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CAREER EXPERIENCES AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT AMONG CHINESE
AMERICAN PROFESSIONAL WOMEN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

Yi-Ling Linda Kuo-Rice

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
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Department of Counselor Education and
Counseling Psychology
Dr. Gary Bischof, Advisor

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
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CAREER EXPERIENCES AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT AMONG CHINESE AMERICAN PROFESSIONAL WOMEN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Yi-Ling Linda Kuo-Rice, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2005

Only a few research studies have addressed the cultural transitions and career-related issues experienced by Chinese American women. These individuals represent a silent group whose career values, career choices, and vocational needs remain largely unexplored (Yang, 1991).

This qualitative study, using grounded theory methods, explored the career experiences, career development, and career decision-making of nine foreign-born Chinese American professional women from various career fields. The findings from the study are divided into two parts. The first part presents summaries of each study participant's career development, providing a context-rich description of each case. The second part of the findings offers the results from the data analyses at the cross-case level and describes an emerging theoretical scheme of this study.

The major findings of this study include the following: (a) Chinese American professional women's career development is comprised of significant life experiences, their career decision-making processes, different career challenges and the management of these challenges, and their experience as professional women in the U.S. workforce; (b) contextual factors (e.g., cultural and gender issues, family

influences, personal factors, social environmental variables, and other influential individuals) have strongly impacted these women's career decision-making processes; (c) the career challenges identified include language issues, cultural barriers, family-career conflicts and playing multiple roles, challenges from work demands, fewer promotions, a cultural glass ceiling, and lack of supportive resources; (d) to manage these career challenges, these women have developed positive coping attitudes and various coping strategies. Finally, (e) these women's overall experiences as professionals involve a dynamic process of negotiating personal and professional identities, facing and handling career challenges, managing multiple roles, a sense of fulfillment, acknowledging personal strengths, and focusing on the present and future of their careers.

Discussion of the study findings include relating the findings to existing research and theories regarding career development, implications of the findings, and the strengths and limitations of this study. Recommendations for future research and practice are also offered. This study sought to provide helpful information through the career stories of the participants, with the hope to contribute to the scarce body of knowledge regarding the career development of Chinese American professional women.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There has been an increasing trend of ethnic minority women participating in the United States' labor force. Ward and Bingham (1994) indicated that ethnic minority women would constitute a strong growth force in the workplace, and they would bring a diverse range of perceptions regarding work, career development, and knowledge of the world of work. A woman's race and ethnicity has a strong influence on the various aspects of her career (e.g., job selection process, career aspirations, and work-related expectations).

Asian Americans are one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States, increasing 57% from 1990 to 2001 (U.S. Census, 2000, 2001), and they encompass several sub-cultural groups (e.g., Chinese American, Japanese American, Korean American, and Indian American) (Leong, 1991). Despite an increase in the literature addressing career-related issues for Asian Americans, information regarding the career development of Asian American women with various Asian ethnic heritages remains scarce. It is the researcher's intention to single out Chinese American women from Asian American women in general and to explore Chinese American women's career experiences and career development through a qualitative research study.

Background of the Study

Little research has been done specifically regarding Chinese Americans' career development process and career-related issues. Yet, this subgroup is the oldest and largest of all the Asian American groups in the U.S. (Liu, 1998). Yang (1991) indicated that only a few research studies have provided a discussion regarding cultural transitions and career-related issues experienced by Chinese American women. These individuals represent a silent group whose career values, career choices, and vocational needs remain largely unexplored.

Yang (1991) suggested that the career development of Chinese American women is jeopardized by (a) traditional Chinese cultural obstructions to equality between males and females perpetuated by Confucian patriarchal notions, (b) difficulties resulting from the social ramifications of gender and racial differences in the dominant U.S. culture, and (c) stress and distress resulting from both the loss of an extended family support system and the lack of coping strategies necessary to diminish the conflicts embedded in living in two cultures. A case scenario created by Chen and Leong (1997) depicted the occupational barriers that Chinese American female professionals have encountered in their career development. Fouad and Tang (1997) further examined the case scenario to point out the issues this specific group has faced in the U.S. workplace, such as family influence on career choices, the impact of cultural values and gender socialization on career development, and the influence of ethnic identity on career decision-making.

Due to the paucity of research on career development among Chinese American female professionals, studies that focus on the issues regarding the career development of this specific group are strongly needed. Various career-related issues faced by Chinese

American women, such as their career values, occupational stereotypes, and key factors influencing career aspirations and choices, and the impact of racial identity, as well as acculturation on career decisions, need to be explored.

Some research has indicated that Asian American college students show higher levels of dependent decision-making styles and lower levels of career maturity when compared to their White counterparts in their career development (Leong, 1991; Liu, 1998). Other research pointed out that Asian Americans place a great emphasis on extrinsic and pragmatic occupational values, such as earning a good deal of money, gaining social status and prestige, and having a secure future (Leong, 1991; Byars & Hackett, 1998). General research on Asian Americans may provide broad explanations of career decision-making and development among Chinese American female professionals. Yet, more studies should be conducted to specifically investigate the career-related issues faced by Chinese American women in different professions.

Roots of Interest

As a minority woman myself, issues related to minority women have always intrigued me. I am often interested in how ethnic minority women deal with their personal and professional lives in modern society. As a Chinese woman, I believe there is a need for the public, career counselors, and mental health professionals to have more knowledge about how Chinese women in the U.S. make their career decisions, and how different life transitions and contextual factors may affect their career development and career decision-making.

In the process of searching relevant literature on career development among Chinese American women, most of the studies found were targeted either on ethnic minority women overall or merely on Asian Americans as one general group. Byars and Hackett (1998) addressed ethnic minority women's career development in a broad way and seemed to lump all ethnic minority women into one group. They then focused on commonalties these women had in their career development. Some research on career experience and development among ethnic minority groups often compares Asian Americans with a White American reference group (Leong, 1991; Leung, Ivey & Suzuki, 1994).

When exploring factors that may influence ethnic minority women's career development, much of the literature has explored variables such as family influences, cultural values, ethnic stereotypes, and gender-role differences. However, I began to wonder how these different variables may be unique for Chinese American women, and how other contextual factors may impact Chinese American women's career development. Therefore, this study was conducted using a qualitative design to gain a more in-depth understanding of issues related to Chinese American women's career development, and how they select certain type of professions, as well as how the chosen careers have influenced their personal and professional lives.

A Grounded Theory Research Method

Creswell (1998) defined qualitative research as:

An inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a

complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p.15)

According to Creswell (1998), qualitative research places an emphasis on processes that are inductive, generative, constructive, and subjective, and different qualitative approaches are constructed to understand how the world is viewed through each individual's perspective. Furthermore, instead of asking for cause and effect relationships by conducting studies in a controlled environment, qualitative research explores individuals' experiences and how they interpret their experiences within different contexts (Morse, 1994).

To explore the career decision-making process and career development process among Chinese American women, a qualitative design using the grounded theory approach was most appropriate to the study. The grounded theory approach is one of the key traditions in qualitative inquiry, and its intent is to "generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon, that relates to a particular situation" (Creswell, 1998, p. 56). A grounded theory study is designed to explore how individuals interact, take actions, or engage in a process of responding to a phenomenon. This study was designed to explore the career development of Chinese American women and how these female professionals make their career decisions within the context of different contextual factors (e.g., family and parental influence, racial identity development, and acculturation processes) that impact their career values and choices. The researcher hoped that through in-depth interviews, open coding and data analysis, the voices of participants would be heard regarding what has impacted their career development, and a theory

regarding the career-decision making processes among Chinese American professional women could be generated.

Statement of the Problem

A common misperception about Asian Americans is that their career development need not be studied because of the “model minority” myth, which involves the idea that successful Asian Americans who have done well in the U.S. working world are viewed to represent all Asian Americans (Leong & Chou, 1994; Leong & Serafica, 1995). Leong and Serafica (1995) noted that Asian Americans in fact develop a bimodal distribution of success: a highly educated and successful group, and a poorly educated and less successful group.

Occupational stereotypes have indicated that Asian Americans are more qualified in the physical, biological, and medical sciences, yet less likely to be successful in verbal, persuasive, or social careers (Leong & Chou, 1994; Leong & Hayes, 1990). Stories of successful Asian Americans in academic fields and workplaces lead the public to believe that this minority group is highly educated and financially well off. Therefore, the struggles faced by Asian Americans in occupational segregation and stereotyping are often overlooked.

As Chinese American women are labeled as the *silent group*, the myth of model minority and occupational stereotypes among Asian Americans can easily disguise the needs of Chinese American women and intensify the problems or conflicts in their career development (Yang, 1991). According to the immigration history of Chinese women in the United States, three chronological groups have been identified: (a) early Chinese

immigrant women, from the 1840s to 1943; (b) postwar Chinese American women, from 1943 to 1965; and (c) contemporary Chinese American women, from 1965 to the 1990s (Ling, 1998). Despite the long working history of Chinese American women in the United States, little information is known on how exactly these women manage their career development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the career experiences and career development of foreign-born Chinese American professional women who have received associate's or bachelor's degrees from their home countries and have been working as professionals in the U.S. work force at least for 2 years. The researcher was primarily interested in (a) what Chinese American professional women have experienced in their career development, (b) how they chose certain types of professions under the influence of different contextual factors, and (c) what career barriers they have experienced and how they have managed these barriers. This study sought to provide information through career stories shared by each participant in the hope to contribute to the scarce body of knowledge regarding Chinese American professional women in their career development.

Importance of the Study

Some research regarding Asian Americans (Leong & Chou, 1994; Leung, Ivey, & Suzuki, 1994; Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999) indicates that high-prestige occupations are favored by both Asian American males and females, and that acculturation processes and family influences are strongly related to the career choices and development among this

group. However, it is inappropriate to assume that information generated in the previous studies regarding Asian Americans in general can adequately explain the career-related issues and professional development specifically among Chinese American professional women.

Because of the scarcity of the literature regarding Chinese American professional women's career development, the necessity for this study is evident. This study is important because it provides information that may reduce overgeneralizations about Chinese American professional women. Furthermore, this study makes significant contributions because it was designed to gain participants' unique perspectives about their career development and how they make career choices when facing different contextual factors. Finally, this study helps to increase understanding for professionals who provide career-related services for Chinese American women.

Research Questions

This study explored the following four primary research questions:

1. What have Chinese American professional women experienced in their career development? How do they describe the experiences related to their professional development?
2. What are the career paths of Chinese American professional women, and what are some key events that influence their career development?
3. How do Chinese American professional women make career decisions taking into account different contextual factors or background variables (e.g., family and parental

influence, racial identity development, cultural values, gender-role socialization, acculturation process, immigration status, and possible career barriers)?

4. What career barriers have Chinese American professional women encountered in their career development, and how do they manage these barriers?

A list of guiding interview questions was developed based on the main research questions. All interview questions were designed to elicit in-depth information regarding the participants' subjective experiences about their professions and to explore significant incidences or themes that influence their career decision-making processes and career development.

Definitions of Terms

Career Development

Career development is defined as “the implementation of a series of integrated career decisions over the life span that provide a guiding direction to one’s career path” (Brown & Brooks, 1996, p. 428). The term, career development, includes a range of activities and information from basic awareness of different professions and their requirements to paid internships (American’s Career Resource Network, 2000).

Career Decision-making

Career decision-making refers to “a process that not only encompasses career choice but also involves making a commitment and carrying out the actions necessary to implement the choice” (Brown & Brooks, 1996, p. 428).

Profession

Profession refers specifically to career fields that require extensive study or training and mastery of specialized knowledge, such as law, medicine, the military, nursing, social science or engineering. In this sense, profession is contrasted with occupation, which refers generally to the nature of a person's employment (Wikipedia, 2001).

Professionals

Professionals refer to persons qualified or employed in an identified profession. To conduct oneself as a professional would indicate that the person's actions remain in accordance with specific rules, written or unwritten, pertaining to the standards of that profession (Wikipedia, 2001).

Chinese American Women

The term, *Chinese American women*, is defined in this study as post World War II foreign-born Chinese women from China or Taiwan who have obtained a working visa, permanent residence or citizenship in the U.S.

Career Maturity

Career maturity is defined as “the successful completion of developmental tasks within a continuous series of life stages” (Zunker, 1998, p. 36).

Acculturation

Acculturation is defined as “a process that individuals learn about rules for behavioral characteristics of a certain group of people” (Concise encyclopedia of psychology, 1996, p. 5).

Summary

Chapter I introduces the background of the researcher's study regarding Chinese American women's career development. This chapter briefly explains why the researcher took an interest in investigating Chinese American women's career experiences and identifies the qualitative research method to be used for this study. This chapter also describes the purpose and the importance of the study, identifies the research questions, and provides definitions of the key terms.

In addition to Chapter I, four more chapters are included in this study. Chapter II presents the researcher's review of the literature to establish the research context for the study. Chapter III describes the qualitative research method and grounded theory approach that guide the research process as well as the specific procedures that were employed in this study. Chapter IV summarizes the findings of the study. Finally, Chapter V provides a discussion of the research findings followed by recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Given the paucity of the information specifically related to career development among Chinese American women, the review of relevant literature focuses on the career development of Asian Americans in general.

The literature review consists of three sections. The first section covers demographic data and the sociopolitical background of Asian Americans. The second section discusses the general Asian cultural values, women's roles and status in this population, and changes in contemporary Chinese American families. The third section provides an overview of Asian Americans' career development, reviews the implications of three theories to the career development among Asian Americans, and discusses contextual variables that influence their career development.

The review of relevant literature aims to provide general information regarding demographic information and sociopolitical trends about Asian Americans, to aid an understanding of Asian cultural values and gender roles and the impacts of Asian cultural values and gender roles on Asian women's career development, and to offer pertinent discussions about the career development of Asian Americans.

Demographic and Sociopolitical Background

Asian Americans have had the largest increase of all immigrant groups from 6% in the 1950s to 42% in the 1980s (Gall & Gall, 1993). The Asian and Asian American population in the United States increased 95% from 1980 to 1990. It is predicted that the total Asian and Asian American population of the U.S. will exceed 41 million by the year of 2050.

The term, *Asian American*, is a broad identifier, which includes Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Asian Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Hawaiian, Guamanian, Samoan, and other Asian and Pacific Islanders (as cited in Hsieh, 1996). The 2000 Census data indicated that 10,242,998 individuals reported themselves to be of solely Asian heritage, and the largest ethnic group in Asian American population has shifted from the Japanese to the Chinese (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2001).

The different Asian ethnic groups started immigrating to the U.S. during different time periods (Prosser, 2002). The first wave of Asian immigration began in the late 1800s and early 1900s. It consisted of immigrants from different Asian ethnic groups who came to the U.S. seeking economic opportunities. The 1965 Immigrant Act stimulated the second wave of Asian immigration that attracted people who were trained with different technical skills. Unlike the early immigrants, the post-1965 Asian immigrants included workers who are more skilled and brought a greater number of women. This recent wave of Asian immigration came mainly from Hong Kong, India, Taiwan, South Korea, China, and the Philippines. The new Asian immigrants came to the United States due to external sociopolitical and economic conditions within their countries (e.g., economic opportunity or seeking political freedom).

In 1997, Asian Americans as a whole had the highest educational attainment and occupational status of all ethnic groups in the U.S. (Prosser, 2002). However, these general statistics for Asian Americans can be misleading, since they fail to reflect racial, ethnic and gender subgroup differences for income, and occupational attainment. Despite high levels of education and employment among Asian Americans, Asian American women still experience gender and racial disparities (Prosser, 2002; U.S. Department of Labor, 1998). With gender and racial inequalities faced by Asian American women in general, it is important for this study to further explore how Chinese American professional women deal with similar issues in their career development. It is also significant in this study to investigate how cultural values, family involvement, ethnicity, acculturation, gender-role socialization and other variables may influence Chinese American professional women's career experiences and decision-making processes.

Cultural Values, Women's Status, and Changes in Contemporary Chinese American Families

This section discusses general Asian/Asian American cultural values, Asian women's status in the culture, and changes that contemporary Chinese American families are experiencing. This portion of the literature review also includes Chinese Americans' cultural values and women's roles since the research focus in this study was on Chinese American women. The review of relevant research in this section helps to establish a broader understanding about Chinese American women and their career development. The literature review in this section also provides information regarding how cultural values, gender roles, and changes in the family may influence Chinese American women's career decision-making.

Cultural Values and Behavioral Norms

“Asian culture” is a broad term for all the subcultures in Asian population due to the diversity inherent in the 30 Asian ethnic groups (Uba, 1994). Despite the differences in all ethnic groups among Asian population, certain general cultural values can be identified across the various groups, such as authoritarianism, extended family structure, focus on collectivism and harmony, conformity, and the concept of “face” (Chandras, Eddy, & Spaulding, 1999; Sue & Sue, 1990).

Many traditional Asian values are influenced by Buddhism and Confucianism (Prosser, 2002; Uba, 1994). Values shaped by Confucianism dictate a structured patriarchal family system that gives power to individuals who are of higher status, older, and male. The patriarchal family structure in Asian culture places an emphasis on authoritarianism, loyalty toward families, and filial piety toward parents and seniors. The influence of the patriarchal family system also defines traditional gender roles of women in Asian culture. Despite societal changes in recent years, women in Asian culture are expected to be caretaker and take multiple responsibilities in the family.

Asian culture is seen as collectivistic in nature, and traditional Asian values emphasize group or family needs above individual ones (Huang, 2004; Prosser, 2002). In a culture with collectivistic orientations, many decisions are made not by individuals but by families or groups, with the group welfare in mind. Collectivism in Asian culture not only affects family interactions but also influences many areas of an individual’s life, including the way one communicates, the life choices one makes, and how one copes with stress (Leong, 2002). Prosser’s review of Asian culture suggested that the concern for the group often turns into a desire to maintain group harmony and avoid conflicts or

confrontation in the family. The importance of maintaining harmony in relationships asks Asian individuals to defer to authority and conform to social standards.

The concept of “face” is vital in Asian culture (Uba, 1994). Children’s obligations to the family, obedience to parents and seniors, and bringing honor to the family are strongly emphasized in Asian cultures. Violating these cultural rules is associated with a great deal of shame, which means “losing face.” In order to “save face,” one has to avoid disgracing the family. In Asian culture, individuals are socialized to use subtle body language or indirect communication as ways to avoid embarrassment and maintain social harmony (e.g., avoiding direct eye contacts or using “we” statements in the conversations).

The values and behavioral norms in Chinese American culture are similar to ones in Asian culture discussed above. The emphasis of the Chinese culture is to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships (Hsieh, 1996). A sense of togetherness is strongly favored in the culture, and individuals who behave inappropriately not only shame themselves but also their family as well. The family is the most important social structure of Chinese and Chinese Americans. In the family, filial piety and loyalty are strongly addressed, and the father is typically considered the head of the family. The first-born son is usually strongly valued in the family and is given family status, power, and property from the father. It is also common that the first-born son sacrifices his needs and wants to fulfill family expectations.

Asian and Chinese Women’s Roles and Status

Asian women usually take on multiple responsibilities but typically have low status in the family (Huang, 2004). The home is the center of life for married women,

especially for the nonworking wife or mother. In Asian cultures, gender stereotypes are reinforced by the traditional roles of women as caretakers of successful men and their families. It is not uncommon that Asian women sacrifice their career for childrearing and become stay-at-home mothers or part-time workers.

However, in the U.S. and other Asian countries, the rate of Asian women's participation in the labor force has increased rapidly over the past few decades due to socioeconomic development and educational opportunities. Due to this growing participation in the work force, they have faced issues about how to manage both work and home duties. The main function of working Asian women in today's society is to make a home rather than keep a house. Although Asian women have been included into professional, technical, and other white-collar jobs, they may still live in a culture that expects them to play the role of a warm and supportive helpmate for their husbands or fathers who are viewed as the head of the families (Edwards & Roces, 2000).

In Chinese culture, family roles are generally defined by birth order, age, and gender, and it is important to fulfill each individual's role and obligation toward the family (Che, 1979). Based on Confucian doctrines, the role of a woman is one of subordination. Traditional Chinese cultures expect women to find a good husband, emotionally support the family, and produce children, especially male ones. If a woman has a son, her status and power will be improved within the family, and she is more likely to be favored by the in-laws (Hsieh, 1996). Such gender-role expectations often hinder traditional Chinese women from developing a positive self-image and attempting nontraditional careers (Yang, 1991).

Changes in Contemporary Chinese American Families

The values and the patterns of family systems tend to be shaped with time by economic, political, and sociocultural variables (Lee, 1997). In the past few decades, the traditional Chinese culture and family system have undergone changes due to the economic and political forces in China, Taiwan, and the U.S. It is important to understand how these economic and political factors affect Chinese Americans and their career development. In China, communism has greatly impacted traditional Chinese family, gender, and value systems. Confucian thought and religion have been banned. During the 10 years of the Cultural Revolution, many families in China suffered from separation, and filial piety and traditional gender-role expectations were challenged. Lately, the economic boom in China has brought another wave of Westernization. After World War II, Taiwan experienced considerable economic growth, and Westernization, urbanization, and industrialization have brought changes in the Chinese value system and in family structures. The Chinese Americans' values and family systems have also been affected by economic development and changes immigration policies in the U.S (Lee, 1997).

With changes in Chinese culture discussed above, Lee (1997) summarized several distinct shifts in the contemporary Chinese American families: (1) the traditional Chinese extended family has gradually shifted to a more *nuclear family*; (2) the traditional patriarchal family has transformed slowly to a *biarchal system*, where a mother shares decision making with the father; (3) favoritism of sons has decreased slowly because daughters now attain comparable education and careers and can be counted on to take care of aged parents; (4) successful childrearing is now measured by the children's

academic and career achievements; and (5) earning power is no longer merely the father's but is shared with other adult family members.

The changes of the contemporary Chinese American families have given Chinese American women not only more opportunities to receive high-quality education and to secure careers with better pay but also more power to share decision-making in family matters. Despite the positive changes in the modern Chinese American family, women in this culture are still expected to be the main caretakers at home and to be able to juggle between their careers and family responsibilities (Lee, 1997).

Career Development among Asian Americans

This section of the literature review provides a brief overview of Asian Americans' career development, reviews the applications of three career theories to their career development, and discusses the contextual factors that affect career development and decision-making in this population.

Brief Overview of Career Development among Asian Americans

As a minority group, Asian Americans have been found to be distinguishable by their career interests and occupations (Leong & Serafica, 1995). Asian Americans are highly represented in science and technology occupations and less represented in the humanities and social services-related fields. Due to the “*model minority*” myth among Asian Americans, the public tends to think that Asian Americans' career choices are a direct reflection of their career interests. However, many Asian Americans' career interests may not match their career choices due to social and family factors. For example, some Asian American adolescents may be interested in artistic careers but

eventually choose a career in medicine or engineering because of parental guidance or pressure (Tang, 2002). It is important to understand how Asian/Chinese Americans' career interests interact with their career decision-making process and explore the factors that affect their career choices.

Leung, Ivey and Suzuki (1994) indicated that Asian Americans are more attracted to occupational activities related to investigative occupations. Their findings support the notion that Asian Americans are more likely to consider careers with high occupational prestige because they view high-prestige occupations as a means to survive and move upward in today's society. This research further suggested that Asian American women are more likely to consider nontraditional occupations than are their White counterparts. These choices are related to the prestige factor, since both Asian American males and females are strongly encouraged to seek high-status careers and social recognition.

Leung et al. (1994) recommended that it is important not to stereotype Asian Americans as interested primarily in the scientific and technical occupations. Occupational stereotyping limits the range of professions perceived to be suitable or available to Asian Americans and increases the possibility for Asian American women to experience sex role conflicts due to their traditional career values clashing with more current feminist views.

Ethnic identity, acculturation, family involvement, and self-efficacy are considered as components that influence career choices among Asian Americans (Tang, Fouad & Smith, 1999). The acculturation process has a strong influence on Asian Americans' self-efficacy, career choices, and ethnic identity, and the process of acculturation interacts with vocational behaviors among both Asian American males and

females (Leong & Chou, 1994). The positive relationship between family involvement and career choice suggests that parental influence has a significant impact on high-prestige occupational choices. Due to the career values and expectations of their parents, Chinese American women may receive either positive reinforcement to pursue their career goals that strengthen their career self-efficacy or negative messages regarding careers that lead to the selection of gender-role stereotyped occupations.

More research is needed to explore Asian/Chinese Americans' career development process so different career-related issues can be understood, and a useful theoretical framework can be created as a guide for professionals to help Asian/Chinese American men and women who are in need of career counseling. The next section reviews several career theories that describe or explain career development of Asian Americans.

Theories Applied to Asian Americans' Career Development

To better understand the career development of Asian Americans, three theories that have been applied to Asian Americans are discussed for their potential usefulness to describe career-related issues, such as career development sequences, career choices, and career decision-making processes. Super's life-span theory, Holland's person-environment match theory, and social learning cognitive theory were chosen because they have been used to explain Asian Americans' career development.

Super's Life-Span Theory and Career Development Stages

For most Asian Americans, a life-span career is a meaningful concept because traditional Asian culture places an emphasis on the concept of a career as life's work

(Leong & Serafica, 1995). When applying career theories to Asian Americans across the life span, Super's theory is useful because it proposes a thorough description of career development across different life stages (Super, 1957; 1980). Life-span theory is also appropriate in applying to Asian-American women's career development process since the theory itself is constantly refined and updated, and gender and cultural differences have been addressed in the model (Sharf, 2002; Zunker, 1998).

The two major beliefs of Super's theory are (1) career development is a dynamic process taking place through defined developmental periods, and it includes five different stages: Growth, Exploratory, Establishment, Maintenance, and Decline, and (2) the self-concept is being shaped when each stage of life exercises its influence on one's behavior (Super, 1992). Five developmental tasks that one can cycle and recycle across the life span are also delineated in the theory: Crystallization of a career preference, Specification of a career choice, Implementation, Stabilization of career status, and Advancement. Super's theory views that individuals' career development and career decision-making are impacted by developmental tasks, sociology of life stages, and self-concept (Zunker, 1998).

Leong and Gim-Chung (1995) proposed several strengths of life-span theory as it applies to Asian Americans' career development process. First, Super's theory is considered helpful in providing a way of characterizing career development of Asian Americans within one stage. The mini-cycle concept in the theory may be useful when applied to Asian Americans to illustrate the developmental process at any major career stage, to examine the rate of the process, and to determine the influential factors related to the process. Second, the concept of career maturity discussed in life-span theory may

hold some promise for explaining Asian Americans' career development process and provide useful guidelines in understanding the sequence of career maturity and its relationship to successful achievement of career developmental tasks throughout the life span. Finally, social role, a concept discussed in the life-span theory, may be useful in understanding the link between Asian Americans' career development and their personal fulfillment of social roles and their adherence of values, such as filial piety and reciprocal obligations with the family.

However, there are some limitations in its application to Asian Americans' career development processes (Leong et al., 1995). First, the developmental tasks in different stages are developed based on the norm group of Euro-Americans. Both males and females in Asian-American societies are expected to accomplish particular developmental tasks at different periods of the life span. However, it is unclear whether the career developmental tasks for a specific period are the same or different for Euro-Americans and Asian Americans. What needs to be noted is that developmental tasks may be different for Euro-Americans and Asian Americans because of different cultural values attached to social roles.

Furthermore, life-span theory may be less helpful in explaining and predicting certain career variables for Asian Americans, such as career choice and career decision-making, due to its emphasis on self-concept and individual choice. Life-span theory views the implementation of the self-concept as the driving force behind career development, which may be less applicable for Asian Americans whose culture emphasizes a more collective view on the concept of self. The assertion in the theory that individuals are able to choose a career freely may not adequately address the impact of

discrimination and limited job opportunity experienced by Asian Americans, especially for foreign-born individuals and women among this population (Leong & Tang, 2002).

Holland's Person-Environment Theory and Career Choice

Holland's (1985) person-environment match theory is a second prominent theory that has been used to describe Asian Americans' career choice and behaviors. The goals of the theory of vocational choice are to describe and explain career choice, and to predict career achievement, satisfaction, stability and change (Holland, 1985; Leong & Serafica, 1995). Issues addressed in Holland's theory can be useful to explain the variables that influence Asian Americans' career choices.

Holland (1985) proposed six vocational personality types and work environments: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. The theory purports that individuals try to match their personality styles to characteristics of the work environment, and that the more successful this match is, the more satisfied the individual will be with his or her career choice.

Congruence is an important concept regarding career choice in Holland's theory (1985). It is indicated by the degree of similarity between an individual's personality and the environment in which he or she works (Leong and Serafica, 1995). Optimal congruence or a perfect job fit is present when personality and environment types are identical. Congruence also works as a predictor for individuals' career achievement, stability, and job satisfaction.

Leong and Serafica (1995) indicated that studies of congruence might clarify if occupational segregation is a product of career choices made by Asian Americans or a result of other factors, such as parental pressure, occupational stereotypes, and

discrimination. The concept of congruence might also be used to explore the contributions of personality and family influences on Asian Americans' career choices. In Holland's (1985) theory, career development is affected by intelligence, gender, social class, and organizational structures. Holland views that culture influences career development through its impact on personality development, and that both personality and work environment interact in a cultural context that impacts the job congruence and individuals' job satisfaction, achievement, and stability. The concept of career development influenced by cultural context may be useful to explore how Asian Americans' cultural values and gender beliefs affects individuals' career choices.

The limitation of applying Holland's theory to Asian Americans' career development lies in its ability to empirically demonstrate if his typology model holds true for representative samples drawn from a specific subgroup of Asian Americans and from this population as a whole (Leong & Hardin, 2002; Leong & Serafica, 1995).

Social Learning Cognitive Theory and Career Decision-Making

Social learning cognitive theory has been used to explain Asian Americans' career decision-making processes (Byars & Hachett, 1998; Leong et al., 2002; Leong & Serafica, 1995). The hypothesis of social learning theory is that the development of career preferences and skills and the selections of a specific job are influenced by learning experiences (Leong et al., 1995; Trusty, 2002). There are four factors in social learning theory that influence the process of career decision-making: genetic endowment, environmental conditions and events, learning experiences, and task approach skills (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). Based on social learning theory, social cognitive theory views that one's learning history interacts with his or her abilities to impact individual interest,

self-efficacy, and career behavior. The social cognitive theory of career choice is a multifaceted model that examines the interactions between self-efficacy, outcome expectations, goals, choice, outcome, and environmental factors. (Leong et al., 2002; Sharf, 2002).

There are several strengths of social learning cognitive theory when it is applied to Asian Americans and women in this cultural group (Leong et al., 2002; Leong et al., 1995; Sharf, 2002; Trusty, 2002). First, the social learning theory of decision making is useful in generating interventions or strategies that focus on facilitating career decision making across different life stages, in enhancing career certainty or decidedness, and maintaining career choice. Social learning theory may also be helpful to discuss career barriers that face Asian-American women, and to help women in this group challenge inaccurate self-beliefs that impact their self-efficacy. Lastly, social cognitive theory of career choice may have practical implications for Asian American men and women because of its emphasis on how environmental events occurring at different life stages (e.g., racial or gender discrimination, major life change, immigration, and acculturation status) may affect one's self-efficacy and his or her choice in certain careers. In summary, social cognitive career theory appears to be a good framework in understanding how specific variables, such as gender, ethnicity, and cultural values, influence Asian-American women's self-efficacy, and how an individual's self-efficacy interacts with career choice.

The major limitation in the application of social learning cognitive theory for Asian-American women is its inadequacy to address the "developmental element" in the career development and decision-making process. This theory may be strong in exploring

career interests and is helpful in facilitating career decision-making processes; however, it is vital to note that career decision-making is only one important component in one's overall career development, which is a dynamic process influenced by events occurring in different life stages and personal reactions to these events.

Preferred Theory for the Study

Asian-American women's career development is best conceptualized with a theoretical framework that can combine psychological, sociological, and economic theories. Asian-American women will be better served with a career theory using approaches that are sensitive to their psychological needs and other sociocultural factors due to the impact of these factors on one's career development and decision-making processes. Leong and Tang (2002) indicate that the existence of a culturally accommodated model is needed because it would help to assess career-related constructs and to gain understanding on various issues, such as discrepancies between inventoried career interests and expressed interests, occupational stereotypes, and the relationship between interests, self-efficacy, values, and career choices.

