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BREAKING THE CYCLE FOR A BETTER LIFE:
UNDERSTANDING THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THAT FIRST-
GENERATION, COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCED WHEN
MAKING COLLEGE MAJOR AND CAREER CHOICES

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership

by
Francisco Ramirez

June 2019

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ABSTRACT

Choosing a college major and career are the most critical decisions that college students make and students are expected to make these impactful decisions early in their academic careers. First-generation, community college students are a group that are especially affected by this early decision process as they require the knowledge and experience to make informed decisions. Their parents often lack the experience to guide them through this process since they are unfamiliar with being a college student and providing the necessary support in this area. These barriers cause stress among these students and inefficiencies in the decisions that they make. Nevertheless, first-generation, community college students are a group that possess a tremendous amount of motivation and determination for reaching their goals regardless of the barriers they encounter.

Community colleges and high schools are in a position to create intervention programs that help promote career development at a time when it's most critical. The aim of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the decision-making process that first-generation, community college students experienced as they made college major and career choices. The study focused on understanding the factors that influenced students' college major and career choices.

This study found that the factors that influenced students' college major and career choices were: a desire to break the cycle of poverty for a better life;

the desire to set a good example; the desire to become something real; the exposure to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to authentic careers during their educational experience; knowing there is a future; and the support and guidance students received while pursuing their education.

Furthermore, students reported that their exposure to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to their authentic careers during their educational experience, as well as the support and guidance they received, helped bolster their level of confidence about reaching their career goals, thus, providing students with a heightened sense of career self-efficacy. Results of this study indicated that having the proper support and guidance, both moral and financial, influenced the choices that they made related to their college majors and careers. Being confident about reaching a career goal gave students the determination and resiliency to keep moving forward in their academic path.

Participants described their major and career choice process as confronting unclear futures with determination and resilience; encountering and overcoming financial barriers; being stressful; and as a process of searching.

This new knowledge that emerged as a result of this study will assist counselors in utilizing effective counseling approaches in order to maximize the assistance provided to first-generation, community college students based on their actual career development needs. The study results will also help in directing the development of intervention programs focused on career development at community colleges and pre-collegiate institutions.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Ruth “Cuca” Ramirez and my father, Francisco “Pancho” Ramirez, for their tireless work in order to provide a better life for our family. You have always instilled in me the value of education and made me understand how transformative having an education can be. My father exposed me to college at a very early age and always made me believe that I could accomplish whatever I set my mind to. My mother has always been my rock, and I am the luckiest son because of that. This dissertation is dedicated to you both.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Career development is a process that unfolds over time and encompasses various factors. It is not something that is simple to examine but must be viewed with a multi-dimensional, critical lens. First-generation college students (FGC) are a group that encounters complexities when it comes to this process (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004). These students are defined as those “whose parent(s) did not graduate from college” (Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis, & Ruder, 2006, p. 65). A great majority of first-generation college students come from low socio-economic backgrounds and primarily belong to marginalized ethnic minority groups (Inman & Mayes, 1999; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Tate et. al., 2015; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). This group has little familial context for pursuing higher education.

It has been posited that individuals can acquire the social and cultural capital deemed valuable in society through a formal education (Bourdieu, 1986; Longmire-Avital & Miller-Dyce, 2015; McLaren, 2015; Yosso, 2005). This Social Capital includes the potential resources and credibility available to individuals through their connections and networks. Cultural Capital encompasses one’s traits, characteristics and experiences (Bourdieu, 1986). Through a formal education, Social and Cultural Capital could be transformed into Economic

Capital by obtaining high paying jobs or even jobs that pay a living wage. As a result of this, social mobility occurs (McLaren, 2015).

First-generation college students represent 34 percent of undergraduate students in American colleges and universities (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). According to the Postsecondary National Policy Institute (2018) 48 percent of first-generation students enrolled in a community college. California community colleges educate those students that are traditionally not fully-qualified to attend a UC or CSU system school. They offer programs such as developmental education, transfer preparation, vocational education, continuing education, and more (Cohen & Brawer, 2014). Community colleges serve as a pathway to the bachelor's degree as well as offer curriculum in various trades and careers. They are a resource in the community that they serve and help transform lives in a positive manner (Alexander, Bozick, Entwisle, 2008).

Given the transformational role that community colleges play in the education and lives of first-generation students, it is imperative to understand the guiding principles that govern first-generation, community college students' career development. Research focusing on the influencing factors that impact their college major and career choices is needed. The obstacles that they face in the process must also be examined. With this knowledge, community colleges can begin to create interventions that aid this population in the area of making college major and career choices.

Problem Statement

First-generation, community college students are a group that possess a tremendous amount of motivation and determination for reaching their goals regardless of the barriers they encounter (Lent et al., 2002). Family plays a significant role in influencing the college major and career decisions that they make. However, first-generation, community college students do not always have the proper knowledge, experience or parental guidance in college and career related matters. Parents are knowledge carriers. However, not always of the knowledge that institutions of higher learning deem valuable. Family influences and socio-economic factors play a large role in determining what career paths first-generation college students pursue (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004). Research indicates that when parental guidance is present, first-generation college students are encouraged to seek out positions that offer job security, no physical labor, and social mobility (Ayala & Striplen, 2002). Societal expectations contribute to the decisions they make as well. First-generation college students of color, in particular, feel a pull toward, and are often times systemically directed toward lower paying jobs that require little or no formal education (Gibbons & Borders, 2010; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). The Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012, Senate Bill 1456, states that according to Title 5, Section 55530 of the California Code of Regulations, students at California Community Colleges must identify an

academic and career goal upon applying to college (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2016). Students are required to select their college major from a list of 179 choices listed in alphabetical order (Fulks, 2019). Their financial aid eligibility is based on the college major they select. Given these factors, community colleges need to provide first-generation, community college students with the proper knowledge and experience to make informed decisions about their colleges major and careers. Being undecided about their college majors and careers affects students' time to degree completion, keeping them at the community college for additional years. In some cases, if a student does not feel committed to a particular major or career, they may be susceptible to dropping out. Community colleges and high schools are in a position to create intervention programs that help promote career development at a time when it's most critical.

Purpose Statement

To understand the decision-making process that first-generation, community college students experienced as they made their college major and career choices, attention was placed on understanding the factors that influenced their college major and career choices. Furthermore, the results add to the existing research focusing on first-generation college students and their career development. This study brings new knowledge to community colleges and pre-collegiate institutions looking for direction when creating interventions that promote career development. It also assists community college counselors with

employing effective counseling approaches regarding career development when working with first-generation, community college students based on their actual career development needs. Understanding the decision-making process that first-generation, community college students experience when making college major and career choices is critical.

Research Questions

To understand the decision-making process that first-generation, community college students experienced as they made their college major and career choices, the following two research questions were employed.

Question 1:

What influences first-generation, community college students when choosing a college major and career?

Question 2:

How do first-generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process?

Significance of the Study

Current research associated with first-generation college students and their career development focuses on their transition from school to work. The focus has primarily been on first-generation students that attended a four-year university. This study is unique in that it focuses exclusively on a first-generation,

community college student population and captures their experiences as they make decisions regarding their college major and career choices. This research study adds to the existing literature concerning first-generation students and their career development.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical framework for this study is centered on the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Grounded in Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, SCCT examines how career choices are developed, career and academic interests are established, and how these choices are turned into action. "The theory describes career decision making as a function of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals" (Olson, 2014, p. 203). SCCT is a relevant theory to employ when exploring career and college major choices with FGC students, positing that FGC students may rule out reasonable career and educational options based on a false understanding of their ability to be successful (Chen & Carroll, 2005). Focus was placed on examining how, if at all, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals influence their college major and career choice. The Social Cognitive Career Theory supports the notion that family and socio-economic factors play an influential role on the career paths of first-generation college students. This theory was used to guide the interpretation of the findings but it did not constrain the narratives of the participants.

Assumptions

This study utilized the framework from Social Cognitive Career Theory to explain how, if at all, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals influenced their college major and career choices. Based on this theory, it is assumed that college major and career choices can be influenced by a person's environment and experiences.

Delimitations

This study included interviews with twelve first-generation, community college students. It was delimited to a community college setting because research is scant in the study of first-generation, community college students and their career development. It did not seek to look at major and career choice in the context of socio-economic background, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender specifically.

Definitions of Key Terms

Authentic Career: “A truthful reflection of your genuine values and ideals as opposed to a reflection of the values and ideals of others” (Craddock, 2004, p. 1).

Career Barriers: Events or conditions in a person’s life which can create challenges for career development (Swanson & Woitke, 1997).

Cultural Capital: “Cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed on from one generation to another” (McLaren, 2015, p. 154).

FGC: “First Generation College Students” (Olson, 2014, p. 200).

First- Generation College Students: “Student whose parent(s) did not graduate from college” (Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis, & Ruder, 2006, p. 65).

