generation counterparts.
Tang (2002) Quantitative	Asian American, Chinese, and Caucasian American college students (Midwest)	Relationship between career choice and parental influence	Asian Americans were more likely to choose investigative occupations and to be influenced by family
Community college students			
Teng, Morgan, & Anderson (2001) Quantitative	Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (National Center for Educational Statistics) database	Career goals, career preparation, job seeking strategies among four ethnic groups including Asian/Pacific Islander	No differences found between Asian/Pacific Islander students with regard to age and attending career-related lectures, and job seeking strategies.

Appendix E

IRB Approval Letter (Dissertation Study)

Nebraska
UNIVERSITY OF
Lincoln

Official Approval Letter for IRB project #17262 - New Project Form
June 26, 2017

Minerva Tuliao
Department of Educational Administration
501 N 25th Street Lincoln, NE 68503

Richard Torraco
Department of Educational Administration
120 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20170617262EX
Project ID: 17262
Project Title: Career Development of Asian American Community College Students in Nebraska: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Minerva:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project for the Protection of Human Subjects. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Exemption: 06/26/2017

o Review conducted using exempt category 2 at 45 CFR 46.101
o Funding (Grant congruency, OSP Project/Form ID and Funding Sponsor Award Number, if applicable): N/A

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 06/26/2017. This approval is Valid Until: 06/26/2018.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 402-472-6965.

Sincerely,

Rachel Wenzl, CIP
for the IRB

Appendix F

SCC Participant Recruitment Email Script

SCC Participant Recruitment Email Script

Greetings!

My name is Minerva and I am a researcher at UNL. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study focused on the career pathways and experiences of immigrants and children of immigrants attending community college in Nebraska.

About the Study

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the career pathway experiences of ***immigrant students*** and ***children of immigrant parents*** in community colleges so that programs and services on campus can be designed to support their success.
The experiences participants share as part of the study will contribute to information that can guide decision-making in community colleges. The purpose of this study is to provide community colleges with information they can use to better support diverse students.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you meet the following criteria:

- · At least 18 years old (19 in Nebraska), and
- · Currently enrolled in a community college in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, North Dakota, or South Dakota, and
- · Be able to communicate in English, and
- · Identify as Latin American/Hispanic, Asian, Black, or Middle Eastern/North African, and
- · Identify as any of the following immigrant categories:
    - First generation (foreign-born), or
    - 1.5 generation (foreign-born but entered the US as children), or
    - Second generation (children born in the US to foreign-born immigrants), or
    - Naturalized citizen, green card holder, refugee, asylee, or undocumented
- · Not an international student

For participating, you will receive $30 in cash. You will be asked to participate in 3 interviews at different points in the 2017-2018 academic year.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you are agreeing to participate in one initial interview and two follow-up interviews during the 2017-2018 academic year. The first interview will last approx. 60 minutes. We anticipate that your second and third interviews will be approx. 30 and 60 minutes, respectively. An example of an interview question is: Please tell me about some of the challenges you have faced on campus and how you overcame (or are overcoming such challenges)? Your participation in the study should take less than three hours, including interview and e-mail correspondence time. Before your first interview, we will ask you to complete a short demographic survey online that will take no more than 10 minutes. Examples of demographic survey questions include: Please identify any activities you are currently involved in on campus (e.g., student groups, etc.)? What programs and services have you used on campus? After the demographic survey, you will be asked to

participate in the first of three individual interviews near campus (e.g., coffee shop, public library, etc.) or a phone interview.

I am not a U.S. citizen. Am I eligible to participate?

Yes. Individuals who are NOT U.S Citizens and/or U.S permanent residents ARE eligible to participate. We will not ask you to reveal your citizenship status. If, in talking about your experiences, you identify your citizenship status, this information will be removed from transcripts and cannot be linked to you. **We ask that you DO NOT tell us about your current status as this is not the focus of our study**. This study welcomes any student regardless of their citizenship status.

If you are interested, please e-mail me at mtuliao@huskers.unl.edu.