After the review of three theories above, social learning cognitive theory seems to be the best choice of a theoretical framework to understand Asian and Chinese American women's career development and decision-making processes. Social learning cognitive theory has not only addressed components that impact the development of career preferences and skills and career decisions, but also placed an emphasis on how an individual's learning history interacts with his or her abilities to influence individual interest, self-efficacy, and career behaviors. In addition, social learning cognitive theory has been studied more on its application to career development of women of color,

compared to other career development theories (Byars & Hackett, 1998; Sharf, 2002). The strengths provided by social learning cognitive theory are helpful in understanding the life context of the Chinese American professional women who participated in this study. The theory is also useful as a guideline for the researcher to generate interview questions designed to elicit information regarding how cultural and gender factors, self-efficacy, and other career constructs have impacted the participants' career development.

Factors Affecting Asian Americans' Career Development

This section discusses contextual factors that interact with Asian Americans' career development and provides possible explanations of how Asian Americans make their career decisions under the influence of various factors. The contextual factors include: Asian Americans' ethnic identity development, acculturation process, personal background and family influence, the effect of self-efficacy, gender factors, and career barriers.

Ethnic Identity Development and Career Development

Ethnic identity refers to "one's sense of belonging as part of an ethnic group and includes those aspects of the self, such as beliefs, perspectives, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that are derived from ethnic group membership" (Leong and Serafica, 1995, p. 84). Ethnic identity is related to, but not identical to, acculturation. It is possible for someone who is highly acculturated yet retain a strong sense of identification with his or her ethnic group. Individuals' ethnic identity has a strong impact on different career variables, and its influence is most often seen in career choices. For example, it is

common for an ethnic minority person to choose a career related to social services because he or she feels the need to serve his or her ethnic group.

Gudykunst (2001) reviewed four different models of Asian American ethnic and cultural identities in current usage that are discussed in greater details below: (a) the components model, which emphasizes the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of identity; (b) the typological model of identity, which involves using different types to explain Asian Americans' ethnic and cultural identities; (c) the orthogonal model, which suggests Asian Americans have ethnic identities that are independent from their cultural identities; and (d) the developmental model of identity, which proposes Asian Americans undergo different identity stages.

Components Model

In the components model, the ethnic identity of Asian Americans is determined by the combination of the three components of ethnic identities: affective, cognitive, and behavioral (Phinney, as cited in Gudykunst, 2001). First, the affective component emphasizes Asian Americans' senses of belonging, commitment, and positive attitudes toward their ethnic groups. Second, the cognitive component focuses on Asian Americans' knowledge about their ethnic groups and their interests and/or understandings in the traditions, history, and values of their ethnic cultures. Finally, the behavioral component involves to what degree Asian Americans are willing to engage in the events or activities related to their ethnic groups (e.g., eating Asian food, engaging in Asian behavioral patterns, and speaking the languages of their ethnic groups). Phinney suggested "the more positive Asian Americans' attitudes toward their ethnic groups, the

more knowledge they have, and the more ethnic behaviors they use, the stronger their ethnic identities” (as cited in Gudykunst, 2001, p. 106).

Typological Model

The typological model is an earlier attempt made by researchers to understand Asian Americans’ ethnic identities. The model of Asian American ethnic identity presented by Sue and Sue (1973) covers the following three types: (a) traditionalists, (b) marginals, and (c) Asian Americans.

The traditionalist refers to those with strongly internalized Asian values. Their self-worth is defined by compliance to parents and behaviors that will honor the family. Traditionalists are not socialized to respond assertively to racism, and they believe they can overcome barriers by simply working hard enough.

Marginals are “unwilling to give unquestioning obedience to traditional parental values” (Sue & Sue, 1973, p.156). Their self-worth is defined by their ability to adapt to the White society. Due to living between two cultures, Marginals suffer from an identity crisis. In order to solve this identity crisis, one may become over-westernized or deny his or her own minority culture. Marginals blame Asian values for lack of success. Denying and minimizing are ways of handling racism or discrimination for this group.

Asian Americans attempt to formulate a new identity on their own due to the realization that it is impossible to be completely compliant to their parents’ and Asian values. Their self-worth is defined by the ability to attain self-pride through forming a new identity that combines Asian and American cultures. Asian Americans recognize that racism and discrimination cannot be ignored. As a result, anger becomes a primary way Asian Americans deal with issues of racism and discrimination.

Orthogonal Model

In the orthogonal model, Oetting and Beauvais (as cited in Gudykunst, 2001) suggest Asian Americans' identification with their ethnic groups is independent of their identification with the mainstream culture. Ethnic identities in this model refer to Asian Americans' knowledge of membership in a specific Asian American ethnic group (e.g., Chinese American, Japanese American) and the importance attached to this membership. Cultural identities for Asian Americans refer to "the knowledge of members in the mainstream culture of the U.S. and the significance attached to those memberships" (Gudykunst, 2001, p. 92). Both the ethnic and cultural identities of Asian Americans may influence their behaviors, and individuals may switch between their ethnic and cultural identities. In most situations, the individual behavior is guided by one identity, and which identity is more salient depends on different situations.

Developmental Model

The developmental model focuses on how individuals' ethnic identities develop and change over time. Sue and Sue (1990) proposed that Asian Americans may go through five stages in their ethnic identity development: (a) conformity, (b) dissonance, (c) resistance and immersion, (d) introspection, and (e) integrative awareness.

Conformity stage. During the stage of conformity, Asian Americans value the mainstream culture over their ethnic groups. Young Asian Americans may view themselves negatively in comparison to European Americans and distance themselves from their ethnic groups.

Dissonance stage. At the stage of dissonance, Asian Americans start to develop inconsistency in their beliefs and actions. They may begin to realize there are positive

qualities in their ethnic groups, which leads them to question why they accept the dominant culture without a doubt and put down their own groups. In this stage, Asian Americans become more aware of their minority status and more sensitive to prejudice expressed toward their ethnic groups.

Resistance and immersion stage. In this stage, Asian Americans start to resist the mainstream culture and immerse themselves in the beliefs and practices of their own groups. Some people may become distrustful toward members of the dominant culture and look for cases of Asian Americans being discriminated against by members of the dominant culture. Asian Americans may feel guilty in this stage because of their rejection of their ethnicities in the earlier stages.

Introspection stage. In the stage of introspection, Asian Americans begin to realize their negative attitudes and anger toward the dominant culture are destructive. They may experience struggles regarding whether they should subordinate their personal identities to their ethnic groups, and whether accepting part of the dominant culture is equal to rejecting their own ethnicities.

Integrative awareness stage. When Asian Americans arrive at the stage of integration, they usually have worked through their struggles and conflicts regarding the issue of identities. They come to accept both the dominant culture and their ethnicity, and they start to find a balance point in their identity development and feel secure about who they are. In this stage, Asian Americans begin to realize that they do not have to completely accept the mainstream culture or their ethnicities. They can pick and choose the aspects of both that they accept.

The developmental model seems to be a good choice of framework used to understand how Asian Americans' ethnic identities develop as time changes. It not only identifies different varieties of identity development in different time periods but also places an emphasis on individual differences and non-linear developmental processes. This model indicates that not every Asian American goes through the five stages in the same way, and for example, some people may jump from Stage 1 to Stage 3 and not go through Stage 2.

Ethnic Identity and Career Development

Asian Americans' ethnic identity development seems to have a strong influence on many aspects of their lives, including the working experiences and career development. Leong and Chou (1994) suggested that Asian Americans who are strongly identified with their own ethnicity may tend to consider their interests in helping their own people when choosing careers. Leong and Chou further indicate that some Asian Americans with a strong ethnic identity may be discouraged from pursuing their career interests due to the awareness of discrimination in the workplace against minorities, whereas others with a strong ethnic identity may see discrimination as a challenge they can overcome and therefore help to dispel occupational stereotypes in the workplace.

Acculturation Process and Career Development

Leong and Serafica (1995) indicated that important moderating variables, such as acculturation, must be investigated to understand the vocational behaviors of Asian Americans. A discussion of Asian Americans' acculturation process and its effect on their career development may provide insights into how Asian Americans interact with

their personal and professional lives. Acculturation is “a dynamic process of relating to the dominant group, whereby the minority group selectively adopts its value system and cultural practices when involved in the processes of integrating with and differentiating from the dominant group” (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992, p. 53).

Leong and Chou (1994) indicate that ethnic identity and acculturation are two important components to understand Asian Americans’ personal and career experiences in the U.S. They further point out that ethnic identity and acculturation are two parallel but related areas. Although the existing models and research are not clear about the distinction between ethnic identity and acculturation, Leong and Chou viewed acculturation as a *process* of developing one’s racial, ethnic or cultural identity, and ethnic identity is the *outcome* of that process.

Berry’s Model of Acculturation

Berry (1980) discussed adaptation as a means of dealing with acculturative conflicts, which involve one’s experiences when encountering the differences between culture of origin and the culture of the new environment. Berry developed four varieties of acculturation based upon his research, which are closely parallel to those of Sue and Sue’s discussion of the stages of ethnic identity development (1990). The four varieties include:

1. Rejection is an adaptation technique when someone rejects the new culture’s values and behaviors, because he or she values the original cultural identity, and does not want relationships with the new culture.
2. Assimilation is an adaptation technique when a person did not value the original cultural heritage and wants relationships with the dominant culture.

3. Integration is an outcome when the original cultural identity is valued and relationships with the new culture are also sought.
4. Deculturation refers to a person's rejection of both the original cultural identity and the dominant culture.

Possible Outcomes of Acculturation

Suinn, Khoo, and Ahuna (1995) described three possible outcomes of acculturation: (a) assimilation, (b) resistance to assimilation, and (c) biculturalism. In the stage of assimilation, individuals who are assimilationists adopt the host culture's attitudes, values, and behaviors, and give up their original culture. However, individuals may resist assimilation, holding a negative view of the host culture and maintaining identity with his or her home culture. Biculturalism involves individuals adopting the characteristics of both the host and the original cultures. Biculturalism is considered as the optimal outcome of the acculturation process. People who hold a bicultural stance have positive views of both the host and the original cultures and experience better adjustment within the host culture (Suinn et al., 1995).

The outcome of biculturalism in the acculturation process seems to share similarities with the integrative awareness stage in the ethnic developmental model proposed by Sue and Sue (1990). Individuals assuming biculturalism or those in the integrative awareness stage have come to accept both the dominant culture and their ethnicity and have developed positive views toward the host and original cultures.

Acculturation and Career Development

Leong and Chou (1994) have proposed the possible effects of different stages in the acculturation process on the career development of Asian Americans. First, Asian Americans who are less acculturated are more susceptible to occupational segregation, while those who are more acculturated are less vulnerable to occupational segregation. Second, Asian Americans who are more acculturated seem more resistant to career stereotypes and more willing to enter nontraditional career fields, such as law, sales, and social services. Finally, Asian Americans who are less acculturated may show less self-efficacy in career choice, interest, or expectations due to the strong respect of parental authority in Asian cultures.

Background Variables and Family Influences on Career Development

Contextual variables involving personal and family background (Byars & Hackett, 1998; Tang et al. 1999) and individuals' socialization and development (Fitzgerald, Fassinger, & Betz, 1995) have been identified as influential factors for ethnic minority individuals' career development. Background variables, such as family of origin, socioeconomic status, educational experiences, and sociopolitical context, not only shape individuals' personal development but also exert influence on their career choices and decision-making (Prosser, 2002).

The *model minority myth* is also another variable that plays a great role in affecting career development among Asian American populations. The myth not only fails to attend to disparities between educational and income attainments and ethnic group differences, but also prevents issues of job discrimination against Asian Americans from

being adequately addressed. Therefore, it creates a career hurdle for Asian Americans (Leong & Serafica, 1995).

Family of origin has been identified as an important factor that impacts Asian Americans' career development (Leong & Serafica, 1995; Tang et al., 1999). In reviewing the factor of family influence on Asian Americans' career development, research has shown that Asian American parents are likely to exert direct influence on their children's career aspirations and choices (Leong & Serafica, 1995; Leong & Gim-Chung, 1995). In traditional Asian cultures, one's occupation is not only considered as an indicator of individual achievement and social status but also as a family's accomplishment (Tang, 2002). An individual's career choice is expected to fulfill the family's expectations and to honor the family. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that family involvement can be a powerful influencing factor for career choice, and young Asian Americans often face the challenge of selecting a major or career that matches family and parental expectations (Leong & Serafica, 1995; Prosser, 2002).

Another aspect that needs to be noted is that Asian American parents often encourage their children to pursue prestigious occupations where other Asian Americans have succeeded because of parents' thinking regarding job discrimination in the work place and career barriers (Leong & Gim-Chung, 1995). However, the persuasion from parents may restrict Asian Americans' career choices due to their personal biases and stereotypes toward careers in different fields. It is common to find Asian American students experiencing conflicts with their parents over academic major and occupational choices, which results in young Asian Americans choosing a career to please their parents rather than to meet their own career interests. Leong and Chou (1994) indicate that Asian

Americans, compared to African Americans, Latinos, and European Americans, are the only group that rates parental pressure as one of the top influential factors in their career choices.

Effect of Self-Efficacy on Career Choices

In the social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is a concept that refers to one's belief or judgment in one's ability to be successful in a particular career domain (Sharf, 2002). The sources of career self-efficacy include performance achievements, vicarious learning, emotional arousal, and verbal persuasion (Byars & Hackett, 1998). Successful performance accomplishments are the strongest source of information for self-efficacy, and vicarious learning experience and verbal encouragement can promote a stronger sense of efficacy. Strong career self-efficacy expectations generate positive outcome expectations, increase interest in career areas where one feels confident, and promote persistence when one faces career setbacks.

Regarding the effect of self-efficacy on Asian Americans' career choices, Tang et al. (1999) have indicated that self-efficacy's impact on Asian Americans' career choice is considered positive. Their study showed that if self-efficacy is high in typical occupations, interest and career choice are also high in this area. The reason for this result may be that Asian Americans' career choices in science and technology-related areas are not only encouraged by the family, but also by other Asian Americans' successful experiences in the fields.

Byars and Hackett (1998) applied social cognitive theory to the career development of women of color and provided discussions on how sources of self-efficacy interact with Asian American women's career achievements and choices. These authors

suggest that extrinsic and pragmatic occupational values are prevalent in Asian Americans because of social prestige and racial discrimination. Asian American women may be encouraged to prepare themselves academically to enter science or technology-related fields because of the high value placed on occupational prestige and social status within Asian American culture. Career choices made on the basis of prestige alone may result in career decision-making that is incongruent with interests and skills, and therefore restrict career choices for Asian American women (Leung et al., 1994).

Byars and Hackett (1998) further pointed out that Asian American women may be exposed to few Asian American female role models across different career fields, with Asian Americans concentrated in technical fields. With Asian American cultures valuing collectivism, Asian American women may be more influenced by the role models that have existed for them. In addition, through cultural and gender socialization, Asian American women may learn to give up their career interests because of the influence from in-group members. Lastly, verbal messages from Asian American families or parents tend to have a strong impact on Asian American men and women. Therefore, educational and career values held by Asian Americans parents are influential on Asian American women's career choices. Asian American women's career self-efficacy can be strengthened or weakened due to the career choices they make based on the influence of verbal messages.

Gender Factors and Career Development

The gender variables that influence the career development of women of color include gender role socialization, the balance between home and work, and the management of relationships with family members (Bingham & Ward, 1994). Bingham

and Ward report that fear of success, gender-role orientation, and home-career conflict may all serve as hurdles for women of color in their career development. For example, Chinese American women may be concerned with being professionally successful because equality between men and women is not recognized in Chinese culture (Yang, 1991). Chinese American women can also feel the strain of gender role socialization when they make career choices. Women from different Asian ethnic groups often report home-career conflicts because they are the ones who typically take on more responsibilities for maintaining the home and child-rearing in the dual career family structure. They are also considered as caretakers for the elderly in the family and need to carefully manage relationships with in-laws. Career success for women of color in the modern society may be defined by how well a woman can balance her family and career.

Chow (1987) investigated the relationship between gender-role, sex-role identity and occupational attainment among working Asian American women. The findings indicate that Asian American women with masculine and neutral sex-role identities tend to have higher occupational attainment than those with feminine identities. Yang (1991) suggested that conflicts within the family and negotiation between traditional and more contemporary gender roles can easily cause stress among Asian American women and negatively impact their career development. With the discussion above, it is important to explore how gender variables may affect Asian and Chinese American women's career development, so the career-decision making processes among this population can be better understood.

Career Barriers Faced by Asian Americans and Chinese American Women

Asian Americans' Career Barriers

Different societal and cultural barriers have impacted Asian Americans' career development, and many Asian Americans encounter challenges in their process of career preparation (Nguyen, 2000). As noted above, Asian Americans are often referred to as the "model minority" or the "invisible minority" because of their outstanding academic performance and high achievement and the cultural emphasis on modesty and relationship harmony. Leong and Chou (1994) and Leong Serafica (1995) discussed occupation segregation, occupational stereotypes, and job discrimination as possible career barriers for Asian Americans and their influence of career behaviors in this population. Jobs that Asian Americans are segregated into include medicine, physical and biological science, accounting, and engineering. Therefore, they are less likely to engage in the fields of social services, corporate management, and legal or judicial jobs. Leong and Chou indicated that occupational segregation seems to be consistent with Asian American cultural values, their difficulties with the English language, and their limited understanding of mainstream American norms of social interactions.

Regarding career stereotypes, Asian Americans are stereotyped to be more successful in physical, biological, and medical science, and less qualified in jobs that require verbal, persuasive, and social skills (Leong and Chou, 1994). Occupational segregation and stereotypes result in the overrepresentation of Asian Americans in certain career fields and allow them limited access to professionals in other fields. Occupational segregation and stereotyping also contribute to the little number of Asian American role models in many occupations.

Job discrimination often takes place in Asian Americans' career development (Leong & Chou, 1994; Leong & Serafica, 1995). Examples of discrimination in the work place are low pay, poor reviews, fewer promotions, glass ceilings, and being treated as a model minority. The glass ceiling becomes a serious concern for many Asian Americans in different occupations because it is a barrier hard for Asian Americans to break and a negative phenomenon that perpetuates job discrimination (Fong, 2002). The model minority myth also serves as a barrier for Asian Americans and contributes to occupational discrimination. The model minority myth has resulted in Asian Americans not receiving adequate attention from researchers despite the bimodal distribution of highly successful Asian Americans versus less successful ones (Leong & Chou).

Chinese American Women's Career Barriers

Yang (1991) reports that in their career development, Chinese American women in particular are vulnerable to conflicts that result from the interplay of cultural factors and the impact of immigration and cultural adjustment. Several career development barriers faced by Chinese American women were proposed by Yang (1991). First, Chinese American women's career development may be hindered by traditional gender-role socialization. Chinese American women may experience sexual segregation of occupations or encounter psychological pressure when choosing professions that require full devotion, which may interfere with the responsibility of traditional roles held by women.

Second, Chinese American women's career development is disadvantaged due to the greater emphasis that the Chinese culture places on the external locus of control. Chinese culture highly values collectivism and family honor. An external locus of control

is compatible with Chinese culture where parents feel they have the right to make career decisions for their children, and career attainment means more to the family rather than an individual. Directed by an external locus of control, Chinese American women may choose an occupation under the influence of family, community, social prestige, and other external factors rather than based on personal needs and interests.

Third, Chinese American women's career development is hampered by the lack of role models in the work place, and it is more difficult for Chinese American women to find mentors in the work world within their own cultural group when compared to their White counterparts.

Lastly, Chinese American women's career development is disadvantaged by occupational stereotypes. As discussed above, Asian Americans in general are stereotyped to succeed in the fields of math, engineering, and computer science. Chinese American women may choose math or science-related jobs because of the career stereotypes or their intention to avoid the language barriers that may be more evident in some careers that require more sophisticated verbal skills.

The barriers mentioned above result from gender-role socialization, social isolation, traditionality of interests, and occupational stereotypes. The disadvantages faced by Chinese American women can complicate their vocational aspirations, career choices, career success, and satisfaction. The difficulties that Chinese American women have experienced in their career development may be further exacerbated without a support network and proper coping skills for different situations.

Summary

In summary, Chapter II provides a comprehensive literature review of different issues pertaining to Asian Americans and their career development. Three sections in this chapter cover demographic and sociopolitical background about Asian Americans, the general Asian cultural values and women's roles, and an overview about Asian Americans' career development.

Next, Chapter III introduces the research methodology of this study. An overview of the research method is described, and the research process and the results of a pilot study are summarized. Chapter III also discusses the sampling procedures and the steps of data collection and analysis. The research design of this study was structured to explore Chinese American women's career experiences, professional development, and different contextual factors that affect their career decision-making processes.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative research methodology, and specifically the grounded theory approach to explore Chinese American professional women's career development and contextual factors that affect their career-decision making processes. In this chapter, the research methodology is addressed first. Second, the process and the results of a pilot study of a single case are summarized. The third section in this chapter focuses on the procedures for sampling, the selection of participants, and participant characteristics. Finally, the research procedures involving data collection and analysis are described.

Research Methodology

Three sections are presented in the research methodology segment. First, an overview of qualitative research and the grounded-theory approach is described. The role of the researcher in qualitative research is also delineated. Second, the researcher's personal biases and assumptions regarding this study are discussed. Finally, the research questions are restated to refresh the reader's memory.

Overview of Qualitative Research and Grounded Theory

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a research method used more and more often in social sciences. Qualitative research places an emphasis on research processes that are inductive, generative, constructive, and subjective (Creswell, 1998). Research questions in qualitative research are not guided by operationalizing variables; rather, they are generated to explore issues in context (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Researchers conducting qualitative studies do not approach research with hypotheses to test; instead, they are more concerned with understanding meaning of experiences and behaviors from the participant's own frame of reference. Typical research techniques involved in qualitative research are participant observation and in-depth interviewing.

The purpose of qualitative research is to understand an individual's experiences, and the goal is to provide in-depth details about how the participant perceives his or her experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). A qualitative study gives participants a "voice" to make their experiences or life stories known. Qualitative research also documents personal experiences in a way that helps professionals and the public to know more about the construction of a particular segment of the participant's world (McLeod, 2001).

Features of qualitative research are defined as follows (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998): (a) Qualitative research is naturalistic and has actual research settings as the direct source of data. The researcher is the main instrument; (b) Qualitative research is descriptive. The data collection takes the form of words or pictures rather than numbers; (c) Qualitative research emphasizes the process. The researchers are concerned with research process instead of simply with outcomes; (d) Qualitative research is inductive. Researchers do not

search out data to test hypotheses for the study; and (e) “Meaning” is the crucial concern to qualitative research. Researchers are interested in how individuals make sense of their lives.

The purpose of this study was to investigate Chinese American women’s career experiences and professional development and the factors that influence their career decision-making process. The participants’ experiences in their professions and the meaning of their career development formed the core of this study. The data provided by this study enriches the understanding of career development among Chinese American professional women. Therefore, qualitative research was well suited to the purpose of this research.

Grounded Theory

A qualitative design using the grounded theory approach was utilized in this study to collect and analyze information for the primary research questions. The centerpiece of grounded theory research is the development or generation of a theory closely related to the context of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998). Grounded theory research involves studying how individuals act and react to a phenomenon, collecting information through interviews, visiting the field, developing categories of information, and presenting theoretical propositions.

Grounded theory focuses on research processes that exist within the individual or groups of individuals rather than on social structure, and is used to elucidate a given social situation by understanding the core and auxiliary processes operating in the situation (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992). The process of grounded theory is to decide the guiding principle that lies beneath what is taking place in the given situation and

“dominates the analysis because it links most of the other processes involved in an explanatory network” (Glaser, 1995, p. 45). Grounded theory is a method that helps researchers to comprehend the participants’ experiences when the participants learn about their world and their interpretation of self in the interaction (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In the research process, the grounded theory approach generates theoretical explanations of social situations in an inductive manner.

In the data analysis of the grounded theory method, the main concern is the usefulness of the theory generated from the study (Glaser, 1995). In order for the research to be credible, the main variables need to be integrated, and the theory generated must explain the major variations in the process or the phenomenon studied (Glaser, 1995). The process of data analysis in grounded theory research is systematic and can be outlined as follows (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998):

1. In *open coding*, the researcher develops initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied.
2. In *axial coding*, the researcher organizes data in new ways after open coding by using a coding paradigm, in which a central phenomenon and the conditions that influence the phenomenon are identified.
3. In *selective coding*, the researcher identifies a story that integrates the categories in the axial coding model.
4. Lastly, a *conditional matrix* is developed to explain the social, historical, and economic conditions that affect the phenomenon studied.

The review of relevant literature in Chapter II showed that different factors, such as racial identity development, the acculturation process, career values, and occupational

stereotypes, have had an impact on how Asian Americans choose certain types of professions in their career development. Utilizing the grounded theory approach, this study has helped to understand how Chinese American women in particular respond to these and other possible contextual factors that impact the career development of all Asian Americans.

It is the researcher's hope that with the career stories shared by the participants, an understanding is gained regarding how Chinese American professional women come to career decisions in the context of different influential factors in the career decision-making process. The grounded-theory approach is not only helpful in reaching the purpose of the research but also useful in discovering a possible theory regarding career decision-making patterns among Chinese American professional women through the coding procedures and data analysis.

Researcher's Role in Qualitative Research

Subjectivity is unavoidable in any research endeavor. However, it is important for the researcher using qualitative research methods to be aware of and attempt to avoid allowing his or her biases to influence the findings as much as possible so the validity of the observation and the participants' experiences under exploration can be protected (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999).

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) delineated the characteristics of qualitative researchers as follows: (a) Qualitative researchers consider social worlds as holistic; (b) Qualitative researchers engage in systematic reflection on their own roles in the research; (c) Qualitative researchers are sensitive to their personal biographies and how these shape the research; and (d) Qualitative researchers depend upon complex reasoning that is

multifaceted and interactive. Therefore, the researcher in the qualitative study is the instrument of the research as well as the tool of decision-making in the process of data gathering and analysis. The researcher thereby becomes a part of both the research process and of the knowledge generated by the research.

I, as the researcher and a Chinese American woman, can see how my life experiences at different stages have affected and shaped my career path. Conducting this study offered me an opportunity to think about how my career experiences and development may be similar to or different from the participants. It was interesting to see how the participants with the same ethnic backgrounds may share similarities and differences in their career development. I hoped that the information generated from this study would be useful to professionals in career counseling and mental health fields who work with Chinese American women.

Personal Biases and Assumptions

As mentioned above, it is important for the researcher to avoid inadvertent influence of his or her biases as much as possible in the qualitative study so the validity of the observation and participants' experiences under examination can be protected. Since I was the primary researcher and the only interviewer in this study, my personal biases and assumptions along with my ethnic identity as a Chinese American woman may have possibly influenced the interviews and my interpretations of the research results.

As the researcher, I had examined possible biases and assumptions that I may have had before the research process began. I also kept these biases in mind and

reminded myself of them during the data analysis process. The biases and assumptions that I identified before beginning the study included:

1. As a female from Taiwan who came to the U.S. for advanced education, I tend to assume Chinese women in the U.S. should be able to choose a career without the influence of economic and political situations from their home countries. However, this assumption may not be held true for Chinese women who are from China and have decided to stay in the U.S. after the completion of their higher education.
2. As a modern Chinese American female who chose to be a counselor, I tend to think Chinese women in the U.S., compared to ones living under traditional Chinese culture, should have more control of making their own career decisions and should have better management skills when dealing with career barriers. However, due to generational and background differences, Chinese American women may make their career choices based on different external factors, and may not have sufficient resources to help them deal with career challenges.
3. Due to the findings suggested by some research reviewed in Chapter II and my personal background and experiences, I tend to view that struggling with language issues, maintaining an individual's ethnic identity, and managing issues occurring in the individual's acculturation process may exert negative impacts upon Chinese Americans' personal and professional development or create barriers in different aspects of their lives. However, my view may be skewed because the findings suggested by research and my assumptions

cannot account for each Chinese American's experience in dealing with the same issues mentioned above. Some Chinese Americans may not view language issues or challenges taking place in ethnic identity development or acculturation processes as barriers in their personal or professional lives.

4. Being a Chinese female myself, I tend to assume that Chinese women, compared to their male counterparts, may bear more responsibilities and have more struggles to balance their careers and families since they are typically expected to be the caretakers of children and seniors in Chinese culture. However, due to various factors (e.g., age or generation differences, educational levels, personal views on gender roles, changes in modern Chinese American families, and levels of family support), Chinese American women may not be the ones that necessarily take more responsibilities or struggle more among multiple roles they have played.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study were designed to elicit in-depth information regarding the participants' career experiences, important events occurring in their career development, influential factors that impact the career decision-making process, and the management of career barriers.

This study has explored the following four research questions:

1. What have Chinese American professional women in the U.S. experienced in their career development? How do they describe the experiences related to their professional development?

2. What are the career paths of Chinese American professional women, and what are some key events that influence their career development?
3. How do Chinese American professional women make career decisions, taking into account different contextual factors or background variables (e.g., family and parental influence, racial identity development, cultural values, gender-role socialization, acculturation process, immigration status, and possible career barriers)?
4. What career barriers have Chinese American professional women encountered in their career development, and how do they manage these barriers?

A list of guiding interview questions (see Appendix F) was developed based upon the main research questions, and the interview process will be discussed in the section below on data collection.

Pilot Study

A pilot study of one single case was conducted by this researcher as a graduate class project in the winter of 2002. The study was designed to investigate how Asian American women make career decisions, and to identify some of the contextual factors that influence their career experience and development.

Description of the Participant

The participant was a middle-aged woman who teaches Business English part-time at a Midwestern university. The participant was married and had three children. She was originally from Taiwan and had lived in the United States for 14 years. She received her graduate training in the United States and became an American citizen several years ago.

Research Procedure

Grounded theory methods were used in the research process of this pilot study. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted in a private comfortable setting in an attempt to make the participant feel relaxed and free to share her career experiences and incidences that have influenced her career development. Each audiotaped interview was transcribed. Transcription of the first interview was sent to the participant so she had an opportunity to review and make comments. The participant also received the findings of the study after the completion of the interviews. A follow-up contact was made via email to thank the participant for her involvement and to see if she had any comments about the findings.

After transcribing the two interviews, the researcher read through the transcriptions and highlighted quotes or themes that appeared significant, which helped to formulate the twelve coding categories that are the main factors impacting the participants' career development. The twelve coding categories included family factors, gender beliefs, the influence of educational training, role model factor, career barriers and stereotypes, the influence of personal values and beliefs, racial identity factor, the impact of acculturation processes, career goals and aspiration, the impact of locus of control, personal and professional growth, and the impact of discrimination. After creating the coding categories, the qualitative research computer software NUD*IST (Richard, 2002) was used to organize and sort data. The sorted data then were analyzed to generate findings.

Findings

The participant identified family values, gender-role socialization, female identity, language issues, and the acculturation process as key themes that had influenced her career choice and development. The participant revealed that her family-of-origin had a strong impact on her career decisions. She also indicated that as a career woman and a mother, sometimes it is difficult for her to balance her career and family responsibilities. The participant's discussion regarding career barriers focused on language difficulties. She indicated many obstacles she experienced in her career development were around language issues and not necessarily her ethnicity.

The participant seemed to think being a woman had a stronger influence on her career-related experiences and career development than being an Asian American. Given the participant's background as an immigrant and being in the U.S. for 14 years, the acculturation process had played an important part in her career experience and development. In sharing her career story, the participant expressed her frustration in adapting to the U.S. culture and her struggle to gain a balance between American and Chinese cultures.

Discussion

The findings of this pilot study can be useful because it gained the participant's perspectives in reflecting upon her career story and looked at themes that have influenced her career development and experiences. The pilot study may also spark other readers similar to the participant's background to focus on factors that might have influenced their career development, and obtain a better understanding about this phenomenon. Moreover, the results from the pilot single case study provided useful information to

inform this current research study that was conducted on multiple participants. Finally, the implications of the pilot study challenged my personal bias that modern Chinese American women should have more control in making career decisions, since the participant revealed that her career choice of being a part-time instructor was made mainly because of the demands and needs from her family and children.

In addition to the usefulness of the results mentioned above, the list of interview questions asked in the pilot study was used as a general guide to generate more in-depth interview questions used for this study. The coding categories created in the pilot study have served as an informative reference for the analysis of data collected for this current study. The pilot study revealed that family values, gender-role socialization, female identity, language issues, and the acculturation process were key factors that influenced the participant's career choice and development.