Self-Efficacy: “The belief in one’s capability to complete a task” (Butz & Usher, 2015, p. 49).

Social Capital: The resources and credibility available to individuals through their connections and networks (Bourdieu, 1986).

Summary

First-generation, community college students make important college major and career choices lacking sufficient knowledge to make informed decisions. Being the first in their families to go to college often times means making decisions on their own. Societal influences and expectations impose on the decisions made by this already vulnerable population. Some of the choices made are less than favorable due to the lack of information and role models available to them. High school campuses and institutions of higher learning are in a position to have a great impact on this process. Providing students with the proper tools and knowledge to make informed decisions, at the right time during their academic journey, is life changing. What follows is the literature reviewed for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will highlight the literature examined for this study. Attention was placed on literature that examined the complexities that make up the experiences of first-generation, community college students when making college major and career choices. This section is organized by highlighting six overarching themes. What follows begins with the history of community colleges and then extrapolates upon the following themes: First-generation college students, STEM fields and first-generation college students, social, cultural and economic capital, customized programs supporting student success, career barriers, factors affecting career decision making, and self-efficacy.

History of Community Colleges

The California Master Plan of Higher Education has had a significant impact in providing direction to institutions of higher education in California and in the U.S. Since its inception in 1960, it has served to transform the very factors that contribute to the sustainability and growth of California colleges and universities. As noted in The California Master Plan of Higher Education (California State Department of Education, 1960), the purpose of the document was to create policy related to the “development, expansion and integration of the facilities, curriculum and standards” (p.1), of higher education in the state. One of the major directives that came from The California Master Plan of Higher

Education was universal access. The Master Plan set the standards for lower-division admission to California public universities, specifically, access to the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) school systems. The top one-third of all graduates of California public high schools were granted the opportunity to attend a California State University system school. Only the top one-eighth were candidates for admission to the University of California system. The community college served as the place for open access. The Donahoe Act of 1960 codified many of the recommendations brought forth by The California Master Plan. An example of this includes the missions for the different segments of higher education as stated above (California State Department of Education, 1960).

An open admission policy gives any student the opportunity to pursue a college degree. As noted by Callan (2009), other significant changes brought forth by The California Master Plan of Higher Education were that community colleges “gained acceptance as an integral part of higher education, and were given the largest mandate for expansion” (p. 4). Also, California State Universities were given permission to award degrees through the master’s level. The University of California was charged with awarding advanced graduate and professional degrees with a focus on research. Modifications have recently taken place via legislation, including SB 850 which enabled California Community Colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees (SB 850, 2014). Another legislation that brought about change was SB 724. This legislation made it possible for

California State University system schools to award the Doctorate degree in Education, Ed.D. (SB 724, 2005). The focus was to prepare individuals to become administrative leaders in California public K-12 schools and community colleges. This bill was drafted as a result of the immediate need for administrators that were qualified to direct the changes needed within the public school system. Furthermore, in 2017, the Assembly Select Committee on the Master Plan of Higher Education in California was formed. The members met to examine the relevancy of the Master Plan in the 21st century economy (California State Assembly Democratic Caucus, 2018).

Community colleges offer programs such as developmental education, transfer preparation, vocational education, continuing education, and more (Cohen & Brawer, 2014). Community colleges serve as a pathway to the bachelor's degree as well as to trades and careers. Amery (2010) noted that economic growth and competitiveness create a demand for "An emphasis on the education, skills and training of all California residents" (p.333); an educated workforce is crucial for the California economy. Community colleges possess the resources that are allowing this skills-based education to take place. Community colleges educate those students that are traditionally not fully-qualified to attend a UC or CSU system school. First-generation, non-traditional college students are more likely to start their undergraduate education at community college. The same is true about students of color and students from low-income backgrounds (Inman & Mayes, 1999).

First-Generation College Students

There are various definitions in the literature defining first-generation college students. Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998) defined them as “those whose parents’ highest level of education is a high school diploma or less” (p.7), and never enrolled in postsecondary education. Benmayor (2002) defined them as those whose parents did not enroll in college. Others defined first-generation college students as “students whose parent(s) did not graduate from college” (Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis, & Ruder, 2006, p.65). Tate et. al. (2015) described first-generation college students as coming from low socio-economic backgrounds and primarily belonging to marginalized ethnic minority groups. This group has limited familial experience with attending a college or university. Gibbons and Shoffner (2004) explained that first-generation college students are a group that encounter complexities when it comes to issues of career development. They represent 34 percent of undergraduate students in American colleges and universities (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). They navigate unfamiliar territories and their parents often times lack the sufficient experience or knowledge to adequately help them. Ayala and Striplen (2002) suggested that if a first-generation college student claims to know what they want out of college, it is based on parental influences to seek security, a job that does not require physical labor, and one that permits the student to live at a level in society above that of their parents.

First-generation college students of color feel a pull toward, and are often times systemically directed toward lower paying jobs that require little or no formal education (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). According to Clark (1960), his “Cooling Out” theory suggests that community colleges divert the aspirations of students who aspire to be a part of the professional and managerial upper middle class, and these are the same students who are typically destined by the structure of opportunity to occupy more modest positions. For a large number of students, failure is inevitable and structured, which according to Brint and Karabel (1989), described it as where students experienced a downward leveling of ambition. This is notably the case within low-income community college students with high expectations. In contrast, Alexander, Bozick and Entwisle (2008) noted that the expectations are not necessarily cooled out. In fact, attending a community college is associated more with warming up than with cooling out. Community colleges serve then as a supportive resource for students to grow from their ambition and pursue their career goals. Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) stated that career choice is affected by factors from one’s early years, such as family socioeconomic status and gender. Socioeconomic status plays a powerful role in the career development of first-generation college students. Studies on career choice, especially in the STEM fields, have indicated that first-generation college students face financial barriers that affects their success and retention.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Fields and First-Generation College Students

The number of first-generation college students pursuing a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) has been traditionally low (Arcidiacono, Aucejo, & Hotz, 2016). In programs where first-generation college students are enrolled, these STEM programs have been least successful in retaining them. To investigate this trend, Baltaci, Dakeev and Yildiz (2015) conducted a quantitative survey focusing on students pursuing an engineering degree at two colleges. They surveyed a total of 139 students from seven technology engineering programs offered at Bridgemont Community and Technical College in Montgomery, West Virginia (BCTC). These participants accounted for 65.6% of students in those seven programs. The students who participated in the study included 48.12% who were first-generation college students, 40.75% who were 22 years old or older, and 93.53% who were attending college full-time. Fifteen survey questions were asked in total. All survey questions were closed-ended and were either multiple-choice or scaled. The survey results indicated that financial barriers cause two main problems. First, most students surveyed indicated that they could not afford to pay for the college. Second, the survey highlighted a lack of sufficient time on studying for their classes due to working part-time or full-time. It was revealed that students also lack enough time due to having other family responsibilities as a result of being non-traditional students.

McGonagle et al. (2014) focused their study on investigating a support based intervention program focusing on retaining and graduating ethnic minority and first-generation science college students. Four institutions in Connecticut were involved with the program titled, Science Technology Reaching Out to New Generations in Connecticut (STRONG-CT). These institutions are in rural and urban settings, low-populated and low-socioeconomic areas. This quantitative study evaluated the STRONG-CT program that supports minority and first-generation science students. The purpose of this program is to promote diversity within the business and STEM academic communities in Connecticut by making a concerted effort in increasing enrollment, retention and graduation rates of historically underrepresented, first-generation and racial/ethnic minority students in the life sciences. Four institutions in the study were three Connecticut community colleges, including Manchester, Quinebaug Valley and Three Rivers and the University of Connecticut, a four-year university. For those students participating at the community colleges, the focus was on program completion and transfer to the University of Connecticut to pursue science degrees and graduate in a STEM major. The study's main focus was to investigate if the program was meeting their stated objectives. The study consisted of distributing two surveys. The first survey link was emailed to students and included 199 community college students and 705 university students. The second survey was longitudinal and was administered two years later. A total of 67 university students completed the survey both times. The results revealed that STRONG-

CT benefits students in terms of psychological and behavioral variables. These benefits include positively influencing students' self-efficacy and study habits, sense of belonging and decreasing stress. In addition, it benefited students academically. The results indicated that students performed similar to those, and in some cases better than control students. STRONG-CT is a promising intervention for minority and first-generation college students. Results show that STRONG-CT students perform better in school, on average, than comparable control groups, especially in the first few semesters of school. Additionally, STRONG-CT community college students were far more likely to transfer to four-year institutions and pursue STEM degrees than non-STRONG-CT students. Furthermore, students in the STRONG-CT program performed better than comparable students once they reached a four-year institution.