Minerva D. Tuliao, M.A.
PhD Candidate
Department of Educational Administration
141 Teachers College Hall
College of Education and Human Sciences
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68588
Office: 402-472-3726

Appendix G

SCC Approval Letter

SCC Approval Letter

Southeast community college
www.southeast.edu

Area Office: 301 S. South 68 St. Place; Lincoln, NE 68510; 402-323-3400
Beatrice Campus: 4771 W. Scott RD.; Beatrice, NE 68310; 402-228-3468
Lincoln Campus: 8800 O St.; Lincoln, NE 68520; 402-471-3333
Milford Campus: 600 State St.; Milford, NE 68405; 402-761-2131

November 27, 2017

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Economic Development
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

RE: Southeast Community College Research Site Approval for "Career Development of Asian American Community College Students in Nebraska: A Phenomenological Study" (Project ID 17262)

Members of the Institutional Review Board, University of Nebraska-Lincoln:

Minerva Tuliao has requested approval from Southeast Community College (SCC) to conduct qualitative research involving students at Southeast Community College as part of the research project "Career Development of Asian American Community College Students in Nebraska: A Phenomenological Study" (Project ID 17262).

Southeast Community College does not have an Institutional Review Board at this time. Our current practice is to approve research site and data requests through the Office of Institutional Research. We rely on the IRB of the institution with which the requestor has a primary research affiliation to assess whether the proposed research protocols adequately meet federal standards for protection of human subjects and the ethical principles and guidelines outlined in the Belmont Report.

Southeast Community College (SCC) grants permission for Ms. Tuliao to recruit students on SCC's campus for qualitative interviews, within the following parameters:
- Ms. Tuliao's recruitment efforts will be combined with similar recruitment efforts being conducted for the research study "Immigrants in Community Colleges," led by Dr. Elvira Abrica.
- Researcher will set up a recruitment booth on the main and/or satellite campuses (e.g. at cafeteria or other central location on campus). With increased visibility for the study, students can approach us if they have any questions about the study or are interested in participating. Note, that researchers will not directly approach students but allow those walking by to approach researchers with questions. Researchers will adhere to the SCC policy that allows for the passive promotion of information (such as through a booth) but does not allow actively approaching students.
- Researcher will promote the study via printed advertisement (e.g. flyers, newsletters, sandwich boards, etc.)
- Researcher will visit classrooms to announce the study at the start or end of class, this is of course only in classes which is appropriate to do so and where instructor has given their consent to such announcement.
- Researcher will email staff who work directly with students (e.g. instructors, career advisers, etc.) and ask them to share study flyer and e-mail with student (either via e-mail, verbally, or post in their office). Appropriate staff members will be identified via online, public directory located on community college's website.
- Institutional research office will send targeted e-mail to all currently enrolled students fitting the study criteria based on current intuitional research data – E-mails will be forwarded to students who have self-identified as Latino/Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Asian, or Black/African/African American. We understand that we cannot identify students on the basis on race/ethnicity and immigrant status, so we request that e-mails go out to students fitting targeted racial/ethnic categories. There will be one e-

Southeast community college
www.southeast.edu

mail to be circulated directly to students and indirectly to staff/faculty which recruits for both Ms. Tuliao's study and the broader research study led by Dr. Abrica.

Permission for any further involvement of SCC instructors, staff, or students requires further approval and requests should be directed to the Office of Institutional Research.

Sincerely,

Jill Wightman, PhD
Office of Institutional Research
Area Office
Southeast Community College
301 South 68th Street Place
Lincoln, NE 68510

Phone: (402) 323-3386
jwightman@southeast.edu

Appendix H

MCC Approval Letter

MCC Approval Letter

METROPOLITAN
Community College

November 19, 2017

Minerva Tuliao
501 N 25th Street, Apt 9
Lincoln, NE 68503

Dear Ms. Tuliao,

The Metropolitan Community College IRB has approved your research study titled, "Career Development of Asian American Community College Students in Nebraska: A Phenomenological Study." Please contact Tracy McTavish Mlady and she will put in touch with the appropriate resources on campus to conduct your research. Tracy's email is tjmctavishmlady@mccneb.edu and her phone number is (531) 622-2736.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely.