Sampling

Characteristics of Participants

The participants for this study were Chinese American women who were born in China or Taiwan and who have obtained a working visa, permanent residence or citizenship in the United States. Nine individuals were recruited as the selected participants for the study. All participants fulfilled the following criteria: (a) receiving associate or bachelor degrees in China or Taiwan, and (b) working as professionals in the U.S. work force for at least 2 years. Chinese American professional women who work either full time or part time were considered as potential participants for this study.

In order to obtain a diverse sample, several occupational fields were identified as selection criterion as well, such as business, fine arts, medicine, social science, science, education, social service, mental health, and law/politics. Ideally, one participant from each occupational field would be recruited for this study. In the participant selection process, an effort was made to include individuals at various levels of experiences within their career fields and at different life cycle stages so a sample that resulted in a rich variety of personal and professional experiences among Chinese American women would be generated. Potential participants residing in Chicago area and the surrounding states were considered first due to the researcher's preference for face-to-face interviews, logistical issues, availability and geographical location.

Rationale for Selection Criteria

The sample for this study targeted foreign-born Chinese American women who have earned their associate's or bachelor's degrees at China or Taiwan because: (a) this study was interested in Chinese women who are primarily socialized in their home countries, and (b) women in this population, compared to U.S. born Chinese American women, may encounter additional contextual factors impacting their career decision-making and development due to their backgrounds of being socialized in their home countries and then coming to the United States for various reasons (e.g., educational purpose, job transfer or change, or immigration due to marriage). Additional contextual factors may include the acculturation status, the politics of the home country, and the individual immigrant's background and legal status. The researcher hoped that by studying one specific group, participants would offer their personal experiences on career-related issues to enrich the understanding about Chinese American professional

women's career development. The criterion of selecting participants from China or Taiwan was included because these two countries share Chinese cultural values in general and the same official language, Mandarin. Although the political system is quite different in China and Taiwan, people from these two countries represent the largest number of Chinese immigrants in the U.S.

Profession refers specifically to career fields that require extensive study or training and mastery of specialized knowledge. The term, *profession*, is contrasted with *occupation*, which refers generally to the nature of a person's employment (Wikipedia, 2001). The reason that professional Chinese American women were targeted as participants in this study was because the researcher was interested in how these professional women manage to receive required education or training in certain professions and develop a *career* in the professions they chose, rather than merely holding a *job* to attain financial income.

The criterion of selecting participants who have obtained a working visa, permanent residence or citizenship status was included because the participants who would be selected are foreign-born, and they typically need to obtain a working visa and then secure permanent residence in order to continue their work in the U.S. legally. Holding permanent residence ultimately leads to American citizenship.

Career development and decision-making is a process influenced by individuals' culture, family, ethnic identity and acculturation status. In order to retrieve in-depth data about what Chinese American professional women have experienced in their current positions and how they make their career decisions, it was necessary to select participants who have been working for some period of time, and who may have developed some

awareness of how different contextual factors may play a role in their career development. Therefore, the criterion of selecting participants who have had at least two years of working experience was determined.

Business, fine arts, medicine, social science, science, education, social service, mental health, and law/politics were identified as career areas from which the participants would be recruited. These occupational fields were selected because Chinese American women are either underrepresented or over-represented in different career areas as the review of literature illustrated in Chapter II. Compared to the science and business field, it is less likely to find Chinese American women in the fields of social science, social service, and law/politics. By selecting participants in the career areas mentioned above, this research obtained a sample that represents different walks of life among Chinese American women, and may generate more meaningful results with the career stories shared by women of various professions in the Chinese American population.

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

The purposeful sampling of participants is an important decision point in a qualitative research study. Criterion sampling was used to make sure that all participants met the stated criteria above. In addition, a snowball sampling technique was utilized in order to “identify cases from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich” (Creswell, 1998, p.119).

The first step of recruiting participants for this study was to locate Chinese American professional women by contacting professional organizations that had an identified group of Chinese American professionals. Potential participants were also

identified through the researcher's personal connections to locate Chinese American professional women for the study.

Since the targeted population was foreign-born Chinese American female professionals from China or Taiwan, various organizations associated with Asian Americans, or Chinese/Taiwanese communities were contacted to recruit participants, which included the: Asian American Psychological Association, American Association of Chinese Physicians, Chinese American Association for Engineering, Chinese-American Chemical Association, Chinese-American Computer Association, Chinese American Medical Society, and Chinese Fine Arts Society. Other organizations in Chicago area were also contacted, such as Chinese American Librarians (Chicago Chapter), Chinese American Service League, Asian Human Services, Asian American Institute, Chinese Mutual Aid Association – Chicago, National Association for Asian American Professionals (Chicago Chapter), Taiwanese Cultural Association, and Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Chicago. When contacting different professional organizations, the researcher used a written script (Appendix B) to explain the purpose of the research in order to obtain a list of potential participants for the study.

After obtaining a list of potential participants through personal connections and the contacts with different professional organizations, an invitation letter (Appendix C) was sent out to all potential participants to see if anyone would like to learn more about the study. Twenty-five Chinese American professional women responded with an interest in participating in the research. Next, an initial contact was made by phone with the 25 individuals so the further details of how the study would be conducted were explained. At the initial contact, the 25 potential participants were informed about how the study would

be conducted under the approval of the Human Subject Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) from Western Michigan University (Appendix A), and how their confidentiality and rights would be protected through the guidelines set forth in the HSIRB policy. In addition, the research procedure was explained, and the 25 potential participants were invited to ask questions related to the research. The initial contact also served an opportunity for the researcher to make sure the potential participants fulfilled all the criteria of the study. After the initial contact, five individuals expressed concerns about the time required for the study, and another four individuals were concerned about being interviewed in English, so these nine individuals decided not to participate in the study, which narrowed the potential participants to 16 people.

The 16 potential participants' career and personal backgrounds were carefully reviewed because of the researcher's attempt to generate a sample that would cover individuals at various levels of experiences within their career fields and at different life cycle stages. In order to include individuals with different levels of personal and professional experiences, the 16 potential participants were divided according to their career fields, age groups of the 30s, 40s and 50s, years of experiences in the current job (e.g., less than 2 years, 2 to 4 years, 4 years and above) and their marital status and family situation (e.g., single, married without children, married with small children or school-age children, married with adult children, or single parent).

After an evaluation in the process of participant selection, ten of the 16 potential participants were selected for the study based on their willingness to share their career stories and that they meet all the selection criteria. Other factors, such as the career fields that contained multiple potential participants and the researcher's preference for a face-

to-face interview, were also considered in the participant selection process. An appreciation letter was sent to those who were willing to participate in the study but were not ultimately invited.

The 10 selected participants were contacted again to set up meetings times and preferred locations for the two interviews. The selected participants were also informed that a consent document (Appendix D) and a demographic questionnaire (Appendix E) would be sent to them before the interviews started. Each participant was told that a code number would be used instead of her name in the data analysis process and the dissertation write-up, and that only the researcher knew the identities of participants.

Before data collection began, one of the selected participants, who works in the mental health field, phoned to inform the researcher that she would like to withdraw from the study due to health concerns. Although the researcher made an attempt to contact another potential participant in the same career field to replace the individual who withdrew from the study, the potential participant declined the invitation in participating in the study due to her busy working schedule. Therefore, only nine participants actually participated in the study and were interviewed for the data collection.

Among the nine selected participants, four of them were from China, and the other five were from Taiwan. Three of the nine participants were in their 30s; three were in their 40s, and the remaining three were in their 50s. For the marital status of the nine participants, one was single, one was married without children, two were single parents with adult children, two were married with adult children, and the final three were married with small or school-age children.

In terms of the career backgrounds of the nine participants, one worked in the field of fine arts, one worked in the business field, one worked in the education field, one worked in the field of social service, one worked in the social science field, two of them worked in the science field, and another two worked in the health care and medicine field. This study did not include individuals who work in the mental health, legal, and political fields because of two reasons. First, one selected participant working in the mental health field withdrew from the study. Another individual in the same field was contacted, but she was not able to participate in the study. Second, it was difficult for the researcher to locate Chinese American female professionals in the legal and political fields due to the slim number of Chinese American women working in these fields.

Regarding the term of employment, one of the participants had only worked in her current job for 6 months but had two years of working experience in the U.S. Five of them had worked in their current job for 2 to 4 years, and the rest of three individuals had worked in the current job for more than 4 years. Table 1 (Appendix H) provides a summary and more details of the personal and professional backgrounds of the nine participants.

Procedures

Data Collection

Interview Process

The data of this research were collected through in-depth, one-on-one interviews with each participant, guided by a semi-structured interview format. The interview process involved two contacts, and each participant was interviewed individually in

English. Six of the participants were interviewed in person by the researcher, and three of them were interviewed via the phone due to their geographic locations. Each interview with each participant was audio taped. The first interviews took between an hour to an hour and half with the average length of the first interview lasting about 1 hour and 15 minutes. The length of the second interviews ranged from 45 minutes to one hour and 15 minutes and averaged about one hour long. The interviews were conducted in English instead of Chinese because the researcher did not want to lose the essence of the words shared by the participants and skew the real meaning of the collected data in the process of translating data from one language to another.

Before the interview process began, two copies of the consent document (Appendix D) with descriptions of data collection procedures and a demographic questionnaire (Appendix E) were mailed to the nine participants. One copy of the consent form was for the participants to keep, and the other signed copy along with the demographic questionnaire were sent back to the researcher before the first interview started. The signed copy of the consent forms and the demographic questionnaires were kept separate from the interview data and research results to ensure confidentiality.

In the first interview, the purpose of the research and the interview procedure were explained. The researcher spent the first 10 to 15 minutes of the interview on ensuring the participants' confidentiality and discussing concerns or questions related to the study. The researcher also tried to engage the participants in small talk to enhance the rapport between the participant and the researcher. As the interview process officially began, each participant was asked questions (Appendix F) regarding their career-related experiences and career development. The participants were first asked to reflect their

educational backgrounds and career histories and to share their experiences working in the U.S. and the current jobs. Then, the participants were asked to discuss factors that have influenced their career development and decision-making processes and to talk about career challenges they have faced and how they have managed these career challenges. Finally, the participants were invited to reflect upon their experience as Chinese American professional women in the U.S. and how their experiences had interacted with their career development.

The first interviews were meetings for each participant to reflect upon her career-related experiences in general, their career paths, and key factors that have influenced their career development. The participants were also asked to share their career stories and to evaluate their experiences working in the U.S. as professional women. The transcriptions of the first interviews were sent to the participants via mail prior to the second interview, so the participants had an opportunity to verify and comment in the second meetings on whether or not the transcripts of the first contact were accurate. The first and second interviews were about two weeks apart.

During the second interviews with the participants, the researcher asked additional questions to enrich the research data after reviewing and doing initial analyses on the content of the first interviews. The second interview also served as an opportunity for the participants to add more information or make comments after they reviewed the transcriptions of the first interviews. Some of the participants did not provide additional comments during the second interviews since they thought the first interviews had covered their career stories and development accurately. The second interview was a great opportunity for the researcher to discuss with the participants about the emerging

themes from the first interview, which helped to ensure that the research findings were not unduly influenced by the researcher's personal assumptions or biases, and to enrich the emerging findings.

Contact Summary

After each interview, the researcher completed a contact summary sheet (Appendix G) to document the interview content and experiences. The contact summary helped the researcher to review the conversations during the interviews and to think about main themes or issues that had emerged from the contacts. The contact summary also provided a good opportunity for the researcher to reflect personal observations, to think about what should be discussed in the next contact, and to look at anything that may be salient, illuminating, or important during the interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The contact summary form was adapted to fit the research needs of this study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2000).

Data Analysis

In this study, qualitative data analysis procedures were used to analyze the data collected from interviews and contact summaries. By using the grounded theory approach, the researcher hoped to generate a theoretical framework, emerged from the data, to reflect the participants' experiences accurately. In this section, data processing, procedures to analyze data, and self-reflective memos are discussed to explain the primary data analysis methods of this study.

Processing Research Data

The sources of the raw data in this study included audiotapes, transcripts, information from the demographic questionnaires, contact summaries, and qualitative memos written by the researcher. Each interview was transcribed in the format of a Word document and saved on the researcher's computer. The first interviews with each participant were transcribed right after the contact and the transcriptions were sent to the participants, so they were able to review the content of the first interviews before the second interviews.

After transcribing the initial interviews with the first three participants, the researcher adjusted the manner in which some of the questions were asked in the subsequent initial interviews. The reason this was done was because the researcher noticed that the first three participants were invited to share their thoughts about how playing multiple roles as a professional woman can be a challenge in their career development. However, the three participants in turn talked about how playing multiple roles as a professional woman also brought personal and professional satisfaction in their lives. Therefore, the researcher made adjustments and was more aware of how the questions pertaining to issues of playing multiple roles should be asked, thus not focusing only upon the challenges involved.

The demographic questionnaires were reviewed and included as background information for each participant. The contact summaries and qualitative memos were organized so information documented from these sources could be used in the data analysis. After the interviews were completed, the participants were provided with a draft of the initial findings resulting from analyses of the data, and were invited to share their

comments or feedback through phone or email. After the draft of the initial findings was sent to the participants via mail, three of them responded via email with positive comments. They indicated this study had given them an opportunity to share their career stories and career development and to contribute their experience as Chinese American professional women in a study that focuses on Chinese American women and their professional development. None of the participants responded with requests to change any of the information that was presented in the initial draft of the findings of this study. Therefore, no modifications were made based upon the information generated through these member checks.

Procedures for Data Analysis

After the data had been collected and transcribed, data analysis using the grounded theory method was conducted. The grounded theory approach is a research procedure that develops categories of information through open coding, interconnects the categories, constructs a story that ties together all the categories, and formulates theoretical propositions to explain the meaning of individuals' experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In the process of the data analysis, the researcher carefully reviewed all interview transcriptions using the open coding method to discover significant themes. The initial data analysis began with the researcher reading and coding the transcriptions, and reviewing the contact summaries and the qualitative memos from the first interviews with each participant. The data collected from the first interviews and other related materials were analyzed using open coding methods before the second interviews took place. The initial findings from these first contacts served to inform the subsequent data collection

during the second interviews, and thus analyses of the data regarding the second interviews and other materials (e.g., contact summaries, and self-reflective memos) associated with the second contacts were enriched by this interplay between data collection and analysis. This was a strength of the qualitative design of this study, with the eventual findings being enhanced by the reciprocal nature of data collection and analysis.

After all the interviews were completed with each participant, the researcher proceeded to re-examine the data collected from the first contacts and to review the data gathered from the second contacts. First, all the transcriptions were read line-by-line, and quotes or themes in the transcriptions that appeared to be significant were highlighted to help formulate the categories in a coding paradigm. Then, all the contact summaries and self-reflective memos associated with the first and second interviews were also reviewed so the information from these sources was taken into account to form the coding categories. The coding paradigm was organized based on five major areas that correspond to the primary research questions of the study: (a) information pertaining to the participants' career development, (b) key experiences that have impacted the participants' career development, (c) factors that have influenced the participants' career development and career choices, (d) career challenges encountered by the participants and their coping strategies, and (e) the evaluation of the participants' overall experience as a Chinese American professional woman in the U.S. workforce. Each area represents a coding group that contains sub-categories including issues pertaining to that particular theme. These are presented in Chapter IV.

After creating the coding paradigm with various coding categories, the researcher utilized the NUD*IST computer software (Richard, 2002) as a tool to manage the research data in the axial coding stage and to organize significant themes that have appeared across the participants' experiences. All the data were sorted with the research software and organized according to the coding paradigm.

In the stage of selective coding, the researcher reviewed the data reports organized by the research software to make connections among all the coding categories and to identify key incidences or important variables that have impacted the participants' career experiences, career development and career decision-making processes. After all the data were cross-examined, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the analyzed data in order to generate meaningful findings and theoretical propositions that would reflect the participants' career development processes and their experiences as Chinese American professional women. The resulting findings also served to explain their career decision-making processes as influenced by different contextual factors.

Self-Reflective Memos

Self-reflective documentation played an important role in the data analysis process. Glaser (1995) indicated that qualitative memos describe the strategies of data analysis, identify links between categories and theoretical codes, and diagram the relationships between categories. Throughout the course of the study, the researcher kept self-reflective memos so personal insights, emerging questions or observations, and emerging theoretical propositions were recorded. In the process of analyzing the data, the researcher found self-reflective memos useful in re-examining the selected data related to the emerging categories or to gather more data to explain unanswered questions. Contact

summaries mentioned in the former section and self-reflective memos have shared a similar function, that is, to help the researcher record emerging insights and impressions during the research process.

Confidentiality of Data

In the process of data analysis, each participant was identified by a number (Participant 1 to Participant 9) instead of her real identity. Only the researcher knew the real names of the participants. All the information collected from the demographic questionnaires and the interviews was kept confidential, which means that the participants' names would not appear on any papers in which the information was recorded or in the final write-up of this study. The questionnaires and the transcriptions were coded and organized by the researcher only. The researcher isolated the master list with the names of the participants and the corresponding code numbers from all documented materials. The master list was destroyed after all the data were collected.

The audiotapes, demographic questionnaires, and transcriptions were placed in a locked cabinet and will remain there for a minimum of three years. All transcriptions and coded data were stored in the researcher's computer file, but no information was stored on the computer with the participants' names or other identifiable information. Any specific or identifiable information reported by the participants on the transcriptions was replaced with more general terms so no personal identifying data could be traced back to the participants. For example, three of the participants live in smaller towns in the upper Midwestern area; therefore, the name of the town was never revealed in the findings due to the small numbers of Chinese Americans women residing in these communities.

Recursivity in the Research Design

A strength of the research design of this study lies in the recursivity of data collection and analysis. The data collection process of this study involved gathering data from two separate interviews, the contact summaries from each interview contact, and the qualitative memos recorded by the researcher. The complete data analysis process included the researcher's initial data analysis between the two interviews and a detailed examination regarding all the collected data after the entire data collection process was completed. Therefore, the processes of data collection and analysis interacted with each other, as part of the recursive research design, in which the preliminary data collection informed initial analyses, which then informed and influenced subsequent data collection and analyses. Thus, in this study, the processes of data collection and data analysis were not mutually exclusive. The recursivity embedded in the research design of this study served to strengthen the data collection and data analyses processes and helped to generate findings that more accurately represent the career experiences of Chinese American professional women.

Summary

This chapter has presented the methodology used in this study, the findings of the pilot study and the procedures of sampling. In the section regarding sampling, the procedures of participant selection, data collection and data analysis using grounded theory methods, and the recursivity of the research design were discussed.

In summary, nine Chinese American professional women participated in the study and shared with the researcher about their experiences working in the U.S. and their

career development through two in-depth interviews. The interviews with the participants helped to explore their professional development and the important factors that have influenced their career development and decision-making processes.

The participants were selected based on their willingness to participate, their background of educational training, the years of experience working in the U.S. and the career fields in which they have worked. The participants were also selected based on their ages, years of experience working in the current positions and different life-stage cycles, consistent with the researcher's intention to generate a sample that included individuals at different levels of personal and professional experiences.

Grounded theory methods of data collection and analysis were employed, such as in-depth interviews, verbatim transcriptions of interviews, contact summaries, self-reflective memos, various coding approaches, and generating theoretical propositions. All the data collected and analyzed through grounded theory methods were organized into the research findings, which are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Chapter IV presents the findings of this study regarding Chinese American professional women's career experiences and development. The report of the findings is divided into two parts. The first part of the findings provides the summaries of each study participant's career development. Each participant's educational background, work history, current profession, career values and work attitude, and future career plan is summarized and presented in the first part of the findings.

The second part of the findings offers the results from the grounded theory data analyses at the cross-case level. It consists of the descriptions of different key experiences and factors that have influenced the participants' career development and their decision-making processes. In addition, the career challenges faced by the participants and the coping strategies used by them are identified. A section regarding the participants' evaluation of the overall experience of being a professional woman in the U.S. is also presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with a presentation of the emerging theoretical scheme.

The report of the findings includes not only the researcher's analysis of the data but also selected quotations from the interviews with the participants. The quotes from the participants serve as significant examples to help the reader better understand the participants' experience as Chinese American professional women in various professions.

The quotes also reflect the participants' professional experiences and development in a personalized manner with the exact words shared by them, allowing their voices to be heard.

Part I: Career Development of Participants

Nine Chinese American professional women participated in this study. This section summarizes and reports each participant's career development. The participants' educational backgrounds, career histories, current professions, personal career values and work attitude, and future career plans are described so personal work experience and the career development of each individual in the study can be understood. Table 1 (Appendix H) provides a summary of each participant's background information.

Participant 1

Participant 1 (P1) is a 40-year-old female from China originally. P1 is married with two small children and currently living in the upper Midwest. Starting in 1992, she came to the U.S. for various visits and moved to the Midwest in 2003 because of her husband's job. P1 received her bachelor's degree in Engineering in China and went to Japan for advanced educational training. While studying in Japan, she changed her major from engineering to literature and earned her master's degree in American Literature and a doctoral degree in Comparative Cultures. P1 married her husband in Japan and had her first child while working there.

P1 worked as a computer engineer for five years in China before she went to Japan. She indicated the reason she switched her profession was because she has a strong

interest in literature and humanities. Another reason P1 changed her major was due to her experience of taking a bicycle trip to the rural area in China. She stated:

I had a bike trip along the Yellow River. I had never been to the countryside before...I went to villages that had no electricity, so I felt like what I am doing in computer science...after that I thought a lot about my future...I decided to change my major and went to Japan...I think the bike trip is the most powerful turning point for me...I was really happy about my engineering job...but that trip totally changed my view about life...that's why I changed my field.

P1 taught American Studies and Chinese in a Japanese university for 4 years after finishing her degrees in Japan. She worked full time in Japan while her husband was working on his doctoral degree. As P1's husband completed his degree, he was offered a teaching position at a Midwestern university, so P1 moved to the U.S. with her family.

P1 is currently working part-time for 15 to 20 hours a week and teaches both Chinese and Japanese classes in the same university where her husband teaches. P1 started her part-time teaching a few months after she moved to the Midwest. At first, she only taught Chinese classes and later lectured in a seminar offered by the program of American Studies. However, the seminar was cancelled due to budget cuts after P1's first semester of teaching the course. Therefore, she now only teaches language classes as a part-time instructor. P1 indicated that she decided to work part-time after she moved to the Midwest because she thought she needed some time to adjust to the new place. P1's second child was born one year after she started teaching. Now, taking care of two small children has become her priority and is the main reason she remains teaching part time.

When asked what have shaped her career values and influenced her career choices, P1 mentioned her mother and grandmother had a strong influence on her career values and her passion for teaching. She said, "For teaching, actually my family has a history. My grandmother was a teacher and my mother is a professor at college...so it

seems very naturally for me to choose teaching.” P1 also indicated her mother had set a good example for her regarding how a teacher should devote her time and energy to the profession and the students. When discussing the issue of work attitude, P1 indicated she cares a lot about her career and loves her students. She stated, “I spend a lot of time with my students. Even though I am a part-time teacher, I invite my students to my house...they come to my office all the time...we have a very good relationship.”

Regarding her future career plans, P1 indicated that someday she would like to teach full-time again in the field of her own expertise. Although fulfilling family responsibilities and taking care of her children are the main priorities in P1’s life at the moment, she still wants to go back to full-time teaching after her children are old enough to go to school. Despite not being able to teach full-time due to these family responsibilities, P1 indicated it has been worth delaying her career development for her children and family.

P1 mentioned the one concern she has for her current profession is the economic situation in the state where she resides. Due to decreases in the state funding for universities, P1 is worried that it will not be easy for her to secure a full-time teaching position in the university where she works. However, P1 stated there are different career possibilities for her in the future, such as writing or freelancing, which may allow her to take care of her children at home as well as establish herself professionally.

Overall, P1 viewed her career development in her current profession as a positive experience for her personally and professionally. She did not regret moving to the U.S. to start a new chapter in her life. She said if she had not come to the U.S., she would still teach somewhere else, since teaching has been her passion. P1 did indicate that it would

be great if she could resume teaching and doing research full time in the field of American studies, which would be a dream job for her.

Participant 2

Participant 2 (P2) is a 50-year-old female from China originally. P2 is married with one adult child and currently living in the upper Midwest. She first came to the U.S. in 1988 to visit her husband, who was working in the Southern part of the U.S. She relocated from the South to the Midwest in 1998 because of her husband's job offer. P2 received her bachelor's degree in Gymnastics Education in China. She stated that the reason she chose Gymnastics Education was because of her personal interest to be a gymnast. P2 married her husband while she was in China. After P2 came to the U.S., she stayed home for three to four years. During those years, P2 took English lessons to improve her language skills. Four years after moving to the U.S., P2 decided to enroll in a dental technician program so she could be trained professionally and establish herself professionally. She went to the classes intensively and completed the training program in two years.

In terms of P2's work history, she was a government employee in China and worked in the social education program for about eight years. Then she switched to an editing job in Beijing Language College (BLC). She was an Assistant Editor in BLC for 5 years before she left for the U.S. After coming to the U.S., P2 had to take English courses as well as worked in a restaurant to help her family financially. After being certified as a dental technician, she started her first job in the field for about 2-and-a-half years before she moved to the Midwest.

P2 is currently working full-time as a dental laboratory technician and has been working in this position for 7 years. Her job tasks involve helping dentists to produce prosthetics for patients. P2 indicated the reason she chose to work in this field was because she used to dream of being a dentist when she was young, and she needed a profession to establish herself professionally after moving to the U.S. Due to her professional training, P2 did not have much difficulty finding decent jobs, and she has enjoyed working as a dental laboratory technician.

When asked about her career values and work attitude, P2 indicated the way her parents raised her and advice given to her from her family have had a strong impact on her work values and ethics. She stated having a career is a way to establish a sense of achievement, and working in the U.S. has given her the advantage of not being limited by her age. She can keep working as a career woman until she chooses to retire. P2 said:

In China, most women would retire at the age of 55. It is the culture there. In the U.S., I don't have to be limited by my age...having a career is like something I can do for myself...I can make contributions...if someone does nothing, slowly she will be forgotten by the society and be forced out from the work place.

P2 indicated she is very devoted to her work and tries to work hard. She reported, "If I like the job, I try to work hard...I follow the rules and fulfill my work duties. I am a person that tries to do my job well and make no troubles at work. That is my work attitude."

Regarding P2's future career plan, she said she will continue working in the same field but would like to help her daughter by using her knowledge as a dental technician if there is an opportunity in the near future. P2's daughter is currently in dental school. She said, "My future planning is that if my daughter opens her own clinic and needs my help in her clinic...maybe my career will work around her career...but I don't really know

how things will go yet.” Overall, P2 considered her work experience in the U.S. a positive journey, and she was glad to choose a profession that matches her interest and allows her to grow professionally. With the decision of coming to the U.S., P2 was able to establish a career path out of her personal choice and enter a profession somewhat close to her childhood dream.

Participant 3

Participant 3 (P3) is a 35-year-old female from Taiwan originally, who is married with two small children and currently living in the upper Midwest. P3 and her husband met when she came to the U.S. to visit her sister. She moved to the U.S. in 2000 for her marriage. P3 received artistic training in Taiwan and went to the United Kingdom to complete her bachelor’s degree in Three Dimensional Design. After completing her degree in the U.K., P3 went back to Taiwan and worked as a merchandise representative for 3 years. Then P3 changed her job to a recruitment representative for a company that recruits students to study in the U.K. She used her personal experience studying in the U.K. as a career advantage and stayed with the company for 1 year before leaving for the U.S.

P3 is currently working part-time as a guest service representative in a retail business. She works about 30 hours per week, and her job involves helping guests with their questions and complaints. She has been working in the retail business for 4 years. P3 indicated the reason she entered this profession was because she would like to continue working as a career woman, and the retail business where she works hired her immediately after the job interview. P3 stated she went to many job interviews after she moved to her current residence. However, due to her educational background and the

geographic location where she resides, she was not able to find a job that matches her true interests.

P3 admitted that her current job is not the *ideal* career. She keeps the part-time job because she views working as a way to stay financially independent and to build social and professional connections. She works part-time also because taking care of her children takes priority in her life, and her flexible working hours allow her to fulfill these family responsibilities.

P3 indicated her parents had a great impact on her attitude toward work and how she has established herself as a professional woman. She stated, "My parents try to encourage my siblings and me to reach out more by studying overseas so we know how big the world is and to look for something higher and better for our careers." P3 indicated she has a positive work attitude and is not afraid to take different career opportunities. A quotation from her showed her work philosophy, "I know sometimes it is not up to me to say I want to do a manager's job, but when I have an opportunity, I will grab it...just keep going up and try." P3 said she tries to enjoy her job and to maintain good relationships with her co-workers. Due to the nature of her profession, she has a great numbers of co-workers who are older females. One strategy P3 uses to build rapport with her co-workers is to respect their seniority and seek advice from them. She quoted, "They are older than me and have been working here for a long time, so I respect them and their experiences. A lot of them are like my mother's age. I just ask help from them or help them with different things."

P3's future career plan is to resume working full-time after her children are old enough to go to school. She would like to devote more time to her career development

and maybe find another job where she can use the expertise she gained from the current and previous work experiences. She stated, “I will go back working full time after my kids grow older...maybe relocate to a bigger city so I can work in a setting to recruit international students and share my personal experiences...maybe work like a student coordinator.”

P3 believes a career that involves helping international students in the U.S. would be a dream job for her so she can connect with people from different ethnic backgrounds and provide services to ethnic minority students. Overall, P3 found that her experience working in the U.S. helps to maintain her financial independence and keeps her connected with the professional world. However, she would like to relocate to a bigger city so she can have more career options and find a job where her true passion lies.

Participant 4

Participant 4 (P4) is a 35-year-old female from China originally. She is single and currently living in a large Southern urban area. P4 received her bachelor's and first master's degrees in Soil Chemistry in China. She came to the U.S. in 1998 for educational purposes and completed her second master's degree in Chemistry at a Midwestern university.

In China, she worked as a faculty member in a college setting and did research as well as teaching in the Department of Chemistry for several years. While working on her second master's degree in the U.S., P4 worked on campus as a research and teaching assistant as a way to obtain financial help from the university. She started her current job as an analytical chemist immediately after graduation. She has been working in her current profession for three-and-a-half years, and her tasks involve environmental

chemical testing and monitoring for different cases. When asked how she ended up in the current job, P4 explained that she wanted to start working right after her graduation so she could gain some professional experiences. She said:

When I was about to graduate, I searched different jobs. The job market back then was not so good...I just think whatever job they gave to me, I will take it...I just wanted to get a job...to get some experiences and to see how things are different in the work force between China and the U.S.

P4 indicated she chose her profession in Chemistry because of her personal interest and concerns for the living environment. She said, "I chose chemistry and ended up in the environmental analytical job. I can say I am concerned about our environment." Regarding her career values and work attitude, P4 pointed out her family had a strong influence on shaping her values and work ethics. She said, "I am a hard-working person, kind of like a perfectionist. I want to do everything in a perfect way...like doing a research project and analyze the data...I think that kind of perfection I want for my work is influenced by my family."

P4 identified her career path as being research-related, and she enjoys being a chemist as her profession. However, she has concerns and feels uncertain about her career development because of her legal status. P4 is the only individual in this study who is a legal alien with a working visa. When asked about her future career plans, P4 indicated that she hopes to obtain her green card soon so she can change her status to a permanent resident. Without a green card, she has limited career opportunities and less flexibility of choosing another job due to the restrictions of immigration policies. P4 said she would like to work in a setting that would involve her in international research if she has an opportunity in the future. She stated, "My dream job will be a job in international

research, working for a company in the U.S. that can use my expertise. Maybe they have a branch office in China so I can go back and forth to do research here and there.”

Overall, P4 likes her current profession and views her work experience positively. She stated that different experiences she accumulated from her current job have enhanced her career development. The main concern in her career development is her pending case in permanent residence status. The long waiting process of her case, due to the uncertainty and changes of the current U.S. immigration policy, has created a great deal of stress for her personally and professionally.

Participant 5

Participant 5 (P5) is a 41-year-old female from Taiwan originally. She is married with two school-aged children and currently living in a large Upper-Midwestern urban area. P5 received her bachelor's degree in Forest Recreation in Taiwan. She first came to the U.S. in 1988 and completed her master's degree in Leisure Studies. After receiving her master's degree, P5 worked in the U.S. shortly and went back to Taiwan for a job offer in recreation planning. She worked in Taiwan for about a year and met her husband who was a Taiwanese Ph.D. student studying in Chicago. P5 decided to quit her job and moved to Chicago for her marriage in 1991.