A similar study examining ethnically and socioeconomically diverse students in a STEM student mentoring program was conducted by MacPhee, Farro, and Canetto (2013). They investigated students' academic performance and self-efficacy at the start, and completion of, a mentoring program for underrepresented STEM majors. The longitudinal quantitative study focused on examining self-efficacy as a central concept and also examined academic self-efficacy and performance among STEM majors who are underrepresented in STEM academic majors and career fields.

The sample consisted of 175 students pursuing STEM majors and were part of the McNair Scholars Program. The data was from a 10 year period of

time, and participants were in their junior and senior years in college. The study was located at Mountain West University, a large public university consisting of 26,500 students. Self-perceptions of academic skills and the results from academic tests were also measured. This assessment was done both at the start of, and at the completion of the McNair Scholars Program.

At the start of the program, women did not feel that they could compete academically with the male members even though they had similar grade point averages. However, at the completion of the program, women and men expressed having similar academic self-efficacy. The study also found the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields is contributed to women's perception that they are academically weaker than men. In addition, the findings showed that mentoring approaches are an effective way of engaging women in science occupations. The authors suggested that there is a gap in the literature regarding multiple STEM minority identities.

Most studies have focused on examining single rather than multiple STEM-minority dimensions such as being a woman and a first-generation college student. Given the studies examined, in order to improve first-generation student outcomes in pursuing STEM related fields, student success programs play a pivotal role in retaining and supporting their needs. Financial barriers have been a recurring theme for first-generation college students. Other research has focused on the role of social, cultural and economic capital as a way of explaining how these forms of capital are transformed into economic capital. In

turn, they have a direct effect on first-generation college students' financial status which affects the career choices that they make.

Social, Cultural and Economic Capital

Building on the notion of capital, Yosso (2005) explained that Bourdieu's theoretical perspective outlining how a hierarchical society reproduces itself could be interpreted to explain why the social and academic outcomes of culturally diverse, first-generation college students are significantly lower than the outcomes of Whites. Their race and class background have left them at a disadvantage when it comes to having the necessary social connections, experiences and characteristics for social mobility. It is argued that if one is not born into White upper and middle-class families, families whose knowledge is presumed to be valuable in society, one could then access this knowledge through a formal education (Yosso, 2005).

Social Capital acts as a type of currency for access to resources. Individuals must invest time and energy to acquire this type of capital. Social Capital is understood as the potential resources and credibility available to individuals through their connections and networks (Bourdieu, 1986). Social Capital could include networks, parents' occupations, and resources derived from a private school education and religious communities. "Cultural Capital is then the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed on from one generation to another" (McLaren, 2015, p. 154). This middle and upper class capital provides potential for social mobility and acceptance into

the upper classes in society. Social and Cultural Capital are transformed into Economic Capital. In the case of the working class students, they are less likely to obtain high paying jobs or even jobs that pay a living wage (McLaren, 2015). However, Yosso (2005) challenged dominant forms of capital and identified different forms of capital that ethnic minorities and marginalized groups possess. Such capital has traditionally gone unrecognized and unacknowledged and includes: familial, aspirational, linguistic, resilient, social and navigational.

Longmire-Avital and Miller-Dyce (2015) focused further on the importance of Social Capital and explored the factors contributing to perceived social status among first-generation college students and non-first generation college students at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). The urban public university was located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Economically-diverse African-American students were recruited from seven classes to participate including 57 males and 77 females. There were 50 first-generation college students and 84 non-first generation college students. Their ages ranged from 18-25 and the vast majority, 88%, self-identified as Black or African American or of African descent. Findings from this quantitative study suggested that first-generation college students used tangible forms of capital to interpret status such as academic performance (GPA) and family economic status. However, non-first-generation college students used intangible forms of capital such as appearance and social ability to interpret status. Given the results for first-generation college students, it is evident that family economic

status plays a large role in the perceived social status of first-generation college students.

Metheny and McWhirter (2013) examined this notion further and aimed to understand the roles of socio-economic and social status and family support in the career decision making process of college students. The sample for this quantitative study consisted of 270 female and male undergraduate students at four universities and one community college in the Pacific Northwest and East Coast. Participants' ages were between 18 and 22 and their self-reported ethnicities were 7% Asian, 3% Latino/Latina, 1% Middle Eastern, 7% multiethnic, less than 1% were either African American, Native American, Pacific Islander, and "other", and 79% were White. Participants reported that they resided in the U.S. and in the following areas: 1% Midwest, 4% Northeast, 81% Northwest, 1% "other", 2% South, 9% Southeast and 2% Southwest. The results of this study suggested that family support and family status were correlated with social cognitive career development. The results also indicated that family support and socio-economic status influence career development, especially when examining perceptions of social standing. The results from this study further suggested that social and economic resources play a significant role in the career decision making process of college students.

Stephens, Hamedani and Destin (2014) took a different approach at investigating the influences that social-class has on first-generation college students' psychological health and social engagement. They tested an

intervention constructed to minimize the social-class achievement gap with a randomized controlled trial. Their study focused on real-life stories of students during their senior year in college. They conducted a difference-education intervention at the beginning of college with incoming students about how their diverse backgrounds could be shaped by their college experiences. The sample consisted of 147 participants who were selected using a convenience-sampling method at a private university. This sample consisted of 66 first-generation college students and 81 who were non-first generation. A post-intervention survey and video-testimonial activity found that individuals' diverse backgrounds matter and it was apparent that people with similar backgrounds can succeed using effective tools and strategies. The intervention also helped in minimizing the social-class achievement gap by 63% within first-generation and non-first generation college students alike by the completion of their first year in college. (Stephens, Hamedani & Destin, 2014). This concept for understanding the influencing role that a students' background plays is especially beneficial for first-generation college students. It helped bolster both psychological health and levels of social engagement.

Padgett, Johnson and Pascarella (2012) similarly investigated the cognitive and psychosocial outcomes of first-generation college students in their first year of college. They found that first-generation students are at a disadvantage across cognitive and psychosocial outcomes in comparison to students whose parents have some college experience. This quantitative study

consisted of using longitudinal data from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education to test for conditional effects of good practices on first-year outcomes. Good practices were determined to be interactions with peers and good teaching interactions with faculty, academic challenge, and diversity experiences. The data collection was conducted in two parts, first measuring pre-college and demographic characteristics and then measuring college experiences and outcomes. The sample included incoming freshmen at 19 two-year and four-year institutions. These institutions of higher learning were located in 11 different states in the United States including the Midwest, Northeast, Pacific Coast and Southeast regions. The initial data collected was made up of 4,501 students. The follow-up administration consisted of 3,081 participants making up a response rate of 68.5%. The results suggested that first-generation college students lag behind in cognitive and psychological development compared to non-first generation college students during their first year in college.

It was recommended that administrators and Student Affairs practitioners support first-generation students by providing them with campus, academic and social support networks upon entering. They posited that immediate engagement will enhance the likelihood of successful student development and academic success. This positive social integration would also assist with retaining first-generation college students in school. Studies have indicated that

such engagement and social integration can be provided through customized programs supporting student success and career development.

Customized Programs Supporting Student Success

Summer bridge programs support the retention of first-generation college students at colleges and universities. Suzuki, Amrein-Beardsley and Perry (2012) conducted a quasi-experimental, mixed methods, action-research study to explore a five-week, pre-enrollment initiative called the Pathways Summer Bridge (PSB) Program. This study took place at the New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University (ASU). The focus of the PSB program was to increase retention and overall graduation rates of at-risk, first-year students. Specific goals of the program were to help students 1) familiarize themselves with campus resources; 2) participate in student programs on and off campus; 3) meet other students to create and foster friendships and student communities; 4) experience college-level classes while earning four college credits during the summer; 5) develop relationships with faculty inside and outside the classroom; 6) increase their understanding of college expectations and campus life; and 7) build other academic skills for succeeding at the university like note taking, test taking, and library research. These goals were supported through a three credit course such as pre-college algebra, English, or writing. The course was paired with a one unit academic success course designed to promote student exposure to campus and community development. An overnight experience in the residence halls was part of the program and

students were also able to engage in social events and community service. Two student groups participated in the study. Group 1 included students who participated in the summer bridge program. These first-year students were invited to participate in the program if they were considered at-risk. They were considered at-risk if they had no or low college entrance exam or placement exam scores such as a 460 or below on the SAT or 18 or below on the ACT and/or were first-generation students. Group 2, the control group, consisted of first-year students who did not participate in the summer bridge program and agreed to take part in a survey. In Group 1, 56 students applied and participated in the PSB program. For those in the program, 66.1% were female, and 33.9% were male. Participants were predominantly Hispanic/Latino(a), which accounted for 51.8%. Caucasians made up 25.0% and African Americans 10.7%. Asian Americans represented 3.6% and Native Americans 3.6%. 5.4% declared themselves as “other”. Slightly more than 85% were first-generation college students, the majority of whom were 18 years old. Fourteen participants making up 25% of the participants were under 18 and were accepted into the program after their parent(s) or guardian(s) officially approved their participation. Results from the study indicated that the program increased participants’ confidence about what to expect in college. Their level of comfort at the university also increased compared to non-participants who reported feeling less confident at the end of the semester. Meeting new people and forming friendships were critical in developing a supportive community for these students. Their

community made them feel comfortable and excited to be at the university and part of the campus. Participants also expressed that the academic success skills they learned in the program helped in their fall classes. They also realized faculty members were not as intimidating as they thought and valued that realization, along with getting to know their professors. These findings suggested that summer bridge programs may provide these students with compensatory skills and support strategies needed to succeed in college. Motivation is also an important factor that contributes to student success.