Tracy McTavish Mlady
Institutional Effectiveness Director

P.O. Box 3777 Omaha, NE 68103   531-622-2400   mccneb.edu

Appendix I

MCC Participant Recruitment Email Script

MCC Participant Recruitment Email Script

RE: Inviting you to participate in UNL research study

Greetings!

My name is Minerva and I am a graduate student researcher at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I would like to offer you an opportunity to participate in a study about Asian/Asian American immigrant students' career development experiences in community colleges in Nebraska.

As it is, little is known about this demographic group in the community college context, especially on their career transitions in emerging immigrant gateway states like Nebraska. Based on students' experiences, this study aims to provide more context and information for community colleges and their community stakeholders on how to help these students with their career choice and preparation.

You qualify to participate if you meet the following criteria:

- 19 years old and above
- identify as Asian or Asian American
- identify as first-generation immigrant or refugee (foreign born)
- currently attend Metropolitan CC (Omaha)
- able to converse in English
- not an international student

If you agree to participate, you will receive $10 for one interview. You can choose to be interviewed face to face individually or in small groups, by phone, or online (i.e., email or instant messaging). Face to face and phone interviews will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour.

If you are qualified and interested to participate,
I will be happy to hear from you! ☺
Please directly contact me at: mtuliao@huskers.unl.edu

I also welcome any questions about the study or concerns about participating.

Thanks and I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Minerva Tuliao
PhD Candidate
Department of Educational Administration
University of Nebraska Lincoln
Email: mtuliao@huskers.unl.edu

Appendix J

Demographic Survey

Demographic Survey

Career Choice and Preparation among
Asian American Immigrant Community College Students

Date: <u>MM/DD/YY</u>

Tell us about yourself.

1. What is your current age? _____

2. How old were you when you arrived in the United States? _____

   NOTE: *Due to current political and social climates regarding immigration and citizenship, I will NOT ask you about your citizenship status.*

3. What gender do you currently self-identify? *(e.g., male, female, etc.):*

   _____

4. Which Asian ethnic group do you identify with? *(please check one):*

☐	Asian Indian	☐	Bangladeshi	☐	Bhutanese
☐	Burmese	☐	Cambodian	☐	Chinese
☐	Filipino	☐	Hmong	☐	Indonesian
☐	Japanese	☐	Korean	☐	Laotian
☐	Malaysian	☐	Nepalese	☐	Pakistani
☐	Sri Lankan	☐	Taiwanese	☐	Thai
☐	Vietnamese	☐	Other (please specify): _____		

5. What is your marital status?

☐ Married	☐ Divorced
☐ Separated	☐ Never been married
☐ Widowed	☐ In an unmarried relationship
☐ Single	☐ Other (please specify): _____

6. Before immigrating to the United States, what was the highest educational credential you attained? *(please check one):*

☐ No schooling ☐ College/university degree

☐ Primary/elementary school ☐ Associate's degree

☐ High school or GED equivalent ☐ Post-graduate (M.A., PhD, M.D., etc.)

☐ Some tertiary/college ☐ Other (please specify): _____

☐ Not applicable

Tell us about your experience at your community college.

7. What credential/degree are you currently pursuing? *(please check one):*

☐ Associate's Degree ☐ Vocational Certificate

☐ GED Certificate ☐ Professional/continuing education

☐ None – I am taking non-credit courses

☐ None – I plan to transfer to a 4-year university

☐ Other (please specify): _____

8. What is your Major? _____

9. How long *(in days/months/years)* have you been studying at your community college? _____

10. What is your status as a student? ☐ I study full-time ☐ I study part-time

Tell us about your career choice and preparation.

11. Are you currently employed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

12. What kind of career do you hope to pursue after graduation?

_____

13. What kinds of activities do you do (at college or outside) that you think prepares you for your career?

_____

14. What kinds of opportunities that you wish were available at the college (or outside of the college) that would help prepare you for your career?

_____

Appendix K

IRB Approval Letter (Expanded Data Collection Methods)

IRB Approval Letter (Expanded Data Collection Methods)

Nebraska
Lincoln

Official Approval Letter for IRB project #17262 - Change Request Form
February 6, 2018

Minerva Tuliao
Department of Educational Administration
501 N 25th Street Lincoln, NE 68503

Richard Torraco
Department of Educational Administration
120 TEAC, UNL, 685880360

IRB Number: 20170617262 EX
Project ID: 17262
Project Title: Career Development of Asian American Community College Students in Nebraska: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Minerva:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects has completed its review of the Request for Change in Protocol submitted to the IRB.