As a new immigrant, P5 found it difficult to find a job due to her status as a spouse of an international student, so she went back to school to get her Ph.D. degree. However, becoming pregnant made it hard to continue her study; therefore, she decided to withdraw from the doctoral program. Regarding P5's work history in the U.S., she had gone through several career changes before entering her current career field. In the beginning, P5 had a temporary job as an office assistant during her pregnancy. She chose

to quit her job after her twins were born. She stayed home for five years and went back to the workforce after her children were old enough to go school. P5 started with a part-time job as a realtor and ended up being a marketing programmer for the realtor office for 3 to 4 years.

Afterwards, P5 changed to a full-time job in an international banking and provided services to a great number of Asian and Chinese customers. About six months ago, she switched to her current position as a program coordinator in the cultural division for the government of Taiwan. P5's job task involves coordinating educational activities for Taiwanese students studying in the Midwest area. P5 is also in charge of government-sponsored scholarships and providing different services to Taiwanese students.

P5 identified her career path has been service-related, and she had worked in different organizations where she provided services for various groups of people. P5 indicated she is a people person and enjoys serving people's needs. She stated, "I think I am friendly to people. A lot of times, jobs chose me, not I chose the job." P5 also pointed out that her friends have played an important role in her career development because her friends often introduced different job opportunities to her. When asked about her work attitude, P5 indicated she is very enthusiastic about her work and not afraid of changing jobs if she sees a better opportunity. She also said she works hard and tries to do her best at work. She stated, "I can be very aggressive! I always think I have to do my best to fulfill my duties or to do whatever my supervisor asks me to do. So I think I am a very hardworking person."

When asked about her future career plan, P5 said:

The current job is still a temp job for me. It is something I can come out to meet people and make extra income. If I can, in the future, I would like to have a shop

with crafts. I like to have a gallery or something since I enjoy drawing and making crafts.

Overall, P5 views her experience working in the U.S. positively, since her current and previous jobs have helped her to accumulate experiences working with people and to establish professional resources. P5 did indicate that the limitations and career challenges (e.g., her background as an immigrant, and family-career conflicts) she encountered in the U.S. have led her to believe she might have more career options if she had stayed in Taiwan as a professional woman.

Participant 6

Participant 6 (P6) is a 50-year-old female from Taiwan originally. She is a single parent with a teenaged daughter and currently living in a large Upper-Midwestern urban area. P6 received her bachelor's degree in Applied Math in Taiwan. She came to the U.S. in 1980 and completed her master's degree in Applied Math. She worked as a teaching assistant for a year before coming to the U.S. After receiving her master's degree, P6 was going to follow her passion in teaching as a math teacher in the U.S. However, the immigration office did not grant P6 a work permit for the teaching position she accepted. Therefore, P6 went back to school for her doctoral degree.

P6 has been living in the U.S. for 24 years and has a very long history working in the field of Software Engineering. She received her first job offer after she entered the doctoral program, so she quit her studies and started working as a software engineer. The company that hired P6 sponsored her to get a green card. With her green card, she had more career options and was engaged in different jobs in the same career field.

After P6's daughter was born, she quit her job and stayed at home taking care of her daughter for four years. Due to the four-year gap of staying at home, P6 had a difficult time convincing different companies to give her a full-time job. After gaining some experiences from a contract job, P6 eventually resumed working full-time in the Software Engineering field. P6 has been working in her current job for 4 years as a quality staff engineer. Her tasks involve writing software process, training software and hardware engineers, monitoring the software process and communications, and attending review meetings.

P6 indicated she is a very business-oriented person and likes to try different career opportunities. She said, "During those 4 years at home, I started my own business. I arranged the tours and accommodations for engineers coming from overseas. I also searched different opportunities and started a business of personalized children's books." When asked about her values and attitude toward work, P6 indicated that her supervisor from the first job is a role model for her. She stated, "I learned a lot from him...he helped me settle into my job. Because of his mentoring, my job becomes more and more interesting." P6 also said she has a positive work attitude and tries to stay motivated. She stated, "I think that [the work attitude] is what keeps me going till now. That is why I still work in this field and I am happy to go to work. I learn new things everyday and challenge myself at work."

The immigration status issue was a major turning point for P6's career development. P6 indicated she would have followed her passion and worked as a teacher if she were able to work legally with her very first job offer. P6 stated, "Since being young, I always wanted to be a teacher. That is what I wanted to do. During my first job

as an engineer, I in fact taught calculus on the side, but I had to give it up because I was too busy.” P6 pointed out that her current job is her dream job in the engineering field, but she still would like to teach someday. When asked about her future career plan, P6 reported, “I have worked for others too long. In this profession, I don’t really want to go further. I want to spend more time with my family and maybe start my own business...I am not sure.”

Overall, P6’s experience working in the U.S. has been positive. She indicated her career development has been a good path, and her profession has offered her and her family financial security and provided herself a sense of fulfillment. She did not have any regrets in her career development, but hopes she can begin teaching or start a business in the future.

Participant 7

Participant 7 (P7) is a 55-year-old female from Taiwan originally. She is married with two adult children and currently living in a large urban area on the West Coast. P7 received her associate’s degree in Accounting in Taiwan. She immigrated to the U.S. in 1990 with her family. Soon after moving to the U.S., P7 entered the Acupuncture Academy and completed her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Oriental Medicine.

In Taiwan, P7 worked as an assistant in the accounting field for several years. After completing the training in the U.S., she has been working full time as a licensed acupuncturist for 9 years in an oriental medicine clinic. P7 also provides free treatments to people from the temple where she practices her faith.

When asked about her career values, P7 indicated parental influence has been an important factor. She stated, “In the U.S., the educational system encourages students to

follow their career interests. But in Taiwan, the culture or parents always encourage their kids to pursue jobs with prestige. But after I came here, I decided to give myself a chance so I just follow my interest and become an acupuncturist.” P7 considers herself a hardworking person. She stated, “When I just entered this field, I work overtime almost everyday. I like to finish my daily tasks before I go home. When I am at work, I help patients even though they came in right before the closing time.”

Regarding future career plans, P7 indicated she plans on retiring after her tenth year as an acupuncturist. She said, “I think I will retire soon, after all, my daughters have grown up. I will keep practicing my faith and provide free acupuncture services to the congregation in my temple.” Overall, P7 views her career development as a positive journey and has enjoyed her profession very much. Working as an acupuncturist is a personal choice for P7, and it has provided a sense of achievement as well as financial security for her and her family.

Participant 8

Participant 8 (P8) is a 35-year-old female from Taiwan originally. She is a married and currently living in a large urban area on the West Coast. P8 received her first bachelor’s degree in Music Education in Taiwan. She came to the U.S. in 1997 with a plan to enter a graduate program in Music Performance but ended up with a second bachelor’s degree in Music Therapy. She met her husband while working on her degree and relocated to the West Coast after graduation. P8 is certified as a piano teacher from her state’s Piano Teacher Association.

In Taiwan, P8 worked as a piano teacher for 10 years and provided piano lessons in different settings. In 2003, P9 started her own piano studio at home and began teaching

piano to school-aged children in the surrounding neighborhoods for about 45 hours a week. She indicated she began her own business because she likes to teach piano and would like to help her family financially. P8 stated starting her own business has been a long but rewarding process. She stated:

At the beginning, my husband and I had to recruit students. We printed our own flyers and passing flyers from door to door in our neighborhood. I started with only few students...after that, words are spread. I got more and more students in the first 6 months.

When asked how she ended up with her current profession, P8 stated that it is a career choice that matches her interests and her passion of teaching. Being a piano teacher and owning a studio at home have also provided income for her family and allowed her to take care of family responsibilities in a more flexible way. Regarding P8's work attitude, she said, "I am a very devoted teacher, very hardworking. I think as a piano teacher, you need to establish a good rapport with your students and a good trust with their parents. So I try to work hard and devote a lot of time to my job to achieve these goals."

In terms of future career plans, P8 stated, "I will continue teaching in my studio...maybe recruit more students and holding more and bigger recitals for more of my students. Now this is like a dream job for me." She also indicated that in the future she would like to open an after-school program where she can combine her piano teaching with other activities for school-aged children. Overall, P8 views her work experience in a positive manner. She stated, "I have been teaching piano for so long. It has been my passion. I am glad I started my own studio here. Being a piano teacher is very fulfilling, a big sense of achievement when you see your students play." P8

concluded that being a piano teacher is a great career choice and a good way to take care of herself and her family.

Participant 9

Participant 9 (P9) is a 49-year-old female from China originally. She is a single parent with an adult child and currently living in a large Upper-Midwestern urban area. P9 received her bachelor's degree in English from a Foreign Language Academy in China. She came to the U.S. in 1989 and completed her first master's degree in Education and Program Design. A few years later, due to a need for personal career advancement, P9 obtained her second master's degree in Library Science. She is current working on her doctoral degree in Education at the same university where she works.

In China, P9 was an English teacher for several years. She decided to come to the U.S. for more educational training due to the limited development of her career in China. P9 started working as a librarian assistant in a university after her first master's degree and has worked in the same career field since 1991. She is currently the director of library services after her promotion in 1997. P9 is in charge of different administrative responsibilities and supervises a team with two full time librarians and six student workers. She also coordinates library services for different branch campuses and conducts seminars regarding information technology.

When asked about why she chose this profession, P9 indicated she had hoped to teach in a college setting after her graduation, but it was hard to secure a college-level teaching position with a master's degree. Therefore, she took the job when the library where she had been working needed a librarian so she could start working and gaining professional experiences. P9 indicated her passion about teaching never fades away. She

stated she is glad her current job involves teaching different seminars, which allows her to lecture and provide information. She said, "Teaching is very rewarding. You can see how students grow from the information you give them. For me, seeing students grow is very fulfilling." P9 considers herself very devoted to her work, and she believes her performance has been recognized through the job promotion that placed her in the current position.

When asked about future career plans, P9 indicated teaching is her passion and she will not give up any opportunities of teaching. Therefore, earning her doctoral degree in Education may help her teaching dream come true soon in a university setting. She stated:

I don't know what I will do after getting my Ed.D. I may turn to full-time teaching or I may just stay in this field. With my current job, I still have a lot of chances to teach. When I conduct seminars, I am teaching. As far as the future goes, I would like to work in a bigger university. I would like to work my way up...maybe become a dean of the Library Science Department.

P9 has established herself well in her current profession. Overall, she views her career development a good professional path. "I never imagined I would become a director of library services here. I think I can be proud of myself as a professional woman," said P9. She believes the experiences she accumulated in the current profession have enhanced her career development and provided a sense of fulfillment for her personally and professionally.

The findings above have presented the participants' career stories and their career development in a summarized format in the hope to provide significant contextual information pertaining to the career histories and backgrounds of the Chinese American professional women in this study. The next part of the findings chapter comprises the

primary findings of this study. This next section describes the important themes that emerged from cross-case analyses in this study regarding the participants' career experiences, factors that impacted their career development and decision-making processes, the career challenges faced by them, and their management of these career challenges.

Part II: Chinese American Professional Women's Career Experiences, Career Decision-Making, and Career Challenges

The Chinese American professional women in this study were asked to share their professional experiences, the factors that impacted their career decision-making, and the career challenges they encountered in their professional development. This part of the findings chapter presents the results from cross-case analyses in response to the primary research questions of this study, which include the following four inquiries:

1. What have Chinese American professional women in the U.S. experienced in their career development? How do they describe the experiences related to their professional development?
2. What are the career paths of Chinese American professional women, and what are some key events that influence their career development?
3. How do Chinese American professional women make career decisions taking into account different contextual factors or background factors (e.g., family and parental influence, racial identity development, cultural values, gender-role socialization, acculturation process, immigration status, and possible career barriers)?

4. What career barriers have Chinese American professional women encountered in their career development, and how do they manage these barriers?

The second part of the findings chapter consists of five sections. First, key experiences that have influenced the participants' career development are presented. Second, emerging factors that have impacted the participants' decision-making processes are described. Third, career challenges faced by these professional women and the coping strategies used by them are identified. Fourth, the significant themes that appeared in the participants' experience of being a Chinese American professional woman are illustrated. Finally, the emerging theoretical scheme of the study is depicted.

Influential Experiences in Career Development

This section presents the findings regarding different experiences in the participants' personal and professional lives that have significantly impacted their career development. Four major experiences emerged from the data analyses as the common themes that influenced these women's professional development. They include experiences before coming to the U.S., the experience of coming to the U.S., marriage and having children, and the work experience in the U.S.

Experiences Before Coming to the U.S.

Two major experiences appeared to have a great impact on different participants' career development: the experience of living in other foreign countries, and previous job experiences in their home countries and other foreign countries.

Experience of living in other foreign countries. Among the nine participants, two of them (P1 and P3) lived in another foreign country before coming to the U.S., which is

a key experience that impacted their lives personally and professionally. P1 went to Japan for her advanced degrees and met her husband while studying there. She indicated, “Living in Japan did not affect what I am doing, but affects where I am doing my career...if I did not meet my husband in Japan, I would go back to China and teach there.” P3 went to the U.K. to finish her bachelor’s degree, which was an eye-opening experience that inspired her career interests and job planning. She stated,

Living in the U.K. for almost 8 years was a big thing for me in my life. I became more international. So later on I tend to pick up international-related jobs...I think studying in the U.K. was the time I started thinking what I am going to do after I go back to Taiwan. So I started my planning about what I can do in the future.

Job experiences in home countries and other foreign countries. Five of the participants believed their previous job experiences in their home countries or other foreign countries have enhanced their current professions and allowed them to establish their career development in a better way. P1 and P8 stayed in the same career fields after moving to the U.S., and they both confirmed that their past teaching experiences have helped their current professions in different ways. P8 stated, “Working in Taiwan as a piano teacher for 10 years helped my job now. I often use the techniques from my previous teaching...my experience working with my old students helps me to deal with my students now.”

P4 also indicated her prior experiences in research and teaching have helped her current job. She stated, “When I got this job, I did not have any working experiences in the U.S. I only had some experiences working in China...I would say my job experiences and educational training in China have helped me a lot here.” Although P3 and P9 chose different occupations after moving to the U.S., they both indicated they have used skills

they learned from previous job experiences to deal with the job tasks or other work-related issues in their current professions.

Coming to the U.S.

Reasons for coming to the U.S. All the participants confirmed that coming to the U.S. was a major turning point in their personal and professional development, and the decision to come to the U.S. has influenced their career development significantly in different ways. The participants came to the U.S. for different purposes (e.g., seeking advanced education, marriage, spouses' jobs, and immigration plans). P4, P6, P8 and P9 all came to the U.S. to seek more educational training with different reasons. P4 and P6 came to the U.S. for their master's degrees because of their personal choices and the influence from their college friends. P8 and P9 decided to obtain more educational training in the U.S. because of the career challenges they encountered in their home countries. P8 stated, "I was kind of burned out after teaching 10 years of piano in Taiwan, so I wanted to change the environment and get another degree to enhance my development." P9 reported, "I don't think my career was developing very well in China. I can not see my future so I finally decided to come to the U.S. due to the frustration in my teaching job...I wanted to get a master's degree to enhance my career development."

Two participants, P3 and P5, moved to the U.S. because of their marriages. P3 met her husband while visiting the U.S. P5 married her husband, who was a Taiwanese student studying in Chicago. They both quit their jobs in Taiwan and moved to the U.S. to start their new families. Two other participants, P1 and P2, moved to the U.S. because of their husbands' careers. P1's husband was offered a teaching position in a Midwestern university, so her whole family had to move from Japan to the U.S. P2's husband

worked as a faculty member in the U.S. and asked P2 to come to the U.S. P7 came to the U.S. with her husband and two school-aged children because of her family's immigration plan.

Coming to the U.S. and career development. The participants had different views regarding the impact of coming to the U.S. on their personal and professional lives. Some of the participants agreed that the experience of coming to and working in a foreign country can be a struggle and difficult transition initially. P1, P2 and P3 indicated that coming to the U.S. was a big transition for them personally and professionally, and because of this major life transition, they went through many emotional struggles. All of them had a satisfying full-time job before coming to the U.S. P1 and P3 said it was hard for them emotionally to adjust from working full-time in their home countries to being a part-time employee in the U.S.

I have been supporting myself since college. When I was in Japan, I worked more than my husband did. I was the one that supported my family. But when we moved here, I became part-time. I felt so dependent for the first time and it wasn't a pleasant feeling...it was a big transition for me. I struggled from working full time to part time. (P1)

It was very difficult for me. It was so tough...when I just got married and moved here. This is a small town compared to where I am from...I felt really bad...I asked myself why I gave up my job in Taiwan. It took me for a while to adjust from a full-time career woman to a married person. The adjustment was not easy. At the beginning I felt so trapped and limited for my career. (P3)

P2 indicated coming to the U.S. was the biggest turning point in her life. Initially, she struggled with the adjustment in her career. Two quotations from her reflect the difficulties of the transition:

When I was working in China, things were easy and smooth. After I came here, it was a real test. At the beginning, I had to work in a restaurant. At that time, I sometimes felt resentful and was not very happy.

Moving here was a big change on my career development. I did not even have a job when I first got here...and leaving my parents and friends behind...I got very emotional and complained to my husband why we even moved to the U.S. (P2)

Some other participants, such as P2, P7 and P9, indicated coming to the U.S. turned out to be a good decision because the experience has impacted their career development in a positive manner. They stated, by coming to the U.S., they were able to either further pursue their career passions with the training they received in the U.S. or start a new career path because of their personal choices. For example, P2 stated:

Since I came to the U.S., I found myself changed in different ways. After I came here, I had to compete with American people in order to have a better life, I need to be trained professionally and work as a professional. So I signed up for the dental technician program...I keep pushing myself because I don't want to give up...now things have gotten better and I have a good professional job.

P7 indicated that coming to the U.S. was a positive turning point for her career development. She was able to choose a profession that matched her career interests and receive the training she needed. She stated she is happy with her career decision of becoming an acupuncturist. She said, "I would not have this career change if I did not move here. I would be still working in the accounting office in Taiwan if I did not come here...the accounting job was just a *job*, not a *career*."

P9 also confirmed that her decision of coming to the U.S. has started a new chapter for her career development, and she is proud of her career achievement as a director of Library Services. She said her positive experiences in her current profession further reinforced her belief that it was a good decision to come to the U.S.

The participants agreed that coming to the U.S. was an influential experience in their career development. It appeared that the experience of coming to the U.S. for most

of the participants involved a process of dealing with emotional struggles and career adjustments as parts of their career development.

Marriage and Having Children

Marriage and having children were identified by most of the participants as key events that significantly influenced their professional development and career planning.

Marriage. P1, P3 and P8 indicated their marriages changed their career development and career decisions dramatically.

We got married when I was about to finish my master's degree. My original plan was to go back to China and teach, but my marriage changed everything. I had to move to the U.S. because my husband got a job here. (P1)

I said to myself, finding a husband is more difficult than finding a job and this is the guy I want to spend the rest of my life with. So I quit my job in Taiwan and came here to have a family. I remembered telling myself I can always go for my career dreams later. (P3)

Getting married here is a big turning point for me...my marriage led me relocate to California and started my own teaching business. (P8)

Having children. Nearly half of the participants (P1, P3, P5 and P6) indicated having children and the responsibility of taking care of them has significantly impacted their career development and forced them to make career compromises at different times in their lives. However, none of them seemed to think of it as a *sacrifice* to delay their career planning for their children. P1 and P3 stated that taking care of their small children keeps them very busy and makes it hard for them to juggle between family responsibilities and work demands. Despite this reality, they have come to accept this fact and try to find a way to negotiate a balance between their family and professional lives. An example of this was given by P1:

We did not plan having any kids at the beginning. I just thought I will go straight to my career...but we had our first daughter in Japan and our son was born 9 months ago...I would not say having children disturbs my career, but it is hard to do both all at the same time. That is why I did not try to get a full-time job here. Although my career development is delayed temporarily, it is just a compromise I need to make now. (P1)

P5 and P6 are mothers with school-aged children. When their children were little, they both quit their jobs and stayed home for a while so they could take care of the children. However, they did not regret the decision they made.

After my twins were born, I decided to quit my job to take care of them. I don't have any regrets about my decision. I don't think career is the whole purpose in my life. I think family values are more important. For me, babies are more important than making money. I would not exchange my babies for two million dollars. (P5)

There is only limited time that children would stay little, so I chose to quit my job and stayed home after my daughter was born and spent as much time as I could with her. Because of those 4 years at home, my daughter and I have had a very good relationship. (P6)

The results showed that several participants' career development was either delayed or interrupted as they tried to take care of their families and keep their careers at the same time. However, they did not mind making career compromises for their families and children, and some of them have attempted to find ways to manage family-career conflicts.

Work Experience in the U.S.

Most of the participants agreed that their work experiences in the U.S. have impacted their career development in many ways. Different statements made by the participants indicated the experiences they accumulated from their jobs have enhanced their career development and positively reinforced their confidence as professional women. For example, P2 said:

About my work experience here, I can say it is not a bad experience. I feel pretty proud of myself and of what I have done in my career. I am also getting used to the work culture here and fit in better...My boss recognizes my performance and I don't feel like [I am] under the microscope of everyone's supervision at work anymore.

Several participants (P3, P5, P6, P7 and P9) indicated that their good relationships with work colleagues and the support they received from work definitely help to build a positive work experience, which in turn impacts their job satisfaction level and professional development. P6 said:

All the engineers get along with me. I have a good leadership style. When I am with people at work, I make them feel good...It is important to work in a happy environment.

P9 confirmed that the support from her work place allowed her to perform her job better. She stated:

Due to my cultural background, I used to face challenges about how to help students to search references, but with time and help I received from my colleagues, I overcame the challenges. I guess working in the Psychology Department helps. Most colleagues of mine are very empathetic and culturally aware.

Overall, most of the participants indicated their work experience in the U.S. has influenced their career development in a positive way. It appears that the constructive encounters the participants had at work have served as encouraging reinforcements in their career development.

Factors that Influenced Career Decision-Making Process

This section reports the contextual factors that have influenced the participants' career decision-making and choices. To better understand how different contextual factors have interacted with the participants' career decision-making, they are grouped in

five different spheres: (a) cultural and gender sphere, (b) family sphere, (c) personal sphere, (d) social and environmental sphere, and (e) other influential factors.

Cultural and Gender Factors

Cultural Factors

This segment discusses different factors in the cultural domain and their influences on the participants' career decision-making processes. The variables include the participants' cultural values and their respective acculturation process and ethnic identity development. Personal cultural values play an important role in one's ethnic identity development and acculturation process, and they often interact with individual ethnic identity development and acculturation in impacting one's career decision-making process. Therefore, the findings in this section are presented in the following format because these three factors are interrelated.

Cultural values and career decision-making. All the Chinese American women in this study are first generation immigrants from either China or Taiwan. They were mainly socialized in their home countries and came to the U.S. in their mid to late 20's. The participants indicated their Chinese cultural values have been deeply rooted in their lives, and the principles emphasized in the Chinese cultural value system have impacted their personal and career development in various ways. Most participants stated that no matter how long they had been in the U.S., they still had a strong preference toward Chinese food, music and ways of thinking. For example, P2 stated:

Like my eating habit or clothing, I still like to eat Chinese food and wear clothes I feel comfortable...at work, I listen to Chinese music all the time...my coworkers know that...they think it is interesting and respect my culture.

A strong theme that appeared in the data analysis regarding cultural values and its impact on career decision-making is the thinking of placing the family and children's well-being above personal career needs, which is strongly emphasized in Chinese culture and an inherent family value system. Several participants spoke about how this thinking has affected their career decision-making. In order to attend to family needs and take care of children, P1 and P3 were willing to delay their career planning, and P5 and P6 did not hesitate to take a long break from their career development. The following few quotes confirmed the importance of meeting family and children's needs.

Raising my kids and see them to grow up and develop... and have a family established...that will be enough for me. (P5)

I take my family seriously. My family and children are my priority in my mind...I will choose my family over my career if I need to. (P7)

I like my job now...I can teach piano at home and take care of my family at the same time. (P8)

Ethnic identity and acculturation process. Leong and Chou (1994) indicated that ethnic identity and acculturation are two parallel, but related areas. Therefore, the report in this segment has combined the results regarding the participants' ethnic development and their processes of acculturation. When asked about their ethnic identity development, seven of the nine participants indicated they strongly identify with their Chinese or Taiwanese ethnicity, and it is important for them to preserve their cultural values associated with their ethnicities. For example, P1 stated:

I think I will still call myself a Chinese. Due to my educational background, I know a lot about American cultures so I did not have so much so-called cultural shocks. But I feel like my values and ethics are already shaped before I came here...it is hard to change no matter how long I live here...maybe someday I will become an American citizen, but culturally, I am more Chinese than American.

With the same attitude, P5 stated, “I think I am a pretty traditional Taiwanese. Even after I got my citizenship, I still think I am a Taiwanese. I am very clear where I came from...I always feel like I am a guest here...not being at home.” Another quotation from P8 said, “I still identify myself strongly with Taiwanese and Chinese cultures. I think my identity has been deeply rooted and it is not easy to change.”

In the interviews, P3 and P9 were the two individuals that indicated their ethnic identity has been integrated between Chinese and American cultures. P3 stated:

For me, I know I am a Taiwanese. But now I have my family. My husband is Dutch and Irish so my son is like the mixed between all our cultures...America is a big melting pot...so my identity is more like a combination with multiple levels of identities.

P9 said:

I think my ethnic identity has been integrated. Since I have been here for so long, I don't think my identity is either pure Chinese ethnic identity or American identity...I am proud of my heritage but the culture here has its good part.

Regarding the acculturation issue, all the participants indicated inevitably they have been assimilated with American culture's values and behaviors but have adapted to the mainstream culture to different degrees. The findings indicate that some of the participants are less acculturated than others, depending upon their attitudes toward the mainstream culture, living and work environment, and marriages.

P4, P5, P6 and P7 considered their acculturation as very limited, and they manage their lives mostly based on the traditional values in their own culture.

Although I work in an environment with all Americans, I would say I really don't get into American culture much. (P4)

I work at a management level in my job...but my personality is more toward quiet side...I do have several American friends, but I don't really go into their life style...I like to keep my culture. (P6)

P5 and P7 work with mostly Taiwanese and Chinese or Asians in their professions. Therefore, they indicated their acculturation is limited due to their work environment and less contact through work with Americans born in the U.S.

The findings showed that the participants (P1, P3, and P8) who are more acculturated appeared to have less difficulty adapting to American culture. P1 and P3 are both married to white Americans. They indicated their personal exposures to American culture and their attitude have helped their adaptation to the mainstream culture.

The adaptation process is better than I expected. I think because of my educational training, I know more about American culture...it is a long process...it has become part of my life. (P1)

I am open to any kind of culture. I don't have problems adapting the culture here because I am open-minded to accept what it is and how they are. (P3)

The results further showed that some participants can be highly acculturated yet still maintain a strong ethnic identity. For example, P2, P3 and P9 are individuals with a strong sense of who they are culturally yet have developed an integrative awareness of both the mainstream and the original cultures.

I try to accept their culture and also try to preserve my own culture...with time; I am getting better with the culture here. I try to learn the good parts of the U.S. culture and combine with my own...if you only hang out with Americans, you can never really fit in, but you cannot just hang out with Chinese either. (P2)

I think there are some bad and good parts in either culture...what I like about American culture is the respect of privacy...I also like the history of China, the good traditions and life philosophy...so my identity is integrated between the two cultures. (P9)

Such experiences as these above showed that with time and individual encounters with American culture, several participants have found a balance point in their ethnic identity development. Some have even reached the level of *biculturalism* in their acculturation process.

Ethnic identity, acculturation process and career decision-making. When asked about how acculturation processes have impacted their career development and decision-making, most of the participants indicated their acculturation process has had little influence on their career choices. However, the participants who are more acculturated did point out that their integrative awareness of the two cultures has helped them to build positive relationships with people at work and to deal with work conflicts due to cultural differences.

Regarding the impact of ethnic identity and cultural background on career decision-making, the results showed that the participants' ethnic identities and cultural values have influenced their career development and decision-making process both positively and negatively. Some of the participants viewed being a Chinese American as an advantage in their career development. For example, P1, P5, P7 and P8 indicated their ethnic identity has persuaded them to choose jobs that allow them to use their ethnicity and cultural background as career advantages. Therefore, their cultural background has enhanced their career development and current professions.

The bank job and the job now both used my Taiwanese background...so being a Taiwanese in these two jobs is like a plus...I can help people using my background and my language. (P5)

I believe being a Chinese American sometimes can be an advantage...you have your own advantage because Chinese people typically work hard and they are smart...people know that...so it is our advantage. (P4)

On the other hand, some other participants considered that being a foreign-born Chinese American has discouraged them from choosing certain professions as well as brought some limitations to their career development. P4 and P7 both indicated due to

language issues, they would not choose certain professions, such as being an elementary school teacher or a social worker.

In terms of the limitations on career development, P1 said, “Sometimes when you have too strong a background with a different culture, it may not always help your career...people think you are different.” In P6’s case, although her ethnic identity did not influence her career choices, she indicated that being a Chinese American and her cultural values have limited her career development to some degree. She reported, “I think one barrier comes from...maybe my culture. I am soft-spoken...I don’t like to confront people at work, so sometimes they think I am not aggressive enough.”

P3 and P9’s perspectives provide another example of how ethnicity can limit one’s career development. They both strongly believed that being Chinese American has limited or will hinder the development in their professions due to their cultural background.

In the town I live, people are very conservative...you don’t see many different races in this area...a lot of people are also looking for a job in my field...I just think being a different color of skin in this area is limited for me to find a job I want...in my field, there is a limitation definitely...it is about my ethnicity...hard for me to get a management level job. (P3)

There are some limitations for my future. I think the limitation lies in I was not born and raised here. I don’t totally relate to American culture...if I want to get a position at the level of being a dean...my cultural background will be a factor due to the cultural differences...the gap between my background and the mainstream culture can become a barrier. (P9)

Gender Role Issues

Gender role socialization and beliefs. Four of the participants in this study are from China originally, and the others are from Taiwan. The researcher mentioned in Chapter Two that China and Taiwan share most of the Chinese cultural values yet have

different political systems. The findings showed that due to different societal and political climates in the two countries, women in China were socialized differently from ones in Taiwan regarding their gender role beliefs.

The participants from China (P1, P2, P4 and P9) indicated that after the Cultural Revolution, women in China were taught that men and women should be equal, and women can choose any profession they desire. P1 and P2 both mentioned how Mao, the communist leader during the Cultural Revolution, broke the gender inequality embedded in traditional Chinese culture. A famous saying was quoted by both P1 and P2, “Men and women are equal; women can hold up to half of the sky.” P4 said:

I grew up in a concept that men and women are equal. It is not like women can only choose certain professions. So I believe although there are some physical differences between men and women, professionally, women and men can do the same things.

On the other hand, the five participants from Taiwan were socialized with more traditional Chinese gender role expectations that place a strong emphasis on the concept of how important it is for a woman to be a good mother and wife. Two individuals, P5 and P7, indicated, compared to Taiwanese men, women in Taiwan face more struggles and responsibilities in their personal and professional lives. The following quotes from P5, P7 and P8 show the societal and cultural expectations toward women in Taiwan.

I have a lot of expectations from the family side, from both my extended family and my family now. They still think being a good mother is much more important than anything else. (P5)

I was expected to be a good daughter when I was single. After I got married, I am expected to be a good wife to take care of my family. (P8)

Traditionally women in Chinese culture are expected to focus on taking care of her family. Now with modern changes, most women also have a career, but they are still expected to take care of their family first. (P7)

Although the participants from Taiwan were socialized with more traditional gender role values, some of them indicated that their educational training and ability to work as professionals have led them to believe women are entitled to develop their careers and to be respected for different roles they take in their lives.

After going to England, I realized they don't care if you are a girl or a boy. You are a person. So, I am not in that kind of environment anymore. I told myself, 'so what I am a girl...I can still make my own income and do things I want.' (P3)

I think people in this culture should change their mind...having a job means a lot to me as a career woman...men need to get more involved in sharing family responsibilities. Fathers are also very important in the family. (P5)

The findings demonstrated that most of the participants in this study strongly believed it is important for women to be treated equally in the society and to be allowed freedom of choice in their personal and professional lives.

Impact on career decision-making. The results showed that gender role beliefs held by most of the participants have influenced their career development and decision-making process in different ways. The common theme was that most of the participants did not choose their professions based on traditional gender stereotypes.