Abi-Nader (1990) sought to find out what characteristics motivate student success in school. The study investigated a successful college prep program for Hispanic high school students. The program focused on developing the academic and communication skills necessary for college and was titled, "Programa: Latinos Adelantaran de Nuevo" (PLAN) or "Program: Latinos Shall Rise Again" (p.41). This particular program is an example of a successful program. The study took place at Heritage High school, a campus that is populated primarily by male students. Heritage High is a large public school in a metropolitan area in the northeastern region of the United States. Historically, this high school consisted of middle and upper-middle class men who were preparing for positions in the business/industrial industries. However, in 1972, Heritage High School became co-ed and experienced a large population growth of African-Americans and Hispanics students. Twenty-one percent of the school population was made up of Hispanics.

Ethnography was the methodology utilized in this study. The researcher became a participant observer finding ways to fully immerse herself in the lives of the PLAN participants. This allowed her to observe and examine their daily activities at school and at home. In class, she corrected papers and helped students with their school assignments. To gather data, she took field notes and collected audio-recordings. Also, forty-three PLAN participants participated in a questionnaire about the program and small group interviews also took place. The results indicated that teacher strategies “effectively addressed psychosocial conditions which predicted minority student failure, and motivated the students” (p. 41). The school-based practices that were uncovered in this study included a framework for promoting college attendance or preparing for careers, creating a family structure and caring environment, implementing a mentorship program that involved program graduates and setting high expectations for students. The instructor also facilitated classroom talks that promoted heritage pride through “positive references to cultural values familiar to students” (p.52), cultural appreciation, and maintained an affectionate relationship with her students. Results of this program were that these students created a “vision of the future” (p.53), redefined their self-image, and built a community of support. The instructional strategies in PLAN promoted the reconstruction of a worldview by students. Further, these students were positively influenced and encouraged to do well in school by their peers and mentors who shared similar life experiences as they did. As a result, students projected a future in which they had control

over, developed self-confidence, reversed stereotypes, and engaged in a supportive community that promoted success. Many students defined success as having the ability to buy a house for their mother.

Similarly, another program aimed at creating opportunity and student success for non-traditional students is the (2+2) Bachelor of Social Work degree program. Messinger (2014) examined the partnership between a mid-west university's school of social work and an inner-city community college. The college developed an undergraduate Bachelors of Social Work degree completion program (2+2) in an inner-city community college setting. This degree program was created in an effort to grow the pool of perspective social workers by enrolling first-generation, non-traditional ethnic minority students and fostering their completion of the program to earn a BSW degree. The problems this program faced were in three main arenas: "inter-institutional, pedagogical, and student-related issues" (p. 458). A notable issue that arose was the high level of expectations that were placed on the community college students by the demands of a university education. Most students were diverse, non-traditional aged students that had children living at home. They also held full-time jobs. As a result, their schedules conflicted with school demands. Some students lacked the skills to operate the course management system and other equipment critical for their success in school. Other students did not own computers or have internet access at home. Student enrollment and retention were other factors that affected the success of the 2+2 BSW program. Of the 56 students who were

admitted in the first three years, 33 enrolled and/or completed the program. Some of the barriers that hindered student success were financial concerns, work and family responsibilities, illness, and the inability to do the level of work required. To address retention issues, MUSSW developed a mentoring program for students. New students were paired with alumni that lived near them. This mentorship relationship served as a source of advice and encouragement for program participants. Also, in order to accommodate working adults, evening and weekend field placements were offered for students to earn their supervised work experience hours. Establishing a 2+2 program at a community college maximized the retention, participation, and positively influenced program completion. The results from this case study generated recommendations for institutions of higher learning looking to create a community college based 2+2 program. The suggestions generated from the study were as follows:

Secure buy in from all parties, create formal agreements, create a program of study for transfer students, collect and share data, prepare the university faculty and secure their buy-in, coordinate student services between campuses, consider using both community college and university advising, build in processes to support non-traditional students, admit students in small annual cohorts, encourage students to complete their associate's degrees, create multiple methods to communicate to students, and use multiple and targeted methods of student recruitment.

(Messinger, 2014, p. 461-463)

Studies have shown that customized programs promote student success which positively affects their career development. These programs target students that are non-traditional and at-risk, such as first-generation college students. Other research has focused on career barriers that hinder or stifle positive career development from occurring.

Career Barriers

Career barriers can adversely affect career decisions made by first-generation college students. Swanson and Woitke (1997) described career barriers as events or conditions in an individual's life which make career development difficult. As such, Fowler (2012) sought to measure dysfunctional career thoughts of first-generation college students. These dysfunctional career thoughts acted as career barriers. Similarly, Andrews, Bullock-Yowell, Dahlen and Nicholson (2014) also examined career-specific barriers that influence decision making. They explored the relationships between perfectionism, negative career thoughts, and career decision-making self-efficacy. A total of 300 students participated in this quantitative study. Participants were recruited through the psychology department's online research participant recruitment system at a southeastern university. Students from multiple psychology courses were invited to participate. Those who chose to participate were ethnically-diverse and ranged in age from 18 to 45 years old. The sample consisted mostly of female, White college students who were at different phases of their academic careers. The variables examined were perfectionism, negative career thoughts,

and career decision-making self-efficacy. Participants were divided into four groups: low-scoring non-perfectionists, high-scoring non-perfectionists, adaptive perfectionists, and maladaptive perfectionists. The results from the study indicated that perfectionism and negative career thinking were positively connected. Additionally, “an inverse relationship was found between negative career thoughts and career decision-making self-efficacy” (p.275). This finding suggests that individuals with several negative career thoughts possess low confidence in their abilities to complete tasks that are necessary to make career decisions. Furthermore, a correlation was found between adaptive perfectionism and career decision-making self-efficacy. Therefore, perfectionism and negative career thinking play an important part in a person’s confidence in making career-related decisions. These findings suggested that “interventions addressing maladaptive perfectionism and dysfunctional career thinking may enhance students’ confidence in decision making” (p. 270).

Storlie, Mostade, and Duenyas (2016) explored other career barriers in a qualitative study that used a grounded theory methodology with a social constructivist paradigm. They examined the life-role salience and values connected with the career development of first-generation Latina college students at a coed predominantly White mid-western university. Purposive sampling was the method used to recruit participants. Ten first-generation Latina college students participated in the study. Semi-formal qualitative interviews were conducted to explore how culture and values influenced participants’ life-

role salience. Nine questions were asked that pertained to life roles, community, barriers, values and family. Results from the study included two overarching themes with five subthemes. The two overarching themes were “fitting in” (p.309) and “redefining Latina career pathways” (p. 309). Participants expressed feeling disconnected from their families as they pursued a higher education. They also indicated they felt as if they did not fit in with the college environment. Some also expressed a feeling of not being “Latina enough” (p. 311). In terms of redefining Latina career pathways, participants questioned their cultural identity because they were doing things differently than what was expected of them. They did not follow their cultural norm of being a stay at home mom and raising children. As a result of obtaining a higher education, participants also reported feeling a sense of altruism. Improving a sense of belonging was found to be necessary in supporting first-generation Latina college students in predominantly White institutions. In doing so, one must consider the important role that culture, values, and life roles play on this population’s sense of belonging and career development. Duffy and Klingaman (2009) also explored ethnic identity in relation to career development. They examined the relationship between career development progress and ethnic identity achievement among 2,432 first-year college students at a large public university located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The participants completed the Career Decision Profile (CDP; Jones, 1989) and Phinney’s (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. Overall, 1154 were male (48%) and 1278 were female (52%). Additionally, 327 of the

participants were Asian American (13%), 299 Black (12%), 147 Latina/o (6%), and 1548 White (64%). The average age of participants was 17. The results from a correlational analysis revealed the following:

Among students of color, a series of statistically significant, but small correlations existed between higher levels of ethnic identity achievement and career decidedness, choice comfort, indecisiveness, and choice importance. In addition, there was a moderate relationship between racial, ethnic identity achievement and career decidedness. For Black and Asian American students, those with higher levels of ethnic identity achievement were found to have significantly higher levels of career decidedness. However, ethnic identity achievement had no significant relation with the decidedness of White and Latina/o students. (Duffy and Klingaman, 2009, p. 2)

The results suggest that for first-year ethnic minority college students, ethnic identity achievement could play an important, but limited role in an individual's career decisions.