1. It has been approved to enhance recruitment by setting up a recruitment booth on campus, emailing instructors about the study so they may forward to students.

2. Since some students are not comfortable with being interviewed face to face or by phone, it has been approved to conduct email interviews and private instant messaging (IM or online chat) as additional qualitative data collection methods.

3. These changes have been approved to be incorporated at Southeast Community College and Metropolitan Community College.

4. The revised documents have also been approved.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any protocol violation or protocol deviation
* An incarceration of a research participant in a protocol that was not approved to include prisoners
* Any knowledge of adverse audits or enforcement actions required by Sponsors
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This letter constitutes official notification of the approval of the protocol change. You are therefore authorized to implement this change accordingly.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 402-472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB

Full
Accreditation

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Office of Research and Economic Development
nugrant.unl.edu

NUgrant

Appendix L

Participant Informed Consent

Participant Informed Consent

IRB# 20170617262EX
Date Approved: 06/26/2017
Valid Until: 06/26/2018

Nebraska
UNIVERSITY OF
Lincoln

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

Participant Informed Consent
Study on Asian American Immigrant Community College Students'
Career Choice and Preparation

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in this research study about the career choice and preparation of Asian American immigrant community college students in Nebraska. You have been chosen because you have expressed interest to participate in the study and meet all of the criteria for participant eligibility, which are: 1) at least 19 years old, 2) identify as Asian or Asian American, 3) identify as first-generation immigrant or foreign born, 4) not an international student, and 5) currently studying at Metropolitan Community College or Southeast Community College in Nebraska.

Procedures
Participating in this study will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes of your time. We will ask you to complete a short demographic questionnaire. We will also interview you about your experiences in making career choices and preparing for this career in community college. For as long as you are not an international student, you are eligible to participate even if you are not a US citizen. We will not ask you about your citizenship status beyond your identifying as a foreign-born, first-generation immigrant. Please refrain from telling us your citizenship status and those of others, as citizenship status is not the central focus of this study. Should you share such information in the interview, any references to this information will be excluded from the transcripts and will not be reported.

The interview will be conducted in a place and time convenient and comfortable for you. This can be at your home, an educational setting, another location of your choice, or by phone. In face to face interviews, it is possible that you will be interviewed in a small group with others you know and who also meet the participant eligibility criteria. Phone interviews will be conducted individually. With your permission, this interview will be audio recorded. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, it is possible that you will be contacted after the initial interview for a few follow-up questions and validation that will last no more than 30 minutes.

Risks and/or Discomforts
Participating in the questionnaire and interview are not known to have risks or discomforts to you. However, should you feel uncomfortable, we can stop at any time. In addition, if you feel any discomfort in joining the study, psychological counseling is available on a sliding fee scale at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Psychological Consultation Center in Lincoln, NE (Contact: (402) 472 2351). Should you need counseling services as a result of your participation, you will be responsible for paying for these services.

Benefits
There are no immediate benefits to you as a research participant. However, some participants may find it helpful to discuss their feelings, experiences, perceptions, and beliefs about making career choices and preparing for them in community college. The knowledge generated from this study could help further our understanding about the experiences of career choice and preparation among Asian American community college students.

141 Teachers College Hall / P.O. Box 880360 / Lincoln, NE 68588-0360 / (402) 472-3726 / FAX (402) 472-4300

Nebraska
UNIVERSITY OF
Lincoln

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

Confidentiality
Any information that you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Any identifying information that you provide will be stored in a password-protected computer, will only be accessed by the investigator during the study, and for the next 3 years after the study is complete. Instead of your name, a pseudonym will be used during interviews, transcriptions, and reporting. The information gathered from the study can be reported in academic papers, journals, conferences, and similar venues. Only general themes and patterns found in the data will be reported. We can also include quotes in these reports, but no information will identify you. Digital audio files will be deleted after transcription.

Compensation
As a token of appreciation for your participation in this study, you will receive a $10 gift card from Target after the interview is completed.