For several participants, their contemporary gender role beliefs have had a positive influence on their career development. They indicated the professional training they received and their beliefs of gender equality have helped them to choose a career based on personal interests and professional skills.

Gender does not matter on job choices, especially on jobs that involve with professional skills...I am a career woman, and my husband works, too. So, we should respect each other. (P2)

I don't see any advantage or disadvantage being a woman in my profession. It is all depending on my skills. (P6)

In some cases, participants' gender roles as mothers have influenced them to make different decisions in their career development. P1, P3, P5, and P6 believed that women should be able to make a career decision freely, but they also recognized that as a mother, sometimes they needed to make compromises in their careers. They stated that they would not mind making compromises for their family as long as they are not taken for granted and being *expected* to sacrifice their careers.

My gender role beliefs give me more confidence in my work...I know being a woman, you are totally in the same line with men...most men don't have to stop their careers for raising children...as a mother, I naturally want to do more...to care for my children, I am happy to be a mother, but not want to be taken for granted. (P1)

It is not because I am the mother and the wife, I have to do everything...my husband and I share responsibilities together. I also work although I work part time...as a mother, I want to make myself available for my kids...I guess it is hard for women to have both sometimes...to focus on their career 100% and also taking care of their children. (P3)

In addition to the discussions above, the findings regarding the impact of gender role beliefs on professional women's career development showed that some participants (P1, P2, P3, and P5) have placed their careers as secondary to their husbands' and made major career decisions based on their spouses' career needs or family needs (e.g., relocating to the U.S. due to the husbands' job offers, delaying individual career planning to attend to family responsibilities). It appeared that although most of the participants in this study believed the importance of having a career, traditional gender role socialization in Chinese culture and marital values may still have subtle influences on some of the participants' own expectations of how to play the wife's role in their marriages. Consistent with traditional Chinese culture, and influenced by gender role expectations, these professional women are the ones in their marriages who take the main

responsibility in child rearing and the ones who make career compromises because of spousal and family needs.

Family Factors

Most participants in the study mentioned how their families of origin and current nuclear families have strongly influenced their career development and decision-making. This section presents the findings of family influences from these two domains on the participants' career decision-making.

Influence from the Family of Origin

Parental influence. Six participants in this study indicated their parents did not directly influence their career choices. These participants believed their parents influenced their career development in the sense that they did not *dictate* what career fields they need to choose. With parental support and the opportunities involved with receiving high quality education, they were able to choose a profession based on their personal interests and expertise. These six individuals also stated that although their parents did not impact their career choices directly, the way their parents raised them and the advice they received from the parents have helped to shape their career values and develop a good work attitude.

My mother never tells me what to do...they just let me do whatever I wanted...I cannot say I did not get any influence from them, but they did not say what jobs I can or can't choose. (P1)

My parents basically said I can do whatever I want to do...but the disciplines from my parents really impacted me a lot and helped me to become a good worker...the advice I got from my parents also helped me to do my job well. (P2)

Some other participants indicated that their parents' career choices sparked their interests in certain professions as well as impacted their career decisions in their professional development. They either followed the same career path as their parents and/or worked in similar fields.

My family has a teaching history. My grandmother is a teacher and my mother is a college professor...so it is just natural for me to choose teaching as my profession. (P1)

I chose this job because of my family influence. My father is a doctor in Oriental Medicine and he owned a clinic...so I have been interested in herbal medicine...then I decided to give myself a chance to follow my passion. (P7)

Three participants in this study, P3, P5 and P8, said that their parents had a direct influence on their career development. The parents expected them to either choose certain professions based on prestige factors or ones that followed parental career guidance.

My mother encourages me to enjoy what we are good at. But my parents used to expect one of us [three children] to follow in my father's footsteps and become a doctor. But none of us did that. (P3)

My family has a strong input in what I should do. Even the job I had in Taiwan was introduced by my mother's friend. I am very traditional...like to obey my parents...back then I did not know what I want to pick, so I just follow their expectations. (P5)

Other family members. Only two participants (P1 and P2) mentioned the influence from other extended family members in their career decision-making process. P1 addressed that there is a history of teaching in the family. She indicated her career choice was strongly influenced by her mother and grandmother who were both teachers. Therefore, it seems very natural for her to choose teaching as her profession. P2 gave another example of this:

I think it has a lot to do with my family. I was surrounded by a lot of family members who have great career achievement and good career confidence. With

their examples, I will be ashamed if I don't hold the same standards to myself and go higher in my career.

Social economic status. Five of the participants indicated the social economic status (SES) of their families of origin have impacted their career decision-making to some degree. P1, P2 and P4 said although there was no class difference in China due to the political system, their parents and the parents of their friends mostly had professional jobs, which were considered a better lifestyle in the society. Therefore, individual family's social circles and the SES of the family somehow influenced their career decisions; this is reflected in statements made by P2 and P4:

There were no differences in classes...but for jobs, people still prefer white-collar jobs...my parents and other family members all have a good job. (P2)

The friends I hung out with all have similar backgrounds with me so I think class does have an impact on my career. (P4)

P3 and P5 categorized their family in the upper middle class, which had an impact on their career development and choices.

Social economic class surely impacts a lot. My dad is a doctor...due to the family background, my parents encouraged me to pursue a better career that I can use my brain. (P3)

I would not come to the U.S. if my family cannot afford my study here. So of course, the social economic status of my family has an influence on my career development. (P5)

Influence from the Current Nuclear Family

All the participants, except P4 who is single, indicated their current families have exerted a much more powerful impact, compared to the influence of their extended families, on their career development and decision-making processes.

Child-rearing and career decision-making. Most of the participants expressed that taking care of children and their children's well being are the main factors that have impacted their career decisions. As mentioned above, some of them (P1 and P3) made career compromises to take care of small children; the others (P4 and P6) chose to stay home for a while when their children were little. P1 and P3 both said they chose to work part-time because of the need to take care of their children, and having a part-time job gives them more time flexibility to manage their family responsibilities and their careers.

I need to focus on my family now. Working in the retail business is a way that I can socialize with people and make some extra money...compromising the best way to describe my career development now. I am compromising my career life for my family and children, but eventually I will still come back to do what I want. (P3)

P5 took few years off from her career to stay home with her twins. She said:

I think family is very important, so I decided to stay home and take care of my babies...now even I am working full time, they are still my number one concern...I worried about them even at work.

P2's case was another good example of how children can influence professional women's career planning and decisions. She said:

My daughter is in dental school now...part of my future career planning is based on her career decision. If she owns a clinic in the future and needs my help, I will go work for her and help her in her clinic.

Providing financial support. Several participants (P6, P7, P8 and P9) expressed the need to work so they can help their family financially and support their children. P7 and P8 indicated that having a career is not only a way to establish themselves professionally, but also a means to help their family financially. P8 said, "I like teaching piano at home...I enjoy teaching and watching my students play...my job also helps my family financially."

P6 and P9 are both single parents. They indicated their careers have given them financial stability to support their children. P6 said, “As a single parent and a career woman, I have a lot of responsibilities and different bills to pay. My job gives me a financial security and supports my daughter.”

Personal Factors

This segment discusses how different personal factors have impacted the participants’ career development and decision-making. This section includes factors such as personal learning experiences at school, career self-efficacy and job satisfaction, career interests, and expectations for self and personal needs.

Learning Experiences from Educational Training

When asked about the impact of personal learning experiences at school on career decision-making, most of the participants indicated their positive learning experiences had significantly impacted their career development and decisions, and their educational training had prepared them with the skills they needed. For example, P1 and P6 both performed well academically, which reinforced their career confidence and led them to believe they could excel in their chosen majors and career fields. P6 stated, “My good grades in math from middle school reinforced my confidence. That is why I chose my major in Applied Math. I know I am good with numbers.”

The findings also showed that some participants’ positive learning encounters at school have resulted in a positive impact on their career development and decision-making. P7 and P8 confirmed that their positive school experiences in the U.S. helped

them to choose an appropriate job and establish a better career. P7's experience also reflects the notion addressed above:

The academy I went to offers training bilingually so students can take classes based on their language background. I chose the Chinese track and even took the license exam in Chinese. The whole experience helps my career here...it minimizes the language challenge and allows me to get on with my career life.

When describing their learning experiences in different training programs, several participants agreed that the good relationships with their professors and peers have made their career journey much more enjoyable and influenced their career decisions in some way. The following two quotes provide examples of this:

The professor I met in the dental technician training program was very helpful. He gave me a lot of support and even introduced me to a job and gave me good recommendations. (P2)

The classmates I met in the academy really helped me. We studied together and helped each other. I got a lot of help from them while at school. (P7)

Career Self-efficacy & Job Satisfaction

Sources of career self-efficacy. In the interviews, the participants were asked how they have formed confidence in their professions. Most of the participants indicated they gained their confidence through their successful performances at school and work and the positive learning experiences in their professions. Some of the participants also stated their career self-efficacy was reinforced not only by their career achievements but also from the positive feedback they received from their supervisors, students and patients. Therefore, the sources of the participants' career self-efficacy have included performance achievements, learning experiences accumulated over time, and positive verbal encouragements.

These next few quotes from different participants serve as examples of these phenomena:

Each time, when I finish my work project well, I build up my confidence more. My confidence comes from the successful completion of each project. (P4)

At the beginning, I felt really nervous about my job. But with time, I built up different experiences. I see it is a learning process...the more you know the more confidence you have. (P6)

Initially, I try to develop my confidence through my internship. After that, I practiced a lot on my daughter and the people in my temple. They all provided good feedback to me and helped me to refine my skills. (P7)

Two participants had a positive attitude toward the challenges they have faced at work. They viewed facing career challenges and solving problems as ways to build up their career self-efficacy and to promote professional growth. For example, P9 said:

I like my job because it is very exciting and challenging. People come to me with different problems each day. I feel I learn something each time I come up with ideas and solve their problems and that is how I become confident about my job.

Career self-efficacy, job satisfaction and career development. Most participants agreed that being confident in their careers has helped them to perform better professionally, which has led to a sense of achievement and self-value. With the experiences they accumulated at work and their confidence toward their jobs, they have become happier professionals and feel more motivated to pursue better performances in their professions. Most of the participants also agreed that career self-efficacy had helped to increase the level of self-worth and enhanced job satisfaction toward the professions they chose.

My good experiences with people I have served help me to identify myself in my profession...their feedback made me feel good and valuable in my job...when I feel good about myself, I will do more...it is a good reinforcement for my career development. (P5)

I think the experiences I learn in my professions are the key to my successful career. It gives me confidence and makes me want to learn more and achieve more in my career. (P6)

Career Interests

When asked about the impact of personal career interests on career choices, most of the participants indicated their career interests have played an important role in choosing their professions. They also expressed that their career values and interests have helped them to develop their professional identity and to make career choices that match their ability and professional passions. For example, P1 said:

It was my decision to change my major to Humanities and I always know I want to teach. I guess I am old enough to know who I am and what I want. So, I have passed the stage of being influenced by others.

P2 and P7 both changed their career fields after coming to the U.S. They indicated that coming to the U.S. allowed them more freedom to think about what they really wanted in their career development; therefore, they managed to obtain professional training and made career choices based upon their personal interests and career dreams.

P2 stated:

After giving some thoughts about job changing, I thought about my dream when I was young. I wanted to be a dentist. But it will take too much time for me to become a dentist here, so I decided to work as a dental technician...I always think when it comes to career choices, you need to choose a job that matches your interest and ability...so for me, I think I can be a dental technician, so I just keep going till I reach my goals.

One interesting finding in this segment was about P4's career choice to be a chemist. She indicated she chose her profession based on her interests in natural science as well as her personality. She said:

I can say it is my personal interest to be a chemist, but it is also about my personality. I don't like to deal with people that much...my job allows me to deal with machines only...I like to deal with machines more than people. (P4)

Expectations for Self and Personal Needs

When asked about how individual expectations for self and personal needs have impacted their career development and choices, some of the participants said they chose to work in certain professions because they expected themselves to become a professional woman and to have a *career*. Others indicated they chose their professions because of different personal needs, such as individuals' psychological needs (e.g., personal happiness, and having a sense of fulfillment), the need to support the family financially, and a personal wish to maintain financial independence. Therefore, the findings showed that high expectations for self and a need to feel fulfilled and useful have influenced the different participants' career decision-making and choices. Some quotes from the participants serve as examples of these findings:

After I came here, I realized I have to compete with Americans. Therefore, I told myself I need to have professional training to get a decent job. I cannot imagine being a housewife at home and not doing anything for my career. I have been a career woman for a long time. So, I went ahead and got my training and became a dental lab technician. (P2)

After my kids go to school, I went back to work. I think I should do something to maintain my own financial level. Having a job also helps me to fulfill my career life. I want to come out from my house and have contacts with adults, the real world. After I started working, I become a lot happier, and my happiness also influenced my family and my personal lives. (P5)

My job gives me a sense of professionalism and also provides stable and good income for my family...I feel like I cannot depend on anyone. Without my job, my life will be affected seriously. (P6)

I love my job. It has a lot of advantages being a career woman. First, I can have my own career and get a sense of confidence and achievement. Second, I can help with my family financially and provide some support. (P8)

Overall, the participants believed having a career is important as a professional woman. The findings identified a significant message shared by the participants, which is that having a career and choosing a suitable profession not only satisfies their expectations about themselves, but also fulfills their psychological and financial needs.

Social and Environmental Factors

This section of the findings addresses social and environmental factors that have influenced participants' career development and decision-making. The segment is outlined in two categories to discuss the impact exerted by the social and environmental factors on career decision-making. One is the influence of immigration policies and the participants' legal status, and the other is the influence of the geographic location where the participant currently resides.

Immigration Policies and Legal Status

Regarding their legal status in the U.S., four of the participants have become American citizens, and another four are permanent residents with green cards. P4 is the only individual with a working visa, which places her in the legal alien category. When asked about how legal status has impacted their career development and decision-making, the participants had different experiences. Some of them indicated their legal status with permanent residence or citizenship has helped them as a foreign-born professional woman to establish their careers more easily in the U.S. P1, P3 and P8 are married to American citizens so they quickly secured their green cards with a family-based application, which allowed them to start their careers immediately after their graduation

or moving to the U.S. This also reveals a subtle influence of gender, in that the immigration status of these women was tied directly to their male spouses.

Two participants (P5 and P6) indicated they did not have trouble in securing their current jobs due to their present legal status; however, in the past, the issue of legal status had a strong impact on their professional development and career choices. P5 described, “When I just came to the U.S., I am a wife of an international student. My status did not allow me to work.... Job openings for students were very limited...I cannot really work.” P6 stated her initial immigration status completely changed her career path and led her to a different career field. Her experiences are detailed in the next quotations:

After I got my master’s degree here, I got a job as a math teacher...I always wanted to teach so I took the job. But I can’t continue my work because the immigration office would not grant me a work document. Afterwards, I was offered with my first job as a software engineer so I quit my Ph.D. study. The company supported me to get my green card. After getting my green card, it is a lot easier to find better jobs because I have a long-term status.

So, because of the immigration status back then, I can’t keep my teaching job. That is why I ended up with my job in soft engineering field. With the company’s support to get a green card, my profession chose me. Therefore, my immigration status totally changed my career development.

Immigration status has exerted a negative impact on P4’s career development. P4 said her current legal status (again, the only participant with only a working visa) has limited her career choices and her flexibility of changing to another job. P4’s application for permanent residence is based on her current employment; therefore, she worries a lot about her legal status and often becomes frustrated and feels powerless with the restrictions resulting from immigration policy. P4 stated:

My immigration status is a limitation for my career. The reality is my legal status is like a negative factor. Sometimes I want to search for new jobs, but a lot of companies do not want to get involved with immigration status change so they

will not hire someone with a working visa. They would say this position is for permanent residents or citizens only.

I worry sometimes about what if my company lets me go, and then my green card case will be jeopardized.

It is a long waiting process; very frustrating...So far, I am not very positive. The immigration policy is getting tougher on getting a green card and working in the U.S. In here, if you don't have PR [permanent residence status] or citizenship, it is hard to change jobs and get a dream job you want...it is a big limitation on my career development. (P4)

Influence of Geographic Location

In terms of the geographic locations where the participants reside, three of them live in smaller towns located in the Upper Midwest, and the others live in three different large metropolitan areas in the Upper Midwest, South, and on the West Coast. When asked about the impact of geographic locations on their career development and decision-making, the participants had mixed views. One group of the participants indicated the geographic location had no influence on their career choices. The other group believed the geographic location has impacted their career development and decision-making in different ways.

No influence. P1 and P2, who reside in smaller Midwestern towns, indicated their residing geographic locations makes no difference on what professions they chose. P1 said, "I don't think my living location affects my career choice of teaching. No matter where I live, I will be teaching." P2 stated, "I don't think where I live impacts my career choice...it is more about my ability. I think as long as you have the professional skill and determination, you can find a job wherever you go.

A strong impact. Seven other participants believed living in a large metropolitan area is or will be an advantage for their career development. P4, P5, P6 and P9 all

indicated that living in a big city has provided more career options for them and allowed them more career opportunities where they can utilize either their ethnic background or their professional skills in the professions they chose. They are convinced that urban areas tend to provide more career opportunities for most Chinese American professional women due to greater ethnic diversity in large cities.

Two participants, P7 and P8, expressed that their geographic locations have helped their current professions and career development.

I live in a large metropolitan area on the West Coast, a place full of ethnic diversity. The living location definitely is a big factor for my profession. I think my career is established better because of where I live...I need a place where has more Asians because they believe in Oriental Medicine more. (P7)

The location of my neighborhood [in a large metropolitan area on the West Coast] is good. A lot of upper middle class families around, including new Chinese immigrant families. That helps me to recruit students...many families here are well off enough to send their children for piano lessons. (P8)

P3 lives in a small town located in the Upper Midwestern region. She indicated that the geographic location where she lives has limited her career options, and she has a strong desire to relocate to a larger city so she can have more career options and better establish her career. She stated:

In this area, it is very limited for me. You don't see a lot of cultural diversity in this town and it is hard for me to reach out to different jobs in this town. If I live in a metropolitan city, there will be more opportunities for me...like out in the west or east coast where it has more Asian people and more international activities going on. Then I have more advantages to get a job I really want...compared to the small town here.

Other Influential Factors

This segment discusses the impact of other influential factors in the participants' life on their career aspiration, development and decision-making processes. The segment

includes the following factors: mentors (e.g., teachers, professors, and other role models), work role models, and friends and peers.

Mentors

Five participants indicated that teachers and professors in their past educational training had played an important part in their career development and shaping their career aspirations. For example, P4 said:

I did have a role model when I was in China...he is a faculty member and doing research. He is also a well-known scientist in China and he gave me some guidance. He showed me how he succeeds in his profession. So he is like a positive example for me.

P9 recalled one teacher she met in middle school had influenced her way of teaching. She reported:

He [the teacher] is like my role model and mentor...setting an example for me. His way of teaching influenced my teaching later on and affected my way of interacting with my students.

Besides teachers and professors, some individuals, especially examples of successful female professionals, were identified by several participants as role models that exerted a notable influence on their career development. P1 and P5 expressed that the biographies of different professional women had a strong impact on their career decisions and work philosophy. For example, P1 quoted, "I really like Madam Marie Curie. She is a scientist and her story really influenced mine a lot. I learned from her that a woman can do a lot. Her spirit impacted me in many ways."

One participant, P2, stated that the examples of successful professionals she saw in the Chinese community where she lives have motivated her to continue pursuing a thriving career. She said, "After moving here, I saw a lot of people from the Chinese

families have achieved greatly in their careers. They are like good examples that remind me to keep going and perform better in my career.”

Work Role Models

The participants were asked about if there are individuals from their respective work settings that they view as their role models, and how these workplace role models have impacted their career decision-making. Only one participant (P6) mentioned her previous supervisor from her first job as her work role model, who was a mentor for her and had helped her in different employment opportunities. P6 said:

My boss at my first job mentored me a lot. When I met him, he was also a professor teaching at night. So I went to his classes to get more training. He helped me settle into my first job and I have learned a lot from him as an engineer. After I left my first job, he even called me and introduced another job to me. We have been good friends even till now.

Friends or Peers

Chinese culture places a strong emphasis on personal connections and group networking in individuals’ personal and professional lives. The findings showed that friends and peers have influenced some participants’ career development and decision-making positively. P5 and P7 were great examples of how friends can bring encouraging influences to professional women’s career development and introduce them to different career opportunities. A quote from P5 provides an illustration of this:

I believe friends are important in my career. A lot of times, my jobs chose me because when the openings come up, my friends introduced me to those jobs or give me the job offer. If I don’t have those friends, I will not have all these jobs. All my ex-bosses were nice to me and gave me good references for other jobs. They are like my resources in my career development.”

Career Challenges and Management of the Challenges

Career Challenges

In the interviews, the participants were asked to identify the challenges they have encountered in their career development. Several issues regarding career challenges emerged in the data analysis. They include language issues, the challenge of playing multiple roles, challenges due to the nature of the professions and work demands, limited opportunities for career advancement, inadequate support resources and lack of help, and discrimination issues. A more detailed description of each issue is presented as follows.

First-Generation Immigrants and Language Issues

In identifying the career challenges in their career development, six of the participants indicated that language was a main concern in the early stage of their career development. Only three individuals (P1, P3 and P6) said language had not been a challenge in their career development overall.

Most of the participants' responses showed that although they have overcome the language barrier with time and practice, as first-generation immigrants, vocabulary usage and comprehending expressions related to cultural references are still and will remain somewhat of a challenge in their personal and professional lives. A few examples shared by the participants confirmed their views regarding the challenge of language issues.

I remembered my interview in an Art museum. At that time, language was a barrier for me. When I was presenting my work, the interviewers kind of doubted if that was really my work because my oral presentation was so poor. (P5)

I was a little bit naïve at that time. I thought if I chose a skill-based job and I don't have to deal with the difficult language. But working as a dental technician, I still need to understand the professional terms in my field. (P2)

Three participants, P2, P4 and P7, indicated they have less career options because of language issues.

Sometime I thought of getting some training in the elementary education because I like school-aged kids. But studying in English is hard for me. Every time I think of this, I gave up my idea. Unlike me, my daughter has more career options. (P7)

My English was not so good when I just came here. I have limited ability to communicate. Now I am getting better and language is not an issue for my current job. However, I would not think of being an English teacher or something because language will be an issue in that kind of job. (P4)

P9 expressed language usage will remain an issue for her even though she has been living in the U.S. for 16 years. She stated:

I was not born and raised here. Sometimes I feel like no matter how long I have lived here, language will be always an issue. I have no problem communicating in English. But a lot times, my coworkers use words or say jokes related to the cultural references. Then I cannot catch up with them.

Challenges from Negotiating among Multiple Roles

The findings showed that playing multiple roles has created both challenges and benefits in the participants' career development. This segment focuses on the challenges identified by the participants regarding the multiple roles they have played in their personal and professional lives. The benefits of playing multiple roles are discussed in a later section where the participants related their overall experience of being a professional woman in the U.S. workforce.

The findings showed that the common roles played by the participants include daughters, mothers, wives, and career women. Other roles include being a student, a single parent, and a supervisor at work. As they were asked about what challenges playing multiple roles brought to their career development, two themes emerged. One

involved struggles from role changes associated with life cycle changes, and the other issue was a lack of time to fulfill one's multiple roles. Each is described next.

Struggles from the role changes. Some of the participants indicated the role changes due to transitions to different life-cycle stages have sometimes created career detours in their professional development and brought emotional struggles to their lives. P1 and P3 said it was hard for them emotionally to adjust to the role changes from a full-time career woman to a mother with small children and a part-time job. P1 stated:

I did not expect having children. I thought I would just go straight to work and development my career. But, now I need to take care of my children and I only work part-time. At first, I felt so dependent on my husband. I am so used to the self-image of being an independent person. It was a big transition for me, struggling from working full-time to part-time.”

P3 said, “At the beginning, I struggled so much. It took me a while to adjust to the fact that I am married with small children...I told myself I need to switch my focus from my career to my family...it was not easy.”

Not enough time to do everything. With different roles the participants have played in their lives, most of them indicated they are very busy with different duties they needed to fulfill as a mother, a wife and a professional woman, which often creates family-career conflicts in their career development. The findings showed that the participants who are single parents or mothers with small children suffered the most from not having enough time to do everything they need to do, which made it difficult for them emotionally and physically, as they tried to keep a family and develop their careers at the same time. For example, as a single parent, a doctoral student, a full-time professional woman, and a supervisor, P9 is always busy fulfilling different responsibilities at home and work. She reported:

It is not easy to be a single parent and have a career as well. I have to pretty much handle everything in my life. There is no spouse to rely on. So sometimes I feel so burned out and tired...I think being a single parent and a professional woman at the same time can be a career barrier sometimes. (P9)

P8 also gave an example by saying:

I am usually very busy around late afternoons and evenings, so I don't have much time to spend with my husband. I also teach during the weekends...so I feel sorry for my family.

Challenges due to the Nature of the Professions and Work Demands

Several participants mentioned that the career challenges they have encountered are related to the nature of their professions and the demands from work. For example, both P2's and P4's jobs involved technical skills and laboratory devices. They indicated their career challenges come from difficult job tasks or work projects in their professions.

Statements made by P2, P8 and P9 described some of the career challenges in their professions. P2 stated:

My career challenge lies in the difficulty of making prosthetics for different patients. The tasks are very complicated. It is not easy for me at the beginning. When I just started this job, I feel a lot of challenges.

P8 said the career challenges she has faced are related to her profession and the risks she needs to take for running a piano studio on her own. She said:

I love teaching piano but sometimes I have to deal with students with low motivation and issues of running my own business. I also need to keep recruiting students and try to maintain the enrollment...sometimes it can be hard.

P9 works as a library director and has a lot of work demands she needs to keep up with. Her words speak to the challenges she has faced at work:

The challenge is that I handle too many administrative tasks and I have a lot of responsibilities...sometimes I don't have time to get involved with what I want to do as a professional librarian.

Limited Opportunities for Career Advancement

A majority of the participants indicated that one of the career challenges they have faced is the limited chance of getting promoted in their professions. The findings showed that there were two reasons for this limitation regarding job promotions or career advancement: inadequate opportunities due to the company's system, and barriers related to the participants' cultural backgrounds.

Lack of opportunities in the company. P2 and P4 indicated the companies they work for are simply too small to provide any advancement opportunities for their careers. P5 indicated, "The biggest challenge is from the organization I work for. It is a government agency. It has a lot of rules and dynamics here. So the promotion chance is not very good for me in the future, maybe no promotion I should say."

Barriers related to Cultural Backgrounds. Some other participants, such as P3, P6 and P9, believed their chance of getting promoted or advancing in their careers was limited because their ethnic backgrounds or cultural values may get in the way of their career progression.

I guess one of my barriers is me not wanting to confront people directly...they think I am not aggressive or assertive enough. Otherwise, I may be a manager or a director by now. (P6)

I think if I want to advance myself in my career and become a dean in the future, my cultural background may become a barrier...there is a gap between my culture and the mainstream culture. (P9)

Inadequate Support Resources and Lack of Help

The findings showed that lack of support resources and not getting enough help are career challenges for most of the participants in this study. An important theme emerging from the data-analysis was that several participants' complaints of not having

enough time and energy to focus on their career development was due to inadequate help in fulfilling child-rearing responsibilities. Most of the participants' extended family members and in-laws live far away in the participants' home countries. Although a few of the participants are married to American citizens and have in-laws in the U.S., they do not live near where their in-laws reside. Therefore, unlike most career women in China or Taiwan, these women cannot utilize their extended family members or in-laws as resources in their personal and career lives due to the challenge of the geographical distance.

Some of the participants (P1, P3, and P5) clearly indicated that they wished they could receive extra help from other resources to take care of their children so they could focus more on their career development. P1 and P3 have in-laws in the U.S., and they expressed that their in-laws would love to help them with child care, but cannot help much due to geographical separation.

If I were in China, perhaps I will have more time and chances to do my research and teach full-time. The living condition there is different. It is easier to raise kids and work at the same time because I can ask my parents to help me. (P1)

I perhaps will have a better career development if I work in Taiwan. My parents will be happy to look after my kids while I work...or my in-laws can help as well. Like my friends in Taiwan, they got a lot of help from their parents and in-laws as far as child rearing goes. So a lot of career women are more carefree and they can go to work and focus on careers. (P3)

In addition, two participants indicated that lack of help from work is a challenge in their career development. For example, P9 said:

I have too many job tasks that trivialize my passion as a librarian. Sometimes I do not feel very satisfied with my work situation. I need more actual help...maybe they can hire two more people to share my administrative responsibilities.

Discrimination Issues

A majority of the participants did not report racial or gender discrimination as an overt career challenge in their professional development. They did not recall any experiences of being explicitly discriminated against as a Chinese American or a woman in their professions.

P2 was the only individual that gave an example of how she felt discriminated against as a woman at work when she started her current job. She stated:

Although things have gotten better, I still remembered that when I just started this job, my boss was not very nice to me. He always repeated himself over and over again about what he wanted me to do. I was very annoyed. I thought it was because I am a foreigner. But later on, I found that he treated all the female workers that way...it is like a gender thing...I felt bad about the way he treated women.

Most of the participants (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P9) when asked directly, denied having experienced explicit racial or cultural discrimination, and thus concluded that discrimination issues were not a challenge in their professional development. The findings overall, though, suggest that subtle forms of racial or cultural discrimination remained in their experience as professional women in the U.S. workforce, which serve as career limitations or disadvantages in these women's career development. With the findings presented in the study, the sources of implicit racial or cultural discriminations in the participants' career development include their background as immigrants, their ethnic and cultural background as Chinese Americans, language issues, and limited understanding about cultural customs and references. Some of these subtle forms of racial or cultural discrimination were manifested by the study participants, and they described how such discrimination has disadvantaged or hindered their career development.

I remembered when I started teaching in this university, I went to an Internet teaching class for faculty members. The instructor would not answer any of my questions or give me any attention. I don't know if she just does not like me or because I am different from others...it was not a very pleasant experience. (P1)

Sometimes I thought about taking classes in elementary school education because I am interested in school-aged children and would love to work with them...but every time I think of the language issue, I give up the idea of taking classes. It is too hard to study education in English. (P7)

A lot of companies in the U.S. now only hire people with green cards or citizenships because they don't want to sponsor immigrants to adjust their status... my status is the biggest career limitation. I cannot change to a new job easily because of my legal status. (P4)

I think the career limitation is that I was not born and raised here. I don't totally relate to American cultures...if I want to get a position at the level of being a dean, my cultural background will be a limitation due to the cultural differences between my culture and American cultures. (P9)

Management of Career Challenges

This section of the chapter discusses how the participants have managed the challenges they have encountered in their career development. The participants' attitudes toward career challenges in general and the strategies they have used to cope with different issues are presented as follows.

Coping Attitudes

After identifying career challenges, the participants were asked to talk about their attitudes regarding how to cope with the challenges in their career development. Based on the responses from the participants, five types of attitudes emerged from the data analysis:

1. Recognize the challenges and accept the realities.
2. Think positively and be optimistic.

3. Be open to new ideas.
4. Be persistent.
5. Recognize I am not alone.

Recognize the challenges and accept the realities. The findings showed that the career challenges faced by the participants often create stress and trigger negative feelings in their personal and professional lives. Most participants indicated that when the difficult situations took place in their career development, their initial reactions were not constructive. Some of them felt frustrated, resentful, or sad. Others felt overwhelmed, tired and lonely. However, most of the participants were able to step back and think about the challenges they faced. Therefore, they began to recognize the problems (e.g., language issues, juggling between different roles, difficult work tasks) and accept the inherent realities.