Familial influence can also affect the career decision process for college students. Fan, Cheung, Leong and Cheung (2014) examined the influence that family intrusiveness can have on a student's career decision-making difficulties. They focused on the mediating effect of family orientation as a personality trait in different cultural settings. This project consisted of two quantitative studies. In study one, 1,563 students were recruited from nine universities in Hong Kong.

This data set consisted of 551 men and 1,012 women. The results showed that perceived family intrusiveness significantly contributed to career decision-making difficulties.

Similarly, the focus of study two centered on comparing this pattern of relationship between 392 college students from two comprehensive universities in Hong Kong and a U.S. sample of 367 college students from a comprehensive university in the Midwest. The majority of the U.S. students were White, which accounted for approximately 75% of the sample. The results found that influences of family orientation were only supported in the Hong Kong sample. Therefore, family could facilitate career development. It is important for counselors to understand this finding especially when working with college students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

To further investigate the impact that family can have on career decisions, Sumari, Louis, and Sin (2009) conducted a quantitative study focused on the family system perspective. They administered a demographic information sheet, the Family Environment Scale (FIS; Moss & Moose, 1990) and Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale-Short Form (CDSE-SF; Betz & Taylor, 2000) to examine the correlation between college students' career maturity and family interaction patterns. They also looked at identifying the differences in career maturity among students in a public university vs. those attending a private college. Two hundred and seventy four students participated and were from one public university and two private universities in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Of the 274

participants, 128 were from the public institution and 146 were from the two private institutions. Sixty one of the participants were male and 213 were female; 49% were Chinese, 14% were Indians, 32% were Malays, and 5% were from other races.

The results from the study showed that “there are relationships, both positive and negative, between family environment and confidence in making career decisions” (p. 57), and family environment may play a significant role in a student’s career self-efficacy. Furthermore, students’ confidence levels in career decision-making could be predicted by the perceived quality of family environments, especially in terms of emphasis on moral and religious values, control, and participation in social activities. There were no significant differences between the students from public or private higher education institutions. They both shared the “same perspectives regarding their family interaction patterns and also had the same confidence level in career decision-making” (p.57).

Gibbons and Woodside (2014) also found that familial influence played a significant role in the career development of first-generation college students. This qualitative investigation looked at the career development experiences of adults from families without a college education from a southeastern state. Familial influence played a significant role in their educational and career choices. These adults were all at different stages in their lives and had a varied educational and work background. Some only graduated from high school while

others held a Master's degree. The participants included a purposeful sample of 11 women and six men. Of the women, one was African American and 10 were White. Their ages ranged from early 20s to 50s. For the males, their ages ranged from 30s to 60s and two were African-American and four were White. From this study, three major themes emerged: "the role of the father, expectations about career, and expectations about college" (p. 21). The role of the father played an influencing and important role in the education and career choices of the research participants. Expectations about career were associated with the importance of enjoying one's career and the belief of working hard. Lastly, regarding their expectation about college, "most agreed that they attended college to follow the requirements set forth by their parents or to increase their chances of career success" (p. 29). Graduation was an important milestone.

Sexual orientation is another variable that influences career development and may be perceived as a barrier. To examine this notion, Schmidt, Miles, and Welsh (2010) investigated the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) college students' career development and college adjustment as it relates to perceptions of perceived discrimination and social support. This quantitative study consisted of surveying 189 LGBT undergraduate college students who were currently enrolled in a university across the country. The mean age was 20 years old, of which 59.8% were female and 35.4% were male and 1.6% identified as male to female transgender; 3.2% were also transgender from female to male. Results from two multiple

regression analyses found that “perceived discrimination and social support contributed to vocational indecision and college adjustment” (p.1). Furthermore, having the proper social support for LGBT undergraduates is critical for their career development and adjustment to college. As such, sexuality-specific and general support are of great importance when working with this population.

Factors Affecting Career Decision Making

There are other important factors that influence the career decision making process of first-generation college students. Shin and Kelly (2015) examined the influence of “resilience and decision-making strategies as predictors of difficulties experienced during the career decision-making process” (p. 291). This quantitative study took place at a public university in the southeastern region of the United States and involved 364 college students. European Americans accounted for 74% of the participants. The focus of the study was to assess students in the area of career decision difficulties, career decision-making strategies, and resilience. The results found that as students mature, they begin to participate in their own career decision making. Resilience and decision-making strategies played a large role in decision making difficulties, accounting for 46% of the variance. The findings of this study suggested that the more resilient a person is, the more likely they will be to employ effective career decision strategies. This is especially the case when dealing with career decision difficulties. The use of multiple decision strategies was also the focus in the study conducted by Duffy and Sedlacek (2009). A sample of 3,570 first-year

college students were surveyed at a large mid-Atlantic university focusing on understanding the factors that students consider to be the most important to their long-term career choice. "Work values were assessed by a single item on the questionnaire asking students which of 10 work values was most important in their long-term career choice" (p.55). Students were also asked to identify their parents' income level and were prompted to report on the degree they aspired to receive. "Descriptive statistics were used to examine what the total sample selected as the work values were most important to their long-term career choice" (p. 361). It was determined that 29% of the sample participants, consisting of incoming college students, were seeking careers related to their interests, while 47% were seeking careers that were influenced by their values. African Americans and Asian Americans expressed the importance of extrinsic values on their career choices, whereas Whites expressed intrinsic values. Finally, students with a desire to pursue a graduate degree chose prestige values, in contrast, those pursuing a bachelor's degree chose intrinsic values. This data reinforces the important role that values and interest play on the career development process. These two factors directly influenced career choices. Lent et al. (2002) also investigated influences on career choices and focused primarily on first-generation college students. They conducted a qualitative study that examined "the perceived influences on college students' selection and implementation of career choices. Students from two different universities participated in a structured interview" (p.61). The two sites included a large state

university near a metropolitan area and a small technical college located near an inner-city area. The goal was to “identify the perceived bases for their career choices, factors that enabled and/or deterred them in implementing their choice options, and the methods they had used to cope with choice implementation barriers” (p.63). The majority of students attending the larger campus were non-affluent, first-generation college students. Nineteen students were interviewed there in total. This included five men and 14 women. Of these 19 participants, two were African American, three were Asian American, one was Hispanic American one was multiracial, and 12 were White. Their mean age was 22.21 years old. Twelve students from the technical college were interviewed. The sample consisted of equal representation of gender and White to racial/ethnic minorities. Four participants were African American, two were Hispanic American and six were White. Their average age was 25.50 years old. The students came from low to middle class backgrounds and generally were first-generation college students. Participants from both campuses intended to enter careers corresponding closely to their majors. Three main areas were examined, which included factors that affected choice of occupation and barriers that affected pursuing their career choice. A third area that was also studied looked at methods students used to cope with barriers hindering their career choice. Results indicated that students from both sites perceived their interests, values, and abilities as important factors with in regard to both choice options they expected to pursue and those they had ruled out. Work experiences including

performance feedback, modeling and contextual factors were also important in the career choice process. The results also suggested that students view barriers as important factors affecting career selection and implementation. However, most students reported that they expected to pursue their chosen careers even though they experienced implementation barriers. The support that they received from individuals that are considered important in their lives, and their own resourcefulness, were key for overcoming and coping with obstacles.

Interests, values, and abilities were also found to be important factors in the career development of first-generation African American male college students. Owens, Lacey, Rawls, and Holbert-Quince (2010) examined the career development needs of first-generation African American male college students. They found that exploring interests, goals, and abilities when working with African American males is important to their career development. These factors affect the development of career maturity and career beliefs of at-risk populations.