Opportunity to Ask Questions
Before and during this study, you may ask any questions concerning this study and have those questions answered. You may also contact the investigators at the contact details below. If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have questions that were not answered by the investigator, you may also contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965.

Freedom to Withdraw
Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate in this study, or to withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researcher or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this study. Your responses below certify that you have decided to participate, and have agreed to have your interview audio-recorded, having read and understood the information presented. If you agree to be interviewed but do not want a possible follow up meeting, you can indicate that below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

☐   I agree to participate in an audio-recorded interview and a possible follow up meeting.

☐   I agree to participate in an audio-recorded interview, but do NOT consent to a possible follow up meeting.

_____   _____
Name and signature of Participant   *Date*

Name and email of investigators:

Minerva D. Tuliao, PhD Candidate, Principal Investigator   Email: mtuliao@huskers.unl.edu
Richard J. Torraco, PhD, Secondary Investigator   Email: rtorraco1@unl.edu

Appendix M

Recruitment Flyer

Recruitment Flyer

Study on Asian American Career Development in Community College

Seeking students to participate in a study about career development in community college conducted by Minerva Tuliao of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Come share your college experiences if you:

* Are at least 19 years old

* Identify as Asian or Asian American

* Identify as 1st generation immigrant or refugee (i.e. foreign-born) *

* Currently enrolled in Metropolitan Community College or Southeast Community College

* Are able to communicate in English

International students not eligible

If you are interested, or want more information, please contact:
Minerva Tuliao:
mtuliao@huskers.unl.edu

Eligible participants receive $10 for an interview!

Appendix N

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about yourself and how you came to be a student at your community college?
2. Why attend college in Nebraska?

Career Choice

3. What are your career goals?
4. Have you decided on a career?
   - If not, how do you plan to go about deciding on a career?
   - If so, how did you choose this career?
5. What contexts or situations influenced you in choosing your career?
   Prompt:
   - How has your age, ethnicity, culture, religion, immigrant background, family, friends, financial situation, location, etc. played a role in how you made your career choice?
6. How did these contexts and situations influence your career decisions?

Career Preparation

7. What activities at the community college have you encountered to help prepare for this career?
   Prompt: activities can be in class, college events, interactions with instructors, advisors, etc.
   - Through these activities, what skills have you learned/experienced that would be important to your career? (If participants ask "What do you mean?", give an example: in a class, working on projects helps my communication, etc.)
   - How are these skills/learnings important for your career?
8. Aside from the community college, what important experiences have helped you prepare for your career?
   Prompt:
   - Have experiences with age, ethnicity, culture, religion, immigrant background, friends, family, financial situation, etc. played a role in helping you prepare for your career?
9. What challenges do you encounter as you prepare for your career?
10. Do you feel prepared to start your career? Why or why not?
    - Prompt: what opportunities do you think the community college can provide to help you better prepare to start your career?

The meaning of career development

11. What does building a career mean for you?

12. What expectations do you have after graduation? Do you plan to stay in Nebraska, and why or why not?

13. What are your concerns about looking for a job after your graduate?

14. Would you like to add or discuss more before we end this interview?

Appendix O

IRB Approval (Transcription Services)

IRB Approval (Transcription Services)

Nebraska
Lincoln

Official Approval Letter for IRB project #17262 - Change Request Form
April 3, 2018 - official approval letter

Minerva Tuliao
Department of Educational Administration
501 N 25th Street Lincoln, NE 68503

Richard Torraco
Department of Educational Administration
120 TEAC, UNL, 685880360

IRB Number: 20170617262EX
Project ID: 17262
Project Title: Career Development of Asian American Community College Students in Nebraska: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Minerva:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects has completed its review of the Request for Change in Protocol submitted to the IRB.

The change request form has been approved to include the following changes and procedures as described in the form:

Use of Rev.com as a transcription service provider

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any protocol violation or protocol deviation
* An incarceration of a research participant in a protocol that was not approved to include prisoners
* Any knowledge of adverse audits or enforcement actions required by Sponsors
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This letter constitutes official notification of the approval of the protocol change. You are therefore authorized to implement this change accordingly.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 402-472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB

Full
Accreditation

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