Nothing can change how I look. You can't change how people think about you. If you let that bother you, then you cannot live in the area where 90% of people don't look like you. The surroundings are telling me this is the reality. So my attitude is 'You don't want to think what you don't have, but to think what you have.' I started to think realistically because I don't want to stay miserable. (P3)

I try to face the challenges and recognize the reality. I cannot change who I am. I just have to face the reality and deal with the problems day by day. (P9)

I know my job is complicated. The reality is like this...so I face the problem till I solve them. That is how I learn different experiences and stay strong. (P2)

Think positively and be optimistic. Several participants said, in addition to recognizing the challenges, they also developed an optimistic attitude and tried to think positively. By staying positive, they became happier and more motivated to deal with the challenges. Some positive thoughts identified by the participants included the following:
(a) Things will be better with time, (b) It is okay to make career compromises, (c) I can

challenge myself with these problems and learn from them, (d) There are always other career opportunities, and (e) I need to look at the bright side and make some adjustments

I know language is an issue for me. But I think as long as I finish my training and get a job, I can learn the experiences from my job and get familiarized with all the terms through repetitions. (P2)

I just keep thinking about my married life and how wonderful my family is...I started to shift my focus to the family. I told myself I am *here* now...I can always go back to work and start my career path in the future. (P3)

The most important thing is being optimistic. In my mind, I always think if I quit this job, I can get another one. I believe in myself that I can do different jobs. (P5)

Be open to new ideas. Some of the participants said one attitude that has helped them to deal with career challenges and the struggles from living and working in another culture is to be open to the new ideas and learn to know American culture, including the different customs and the work culture.

When I just came here, I tried to do things in Chinese way. But I realized I work with Americans everyday. So I try to learn the good parts of American culture as well as preserve my own culture. (P2)

I am open-minded to accept what it is and how they are...I know I am a foreigner no matter where I go in the U.S. So I try not to act like I am a foreigner...I also socialize with Americans and finally I blend in. (P3)

Be persistent. Another attitude shared by some of the participants is to be persistent. Despite all the career challenges, they strive to embrace their career choices and try their best to hang in there. Two participants, P3 and P6, indicated they need to focus on the *here and now* so they can keep moving forward. They do not want to think about the past and dwell on “*what ifs*”.

I don't want to give up. I don't want to be eliminated from the job market or fall behind. I believe if other people can do it, so do I. So I just keep trying. If you can be persistent in your careers, the success will be yours...so finally I found a way out and develop a career. (P2)

I think everyone can be trained as a professional. It is up to you if want to do that. If you give up, you will not get it. In my job, I try to complete every project. Each time I finish a project, I learn something...I just keep going. (P4)

Recognize I am not alone. Several participants indicated that it is important to keep reminding themselves that they are not alone and do not have to be alone in their career journey. Most of them are grateful for the support and help they have received from their extended family members, husbands, friends, and co-workers, which make their professional development much more pleasant. Some of them said they often ask for support from their husbands, friends and colleagues, and they are not afraid to reach out for help.

I have a good family. My husband shares a lot of responsibilities with me. I also pick up house chores because I want to do so. I am a career woman and my husband works too. So we respect each other. I don't want to be taken for granted. (P2)

The family support from Taiwan and from my current family is important. If I did not have a strong family tie, I perhaps would fall apart in the first year I got here. I think with time and support, things have got better. (P3)

I guess the challenge was overcome with time and help I got from the faculty members and my colleagues. I have gained a lot of help from them, which made my job a lot easier. (P9)

Coping Strategies

Based on the responses from the participants, several strategies were identified as ways to deal with the challenges in their career development. They include: (a) thinking of solutions for the problems, (b) setting boundaries and separating roles, (c) using positive self-talk, (d) relying on self-confidence and keep improving, (e) recognizing the importance of a support system, and (f) asking for help. The strategies are presented below with a detailed description.

Think of solutions for the problems. Several participants stated they cannot make career challenges disappear so the only way is to find solutions for different problems, such as planning ahead, using time efficiently, and being creative. For example, P1 and P3 indicated that since they need to take care of their children and also would like to maintain their careers, they have to make plans ahead and come up with reasonable scheduling for their families and her careers. P1 said:

I try to plan ahead. In the morning, I am a stay-home mother and during the evening, I go out and teach. I have to use my time well...sometimes I don't get much sleep but I can't imagine not working at all.

Set boundaries and separating roles. Some of the participants confirmed that setting boundaries between their personal and professional lives has served as an advantage to help them deal with career challenges in their career development. For example, P6 said,

In all my jobs, I never let my family life affect my work, even during the worst time in my personal life. That is how I try to do my job well. I try to separate things at work from things at family. That is how I keep myself going as a career woman.

P7 stated:

My attitude is to try my best. When I work, I try to be devoted. When I am home, I try to focus on family matters. That is how I deal with different things from my personal and profession lives. I need to set the boundaries.

Use positive self-talk. Some of the participants indicated they have utilized positive self-talk to help them stay cheerful and to deal with career challenges.

I just told my self it is better to live here than in my own country. I try to tell myself *it is ok* for me to face more challenges because I am a foreigner. If I meet difficulties at work, I also told myself the same thing. That is how I stay positive and keep going. (P1)

I keep telling myself if my students and their parents don't follow the rules...like the students do not practice enough, then *that is not my fault* if they cannot make

progress. I don't have to be responsible for something I cannot control...I have done my duties. (P8)

Rely on self-confidence and keep improving. Another strategy used by some of the participants is to rely on personal confidence and keep improving themselves at work through extra training and trying new ideas. A few quotes showed how these participants managed the career challenges with a strong confidence and a great determination to constantly improve themselves as professional women.

When I ran into problems, I have the confidence that I can solve the problems. So I just keep on trying different ideas 'til finally I broke the barrier and made it. I like to challenge myself at work. That is how I improve myself and keep going higher. (P2)

It is about learning something new everyday and to create something new everyday. In my job, I learn new things with each project. I like challenges...I would say that is the interesting part about my job. (P6)

I think training is very important. That is why I never stop getting more training for myself. That is how I improve myself. Each time something happens at work, I believe my training skills can solve the problem. (P4)

Recognize the importance of a support system. The findings showed that support systems in the participants' lives have served an important role in their coping with career challenges. Most of the participants have relied on the support from different individuals in their support system (e.g., extended family members, spouses, friends, and colleagues) to deal with difficulties, to fulfill duties from the different roles in their lives, and to advance their careers.

Several participants (P1, P2, P3, P5 and P9) acknowledged their extended family members for their emotional support and identified their spouses as persons who give them the most help personally and professionally. P3 said, "Support from my spouse is

very important. I am lucky because my husband is very helpful. We share responsibilities together. He helps with the kids when I work.”

In some cases, friends have played an encouraging role in difficult times. P5, P7, and P9 indicated the emotional support from their friends have helped them to deal with hardships and career challenges. P7 said:

If I face problems, I just try to talk with my friends. I remembered one time I was going to give up my training in the Academy because I was frustrated with my study. My friends kept encouraging me and told me not to give up.

Two participants, P6 and P9, indicated the support from their colleagues has meant a great deal for them and helped them perform their careers more easily. P9 stated:

I got a lot of help from the faculty members and my colleagues. I think it is because I work in the Psychology Department. People are more empathetic and culturally aware of how to communicate with a person with a different cultural background. They have helped me along the way in my career.

Always ask for help. Several participants shared that they have no hesitation to ask for help when they feel a need to do so. Some of them have always asked help from their families, and the others have reached out to their friends or co-workers for support and assistance in their career development. For example, three participants (P1, P3 and P5) often engage their husbands in helping them with family responsibilities and child-rearing so they can obtain some personal time to focus on their job duties and careers.

When I just went back to my full-time job, I got worried at the beginning about everything at home. I gave my husband a few months to get used to helping me take care of our children...things turned out better than I thought, and my husband is more involved with the family things now. So I guess if I don't give my husband a chance to do that, he would not learn how to help me with taking care of the children. (P5)

My strategy is to talk with my boss and coworkers. Sometimes when I run into a difficult project, I will go to my coworkers or boss and get some advice from them. That is how I deal with challenges at work. (P4)

I have a lot of friends who are very supportive. When I am lonely or feel frustrated about my work, I talk with them. I even have friends who are psychologists. They can refer me to professional help if I need to. I don't go to therapy much but I know what services are available for me. It is about being aware of the resources. If I need help, I always ask for it. (P9)

Overall Experience of Being a Chinese American Professional Woman

During the interviews, the participants were asked first to reflect upon influential experiences and significant factors that have impacted their career development and career decision-making. Then they were asked to share the career challenges they have encountered and how they came up with different strategies to deal with the challenges. Finally, all of them were invited to answer an important question to sum up their overall experience, "How do you see your experience of being a Chinese American professional woman in the U.S.? What is this experience like in your career development?"

Each participant's experience of being a Chinese American professional woman is unique to herself. However, the findings showed the participants have shared some similarities in their career development related to their overall experience of being a Chinese American professional woman. This section serves as a summary and an effort to distill down some of the essence of the experience of being a Chinese American professional woman in the U.S. workforce, which includes the following common themes that emerged from the data analysis.

A Dynamic Journey and Process for Self and Career Identity

Most of the participants described their experience of being a Chinese American professional woman as involving a sense of journey and a process for identity search and career developing. They indicated their experience of being a professional woman in the

American workforce is like a dynamic journey for them that involves consistently negotiating their personal and professional identities.

The journey for personal identity and career establishment may not be always smooth and easy due to the adjustments and struggles they have gone through; however, the journey has its enjoyable and fulfilling moments. The participants seemed to agree that this journey is a process that keeps them moving ahead in their personal and professional development.

I guess my experience about working as a career woman is like giving me a break from all the family chores. Working also gives me a chance to realize who I am and what I can do for myself. (P1)

I have been through a lot of challenges in my career development but I see these as hurdles I need to overcome to make myself stronger. I try to stand up at where I fall. This is how I keep moving forward and how I keep going in my career. (P2)

The experience is like a process to learn something new everyday in my career and to create something useful everyday. In this process, I learn how to do my job better. (P6)

Dealing with Challenging Issues

Another theme of the participant's overall experience of being a Chinese American professional woman involves dealing with challenging issues in their career development. The general challenging issues that emerged from the participants' responses include: the need to start a new career, language issues, cultural barriers, emotional struggles due to the adaptation to the new culture, making career compromises for their families, limited career opportunities, and restrictions related to immigration policies, some of which are discussed earlier in the career challenge section. These next quotations below provide examples of the challenging issues faced by these women in their overall experience as professional females in the U.S. workforce.

I had a career back home. But when I came to the U.S., it is like I have to start everything from ground zero. I need to start all over again for my career development. It was hard and struggling. (P2)

If I go back to China, I perhaps will have more job choices. Like my case now, the immigration policy is getting tougher. They just cut the quota of working visas and permanent residence. It is hard to get PR [permanent residence] for foreigners. (P4)

It was very tough for me when I just came here. I quit my job in Taiwan and came here to start a new family...it was hard to adjust from a full-time career woman to a married person with no job when I just got here. (P3)

Playing Multiple Roles and Embracing the Benefits and Challenges

The participants reported that their experiences as Chinese American professional women also involve the process of playing multiple roles in their personal and professional lives. One must find a balancing point from all the duties demanded by the different roles they play. In the meantime, they have learned to embrace the benefits and the challenges in the process of negotiating these various roles.

Despite the challenges, most participants have greatly emphasized the benefits of playing multiple roles in their career development, which include a more colorful and exciting life with multiple identities, a better way to connect with people in the professional world, richer life and professional experiences, better planning and management skills, a sense of self-sufficiency, and bringing in income for the family.

Being a professional woman is part of me. Without that part, it is not a complete me. By working part-time, it gives me a break from the family chores...it also gives me a chance to realize I am not only a mother but also a person and a career woman. (P1)

My job is part of my social life outside of the family and a way to connect with people in the business world. I enjoy meeting people at work and talk to my customers. That is how I blend in with local people. (P3)

I see my job as a way to provide health care for my patients, a way to do good deeds and achieve something professionally, and a way to bringing myself independence. (P7)

I think this career leads me to a steady life style, to keep a family, and to bring me a sense of achievement. (P6)

A Sense of Growth, Fulfillment, and Pride

A sense of personal and professional growth and feelings of accomplishment and self-value permeate the participants' experiences of being Chinese American professional women. Most of the participants in this study strongly agreed that being professional women and establishing themselves in their current professions have brought them psychological happiness, a sense of fulfillment personally and professionally, positive feelings for self, and a sense of pride. A few quotes from several participants exemplify these findings.

I have learned a lot of experiences from my job now. I also learned a lot about the culture from my work as well. I think it is a great experience for me. (P4)

I have a great passion in piano teaching, especially seeing my students grow and perform better. It is a big sense of achievement and a sense of self-approval. (P8)

I think being a professional woman is a positive experience for my self. Entering this field and helping my patients...it somehow makes me feel useful even though I am not young anymore. My current job not only matches my personal interest. I have also learned professional skills to serve people. That really gives me a sense of fulfillment. (P7)

I think I can be proud of myself. I often receive phone calls from people I helped and they thanked me for helping them. They told me I am the friendliest employee they met in this organization. That kind of thing makes me feel I am a valuable person. (P5)

Recognizing Personal Strengths

Recognizing personal strengths is a strong theme that appeared in many of the participants' responses when they talked about their experience of being a Chinese American professional woman. Several participants said knowing their personal strengths and using the strengths as a way to deal with difficult situations in their career development have helped them to build a better experience as a professional woman in their lives.

Various personal strengths identified by the participants include: knowing how to adapt to the environment, maintaining a positive attitude, being open-minded, hard working, staying emotionally strong, using professional skills as an advantage, trying one's best, believing in oneself, being a motivated learner, keep challenging oneself, and daring to take risks. The following words from several participants serve as examples of how they have recognized and used their personal strengths as a Chinese American professional woman.

It is like if you cannot change the environment, then you adapt to the environment. I don't want to stay feeling sorry for myself and I am not a person who just quits...so I try to blend in with the people I meet. I will say I perform quite well and blend in pretty well. Compared to some Chinese American women in the local community, I have not seen anyone as active as I am to try blending in at work. (P3)

I don't want to give up. I don't want to be fall behind in my career. I think I am a hardworking person. That is how I keep myself going in my career. Just keep pushing myself. I did not want to be just a stay-home mother so I went out get a job to reach career achievement. (P2)

The key thing is my knowledge. My professional training is my biggest strength in my career development. (P4)

I always think I do my best to fulfill my duties. I word hard and try to be positive. I look for different opportunities and believe in my self. (P5)

I am a person who likes to take risks. I am very adventurous. I like challenges and excitement at work. I like to try new things and keep myself updated with new technology and keep up with new information. I think it is boring if I stay stagnant in my career. I will not advance myself that way. (P9)

No Regrets and Keep Moving Ahead

Most of the participants indicated that their experience as a Chinese American professional woman in the U.S. workforce has been a great voyage for them, and they did not have regrets about the career decisions they made. Some of them (P2 and P9) commented that their professional development in the U.S. has been a good career path for them. Others (P4 and P6) said their experience as professional women in the U.S. has been a positive and exciting learning process for them. When the participants were asked to give some advice to other Chinese American professional women, the key message sent by them was “Believe in yourself and keep moving forward. You will make it.”

Several quotations from different participants regarding their positive views follow:

I think it is a good development. It is full of positive experiences. Although I have been through many hardships, I am also learning. If I did not go through different things, including good and bad things, I will not become who I am today. (P2)

It is a good career path. I don't have any regrets about going to this path. In my development, one job led to another, there was a time I got two big raises in one year. So, money wise and career establishment wise, it is a good path. My position now is my dream job in this field, so I am happy about it. (P6)

I don't have any regrets on my career decision. I can't think of anything I would do differently. For my current job, it matches my interest and I have a passion for it. So I try to enjoy every moment and embrace my own career choice. (P7)

As long as you have the professional training and a good opportunity, you can do well in your career even though you are a woman. I still believe as long as you are competent in your job field, you can make it. (P2)

Overview of Emergent Theoretical Scheme

This section presents an emergent theoretical scheme that illustrates the professional experiences and career development of the Chinese American professional women in this study. This theoretical scheme has emerged from the key findings in the cross-case analysis and from the experiences and perspectives of the participants as Chinese American professional women in the U.S.

The theoretical scheme presented graphically in Figure 1 summarizes the important elements and factors that constitute the participants' career development and their experience as Chinese American professional women. It also suggests the relationships between different elements and influential factors and how each of them interacts with the participants' career development, their career decision-making processes and their experiences as professional women.

The theoretical scheme consists of four major components in the career development of Chinese American professional women. These include: (a) the participants' career development process itself, (b) their career decision-making process, (c) the career challenges they have encountered, and (d) their overall experience of being a Chinese American professional woman. Each component interacts with one another and connects to different contextual factors that have impacted the career development and career experiences of the Chinese American professional women in this study. The one-way and double-ended arrows are used in the scheme, as presented in Figure 1, to suggest the relationships and the interactions among the major components and influential issues. The diagram used in Figure 1 is meant to emphasize the relative and interrelating

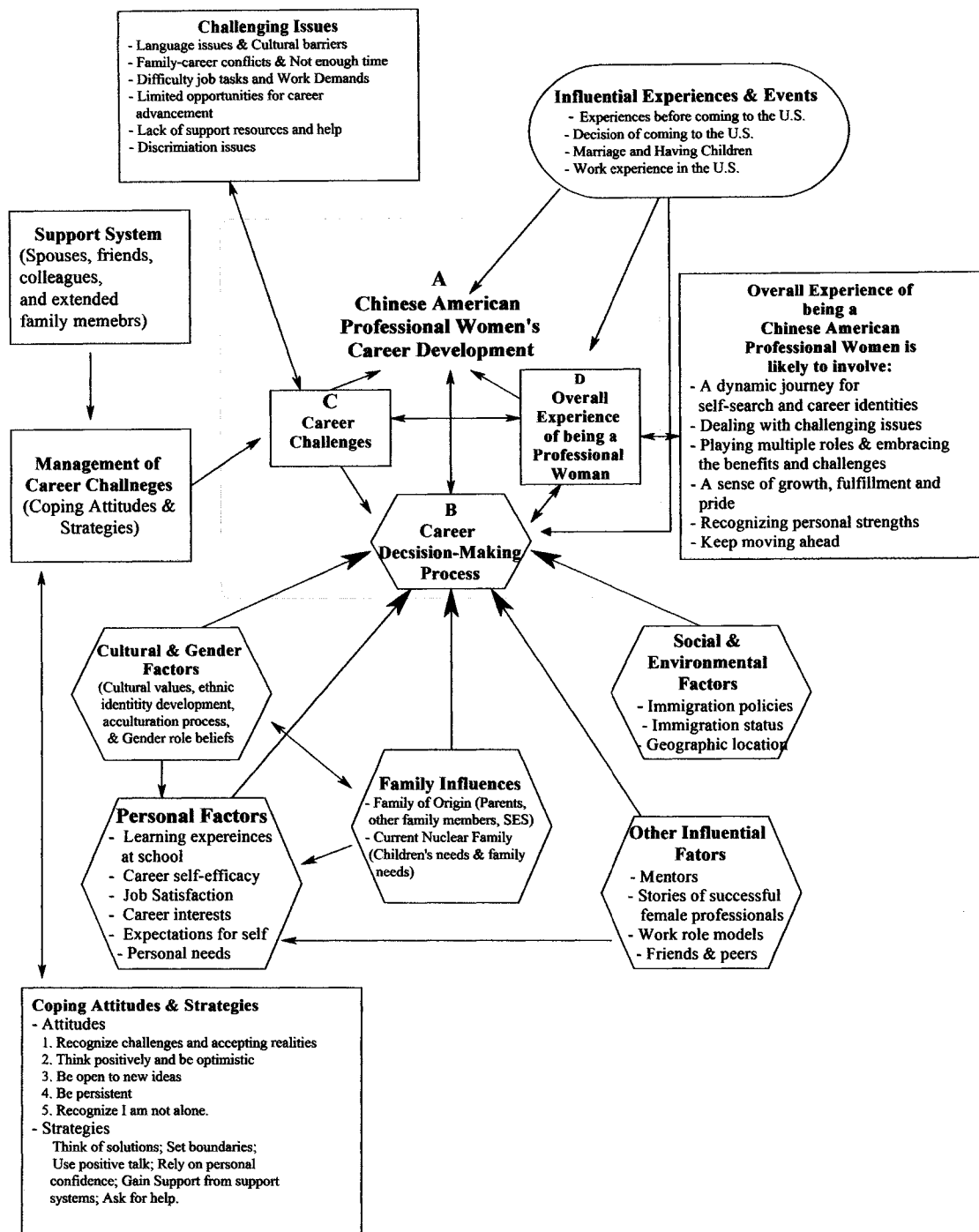


Figure 1. Theoretical Scheme of Career Experiences and Career Development among Chinese American Professional Women

influences from different components and variables regarding the participants' career development and their experiences as professional women in the U.S.

Each component and its related variables have been discussed above in the presentation of the major findings of this study. The emerging theoretical scheme presented in this section brings together these major findings, summarizes them, and indicates some of the key relationships among the primary elements that comprise the career development of Chinese American professional women and their experience of being professional women in the U.S.

Component A: Career Development Process

The theoretical proposition starts with the core component, Chinese American professional women's career development process, indicated by the "A" on Figure 1. The career development of the participants in this study constitutes a dynamic process that consists of various career-related issues, such as different life and professional experiences that have affected the process, making career choices, the experience of facing and dealing with career challenges, and the overall experience of being a Chinese American professional woman.

The theoretical scheme of this study first explores different experiences and events in the participants' personal and professional lives, and how some of those experiences have significantly impacted their career development process. These are presented in the oval in the upper right corner on the Figure. The main experiences that appear to have had a strong impact on most of the participants' career development include personal school and job experiences before coming to the U.S., the decision of moving to the U.S., getting married and having children, and personal work experience in

the U.S. These experiences seemed to interact with one another and have exerted various influences on the participants' professional development process.

All the Chinese American women in this study had a professional job before they came to the U.S. Most of them confirmed that their past educational learning experiences and previous jobs had impacted the early stage of their career development before they came to the U.S. Several of them said their previous school and job experiences also impacted their career development in the U.S. because what they learned from those experiences prepared them with the knowledge and skills necessary to work as a professional woman in this country.

The Chinese American women in this study came to the U.S. for different reasons. Although the reasons for coming to the U.S. vary, all the participants agreed that moving to this country was an important turning point in their personal and professional lives and has significantly impacted their career development and decision-making. Most of them agreed that coming to the U.S. has brought a positive influence to their career development.

For the individuals who came to the U.S. for their marriages, they said getting married and starting a new family has definitely influenced their career development greatly and led them to make different career decisions or career compromises at different times. However, the overall theme identified by these participants is their resilience in managing the duties from different roles they have played and their ability to balance between their work and family demands.

The majority of the participants said their work experience in the U.S. was influential in their career development. The careers they chose in the U.S. have helped to

establish them professionally and have fulfilled their needs and expectations as professional women. For the participants in this study, most of them have gone through various experiences in their personal and professional lives that have impacted their career development significantly (e.g., the decisions of moving to the U.S. led to a new and fulfilling career path, experiences accumulated in the U.S. workplaces resulted in career advancement), which involves a general sense of positive effect expressed by the majority of the participants.

Component B: Career Decision-making Process

Making career decisions and choices is an important aspect in one's career development. Therefore, the theoretical scheme of this study explains the career decision-making process ("Hexagon B" on the Figure) of Chinese American professional women and how various factors have impacted this process.

The findings of this study indicate that the participants' career decisions and choices were influenced by different contextual factors. The lower portion of Figure 1 presents different contextual factors in the hexagons. The factors are categorized in the five spheres and the relating influences from these factors on individual career decision-making process. The five spheres include cultural and gender, family, personal, social and environmental, and other influential factors identified by the participants.

Based on the participants' responses, influences from other individuals (e.g., teachers, friends, or successful female professionals) and from both the family of origin and the current nuclear family, as well as from those related to culture and gender often interact with one another and exert certain impacts on the elements in the personal sphere, such as impacting an individual's choice of educational majors, establishing self-

efficacy, shaping career interests and values, and forming career expectations. Therefore, Figure 1 also serves to show the interrelations among cultural and gender factors, personal variables and family influences. To better understand the interactions among different factors, P1's case is used as an illustrative example.

P1 worked as an engineer in China, and switched her career field to Literature and Humanities when she went to Japan to earn her advanced degrees. After completing her educational training, she then entered the educational field and has been teaching for quite some time, which is a career decision influenced by the teaching history in her extended family and her personal career interest. She currently works as a part-time instructor in a college setting so she can take care of her small children and maintain her teaching career with more flexible working hours.

P1's career development and decision-making were influenced by interactions from various factors, such as family influences, other influential individuals in her life, personal, and culture and gender factors. Her career interests and values were impacted and shaped by her mother and grandmother's career choices, past learning experiences, and the example of Madam Marie Curie, a successful and devoted scientist, which resulted in her passion for being a teacher. Her current nuclear family, cultural values and gender role beliefs have also strongly impacted her career decision as a part-time professional woman who attempts to maintain both a career and family responsibilities. Although it is not easy to juggle between different roles, P1's expectations for self and personal needs have served as powerful forces in driving her to establish a career in the educational field.

Various factors in the cultural and gender sphere include individual ethnic identity development, acculturation process, cultural values and gender role beliefs. Although the majority of the participants did not identify ethnic identity development and their acculturation process as factors that directly influenced their career choices, the ethnic identity and cultural values held by them have had an impact on their career development. Most of the participants' contemporary gender role beliefs were identified to have a positive impact on their career decision-making and helped them to believe in themselves as career women with good education and work competence. One thing related to gender that needs to be noted is the subtle influence of traditional gender role socialization in Chinese culture on some of the participants' career decisions. Typically, Chinese women are expected to place their needs secondary to the family, spousal, and children's needs. Several participants in this study confirmed that, in the marital relationships among Chinese American professional women, the husbands' career development appears to be more primary than the wives', and these women often are the ones who assume the main responsibility in child care, and thus are the individuals who are expected to delay or interrupt their careers or compromise their career development.

Most of the participants identified influences from their families as having an impact on their career development and choices in varying degrees. Several participants expressed how their parents' instilling discipline in their lives impacted their career values and work ethics, and how the career choices of their parents in fact helped to shape their own career interests. The nuclear family of most of the participants was considered to have a prominent impact on their career decision-making. With small

children at home, some of them delayed their full-time working plan to fulfill family responsibilities.

In the personal sphere, the predominant theme was how most of the participants have chosen their professions based on their career interests. Several participants indicated it is important for them to have a career because being a professional woman is an expectation they have for themselves and fulfills their psychological needs and desire to help their families financially.

In the social and environmental sphere, the legal immigration status of some participants has strongly impacted their career decisions and development. One participant (P4), holding only a working visa, particularly expressed her frustration about the career limitations brought on by her legal status and the restrictions imposed by immigration policies. Most of the participants agreed that living in a bigger city serves as a career advantage for Chinese American professional women and offers them more career opportunities.

While most of the participants said teachers, professors and friends have mentored and helped them in many ways in their career development and influenced their career decisions to some degree, only one individual mentioned her previous supervisor as her work role model. A few participants also indicated that stories of successful professional women inspired their career interests and passions.

Component C: Career Challenges

Career challenges faced by the participants in the U.S. workforce play an important role in the career development and experiences of these professional women. The main career challenges identified by them include language issues and cultural

barriers, family-career conflicts, lack of sufficient time to fulfill all their duties and roles, challenges from difficult job tasks and work demands, limited opportunities for career advancement, and lack of supporting resources. Explicit racial or cultural discrimination was not identified as a career challenge or barrier by most of the participants. Yet, many participants revealed more subtle forms of discrimination or treatment based upon their cultural background as Chinese Americans. From the responses shared by the participants, the theoretical scheme of this study illustrates the career challenges (“Rectangle C” on the Figure) encountered by them and how they have come to manage these challenges with coping mechanisms and their support systems, which are displayed on the left side of the Figure in the rectangular boxes.

In order to manage the career challenges, the participants have established coping attitudes and utilized different strategies. The helpful attitudes held by most of the participants consist of recognizing the problems and accepting realities, positive thinking, being open, being persistent, and recognizing that they are not alone in facing their challenges. Several coping strategies identified by the participants include finding solutions, setting boundaries between different roles, using positive self-talk, relying on self-confidence, asking for help, and relying on the support from spouses, friends, colleagues, extended family members.

Several participants stressed the importance of having a support system and to incorporate their support system into their career development and coping with career challenges. Most of them appreciated the emotional support from their families of origin; however, sometimes they felt frustrated about not being able to utilize their extended

family members or in-laws as a resource to help them in child rearing because they live far away in China, Taiwan or other states in the U.S.

Component D: Overall Experience of being a Professional Woman

In their career development, the participants made different career decisions and choices. In the process of establishing their professions, they also faced various career challenges but have found ways to cope with these difficulties. The career development process itself, the decisions the participants made in their professional development, the career challenges they encountered, and how they have come to manage different issues all constitute their overall experience of being a Chinese American professional woman (“Square D” on the Figure).

Based on the career stories the participants shared and their responses to the interview questions, the theoretical scheme of this study addresses their experience of being a Chinese American professional woman and the important themes associated with this experience. Most of the participants agreed their experience as a professional woman in the U.S. is likely to involve the following: (a) a sense of dynamic journey, (b) dealing with different challenges, (c) playing multiple roles and embracing both challenges and benefits, (d) a sense of achievement and self-value, (e) knowing and using personal strengths, and (f) focusing on the present and future. These key elements of their experience are displayed in the square box on the far right of the Figure.

Most of the participants reported that their career development as Chinese American professional women involved a journey for them to constantly search their personal and professional identities. Although the career journey may be bumpy due to

career challenges and the struggles from family-career conflicts, the majority of the participants believe their professional development has been fulfilling and exciting.

The participants in this study all have a very good sense of who they are and are able to recognize and use their personal strengths as a way to help themselves in their career development. As Chinese American professional women, most of them have learned that the only way they can keep moving forward in their professional development is to focus on the here-and-now and on future opportunities. They view what they have experienced as professional women in the U.S. as positive learning experiences and processes that empower them to advance in the professional world.

In conclusion, by exploring all the related components in the participants' career development and the relationships among all the factors identified by the participants in this study, the theoretical scheme proposes that Chinese American professional women's career development and their experience as professional women are influenced by different contextual elements, such as influential experiences in their lives, the factors that influenced their career decisions, the career choices they made, the career challenges they encountered, the coping strategies they have used, the personal and professional help and support they received, and their voyage of being a professional woman in the U.S. The theoretical scheme of this study also suggests that the various elements and influential factors related to Chinese American professional women's career development seem to interact with one another in an interrelated manner, exerting a complex impact on their career decision-making and their experience of being career women. This exploratory study has identified many of these factors, and future research may tease out

more systematically how some of these factors interrelate to comprise the experience of being a Chinese American professional woman in the U.S.

Summary

This chapter presents the findings of this study in two primary ways. The first part of the findings summarized the career development of each participant. Each participant's personal and career background was introduced along with her educational training, work history, career values and work attitudes and future career planning. This allowed for an understanding of the individual context of each participant and reflects within-case analyses conducted on the data offered by the participants.

The second part of the findings provides the results from the cross-case analyses in five different sections. The first four sections in this segment present the information regarding the influential experiences in the participants' career development; the factors that have impacted their career decision-making and choices; the career challenges faced by them in the career development and the coping strategies used by them to manage the challenges, along with the support systems these professional woman have; and the significant themes related to their overall experience of being a Chinese American professional woman. Finally, this chapter concludes with the presentation of an emergent theoretical scheme based on the key findings of this study. This theoretical scheme summarizes major factors and suggests how these factors relate to one another in influencing Chinese American professional women's career development, and their experience of being a professional woman in this country.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consists of four sections. First, the findings of the study and their implications are discussed. Suggestions and ideas related to coping are also presented in the first section. Second, the strengths and the limitations of the study are identified. The third section presents recommendations for future research and practice. Finally, a conclusion about the study is made.

Discussion of the Findings

This study was designed to explore the career experiences and career development of Chinese American professional women in the U.S. workforce. The researcher was interested in the following: (a) what Chinese American professional women have experienced in their career development, (b) what key experiences or life events have impacted their career development, (c) how various contextual factors have impacted their career decisions and choices, (d) what career challenges they have experienced and how they have managed these challenges, and (e) how they described their overall experiences as Chinese American professional women.

The major findings of the study, which are presented in greater detail in Chapter four, include the following:

1. Chinese American professional women's career development is comprised of significant experiences or life events in their personal and professional lives,

their career decision-making process, the career challenges faced by them and their management of the challenges, and their overall experience as professional women in the U.S. workforce.