Similar to the previous two studies where interests, goals, and abilities played a role in the career development of African American male students, Schnorr and Ware (2001) focused their study on examining an integrated career and academic program (ICAP). Participants in this study consisted of 55 academically at-risk students made up 42% Hispanic, 27% African-American, 26%Caucasian, 4% Asian, and 1% Native American. 56% were male and 44% female. This mixed methods study consisted of three phase: “first an exploratory

phase, second, a phase in which multiple linear regression was used employing variables found promising in the exploratory phase, and a third phase addressing interview results”(p. 253). Schnorr and Ware examined the correlation between program participants’ career maturity to their career beliefs and to length of time in the program. Length of time in the program correlated to career maturity, as did believing that they could overcome obstacles such as a vision for their future and self-efficacy. The program participation gave them exposure to a broad range of careers. Some of the participants required a higher education and others needed on the job training. Those requiring on the job training received it while participating in the program. During the interviews, it became evident that the hands-on experience from the program gave them a sense of certainty that they could be successful in that field. The hands-on training gave them a sense of optimism that their experiences would lead to something viable. Studies have further indicated that creating an environment that fosters a student’s confidence in their ability to accomplish career goals, and overcome obstacles, positively impacts their career development. This is especially true when working with first-generation college students.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy plays an important role in the career development of first-generation college students. “Self-efficacy is the belief in one’s capability to complete a task” (Butz & Usher, 2015, p. 49). Kelly and Hatcher (2013) explored the differences between career barriers and decision-making self-efficacy of

students enrolled in applied technology programs and those enrolled in college transfer programs at a community college. The population for this study was 13,288 students enrolled full or part-time at a large, southeastern urban community college. The actual sample consisted of 787 student participants. The convenience sample consisted of 33% male, 67% female, 13.7% African American, 4.8% Asian, 70% Caucasian, 4.8% Hispanic, and 4.6% "other". This was a quantitative, multivariate method study. The variables examined were gender, age, major, ethnicity, employment status, first-generational status, full or part-time status, career decision-making self-efficacy, and imagined career barriers. Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) and career decision-making self-efficacy provided the framework for this study. The results indicated that there were differences between college transfer and applied technology students in terms of career decision-making self-efficacy and career barriers. Age and ethnicity were significant predictors of career development self-efficacy and career barriers. Applied technology students had higher career decision-making self-efficacy scores and were also older in age. In contrast, college transfer students had higher perception of career barriers scores and were younger. These results could be explained by looking at the goal attainment expectation. For those in an applied technology program, the expectation of earning a degree or certificate in their chosen field in a short amount of time may have been seen as attainable. Those in a transfer college program may have been uncertain about which college major or program to choose. They may have more career

barriers because of their uncertainty about their college major and career and may find it more difficult to see their goal of earning a bachelor's degree as attainable over time. Findings suggested a mentoring program at the community college could be useful.

Harlow and Bowman (2016) examined the career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) and career maturity of first-generation four year university and community college student participants. This study focused on generational status, college type and socioeconomic status. There were a total of 268 participants which included 168 students attending a midsized Midwestern university and 100 participants from a local community college. The results indicated that “nonfirst-generation baccalaureate students may enter college with less clearly defined career goals than community college students who are expected to complete their studies in half the time required for a bachelor's degree” (p. 520). Therefore, according to Harlow and Bowman this leaves baccalaureate students feeling less efficacious in making career decisions. Furthermore, first-generation students pursuing a baccalaureate degree and those at the community college reported lower levels of career maturity than nonfirst-generation students. Those pursuing a bachelor's degree reported significantly lower levels of career maturity. Finally, first-generation students from high socioeconomic backgrounds reported the lowest levels of CDSE. In summary, first-generation students expressed having lower levels of career maturity than nonfirst-generation students, and nonfirst-generation four year

university students reported the lowest levels of CDSE. These results indicated that community college students possess higher levels of CDSE and career maturity compared with four year university students. Other studies have focused on the importance of individual's self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals.

Olson (2014) highlighted the career development needs of first-generation college (FGC) students as they transition from college to work. She suggested that the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is a helpful framework for counselors working with FGC graduates especially during the early stages of their careers. Olson identified three case studies highlighting key challenges facing FGC graduates. One of the case studies referenced is the case of Mary. Mary is a White, 23 year old FGC graduate with a bachelor's degree in political science. She graduated with a 3.0 grade point average and struggled with low self-efficacy. She discarded career options based on a past negative experience in that particular field. Olson noted it was important for counselors to explore the individual's self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals during counseling meetings. She contended it was also necessary to account for contextual support and barriers that influence ongoing career development after graduation. This information can provide insight regarding the individual's situation. According to Brown and Lent (1996) knowing about "foreclosed occupational options" (p. 357) can give the counselor insight into areas where the client may be making decisions based on faulty self-efficacy beliefs. In Mary's

case, the counselor helped her realize how she may have connected her past negative experience with an expectation of future failure. Another case highlighted was that of Darnell. He also experienced low self-efficacy due to suffering through a computer programming class during his undergraduate education. Although he graduated with honors, earning an engineering degree, he avoided applying for any jobs in the technology sector. His sense of low career self-efficacy in this area caused him to foreclose on technology jobs. Another case discussed was that of Tong, a Hmong FGC graduate. Tong's parents expect him to pay for his younger brother's expenses through college since they paid for Tong's education. Tong's goal was to be financially independent and pursue a career with a non-profit organization. However, he felt he would not earn enough money to fulfill his goal and support his brother's education. Tong was faced with conflicting goals and cultural expectations.

The transition from college to work can be difficult for FGC graduates. Olson offered that counselors can help the FGC graduate identify the ways that self-efficacy, or the lack of self-efficacy, may hinder or limit their career development. According to Olson, having negative thoughts about perceived obstacles in his or her career path can be paralyzing. SCCT can help career counselors encourage clients to describe "how it will all turn out" (p. 213) and investigate how those thoughts may be limiting their occupational choices. SCCT can be an effective framework for career counselors to encourage FGC graduates to embrace opportunities, face obstacles, and explore options. Choi et

al. (2012) investigated the relationship between career decision self-efficacy and demographic, career-related, and self-concept variables using a meta-analytic approach. The study “included nine variables from 34 studies in seven major journals in the fields of counseling, career, and employment” (p. 47). The study was centered on the SCCT framework. SCCT suggests that career self-efficacy predicts career outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1994). Results indicated that the career decision self-efficacy correlated significantly to vocational identity and self-esteem. These results suggest that career decision self-efficacy is an important part of career specific and general self-concept. Other results indicated that peer support, vocational outcome expectation, and career indecision variables also correlated with career decision self-efficacy.

Other studies have explored the link between career development, level of college self-efficacy, and students’ persistence and academic success. Wright, Jenkins-Guarnieri and Murdock (2012) examined college students’ career development by finding out how their level of college self-efficacy related to their persistence and academic success upon completion of their first semester in college. Their study consisted of 401 students enrolled in a first-year seminar course at a public 4-year Rocky Mountain region university. Wright, Jenkins-Guarnieri and Murdock designed a longitudinal study consisting of two sequential binary logistic regression models. Fall to spring persistence and academic success were the dependent variables. The focus was to figure out if college self-efficacy at the end of the first semester was correlated with significantly

increased odds in outcome variables and beyond relevant background factors. They found that increased college self-efficacy at the end of the first semester was correlated with high odds of attending the university the following semester. Students' increased beliefs in their abilities led them to successfully continue and complete academic tasks.

Self-efficacy can also be influenced by external factors, as has been demonstrated by studies of self-efficacy influencing academic success. Butz and Usher (2015) employed a mixed methodological approach to investigate upper-elementary and middle school students' explanation of factors that contributed to their confidence in math and reading. Students, who participated in the study, referenced the importance of teachers as facilitators of their math self-efficacy. The most frequently reported sources of self-efficacy were mastery experience and social persuasion. Positive relationships with teachers was a strong indicator of learning and motivation. Self-efficacy and college outcome expectations were key indicators of predicting career aspirations in a study conducted by Raque-Bogdan and Lucas (2016). They explored the factors influencing decision making by examining data from surveys conducted for 2,106 incoming undergraduate students at a mid-Atlantic university. Their study revealed that first-generation college students from lower-working-class families had less career-related parental support than upper-middle-class students. This study offered further support for the relevance that SES plays on career-related parental support. However, college outcome expectations and college self-

efficacy were important factors for predicting their career aspirations. These factors supersede their parents' social class status and their involvement in the student's career development. The importance of possessing high levels of self-efficacy was also demonstrated in a study conducted by D'Lima, Winsler, and Kitsantas (2014). They surveyed ethnically-diverse students including Caucasian, African American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian American, and other/mixed students at the beginning and at the end of their first semester in college. At the beginning of the semester, male students across all ethnic groups possessed higher levels of academic self-efficacy when compared to their female counterparts. By the end of the semester, all ethnic groups reported having higher academic self-efficacy. However, females continued to have lower self-efficacy than men. Instilling self-efficacy in all students and a mastery approach to learning were found to be important factors influencing student success.

Summary

In summary, different factors pertinent to the study were reviewed. Attention was placed on exploring the literature that examined the complexities that make up the experiences of first-generation, community college students when making college major and career choices extrapolating upon the following themes: first-generation college students, STEM fields and first-generation college students, social, cultural and economic capital, customized programs supporting student success, career barriers, factors affecting career decision

making, and self-efficacy. What follows will explain the research design and methodology that was used to carry out the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of this study was to understand the decision-making process that first-generation, community college students experience when making college major and career choices. There are various definitions in the literature defining first-generation college students. Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998) defined them as “those whose parents’ highest level of education is a high school diploma or less” (p.7), and never enrolled in postsecondary education. Benmayor (2002) defined them as those whose parents did not enroll in college. Others defined first-generation college students as “students whose parent(s) did not graduate from college” (Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis, & Ruder, 2006, p.65). The definition employed for this study is that of Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis, and Ruder (2016) which states that parents did not graduate from college. In this chapter, I will summarize the research design and methodology that was used to carry out the study. It also includes the research questions, research design, research setting, research sample, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and positionality statement.