2. Influential experiences, such as the personal experience of living in other foreign countries, previous working experiences, moving to the U.S., getting married, having children, and personal working experience in the U.S., have influenced these professional women's career development in various ways.
3. Contextual factors, such as cultural and gender issues, family influences, personal matters, social environmental considerations, and other influential factors, have exerted a strong impact on Chinese American professional women's career decision-making and career choices.
4. The major career challenges that these professional women have encountered include language issues, limited understanding of cultural references, family-career conflicts and negotiating among multiple roles, challenges from difficult job tasks and work demands, fewer promotions, a cultural glass ceiling barrier, and lack of supporting resources and sufficient help.
5. To manage these career challenges, Chinese American professional women have come to accept the challenges and have developed positive coping attitudes. The coping strategies used by these professional women include: finding different solutions for different problems, setting boundaries between personal and professional lives, utilizing positive self-talk, relying on self-confidence and one's support system, and asking for help from family members, friends, and colleagues.

6. The Chinese American woman's overall experience as a professional woman involves a dynamic process of searching and developing personal and professional identities, the experience of facing career challenges and coping with difficult issues, the management of multiple roles and finding a balance, a sense of fulfillment and self-worth, acknowledging personal strengths, and focusing on the present and future.

A detailed discussion of the research findings and their implications are presented in five parts. The first section presents the implications derived from the findings of these Chinese American professional women's career development processes as well as the relation of the findings to Super's life-span theory (1980). The second part discusses the implications of the findings regarding these professional women's career decision-making processes and choices. The relation of the findings to social learning and cognitive theory is also examined. The third segment describes the implications derived from the findings regarding the career challenges faced by these Chinese American professional women. The fourth section discusses the implications of the findings related to the participants' overall experiences as professional women. Finally, the last part of this discussion provides suggestions and coping ideas for other Chinese American professional women based on the findings from this study.

Career Development of Chinese American Professional Women

The findings of the study showed that more than half of the participants reported they had career aspirations or dreams earlier in their lives. However, not all of them developed their careers in the U.S. in line with their original career aspirations. Under the influences of different experiences in the participants' personal and professional lives,

some of them continued working and establishing themselves in the same career fields, while others changed their career fields and created a new career path in their professional development. The important experiences identified as influential factors that have impacted the participants' career development process include: different experiences prior to coming to the U.S., the decision of moving to the U.S., getting married, having children, and individual working experience in the U.S. The findings of the study are consistent with Super's life-span theory (1980) and suggest the need to consider the influence of developmental issues on Chinese American women's career development process, such as environmental changes and different expectations from different life stages (Leong & Serafica, 1995).

In Super's life-span theory (1980, 1992), the individual career development process is described as a series of life stages identified as Growth, Exploratory, Establishment, Maintenance, and Decline. The theory also specifies one's self-concept as being shaped when each life stage exerts its influence on his or her career behaviors. The Life-Career Rainbow depicted in this theory suggests each life stage coincides with an individual's position in the life space, the chronological context, the different social roles he or she plays, and the social context. Therefore, Super's theory views that one's career development and decision-making process is impacted by different developmental tasks, social roles in different life stages, and self-concept (Zunker, 1998).

The findings showed that although the purpose of coming to the U.S. varied, the majority of the participants agreed that moving to the U.S. was a key event and an important turning point that exerted a great impact on their career development and decision-making. The major life change of moving to and living in a foreign country had

compelled the participants to re-evaluate their career paths and professional development. The participants in this study had to make various career decisions due to the different life roles they played and due to other contextual factors. Before coming to the U.S., all the participants had a professional job, and most of them focused on their role as an employee and tried to establish a career. After coming to the U.S., several participants' life roles were expanded. Some of them became graduate students, and later on mothers and career women. Others played the roles as a mother, a wife and a professional woman simultaneously. The common theme is that with the expectations from various life roles in different life stages, all the participants tried to re-establish a career. In the process of doing so, they experienced the course of recycling the developmental tasks emphasized in Super's theory (1980, 1992), which include crystallizing their personal career preferences, making a career choice, entering the chosen field, stabilizing their career status in the current professions, and seeking opportunities for career advancement.

What needs to be noted is that although the participants went through the process of recycling career developmental tasks and made their career decisions under the impact of different influences, not all the participants are at the same stage of their professional development. According to age, one's current life-cycle stage, and the length of the employment term in the current professions, five of the participants (P1, P3, P4, P5, and P8) are at the stage of Establishment (characterized by trial and stabilization through work experiences, Super, 1980, 1992) in their career development, and the others (P2, P6, P7, and P9) are at the stage of Maintenance (characterized by a continuing adjustment process to improve working conditions and situations) in their professional development.

The participants in the first group, in the Establishment stage, are in their late 30s or early 40s, and are either single or married with no children or small and school-aged children and have only worked in their current professions for less than 4 years. With the demands from work and family, several participants in this group have worked hard to find a balance between fulfilling family responsibilities and establishing their careers. Although the career expectations and job tasks may vary, the participants from this group primarily focused on stabilizing their career status, establishing a good foundation for their career development, and continuously looking for possible career opportunities.

The second group consists of the participants at the Maintenance stage who are in their late 40s or early 50s with either teenaged or adult children and have worked in their current professions or the same career fields for at least five years. Some of the participants in this group made their career decisions based on their career interests, while others chose a career because of various factors, such as individual legal status and the need to support one's self financially. The professional women in this group were placing their career energy mainly on maintaining their current professions and seeking out opportunities to advance in their career development.

Overall, the findings of the study regarding the career development process of these Chinese American professional women have drawn attention to how different influential experiences and life events, as well as various social roles in different life-cycle stages, have impacted their career development. The findings also suggest that Super's life-span theory (1980, 1992) appears to be helpful in providing a way of describing the career development sequence of Chinese American professional women due to the concepts emphasized by the theory. The notion of social role and its influence

on one's career development in Super's theory is particularly useful in understanding the connection between Chinese American professional women's career development and their personal fulfillment of multiple roles and their adherence to family values and obligations.

Career Decision-Making Process and Career Choices

Cultural and Gender Factors

Cultural Values, Ethnic Identity and Acculturation Process

As mentioned in the literature review, cultural values, ethnic identity development, and personal acculturation process are considered to have salient influences on Asian Americans' personal and professional lives (Byars & Hackett, 1998; Leung et al., 1994; Tang et al., 1999), which is supported by the findings of this study. Regarding how cultural factors impacted the participants' career development and decision-making, three major points need to be recognized as follows: (a) Chinese cultural values, especially its emphasis on mothers' obligation to fulfill family and children's needs, have a profound impact on career decision-making; (b) personal acculturation process is not considered to directly influence some of the participants' career choices but their integrative awareness of the two cultures has impacted their professional lives and helped them to build positive working relationships in the work place; and (c) the participants' ethnic identity and cultural background have impacted their career development and decision-making both positively and negatively.

The findings showed that the main impact of Chinese cultural values on most of the Chinese American professional women's career decision-making process is the idea

that women should place the family and children's well-being above their personal and career needs, which is emphasized in Chinese family value systems and intertwined with gender socialization among Chinese American women. Examples from several participants' career decisions, such as delaying working full-time for small children, and staying home temporarily to take care of children, substantiated how this thinking has affected their career development and decision-making.

Most of the participants in the study reported they strongly identified themselves with Chinese ethnicity. Only a few of them indicated their ethnic identity has been integrated between Chinese and American cultures. Although a majority of the participants have a strong identification with their own ethnicity, some of them are more acculturated than others. Therefore, given the interactions between an individual's ethnic identity development and acculturation process proposed by existing literature (Leong & Chou, 1994; Sue and Sue, 1990; Suinn, et al., 1995), the participants fell into one of three groups: (a) individuals who identify themselves as Chinese and whose acculturation is limited, (b) individuals who strongly identify themselves as Chinese ethnically, yet are more acculturated to the dominant culture, and (c) individuals who are highly acculturated yet still have a strong sense of their integrated ethnic identity. The findings suggest that with individual exposure to American culture over time, these Chinese American professional women appeared to find a balance point in their ethnic identity development, and some of them had reached the level of biculturalism in their acculturation process.

The findings in the study regarding ethnic identity development also suggest that the developmental model proposed by Sue and Sue (1990) may not satisfactorily explain

the ethnic identity development of the foreign-born Chinese American women in this study. The participants were primarily socialized in their home countries and came to the U.S. as adult immigrants with a good sense of their own ethnic and cultural identities. It is difficult for the researcher to fit the developmental model into the participants' ethnic identity development completely, and to tease out the stages in their ethnic identity development based on the propositions of the model. This may signify the need for future research to seek a model of ethnic and cultural identities that will more thoroughly address foreign-born Asian or Chinese Americans' ethnic identity development process.

The findings further suggest the participants believed that their ethnic identity and cultural background can serve as an advantage or a disadvantage in their career development and impact their career decisions in different ways. Leong and Chou (1994) suggested Asian Americans who are strongly identified with their own ethnicity may tend to consider their interests in helping their own people when making a career choice, which is confirmed by some of the participants' examples. They viewed their ethnicity of being a Chinese American as an advantage in their career development and have chosen careers that can help Chinese or Asian people as well as allow them to use their ethnicity and cultural background to enhance their current professions. For example, P5 and P7 both chose to work in a profession where they can help Chinese or Chinese Americans and provide educational or medical services for people in this population. Their cultural background allows them to use their language and ethnicity as advantages to serve Chinese or Chinese Americans with different needs, which in turn benefits the careers they chose and encourages a sense of pride and achievement in their personal and career development.

On the other hand, some of the participants viewed that being a foreign-born Chinese American has discouraged them from choosing certain professions and limited their career development. For example, P3 and P9 strongly believed that being a Chinese American had created limitations or will hinder their future career development due to their cultural background or an individual's limited understanding of American cultural references.

Gender Role Socialization and Beliefs

Gender issues that impact the career development of ethnic minority women involve gender role socialization, gender role expectations from the culture and family, the balance between work and family, and the management of relationships with family members (Bingham & Ward, 1994). Yang (1991) suggested Chinese American women may be concerned with being professionally successful because equality between women and men is not emphasized in Chinese culture. Therefore, Chinese American women can easily feel the strain of gender role socialization and the family-career conflict as they make career choices.

The findings regarding the impact of gender role socialization and beliefs on the participants' career development and decision-making processes have provided some interesting perspectives. First, nearly half of the Chinese American women in this study were socialized with the concept of gender equality, and all of them are equipped with professional degrees and skills, which lead them to believe it is important to have a career and choose a profession based on their interests and ability, not on gender stereotypes. This may account for the phenomenon of the large numbers of foreign-born educated Chinese American women who have entered the scientific and applied technical fields

and chosen a career in those fields. These women, compared to more traditional Chinese American women, are more likely to choose a career based on beliefs in self and their professional skills, which may break the myth of Chinese American women's tendency to choose technical jobs only because of their concerns about language challenges.

Second, one important finding regarding the impact of gender role beliefs on the participants' career development involved how some of them were willing to place their career needs secondary to their husbands' and made a major career decision based on their spouses' career development (e.g., relocating to the U.S. due to the husband's job). Although most of the Chinese American professional women in this study believed in the importance of having a career, traditional gender role socialization in the Chinese culture and family value systems may still indirectly influence their expectations of how to play the wife role in their marriages, which may reflect the sexism and patriarchy inherent in the Chinese culture.

Third, although some of the participants were socialized with more traditional Chinese gender role expectations, most of them strongly believe in gender equality and subscribe to the ideas that women are entitled to the freedom to choose a career they love and should be treated with respect regarding the different roles they play in their lives. Therefore, the examples provided by the findings in the study manage to show the changes in gender role beliefs among modern educated Chinese American women. For example, P3 was able to develop more contemporary gender role beliefs due to her learning experiences overseas and began to believe men and women should be treated equally at home and work although she grew up in a cultural environment that values

males more and expects women to take priority in their roles of being a good mother and wife.

Fourth, despite the female role changes in modern Chinese and Taiwanese societies, Chinese women are still expected to carry out the responsibilities of taking care of their spouses' parents in their marriages. Chinese parents-in-law usually expect their daughters-in-law to care for them and take care of family needs even though most Chinese career women work as many hours as their husbands do (Huang, 1991; Huang, 2004). The participants in this study rarely mentioned the need to care for their in-laws primarily because their in-laws lived either far away in their home countries or in different states in the U.S. Due to this geographical distance, the majority of the participants indicated they maintained close relationships with their in-laws but did not have to provide actual care for their spouses' parents. This may serve to reduce the family-care responsibilities for Chinese American professional women and allow these women to have more time and energy to focus on developing their careers.

Lastly, how to find a balance between family and career remains an issue for most of the participants with their roles as a mother and a professional woman. Although the participants agreed that women should be able to make a career decision freely, several of them recognized that as mothers, sometimes they needed to make compromises in their career development. However, these professional women do not want to be expected to sacrifice their careers merely because of their obligations as mothers, so they have made efforts to find ways to create a balanced life between work and family. Despite the existence of the strain of family-career conflict as the Chinese American professional women make career choices, the findings in the study showed that modern Chinese

American women have exhibited their determination to manage multiple roles in their lives and to create a new equilibrium between their career and family responsibilities.

Family Influences

Previous research (Leong & Gim-Chung, 1995; Leong & Serafica, 1995; Prosser, 2002; Tang et al., 1999; Tang, 2002) has suggested that ones' family of origin is considered an important factor that impacts Asian Americans' career development and decision-making. Asian American parents are likely to exert direct influence on their children's career choices, and an individual's career choices are expected to fulfill the family's expectations and to honor the family. Therefore, family involvement can be a powerful influential factor for Asian Americans' career choices, and they often need to select a career that matches family and parental expectations.

The findings regarding family influences on the Chinese American professional women's decision-making process showed somewhat different views from the remarks cited above. First, most of the participants in the study indicated their families of origin and parents did not directly influence their career choices, but helped indirectly to shape their career interests and work ethics. Although a few of the participants' parents tried to advise them to choose certain careers in the early stage of their professional development, none of them selected their current professions based on parental suggestions or expectations. The reason for this may be because all the participants are older adults and mature enough to make their career choices based on their personal interests, career preferences, and expectations for self as a professional woman. It may also be that these women place a higher value on independence and self-fulfillment, which is reflected in

the very nature of their decisions to leave their home countries and relocate to the U.S., as well as in their independent career choices.

Second, another implication derived from the findings is that none of the participants mentioned they felt the need to choose a career to fulfill family expectations. Most of the participants did not choose educational majors or their current professions because of family pressures or prestige factors. The reasons that may account for this include the following: (a) the male lineage embedded in Chinese cultural and family value systems may in turn free Chinese American women from parental pressure in influencing their career choices and decisions because Chinese males are typically the ones who are expected to carry the family name and honor the family with a prestigious profession, and (b) the Chinese American professional women in this study live far apart from their extended families and have entered different life stages. Most of them have led an independent life and started their own nuclear families.

Finally, the findings of this study indicate that Chinese American professional women's current nuclear families have strongly influenced their career development and decision-making, which is a factor that was not often included in other existing research regarding family influences on the career development of women of color. Most of the participants agreed their nuclear families have exerted a powerful impact on their career decisions because of the needs to provide financial help for their families and the demands to take care of family and child-rearing responsibilities. Thus, for Chinese American professional women, the sphere of family influence on career decision-making seems to be smaller, with the current nuclear family exerting more influence, compared

with Chinese women in general, who are influenced more by one's family of origin and extended family.

Personal Factors

In this study, personal factors that influenced the Chinese American professional woman's career decision-making process and development included individual learning experiences from school, career self-efficacy and job satisfaction, personal career interests and preferences, career expectations for self, and personal needs. The main findings regarding the impact of different personal factors on career decisions and choices comprise the following points: (a) The participants' positive learning experiences through formal education have reinforced their self-efficacy, have prepared them with the professional skills they need, and have significantly impacted their career development and decisions; (b) The sources of the participants' career self-efficacy include performance achievements at school and work, learning experiences accumulated over time at work, and positive verbal feedback from people they work with; (c) The participants' confidence in their professions has helped them to perform better professionally, which leads to job satisfaction and a sense of achievement and self-value; (d) All the participants chose their current professions based upon their career values and interests. Their career values and interests have helped them to develop their professional identity and to make career choices that match their ability and professional passions; (e) Self expectations as a professional woman have strongly impacted most of the participants' career development and motivated them to establish themselves professionally and to develop a career; and (f) Several participants chose to have a career and selected their current professions because of different personal needs, such as the

desire to fulfill psychological needs, the need to support the family financially, and a wish to maintain personal and financial independence.

The research in the literature review of Chapter II suggests that Asian Americans, especially college students, rely more on a dependent decision-making style, have lower scores on the career maturity scale, and exhibit more extrinsic and pragmatic career values (Byars & Hackett, 1998; Leong, 1991; Liu 1998). The findings in this study regarding the impact of personal factors on the Chinese American professional women's career development and decision-making processes do not seem to match existing research on Asian Americans' career development. First, all the participants in the study appeared to have a clear idea about their career interests and passions and made career decisions and choices mainly based on their ability, career interests and personal needs. Of those who had to incorporate the needs of their families and children in their career decision-making process, although their career development was interrupted in different ways, most of them have managed to maintain their careers and keep family responsibilities. For example, P1 and P3 have reduced their working hours to take care of children, but still have a career to connect themselves to the professional world. P5 and P6 quit their jobs and stayed home for several years when their children were young, yet still continued self-learning as professional women and stayed connected with the professional world while home (e.g. starting a home business or doing volunteer work in the community).

In addition, most of the participants have shown a good level of career maturity and exhibited various characteristics needed to successfully cope with the demands of different life stages. Lastly, the majority of the participants agreed that choosing a career

they loved and working as a professional woman have given them a sense of happiness and helped to maintain their independence and individuality, which are far more important to them than money and status issues. They did not choose their current professions primarily due to pragmatic values, such as gaining social status and prestige or earning a great deal of money.

Social and Environmental Factors

Two important implications derived from the findings relate to the impact exerted by social and environmental factors on Chinese American professional women's career decision-making and development, which are issues not addressed in the existing research reviewed in Chapter II (Hsieh, 1996; Leong & Chou, 1994; Tang et al., 1999). First, foreign-born Chinese American women's legal status can exert either a positive or negative impact on their career development and decision-making. For those who are American citizens and permanent residents, it is less difficult to secure employment, easier to establish a career, and more flexible to change jobs. Individuals who hold only a working visa in the U.S. seem to have more difficulty finding a job, more limitations on career options, and less flexibility in changing jobs. This is likely due to the complex and lengthy process to adjust one's legal status and the restrictions imposed by current immigration policies. One should be cautious to generalize too much in this area, though, as only one participant in this study held only a working visa. Her experience, in particular, along with the experiences of other participants, suggests that immigration status does exert an important influence, which is likely to persist for the foreseeable future given heightened security and immigration concerns in our post-September 11th world.

Another implication indicated by the findings is the impact of the geographic location where these Chinese American professional women reside. Although a few of the participants did not think where they live impacted their career decisions or choices, most of them agreed that living in a large metropolitan area is an career advantage. They believed that the ethnic diversity in bigger cities gives Chinese American women more career options and allows them more career opportunities where they can utilize their ethnic background or their professional skills as a benefit in different professions.

Other Influential Factors

Other influential factors that were identified to have an impact on the participants' career decision-making and development include mentors such as teachers and professors, successful female professionals, friends, peers, and role models from work. The findings showed that teachers and professors typically served as role models or mentors to provide support as well as career guidance, and to influence individuals' career values or interests. Friends and peers have offered encouragement and brought positive influences to several participants' career development and introduced them to different career opportunities, which shows the concept emphasized in Chinese culture regarding the personal connections and group networking in one's personal and professional lives. One participant in the study also mentioned an individual from work as her role model who mentored her, provided support and gave her career information and guidance in her career development.

The implications derived from the findings related to the influence of other factors' on Chinese American professional women's career decision-making and development are two-fold. First, future research needs to explore and address the

influences exerted by individuals outside of the family on Chinese American women's career decision-making and development. Most of existing research (Leong & Gim-Chung, 1995; Leong & Serafica, 1995; Prosser, 2002; Tang et al., 1999; Tang, 2002) has focused on parental and family influences on career development and career decision-making processes. Second, the findings of the study suggest the lack of work role models for Chinese American professional women in different career fields, which may disadvantage the career development of these women due to the lack of support and mentoring from the work place. Although a few of the participants mentioned that reading biographies of successful female professionals had helped to inspire their career interests and shape their work values, most of them did not recognize any individual at work as their role model to provide them career information and guidance.

Relating the Findings to Social Learning and Cognitive Theory

As mentioned in Chapter II, Social learning and cognitive theory is the preferred theoretical framework in this study to understand the career decision-making process of Chinese American professional women, due to its useful concepts and components in explaining how Asian Americans and ethnic minority women make career decisions and choices. This section of Chapter V focuses on relating the findings on different factors that impacted the participants' career decision-making processes to Social learning and cognitive theory.

A brief review of the important concepts addressed in Social learning and cognitive theory as it relates to career development follows. First, the theory suggests that one's development of career preferences and skills and career choices are influenced by one's learning experiences (Leong & Serafica, 1995; Trusty, 2002). Second, the theory

addresses four factors that impact an individual's career decision-making process, such as genetic endowment, environmental conditions and events, learning experiences, and task approach skills. Third, social learning and cognitive theory views one's past learning experiences as interacting with an individual's abilities to impact personal interest, self-efficacy and career behaviors. Fourth, the concept of self-efficacy refers to one's belief in her or his ability to be successful in a particular career field. The sources of career self-efficacy include performance achievements, vicarious learning, emotional arousal, and verbal persuasion. Lastly, the theory itself is a multifaceted framework that explores the interactions among personal inputs, environmental factors, learning experience, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, career goals and interests, and career-related actions and choices (Byars & Hackett, 1998; Lent & Brown, 2002; Leong et al., 2002; Sharf, 2002; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

Different factors (e.g., cultural and gender factors, family factors, personal factors, social environmental factors, and other influential factors) addressed in the findings of the study regarding their influences on the participants' career decisions and choices match the significant concepts and components emphasized in Social learning and cognitive theory. A detailed explanation of the relation of the findings to Social learning and cognitive theory (SLCT) follows.

First, the findings indicate that the influences from teachers and professors, as well as the interaction between the factors included in the cultural and gender domain (the personal inputs component in SLCT) and individual's family and educational background (background component in SLCT) have exerted a strong impact on the

participants' learning experiences, career goals, career self-efficacy, and career values and expectations, which are the key components emphasized in SLCT.

In addition, the findings showed that the participants' career self-efficacy is reinforced with their positive learning experiences from school and work, their performance achievements from personal and professional lives, their psychological happiness as professional women, and the positive feedback from people with whom they work, which in turn exerts an impact on Chinese American professional women's job satisfaction, reaffirms their career interests and affects their career decisions. The interactions exhibited among the participants' career self-efficacy, career interests and career decisions serve as a good example of SLCT's theoretical propositions.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that social and environmental events (e.g., personal immigration status, geographic locations where one resides, major life transitions, influential personal and professional experiences, and challenging issues) occurring at various life stages in the participants' lives have influenced their career decisions and choices in varying degrees. The impact of social and environmental events on these Chinese American professional women's career decision-making processes coincides with the concept emphasized in SLCT regarding how environmental conditions and proximal contextual factors can affect one's career decisions and choices.

Lastly, all the factors addressed in the findings that impacted the participants' career decision-making are related or interrelated and have interacted with one another to affect their career-related choices and actions. This interaction among factors is a primary element in SLCT regarding its explanation of how one makes his or her career decisions or choices under the influence of various factors.

Career Barriers and Challenges

The findings in this study suggest that the career challenges that Chinese American professional women have faced include language issues, limited understanding of American cultural references, family-career conflicts and negotiating among different roles, professional and work demands, limited opportunities for career advancement, and lack of support resources and sufficient help. The findings regarding these challenging issues in the participants' career development appear to support some of the conclusions made by existing research (Leong & Chou, 1994; Leong & Serafica, 1995; Yang, 1991).

The following is a brief review of existing research's suggestions regarding career challenges among Asian Americans and Chinese American women. Occupational segregation, occupational stereotypes and discrimination at work are considered as possible career barriers for Asian Americans. Asian Americans are typically segregated in career fields, such as medicine, computer science, accounting and engineering, and they are less likely to engage in the fields of social services, corporate management, and legal or judicial jobs. Stereotypically, Asian Americans are viewed to be more successful with jobs involving technical skills but less qualified in careers that require verbal or persuasive skills. The examples of job discrimination in Asian Americans' career development include lower pay, poor reviews, fewer promotions, and cultural glass ceilings (Leong & Chou, 1994; Leong & Serafica, 1995).

Yang (1991) indicated that Chinese American women in their career development are vulnerable to conflicts that result from the interplay of cultural factors and the impact of immigration and cultural adjustment. Chinese American women are also more likely to encounter psychological pressure or emotional struggles when choosing a profession that

requires full devotion, which may interfere with responsibilities of traditional roles held by women. Yang further suggested Chinese American women's career development may be hindered by the lack of role models and mentors at work, and they may tend to choose science-related jobs because of the career stereotypes or their intention to avoid language challenges. Findings from this current study support much of what was noted by Yang, particularly regarding the responses shared by several participants about their struggles of managing family-career conflicts and fulfilling responsibilities from the different life roles they have played. Lack of work role models and mentoring among Chinese American professional women's career development, which are evident in the findings of this study, also confirm Yang's suggestions regarding the career challenges faced by Chinese American women.

Occupational Segregation and Stereotype

Keeping the suggestions made by existing research in mind, the researcher made an effort to recruit Chinese American professional women from different career fields in the hope to examine if occupational segregation and stereotypes serve as potential career barriers and impact the participants' career development. The findings of the study showed that none of the participants identified career segregation and stereotypes as a career challenge in their career development. Nearly half of the participants' professions involved technical or special skills, and the rest of the participants' jobs are in fields that require more verbal skills and are considered as non-stereotypical career choices for Asian Americans (e.g., education, retail business, social services, and social science).

It is possible the sample of this study is not representative of Asian American or Chinese American women populations, or that the intentional criterion sampling related

to varying career fields yielded a more heterogeneous sample. Yet, it is interesting to observe that none of the participants in the study indicated that they made their career choices because of occupational stereotypes. Those who chose jobs in technical or scientific fields made their career decisions based on their personal interests and professional skills. The others chose to work in professions that require more verbal skills and interpersonal interactions because of their career passions and educational training. Despite language being a concern for most of the participants, the findings indicate that Chinese American professional women's professional training and skills outweigh language issues in influencing their career development and career choices.

Lack of Career Advancement and Promotions

Most of the participants did mention limited opportunities for job promotions and career advancement as one of the career challenges in their career development, although the reasons for lack of career advancement or job promotions varied. The findings showed that the challenge of fewer job promotions does exist for Chinese American professional women even though most of them did not link the lack of opportunities to advance in their professions to the issue of job discrimination. The findings also showed that the issue of a cultural glass ceiling is a challenge for Chinese American professional women and their career development, which was reflected by some of the participants' indications of how their career advancement has been hampered by attributes related to their cultural background and beliefs (e.g., the disadvantage of not being born and raised in the U.S., and being passive and indirect in one's communication style).

Family-Career Conflicts

The findings showed that most of the Chinese American professional women have encountered family-career conflict and experienced the challenge from playing multiple roles in their career development. Several described the emotional struggles they had to go through when their life roles were changed or expanded. Although most of the participants' gender role beliefs have convinced them to develop and maintain a career, their career development is challenged by the interplay of work and family responsibilities as they tried to combine work and family roles.

The current study's suggestion regarding the dilemma faced by Chinese American professional women of how to find balance between family and child-rearing responsibilities and work demands signifies the notion that Chinese American women, despite the female role changes in contemporary Chinese societies and families, continue to bear more responsibilities for home, family relationships, and child-care in the dual career family structure. The implication derived from such a notion deserves attention in future research on generating career theories or assessment models that will adequately address these women's personal and career needs in their career development. It is also important for career counselors to recognize that the meaning of career success among Chinese American professional women may be defined by how well a woman balances her family responsibilities, relationships with family members and her career, which is consistent with suggestions made by existing research (Bingham & Ward, 1997; Fouad & Bingham, 1995).

Challenges from Difficult Job Tasks and Work Demands

The findings indicate that difficult job tasks and work demands from the professions that the Chinese American professional women have chosen have created challenges in their career development. Although existing research rarely incorporates the challenges from job tasks and work demands as one of the career challenges among Asian or Chinese Americans, several participants in this study identified that the main challenges in their career development have come from the complex nature of the job tasks in the career fields they chose or from the job demands that require their complete devotion, which may signify the need and importance of having work role models who can provide mentoring and work support for Chinese American professional women in their career development.

Lack of Support Resources

The findings showed that most of the participants viewed lack of supporting resources and not getting enough help as career challenges. Due to living far apart from their families of origin and in-laws, several participants complained about not being able to utilize their extended family members or in-laws as a resource to gain extra help in taking care of children. The important implication derived from the findings is that Chinese American professional women's career development may suffer due to the lack of supporting resources in helping them juggle between family and career responsibilities.

Most of the participants did not mention role models or mentors in the work place, which may in fact contribute to their concern of not getting enough help as a professional woman in their career development. Most of the Chinese American

professional women in the study did not indicate why they could not locate individuals at their work place as mentors or role models; this warrants further exploration in future studies. The lack of work role models deserves attention because it may contribute significantly to insufficient work support and the lack of career guidance and information in these professional women' career development.

Racial and Gender Discrimination

One interesting finding in this study that deserves special attention involves the issues of racial and gender discrimination. This study showed that racial, cultural or gender discrimination is not viewed as an overt career challenge by most of the participants in their career development. However, through different responses and examples given in the findings (e.g., concerns about language issues, one's limited understanding about American cultural references, fewer job promotions due to one's cultural background, career challenges from one's legal status), subtle forms of racial or cultural discriminations were prevalent in the majority of the participants' career development. Several women's cultural backgrounds also sometimes even serve as career disadvantages to limit their professional development and job options. Although most of the Chinese American professional women in this study did not feel they have been openly discriminated against because of their ethnicity or gender in their current professions, examples of implicit racial and cultural discrimination in their career development and assumptions from others due to their looking and speaking differently from the majority culture cannot be overlooked.

Three possible reasons that the participants denied overt discrimination in their career development are discussed next. First, the Chinese American professional women

in the study are professionals equipped with expertise in different career fields, which helps them to be considered valuable and productive in the workforce, which in turn may serve as a career advantage for them to secure employment more easily, compared to non-professional individuals. Therefore, these women's sense of professionalism may compel them to overlook their experiences of being discriminated against due to their ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

Second, most of the Chinese American professional women in this study have a positive work mentality and have developed an attitude of not dwelling on the past. In facing different career challenges and difficult issues, they often use their positive attitudes as a way of coping and try to focus on the present and future of their lives. Such a mentality may help these women to cope with the subtle racial or cultural discrimination in their career development as they attempt to look at the bright side of difficult issues and minimize the racism or sexism in U.S. society.

Third, traditional Chinese cultural values emphasize the importance of introspection and taking responsibility for what has happened in one's life. Therefore, the reason that the majority of the participants did not view incidents related to ethnicity or gender issues as one form of discrimination in their career development may be because they have been socialized culturally to look within themselves and to find out what they can do to improve different situations before placing blame on external factors or other individuals.

Overall Experience as a Chinese American Professional Woman

The findings in the study regarding the participants' overall experience as a Chinese American professional woman have provided significant implications for future research and reported important themes that reflect similarities in these women's experiences as a female professional in the U.S. workforce.

One of the important themes in the participants' experience of being a Chinese American professional woman involves the descriptions of how these professional women see their career development as a dynamic process of searching and developing personal and professional identities. This sense of a dynamic journey, in fact, supports the concepts in Super's life-span theory (1992) of how one's career development is a dynamic process that takes place through different developmental stages, and how one's self-concept is shaped and formed in the process of his or her career development.

Another theme recognized in the participants' experience as a professional woman in the U.S. work force involved their encounters with career challenges and their management of these challenges. The implication derived from this finding lies in the importance of developing helpful coping attitudes and useful strategies as the participants face different career challenges. Another implication derived from this part of the findings is the emergence of a psychological process regarding Chinese American professional women's coping with career challenges. As the participants faced career challenges, they typically reacted with negative emotions (e.g., frustration, sadness, or resentment) initially, which led to complaints, doubts and questioning of the occurrence of the challenges. Then, the participants were able to step back and started to recognize the existence of different problems, which led them to come to the acceptance stage.

After accepting the realities, they began to develop coping attitudes and to utilize different strategies to deal with the career challenges, which brought them to the action stage. In the process of dealing with the career challenges, the Chinese American professional women learned from their experiences and kept moving forward in their career journey.

Most of the participants' experiences as Chinese American professional women involved the process of managing and negotiating multiple roles in their lives and learning to embrace both benefits and challenges brought by playing different life roles. The important implications derived from this theme include: the professional women's strong emphasis on the benefits of combining multiple roles from family and work, and the possibility for them to create an equilibrium between family and work. The participants' playing multiple roles in their career development have brought them different advantages, such as multiple levels of identities, a more colorful and exciting life, a better way to connect with people at work, richer life and professional experiences, better planning and management skills, a sense of self-sufficiency, and financial independence. Such responses shared by the participants spoke to how the benefits of playing multiple roles far outweigh the challenges created by work-family conflicts.

What needs to be recognized is how the participants' experiences as Chinese American professional women involved several other issues, such as a sense of fulfillment and self-worth, acknowledging personal strengths, and focusing on the future of their career development. The participants in the study are professional women with high career expectations. Their career expectations have led them to choose and develop a career that allows them to establish themselves professionally, which result in personal

career achievements and a sense of self-value in their career journey. By staying positive, determined, strong, creative, open, motivated, and being a risk taker, these Chinese American professional women are able to focus on the future of their career development and keep moving ahead in their voyage.

Suggestions and Ideas for Coping for Chinese American Professional Women

Based on the findings of the study and the coping strategies used by the participants, suggestions and ideas regarding coping with career challenges and family-career conflicts are provided for other Chinese American professional women.

Coping with Career Challenges

Different career challenges encountered by the Chinese American professional women in the study may represent similar challenging issues faced by other professional women in this population. The career challenges reported by the findings of this study can easily disadvantage the career development of Chinese American professional women and their career success and satisfaction, especially if they do not have a support network and proper coping skills for different situations, which is supported by Yang's research (1991). Therefore, this study provides the following suggestions for other Chinese American professional women as ideas to cope with career challenges in their professional development.

Develop Awareness and Coping Attitudes

Chinese American professional women are encouraged to develop awareness of possible barriers or challenges in their career development. If Chinese American professional women do encounter challenging issues in their professional development,

they need to take time to examine the issues so they know how to deal with the problems. While assessing and accepting career challenges, they also need to develop a coping mentality with optimism and a positive attitude. By staying strong and knowing how to seek out help, career challenges may become more manageable for Chinese American professional women, and the process of dealing with those challenges may be less agonizing.

Incorporate Support Systems into Career Development

The importance of building a support system and including one's support network in Chinese American professional women's career development cannot be stressed enough. It is vital for Chinese American professional women to seek support and help from their significant others, friends, colleagues, supervisors and if possible extended family members because they do not have to voyage alone in their career journey. With proper help and support, Chinese American professional women's career development may become a much more pleasant journey, and the female professionals may have more time and energy to develop their careers and fulfill responsibilities from various life roles.

Establish Coping Strategies

In addition to a positive coping attitude and a good support network, Chinese American professional women are advised to establish specific coping strategies as tools to help them deal with various career challenges. The participants in this study have recommended several coping approaches, such as finding the right solution for the right problem, setting boundaries between personal, family and professional lives, rehearsing positive thoughts, relying on self-confidence to take care of problems, and asking for help

if needed. With proper management skills and a repertoire of coping strategies, Chinese American professional women may handle career challenges with less difficulty and develop their careers with less obstacles.

Coping with Family-Career Conflicts

Young people, especially women, typically face challenges as they are in the stages of beginning a family and developing a career (Tipping, 1997). It is common for young married Chinese American professional women to encounter family-career conflicts when they try to have a family and establish a career at the same time, which is supported by the findings of this study and those of Tipping's research. This study provides the following suggestions for Chinese American professional women who need to cope with family-career conflicts in the hope to help them find family-career resilience in their career development.

Acknowledge the Challenge and Stay Positive

Chinese American professional women are advised to acknowledge the reality that it is not an easy process to negotiate among multiple roles and manage different responsibilities that come with such roles. It is unrealistic for Chinese American professional women to think that as a wife, a mother, and a career woman, they can completely fulfill all the responsibilities from these different roles. It is also important for Chinese American professional women to recognize the stress created by family-career conflicts and to develop a positive mentality to defuse the possible negative emotions that take place in the process of coping with family-career conflicts.

Evaluate Role Values and Prioritize Responsibilities

Upon accepting the existence of family-career conflicts, Chinese American professional women are also encouraged to assess each life role and prioritize the responsibilities that come with the role in order to find an acceptable equilibrium to manage multiple roles and different obligations. Upon clarifying the role values and prioritizing role responsibilities, Chinese American professional women may develop a better sense of how much time and energy should be spent in different roles played by them and have a better idea of what to expect in their personal and professional lives.

Plan Ahead and Make Adjustments

It is vital for Chinese American professional women to develop good time management skills and to actively plan in advance as they play multiple roles in their career development. By planning ahead, they can explore different options and make needed adjustments in their personal and professional lives to deal with existing and possible challenges in the process of playing multiple roles. Through proper planning and making adjustments, Chinese American professional women are more likely to experience less frustration and to have a better sense of control when they try to combine different life roles.

Utilize Support Systems and Be Aware of Resources

Chinese American professional women are strongly recommended to engage their support network in the process of playing multiple roles. With help and support from spouses, family members, friends, employers, and child-care services, they can develop a

better network with assorted resources to help them manage family and work responsibilities and to develop better family-career flexibility and equilibrium.

Strengths and Limitations

This study was designed in an attempt to explore Chinese American professional women's career experiences and development using qualitative research methodology. It was hoped that this study would provide useful information to contribute to the scarce body of knowledge regarding the career development of professional women among the Chinese American population. The strengths and limitations of this study are discussed as follows.

Strengths

This study had several strengths. First, the diversity of the sample was a strength of this study. The researcher made an effort to recruit Chinese American professional women in different career fields, life-cycle stages, and age groups and tried to include individuals at various levels of experiences within their career fields. The selection of a diverse sample resulted in a rich variety of experiences and perspectives from the participants in the study, which increases the likelihood of the findings of this study in reflecting other Chinese American professional women's career experiences and development.

Another strength was rooted in the reciprocal nature of the data collection and analysis inherent in the research design of the study. The researcher did two interviews, shared the transcripts of the first interviews with the participants prior to the second interviews, conducted a data analysis of the first interview data, which informed the data

collection and analysis of the second interviews, and analyzed the entire collected data using the grounded theory approach. The recursive research design embedded in this study served to strengthen the data analysis process and enhanced the thorough examination of the meanings generated at the different stages in the process of data analysis.

Third, one strength of this study was the researcher's familiarity with the phenomenon of study — that of being a Chinese American professional woman herself. The researcher's cultural and personal backgrounds allowed her to connect to the participants more easily, to develop a better rapport with them, and to be able to better relate to their experiences as Chinese American professional women.

Fourth, one of the strengths of this study was the informative findings generated by the research methodology and the development of a theoretical scheme, which served to explain what comprises Chinese American professional women's career development, what has impacted their career decision-making process, and how different factors interact with one another to influence their career development and their experience as professional women in the U.S. workforce. Qualitative research methodology used in this study managed to elicit authentic meanings and give voice to Chinese American professional women's career stories and to gain personal perspectives about their professional development. The theoretical scheme was generated in the hope to develop a comprehensive and culturally appropriate theory in examining Chinese American women's career development and vocational behaviors.

Finally, this study may spark people similar to the participants' backgrounds to focus on variables that have influenced their career development. The findings of this

study have drawn special attention to the different contextual factors that have exerted important impacts on career decision-making processes among Chinese American women. For people who are interested in becoming more aware of Chinese American women's career development and for professionals who provide career-related services to Chinese American females, this study presented a great deal of useful information regarding career-related issues with this population.

Limitations

Each research study has its limitations. One of the weaknesses of this study lied in the limited focus on the specific targeted population of foreign-born Chinese Americans. Research results may differ if a study were to be conducted on American-born Chinese, Chinese American males, or different Asian American ethnic groups.

In addition, the researcher is the only interviewer, coder and reporter as well as a Chinese American woman. Therefore, it is possible the researcher's personal assumptions and biases may have affected the interviews and data interpretation processes. The research study was designed to ensure that the researcher's biases did not unduly influence the findings, and design features noted above regarding the reciprocal interplay between data collection and analysis and periodic member checks helped to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. The researcher also acknowledged and presented her assumptions about the topic of interest in Chapter III. Despite these efforts, it is still possible that, given her multiple roles in the study, the researchers' biases might have inadvertently influenced the process and findings of the research.

Another potential limitation of this study was in the participant selection process. The participants in this study were chosen based upon established criteria, such as

educational background, legal status in the U.S., career fields, term of employment, geographic location, and other additional requirements mentioned earlier. Other Chinese American professional women who were excluded from the study due to the selection criteria may also have contributed valuable and perhaps different information about their career experiences and development.

Furthermore, the participants in this study were interviewed in English due to the researcher's concern about losing true meaning of the data in the translation process. However, the researcher's judgment of conducting interviews in English may serve as a limitation in excluding other potential Chinese American professional women due to the language concern. The researcher's decision to carry out interviews in English may also produce a sample biased toward Chinese American professional women with a higher level of acculturation because one's language proficiency in English might lead to a better understanding of the U.S. culture.

Finally, the sample of this study was rather small and came from limited geographic regions, which may limit the generalizability of the findings in various ways. The voices of individuals whose experiences have differed from those of the participants focused on in this study could also have been accessed. For example, non-professional Chinese American women working in the U.S., or other Chinese American females who reside in foreign countries other than the U.S. could be the attention of similar future research.

Despite the limitations of this study, the useful information provided by this study has managed to enhance the knowledge of Chinese American women's career

development. This was one of the researcher's goals in conducting this exploratory research regarding Chinese American professional women.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

Recommendations for Future Research

It is the researcher's hope that this exploratory study will lay the groundwork for future studies regarding Chinese American women's career development and encourage more studies in the future investigating career development and occupational behaviors of different Asian American and other ethnic groups. It will be worthwhile to replicate the study with other female groups, such as non-professional Chinese American women, professional women from other ethnic groups, Asian American women in general, and across professional women in various Asian ethnic groups. By replicating the study with different female groups, the theoretical scheme generated by this study can be tested in relation to different populations of women with various experiences and career achievements, which will help to increase the understanding of Asian American women and other ethnic minority women's career development and decision-making processes.

The participants in this study were interviewed in English because of the researcher's attempt to avoid possible setbacks resulting from translating different languages. It will be beneficial to replicate this study in the future with research interviews being conducted in Chinese, so the voice of Chinese American professional women who feel more comfortable sharing their career stories in Chinese can be heard, and a more diverse sample can be chosen.

The current study only focused on Chinese American female professionals. It would be interesting to see how similar studies can be conducted in the future on Chinese American professional men. The current study showed that Chinese American professional women's career development and decision-making are strongly impacted by marriage, having children, family and child-rearing responsibilities, gender role beliefs, work-family conflicts, career expectations for self, immigration status, and examples of the successful professional women. Future research will benefit from conducting studies that focus on male professionals in the Chinese American population or comparing the career development between Chinese American professional men and women so the voices from both genders can be heard regarding their career development. Future studies exploring Chinese American male professionals' career development may also discover other influential factors and how they are similar to or different from those impacting Chinese American professional women's career decision-making.

This study sought only the perspective of the Chinese American professional woman. Future research might also include other important perspectives, such as that of the spouse or partner of the professional woman, or that of a parent or in-law to gain other potentially valuable perspectives that could shed further light on the experiences of Chinese American professional women and their significant family members. This study highlighted the significance of the participants' nuclear families and previous research has emphasized the role of one's family of origin on career decision-making. Learning from these other important people in the family systems of Chinese American professional women could prove valuable.

Chinese American professional women in different life-cycle stages may face different challenges in their career development. Not surprisingly, the findings of this study showed that Chinese American professional women with small children, compared the others with adult children, appeared to suffer more from the challenges brought by family-career conflicts and by the responsibilities associated with different life roles. Special research attention is needed to focus on the career development of Chinese American women or women of color in the life stage of taking care of small children, which will tease out how career development and decision-making processes of women in this stage are influenced by their family and career responsibilities and personal and family expectations to fulfill different life roles.

The current study contained only nine Chinese American professional women, which is a rather small sample. Future studies will benefit from expanding the sample size to explore the career development and career decision-making process among Chinese American professional women or other Asian American female groups. If future research replicates the study with a greater number of participants from a single ethnic group or cross-ethnic groups, both qualitative and quantitative research methods could be used to explore the career development and other career-related constructs among Chinese American professional women or to generate a comparison in career development between different female ethnic groups.

The last recommendation is for future research to be conducted in U.S. work places regarding organizational policies in hiring foreign-born Asian or Chinese American professional women and about what practices or changes are needed in the work place itself to create a more immigrant- and woman-friendly work environment for

professional women of different ethnic minority groups. Asian and Chinese American professional women are equipped with different types of expertise and should be viewed as assets to U.S. work places. Organizations in the U.S. workforce will face a great loss and would perpetuate job discrimination if they tend not to hire Asian or Chinese American professionals due to immigration status issues and their reluctance to sponsor status change for immigrants.

Recommendations for Practice

This study confirmed that Chinese American professional women's career development is best conceptualized with a theoretical framework that can combine psychological, sociological, and economic aspects in exploring their career decision-making processes and other career behaviors. In the career counseling process, Chinese American professional women will be better served with an approach that is sensitive to their cultural values, psychological needs as professional women, career challenges, family-career conflicts, and different contextual factors that have an impact on their career development and decision-making processes. Based on the findings of this study and the implications derived from the findings, several recommendations are made for career counselors and other helping professionals who will be or are working with Chinese American professional women.

The first suggestion for career counselors or other helping professionals is to develop a culturally appropriate approach for Chinese American professional women. Such an approach equips counselors with interventions to comprehend these women's personal and career development processes and to assess how they express their career interests as well as what influences their career choices.

It is also important for career counselors or other helping professionals to have a good understanding of different career development theories and their applications to the career development of Chinese American professional women. Without having a theoretical framework, it will be difficult to provide effective counseling services.

In addition, it is essential for career counselors or other helping professionals to know a foreign-born Chinese American female client's ethnic identity development, acculturation level, and their psychological adjustment in the immigration process. With a good understanding of the interaction between cultural-related variables and Chinese American professional women's career decision-making processes, helping professionals will be able to help them to clarify their career values, personal interests, and make better career decisions.

Moreover, it is important for career counselors and other helping professionals to be aware of their biases when serving Chinese American professional women. Helping professionals may need to suspend their own world or cultural views so they can gain a better picture of how different life experiences, cultural value systems, family values, gender-role expectations and beliefs, career challenges, language issues, and immigration status may interact with Chinese American professional women's career development, career interests, and career decision-making and choices.

Lastly, career counselors or other helping professionals need to develop an assessment model that allows for a comprehensive evaluation of Chinese American professional women's career development process, career needs, career challenges, and different factors that impact individual career decisions so they can provide support and guidance and help the women in this population to deal with challenging issues. For those

who have concerns regarding family-work conflicts, it is essential for helping professionals to provide information regarding supportive resources and to incorporate techniques, such as time management and life planning skills, prioritizing needs and clarifying role values.

Findings from this study show that it is not easy for Chinese American professional women to connect with work role models. Career counselors and other helping professionals should serve as a resource to provide the women in this population with accurate career information, occupational guidance, career resources, and the encouragement to identify and cultivate role models or mentors in the workplace.

Providing career counseling and other career-related services for Chinese American professional women can be challenging because of Chinese Americans' tendency to underutilize counseling services. However, with an increasing number of Chinese American professional women working in the U.S. work force, it is imperative for career counselors and other helping professionals to equip themselves with helpful information and needed skills to work with women from this population.

Conclusion

This study was meant to illuminate Chinese American professional women's career experiences, career development, and career decision-making processes. The professional women in this study provided their career stories and shared their career paths. With their generous contributions about their experiences shared in the interviews, these Chinese American professional women helped the researcher to achieve the goal of this study in generating invaluable information about their career development.

The findings generated from the study have served to enhance the knowledge regarding Chinese American women's career development, provide information regarding what has impacted their career decision-making process, and illustrate important themes involving their experience as a professional woman in the U.S. workforce. A theoretical scheme was developed based upon the findings, which explains how different cultural, personal, family, and social environmental factors and influences from other important individuals have worked together to create a multifaceted impact on Chinese American professional women's career development and career choices.

Although Chinese American professional women's career journeys may not be always smooth and may in fact sometimes be rocky, they have tried to stay strong and developed ways of coping as they have faced different challenges. One important accomplishment this study achieved was to capture the sense of optimism and persistence shared by Chinese American professional women in their career stories. It is hopeful for the researcher to witness how these women voyaged in their career journey with pride, self-worth, determination, and a positive outlook. It is also encouraging to see how these women focus on the bright side of playing multiple roles in their journey and to be able to develop a career with passion and support from their families, friends and colleagues. A key message sent by these Chinese American professional women is that, it is important for Chinese American women to believe in themselves and keep moving forward in the process of career development.

As the researcher and a Chinese American woman myself, I would like to thank the Chinese American professional women in this study for contributing accounts of their experiences. Their active and engaged participation and the sharing of their career stories

have helped me to complete this study and have become part of my personal and career journey. I hope the meaning derived from these professional women's career development and experiences will contribute to an increased understanding for future research and practice about Chinese American women's career development, career needs, and career decision-making.

Appendix A

Protocol Clearance Letter from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board



Date: March 31, 2005

To: Gary Bischof, Principal Investigator
Yi-Ling Kuo-Rice, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Mary Lagerwey, Ph.D., Chair

Mary Lagerwey

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 05-03-24

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Career Experiences and Development Among Chinese American Professional Women: A Qualitative Study" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: March 31, 2006

Walwood Hall, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5456
PHONE: (269) 387-8293 FAX: (269) 387-8276

Appendix B

Scripts for Contacting Professional Organizations

Hi, _____:

My name is Yi-Ling Kuo-Rice, and I am a doctoral student from the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology at Western Michigan University. I am contacting you to see if your organization can help me with my study by helping me contact potential participants for the study.

I will be conducting a study for my doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Gary Bischof at Western Michigan University. The purpose of this study is to explore the career experiences and professional development of Chinese American women and how they come to decisions of choosing certain types of professions.

My study will target Chinese American women who were born in China or Taiwan and who have obtained a working visa, permanent residence or citizenship in the United States. The participants will need to fulfill the criteria of: (a) receiving associate or bachelor degrees in China or Taiwan, and (b) working as professionals in the U.S. work force for at least 2 years. My study uses a demographic questionnaire and individual interviews in a qualitative case study approach. Individuals who choose to participate will be asked to do the following:

1. Fill out a brief demographic questionnaire. It will take about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.
2. Take part in two semi-structured audio-taped interviews. Each interview will be between 1 and 1 1/2 hours in length.

I wonder if you would be able to provide me a list of potential participants and their contact phone numbers or email addresses so I can contact the individuals and recruit participants for my study. An invitation letter will be sent to the individual who is interested in learning more about my study. If someone chooses to participate in my study, a consent form and a demographic questionnaire will be sent via mail.

If you are unable to give out the contact information of your members, would you be willing to please pass this message and my contact information onto your members? I can email or mail you a copy of the invitation letter so you may distribute this message to your members. In this way, someone from your organization can contact me if she is interested in learning more about my study.

If you have any questions about my study, please contact me at 269-267-7978 or y7kuo@wmich.edu. Thank you very much for your time and help.

Appendix C
Letter of Invitation

Date:

Dear _____:

I would like to invite you to consider participating in a research study conducted by Yi-Ling Linda Kuo-Rice for her doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Gary Bischof, from the Department of Counselor Education & Counseling Psychology at Western Michigan University. The purpose of this study is to explore the career development of Chinese American women and how they come to decisions of choosing certain types of professions.

This study targets Chinese American women who were born in China or Taiwan and who have obtained a working visa, permanent residence or citizenship in the United States. The participants will need to fulfill the criteria of (a) receiving associate or bachelor degrees in China or Taiwan, and (b) working as professionals in the U.S. work force for at least 2 years. Chinese American professional women who work either full time or part time are considered as potential participants for this study. To obtain a diverse sample, several occupational fields are identified as a selection criterion as well. They include business, fine arts, medicine, social science, science, education, social service, mental health, and law/politics.

This study uses a demographic questionnaire and individual interviews in a qualitative case study approach. If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to the following:

1. Fill out a brief demographic questionnaire. It will take about 20 minutes to finish the questionnaire.
2. Participate in two semi-structured audio-taped interviews. Each interview will be between 1 and 1 1/2 hours in length.

This research study is qualitative in nature. Therefore, a series of interview questions will be asked that are designed to explore your personal career development, your career decision-making process, and factors or key events that have impacted your career choices. Through the in-depth descriptions of your personal career development, you may benefit from the research opportunity to explore personal career stories and development during the interviews. In the future, others may benefit from the knowledge you contribute to this research.

Risks are minimal and may include minor discomfort when talking about yourself during the interviews and the possible inconvenience of scheduling the interviews. Your responses are entirely confidential, and code numbers or pseudonyms will be used when coding the data and presenting the findings.

If you are interested in learning more about this research, please contact Yi-Ling Linda Kuo-Rice by phone at 269-267-7978 or by email at y7kuo@wmich.edu. If you have any

concerns or questions regarding this research study, please feel free to contact Yi-Ling Linda Kuo-Rice or the principal investigator, Dr. Gary Bischof at 269-387-5100, email: gary.bischof@wmich.edu. You may also contact the chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293, email: research-compliance@wmich.edu; or the vice president for research at 269-387-8298, email: jack.luderer@wmich.edu with any concerns that you have.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

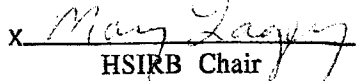
Signature of Student Investigator

Date

Appendix D
Consent Document

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
H. S. I. R. B.
Approved for use for one year from this date:

MAR 31 2005

x 
HSIRB Chair

Western Michigan University

Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

Principal Investigator: Gary Bischof, Ph.D., chair of doctoral committee, Associate Professor,
Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

Student Investigator: Yi-Ling Linda Kuo-Rice, doctoral candidate, Department of Counselor
Education and Counseling Psychology

You have been invited to participate in a research project entitled "*Career experiences and development among Chinese American professional women: A qualitative study.*" The purpose of this study is to explore the career development of Chinese American women and how they come to decisions of choosing certain types of professions. This project is conducted by Yi-Ling Linda Kuo-Rice for her dissertation project under the supervision of Dr. Gary Bischof.

This study uses a qualitative case study approach. As a participant in this study, you will be asked to:

- a. Fill out a brief demographic questionnaire, which will take about 20 minutes to complete.
- b. Participate in two audio tape-recorded interviews of approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours each in length.

The total length of your involvement in the study is over a period of about two months. The two interviews will be conducted by Yi-Ling Linda Kuo-Rice at a mutually agreed upon location. At the first interview, you will be asked questions related to your career experiences, how you came to a decision in working in a particular field, and what factors have impacted your career decisions and choices. Prior to the second interview, you will be asked to review a transcript of your responses to questions asked in the first interview. During the second interview, you will have the opportunity to correct any errors in the transcript from the first interview and to answer some follow-up questions designed to enrich the research data. After the completion of the interviews and data analyses, a draft copy of the findings will be sent to you through mail so you will have a chance to review the findings from this study. You will be invited to provide feedback by phone or email regarding the findings emerging from the study. If you decide to provide comments after you read the emerging findings, your comments will be carefully reviewed. If your comments about the emerging findings differ from those of the researcher, the researcher will contact you via email or phone to confirm how the researcher can best portray in the research findings what you have stated during the interviews. You may request that particular information be altered or removed if the information presented in the emerging findings is inaccurate or might be too sensitive.

MAR 31 2005

x *Mar Lacey*
HSIRB Chair

You may benefit from participation in this research through the opportunity to explore your personal career story and development during the interviews. In the future, others may benefit from the knowledge you contribute to this research.

You may experience minor discomforts as a result of sharing your career story and experiences and the possible inconvenience of scheduling interviews. You will be informed of available counseling services in the unlikely event you need professional intervention for your personal concerns as a result of participation in this research project. You will be responsible for the cost of therapy if you choose to pursue it.

All of the information collected from you will be kept confidential. During the interviews, you may choose to skip questions you do not wish to answer. Confidentiality will be maintained in that your name will not appear on any papers on which this information is recorded. All research-related forms will be coded, and Yi-Ling Linda Kuo-Rice will keep a separate master list with the names of participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list and coding sheet will be destroyed. All other forms and audiotapes will be retained for at least three years in a locked file in the student investigator's office.

After reviewing this consent document, you may choose not to participate. You may refuse to participate or quit at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty. You will not lose the services you are offered from this study (e.g., a counseling referral if needed or requested). If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact either Yi-Ling Linda Kuo-Rice at 269-267-7978 or Dr. Gary Bischof at 269-387-5100. You may also contact the chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 with any concerns that you have.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and/or had explained to you the purpose and requirements of the study and that you agree to participate. By signing this consent form, you also agree to be audio-taped during the two interviews. A copy of this consent form will be given to you as a record to keep.

Signature

Date

Consent obtained by: _____
Initials of researcher

Date

Appendix E
Demographic Questionnaire

Participant Code: _____ (For the researcher only)

Demographic Questionnaire

Name: _____

Phone number and email address: _____

Age: _____

Birth order: _____

Numbers of siblings: _____

Current occupation and position: _____

Working hours per week: _____

Years in the current position: _____

Highest level or years of education completed:

Home country: _____

Year you first came to the U.S.: _____

Number of years you have lived in the U.S.: _____

Status in the U.S. (Working visa, Permanent resident, or Citizen):

Marital Status: _____

Race and ethnicity of spouse or partner: _____

Occupation of spouse or partner: _____

Numbers and ages of children: _____

Country of birth of:

Father: _____

Mother: _____

Parents and sibling(s)' occupations:

Father's occupation(s): _____

Mother's occupation(s): _____

Sibling(s)' occupation(s): _____

Highest level of education completed by parents and sibling(s):

Father: _____

Mother: _____

Sibling(s): _____

Appendix F
Guiding Interview Questions

Guiding Interview Questions

□ Opening Question:

Before we start, do you have any questions about this study or concerns about the issue of confidentiality?

□ Primary Research Question 1:

What have Chinese American professional women experienced in their career development? How do they describe the experiences related to their professional development?

Interview Questions associated with Primary Research Question 1:

1. Please describe your educational background and share your career history (e.g., how many jobs you have had in the past and what kind of jobs you have chosen?).
2. Please describe job-related experiences that have influenced your career development and your career choices.
3. How do you describe your experience as a Chinese American professional woman in the U.S. workforce?

□ Primary Research Question 2:

What are the career paths of Chinese American professional women, and what are some key events that influence their career development?

Interview Questions associated with Primary Research Question 2:

1. Please briefly introduce your current job (e.g., the nature of the job, tasks involved in the job, and how long have you had this job).
2. How would you describe your career path that brought you to your current position?

3. What key factors/events or experiences in your personal or professional lives have been influential or important to your career development and may impact your career choices (e.g., life transitions and turning points, social economic status, studying in the U.S., marriage, having children, immigration status, job promotion or career change)?

□ **Primary Research Question 3:**

How do Chinese American professional women make career decisions taking into account different contextual factors or background variables (e.g., family and parental influence, racial identity development, cultural values, gender-role socialization, acculturation process, immigration status, and possible career barriers)?

Interview Questions associated with Primary Research Question 3:

1. How did you end up in your current job/occupation? Why did you choose this profession?
2. How do you think your career values were shaped? In what ways do you think your career values have impacted your career decisions?
3. How has your family (both current and extended family) influenced your career decisions? What did they expect or encourage you to become? Are there any other individuals, besides your family, who have influenced your career development?
4. In what ways did your early childhood experiences influence your career choices?
5. What influences did your past school (college or high school) experiences have on your career choices?
6. How do you describe your ethnic identity? How has your ethnic identity influenced your career development and choices?

7. In what ways has being a Chinese American limited or given you access to career options?
8. How do you think your cultural values and acculturation process have impacted your career choice and development?
9. How do you develop self-confidence in the jobs you have had chosen and in the current career? What has impacted the way you see yourself as a professional woman?
10. How do your beliefs in yourself as a professional woman influence your career decision-making?
11. In any ways have the gender role expectations affect your career choices?
12. How has being a Chinese American female affected your career decisions?
13. In what ways has being a Chinese American woman limited or enhanced your career development and options?
14. How have your family responsibilities influenced your career development? How do you handle family and work responsibilities?
15. Do you think the geographic location where you reside impact your career development and options?
16. How do you think your background as an immigrant or your legal status affect your career development or decision-making?

❑ **Primary Research Question 4:**

What career barriers have Chinese American professional women encountered in their career development, and how do they manage these barriers?

Interview Questions associated with Primary Research Question 4:

1. What career barriers or challenges have you experienced in your career development?
2. Do you see any obstacles for yourself in your current position, especially due to being a Chinese American woman?
3. How do you deal with career challenges or barriers that you have encountered in the work environment, such as coping strategies you have used or utilizing your support system?

❑ **Ending Questions:**

1. How do you see the opportunities for yourself and other Chinese American women in the U.S. workforce today and in the future?
2. If you look at your experience as a Chinese American professional woman in your career development, how would you evaluate this experience?
3. Is there anything you would like to add or do you have any comments about this study or what we have discussed (e.g. about the study, the interviews, or the transcript you read)?

Appendix G
Contact Summary Sheet

Contact Summary Sheet

Date:

Site:

Interviewer:

Participant Code:

Length of Interview:

Summary of the Contact

1. Personal observations or reflections during the interview (e.g., rapport of the interview, non-verbal communications, notable things in the interview environment, or notable differences in voice or affect)

3. Summary of the information regarding each of the target questions I asked in this contact (or the questions I did not ask)

4. What research questions were focused on the most during the contact? What target questions, either new ones or the ones related to questions from the first interview, would be helpful to bring up in the next contact for this participant?

5. Is there anything else in the contact that struck me as salient, interesting, or important?

(Adapted from Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2000)

Appendix H

Table 1 – Summary of Participants' Background

Table 1
Summary of Participants' Background

Background	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Career field	Education	Health Care	Business	Science	Social Service	Computer Science	Medicine	Fine Arts	Social Science
Job Title	Language Instructor	Certified Dental Technician	Guest Service Representative	Analytical Chemist	Program Coordinator	Quality Staff Engineer	Licensed Acupuncturist	Piano Teacher	Director of Library Services
Working Hours per Week	15 to 20	40	30 to 40	40	40 to 44	40	50	45 to 50	40
Years of Experience in Current Job	2	7	4	3 1/2	6 ms	4	9	3 1/2	8
Educational Background & Highest Degree Obtained	Ph.D. in Comparative Cultures, Japan	B.A. in Gymnastics Education, China	B.A. in Fine Arts, U.K.	M.S. in Chemistry, U.S.A	M.S. in Leisure Studies, U.S.A	M.S. in Applied Math, U.S.A	M.O.M. in Oriental Medicine, U.S.A	B.A. in Music Therapy, U.S.A	M.L.S. in Library Science, U.S.A
Age	40	50	35	35	41	50	55	35	49

Table 1 – Continued

Background	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Home country	China	China	Taiwan	China	Taiwan	Taiwan	Taiwan	Taiwan	China
Legal Status	Permanent Resident	Permanent Resident	Citizen	Legal Alien	Permanent Resident	Citizen	Citizen	Permanent Resident	Citizen
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married	Single	Married	Divorced	Married	Married	Divorced
Ethnicity of Spouse	Caucasian	Chinese	Caucasian	N/A	Chinese	N/A	Chinese	Chinese	N/A
Children & Ages	2 (4, 8 ms)	1 (22)	2 (2 ½, 1 ms)	None	2 (9, 9 – twins)	1 (15)	2 (27, 24)	None	1 (22)
Year first came to the U.S.	1992	1988	2000	1998	1988	1980	1990	1997	1989
Years living in the U.S.	4	16	4 1/2	6 1/2	14	24	15	7 1/2	16
Parents' occupations	F – Architect M- Professor	F- Office staff M- Government Worker	F- Physician M- Housewife	F- Professor M- Physician	F-Businessman M- Teacher	F- Air force Officer M- Business Woman	F- Chinese Medicine Doctor M- Housewife	F- Government Worker M- Nurse	F- Biologist M- Biologist

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