Research Questions

The goal of this study is to answer two research questions. “What influences first-generation, community college students when choosing a college

major and career”? and “How do first-generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process”?

Research Design

The qualitative study employed a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology (Laverty, 2003). This methodology “goes beyond mere description of core concepts and essences to look for meanings embedded in common life practices” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728). Hermeneutical phenomenology is an interpretive process in which the researcher interprets the meaning of the research participants’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). This research study focused on understanding the experiences of first-generation, community college students when making major and career choices. Employing a hermeneutical phenomenology methodology also does not oppose the use of a theoretical framework in the study. The theoretical framework for this study is centered on the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Focus was placed on examining how, if at all, the role of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals influence their career development. The Social Cognitive Career Theory supports the notion that family and socio-economic factors play an influential role on the career paths of first-generation college students. This theory was used to guide the interpretation of the findings but it did not constrain the narratives of the participants.

Research Setting

The setting for this study was a U.S. community college in California. This college offers educational programs ranging from developmental education, transfer preparation, and vocational education, to continuing education and more. The diverse student body consists of 15,791 students. The student demographic breakdown is as follows: 71.6% Hispanic or Latino, 17.58% White, 2.6% Black or African American, 2.4% Asian, 1.6% Filipino or Pacific Islander, 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 2.3% two or more races. Females represent 56.6% of the student body and males make up 43.4%. Also, 82% of the student body consists of first-generation college students. The career center offers such resources as career/vocational assessment testing, career counseling, skill building workshops, and job search assistance in order to support students in the area of career development and major exploration.

Research Sample

There are no numbers of interviews that can define successful qualitative studies. According to Englander (2012) the phenomenological method recommends that researchers use at least three participants. Morse (1994) suggests that at least six participants are needed for phenomenological studies.

Participants for this study consisted of a purposeful sampling of 12 first-generation, community college students. These participants included seven females and five males. Seven, or 58%, identified as being Hispanic; two, or 17%, identified as Mexican-American; one, or .08%, identified as Chinese; one,

or .08%, identified as White; and one, or .08%, identified as African American. The youngest participant was 19 years old and the oldest was 43 years of age. The average age was 25. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. Recruiting 12 participants ensured rich and diverse data pertaining to their experiences. Purposeful sampling is a technique commonly used in qualitative research for the selection and identification of information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). I did not engage in systematic sampling because of the random nature of the method (Madow, 1949). Rather, I was looking for diverse, information-rich cases. Inclusion criteria included diversity of gender, age, ethnicity, major and units completed. Recruiting diverse participants allowed for the emergence of data that was rich with student experiences and perspectives. These participants all completed a minimum of 15 degree applicable units. The Student Success Act of 2012 (S.B. 1456) requires a student to commit to a course of study after completing 15 semester units or prior to the end of the third semester (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2016). Students were asked, and disclosed that they were first-generation college students prior to being selected for the interview. This was also part of the inclusion criteria (See Appendix B). Social class was not an inclusion criteria for the study but after the sample was identified, intersection of class and the first-generation, community college students participating in the study was established.

In order to recruit eligible participants, a recruitment flyer was created and displayed around campus. Interested participants were directed to contact me

via a specially created google email address for the study and/or by phone. I sought out the assistance of the EOPS, CARE, and CalWORKs offices on campus to identify potential participants since some of these programs work exclusively with first-generation college students. A direct email with the recruitment flyer was sent out by the program specialist to students with membership in those programs. Counselors also recommended students that met the participant criteria. A \$20.00 Visa gift card was awarded to research participants for their time.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather details in relation to the participants' experiences with choosing a college major and careers. Interviews were recorded for audio only and hand-written notes were taken. IRB approval was requested at California State University, San Bernardino prior to the data collection process. Permission to conduct research at the U.S. California Community College was also requested in advance of the study.

The 10 interview questions below were reviewed for content validity by experts consisting of faculty members working in the area of higher education which have earned the degree of Ph.D. In addition, a pilot session was conducted to test the validity of the interview questions with a first-generation, community college student. Furthermore, alignment between the research questions, purpose statement, and interview questions were assessed by utilizing the chart in Table 1 below. The purpose of this was to ensure that that

the interview questions helped inform both the research questions and the purpose statement.

Table 1. Research Questions, Purpose Statement, and Interview Questions Alignment

Interview Questions	Q1- What influences first-generation, community college students when choosing a college major and career?	Q2- How do first-generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process?	PS- Build on literature/inform development of interventions and counseling approaches/understand decision-making process when making college major and career choices.
Tell me a little bit about yourself including your ethnicity, age and your career goals.	Yes	No	Yes
Are you or were you a part of any special programs on campus? If so, which one(s) and for how long?	Yes	Yes	Yes
What was it like for you to make your choice regarding your college major and career?	Yes	Yes	Yes
When deciding on your college major, what influenced your choices?	Yes	Yes	Yes
How did you come to pick your career choice?	Yes	Yes	Yes
How does your major relate to your career goals?	Yes	Yes	Yes

Describe your confidence level in achieving your career goals. How does your level of confidence relate to your college major you have chosen?	Yes	Yes	Yes
What will it take for you to reach your dream career?	Yes	No	Yes
Do you have any worries about pursuing your dream career? If yes, what worries you?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Describe your experiences with the community college in relation to your major choice, and in relation to your career choice. What could the community college do to support you in these areas?	Yes	Yes	Yes

Data Analysis

The hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was selected to conduct this research because it was the best design to guide the overall purpose of the study and to capture the essence of the research participants' lived experiences when choosing a college major and career. This methodology looks for meanings embedded in common life practices (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Therefore, using this methodology, I interpreted the meaning of the research participants' lived experiences as depicted by their interviews. Data analysis was performed applying a hermeneutic circle approach. This involved reading, reflective writing and interpretation (Laverty, 2003). Gadamer (1960/1998) described hermeneutics as a process of co-creation between the researcher and participant to derive at the meaning of the lived experience. The hermeneutic circle approach facilitates this process and allows the researcher to create meaning and understanding from the data (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). During the data analysis, I reflected deeply on what the text was conveying to me by employing reflective journaling. This involved analyzing what I was reading and acknowledging the similarities that I shared with the participants' stories. I used pseudonyms to represent each student that I interviewed. In my journal, I created a chart including each student's pseudonym, gender, ethnicity, age, college major, and expected career. This allowed me to fully understand who the participants were and identify with each of them. As a result, I was able to fully immerse myself in their lived experiences and understand what each participant

went through. I gave meaning to those lived experiences by interpreting the interview data and constructing themes. During this process, I engaged fragments of my own identity, first-generation, community college student experiences, and the knowledge that I have gained from working as a career counselor and in the field of higher education for over thirteen years. This all influenced how I made sense of the data, and the interrelated themes that I constructed.

Interviews were transcribed word-for-word utilizing REV transcription services. Student names do not appear in any written reports that stem from data I collected. Interview data were coded and analyzed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The qualitative analysis of data was comprised of looking for repetition of topics, analysis for similarities and differences, constant comparison and coding and categorizing. "Coding is how you define what the data you are analyzing are about" (Gibbs, 2007, p. 38). "Repetitions" is one technique that was employed when identifying themes. Repetitions includes looking for topics that surface and continue to surface regularly (Ryan & Bernardo, 2003). Analysis for similarities and differences involves looking for similarities and differences in the words used by the research participants. The constant comparison technique was utilized as interviews were compared to each other as they were collected to determine similarities and differences between them (Lunnenburg & Irby, 2008). Furthermore, employing the coding and categorizing technique, the "data was segregated, grouped, regrouped and

relinked in order to consolidate meaning and explanation. Similarly coded data was organized and grouped into categories or ‘families’ when they shared characteristics” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 9). A detailed example of the process I went through when analyzing and interpreting the data started with the use of NVivo to create 10 nodes, one for each interview question asked. These nodes were a way to stay organized but not used as codes or themes. I then created codes based on overlap in language and topics described by the research participants, and placed them into different themes. These codes were constructed by grouping significant statements provided by my research participants and similarity in their experiences. This process resulted in creating additional codes and themes, and continued until 10 interrelated themes were constructed based on the overall thematic categories derived from the data.

Audio recordings and digital data were stored on my password protected computer in my work and home offices. Written information collected was also stored in a locked filing cabinet in my work and home offices. All information will be stored for five years after the research is completed. At that time, all information associated with the present study will be destroyed.

Trustworthiness

To examine data accuracy, member checking was employed for the data retrieved from the interviews, thus, the interview transcripts were shared with the research participants to make sure they were representing themselves and their ideas accurately. They confirmed that the interview transcripts accurately

represented their interviews. Findings will also be shared with the research participants. The results were written with a rich, thick description of the data to allow the readers to enter the research context (Glesne, 2011). Kafle (2011) described phenomenological research as requiring the researcher to attune his/her self towards the essence of a particular phenomenon. This was accomplished by engaging myself as I interpreted the research data and constructed 10 interrelated themes. This involved engaging fragments of my own identity including being a first-generation, community college student, and the knowledge that I have gained from working as a career counselor and in the field of higher education for over 13 years. Beck (1993) described credibility in hermeneutic research by capturing a vivid and faithful description that reflects the participants' lived experiences. When this occurs, the insight is self-validating. As a result, others enter their experience and feel the text as if one is experiencing it for themselves (Husserl, 1970). The research analysis in this study vividly captured the lived experiences of those students interviewed. The analysis was grounded in the original raw data, the interview transcripts. Other strategies that I employed was examining the transferability of my research data and being explicit about my subjectivities.

Transferability

The results from this study were written with such detail and description that it invites readers to make connections between elements of this study and their own experiences (Barnes et al., 2012; Curtin, & Fossey, 2007). The

transferability of the study results was evident as I made connections between my own work as a practitioner in the field of higher education, and the research results. Being in the field of higher education for over thirteen years, I have worked in public and private institutions of higher education. Working with students in various contexts has allowed me the opportunity to engage with students at various stages of their academic careers, ranging from community college to students pursuing a doctoral degree. The results from this study are applicable to those contexts (Kuper, Lingard, & Levinson, 2008). Results from this study were also reflective of the important factors that influence students' career development in the multiple settings I have worked. These influencing factors include having the proper support and guidance, financial resources, and exposure to experiential education. Another strategy I employed was being explicit about my subjectivities. Below you will find my positionality statement.

Positionality of the Researcher

Being in the field of counseling for more than thirteen years, I have had the opportunity to work with many students in the area of career development, in both public and private institutions of higher education. I have also developed and implemented different career intervention programs and have informally assessed their effectiveness on first-generation college students and their career choices. The results have shown that intervention programs aid in the area of career development. This is especially evident when working with culturally-diverse first-generation college students.

I was drawn to this area of study for various reasons. I am a first-generation college student who has always been fascinated with the working world. I have always wondered what it would be like to work in various fields. At the age of 12, I secured employment working as a recurring extra on the hit television series “The Wonder Years”. Once I was exposed to the inner-workings of the industry, I realized how to navigate within it. The rest of my career endeavors that followed ranged from working in retail and real estate sales, a vocational and continuation school, customer service, television and news production, to higher education administration and counseling. I have excelled in all of these areas. I feel first-generation college students lack the necessary knowledge to make informed major and career choices due to their minimal exposure to work. Lacking knowledge and exposure is also a result of their parents working in jobs that do not require a college education. However, once they can identify what their career goals are, they could strategize on how to get there and navigate within those fields. Counselors and instructional faculty members can facilitate this process.

It is important for researchers to be aware of how their subjectivity effects their inquiry and its outcomes (Peshkin, 1988). My current position is working as a career counselor at a community college. My role is to help students with academic, career and personal matters. However, my primary focus is to help students with their career development and exploration. The facets of my identity that shape my life influenced my subjectivity. I am a male, first-generation,

community college graduate, member of the LGBTQ community, Chicano, and from a working class background. These facets of my identity influenced this study and were engaged as I interpreted the meaning of the lived experiences of my participants. It influenced how I made sense of the data.

Summary

In this chapter, the research design that I used in this study was described. The data collected intended to answer the proposed two questions: “What influences first-generation, community college students when choosing a college major and career?” and “How do first-generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process?” Interviews were conducted with 12 first-generation, community college students. After the data was transcribed and analyzed, common themes were identified. The following chapter will provide details regarding the findings resulting from the analysis of the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings from the research study. This hermeneutic phenomenological study sought to understand the decision-making process that first-generation, community college students experienced as they made their college major and career choices. Attention was placed on understanding the factors that influenced their college major and career choices. The two research questions selected to capture the essence of this phenomenon were as follows. “What influences first-generation, community college students when choosing a college major and career?” and “How do first-generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process?” This research did not seek to generalize the experiences of all first-generation, community college students. Rather, it focused on understanding how these students applied meaning and understanding to the process of choosing a college major and career.

Sample Demographics

The interview participants included Alex [a pseudonym] a recreation major pursuing a career in active transportation, Angel [a pseudonym] a nursing major pursuing a career in nursing, Terrie [a pseudonym] a biology major hoping to pursue a career as a pediatrician, Shawn [a pseudonym] a sociology major pursuing a career as a social worker, Parker [a pseudonym] a business

administration major pursuing a career in accounting or finance, Pat [a pseudonym] a liberal arts major pursuing a career in mortuary science, Cameron [a pseudonym] a political science and liberal arts: arts, humanities and communications major pursuing a legal position helping immigrants and refugees, Jessie [a pseudonym] a business administration major pursuing a career as a forensic investigator, Ari [a pseudonym] a sociology and psychology major striving for a people-centered career helping those that cannot help themselves, Casey [a pseudonym] a sociology major pursuing a career in public administration, Val [a pseudonym] a psychology major pursuing a career working as a marriage and family therapist, and Chris [a pseudonym] a business administration major striving to start an advertising and marketing firm (See Table 2).

Table 2. Research Participant Information

<i>Name/Pseudonym</i>	<i>Major</i>	<i>Expected Career</i>
Alex	Recreation- Urban and Regional Planning	Active Transportation
Angel	Nursing	Registered Nurse
Terrie	Biology	Pediatrician
Shawn	Sociology	Social Worker
Parker	Business Administration	Accounting or Finance
Pat	Liberal Arts	Mortuary Science
Cameron	Political Science and Liberal Arts- Arts Humanities and Communications	Legal Positions Helping Immigrants and Refugees
Jessie	Business Administration	Forensic Investigator
Ari	Sociology and Psychology	People Centered Career Helping Those That Cannot Help Themselves
Casey	Sociology	Public Administration
Val	Psychology	Marriage and Family Therapist
Chris	Business Administration w/ Emphasis in Marketing	Advertising and Marketing Firm Entrepreneur

Cameron, Casey, and Parker had all been admitted to universities right out of high school. Parker attended the university for one year and then reverse transferred to the community college. The other participants made the decision to attend the community college instead of a four-year university.

The Social Cognitive Career Theory describes how self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals influence career development (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). This theory supports the notion that family and socio-economic factors play an influential role on the career paths that first-generation college students take. This theory was used as a lens to analyze the data in support of answering the two research questions, “What influences first-generation, community college students when choosing a college major and career?” and “How do first-generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process?”

Research Question 1: Results

Research Question 1: What influences first-generation, community college students when choosing a college major and career?

Results indicated that first-generation, community college students were influenced by the desire to break the cycle of poverty for a better life, the desire to set a good example, the desire to become something real, exposure to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to their authentic careers during their educational experience, knowing there’s a future, and the support and guidance

they received when choosing a college major and career. Participants reported that exposure to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to their authentic careers during their educational experience, and support and guidance, helped bolster their level of confidence about reaching their career goals, thus, providing them with a heightened sense of career self-efficacy.

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty for a Better Life

Results indicated that education is the vehicle to break the cycle of poverty for a better life. Social class was not an inclusion criteria for the study but after the sample was identified, intersection of class and first-generation, community college students became apparent. Participants reported living in situations where finances were extremely tight and they strove for change. They expressed that being a first-generation college student came with the responsibility of creating that change for himself or herself and for future generations. When asked to tell a little bit about themselves including their ethnicity, age and his/her career goals, one participant, Angel stated:

I think growing up with my household, my mom, bless her heart, she tried her best. I came from a broken home, a very domestic-violent home. She tried for what she was taught and that was work. Work, work, work and never really put emphasis on education. She tried to help us during homework. Both of my siblings did not graduate high school or let alone even think about college. I'm the only one that has pursued this all the way straight through. My mom, with her not having the education or the proper,

I want to say, teachings to pass along, we were part of the system. We were part of being on welfare, going to the store and paying for food with our Food Stamps before the whole EBT card started. I still remember those booklets with the different colored papers. Even being younger, I still remember, I was ashamed. I'm like, "Why are we paying with this? Why don't we have money? Why don't we have this?" As I grew older I finally understood. Well, she was doing the best she could. She was trying to raise three kids on her own and trying to just keep her head above water. When I became an adult and I started working and I had my money, I'm like, "I'm never going to let this happen." Unfortunately, I'm on the system now. That is another big push why I am here at school. I don't want to continue this anymore. I don't want to be having to depend on someone else to pay for my food. I don't want to depend on someone else to pay for my gas. Even though I love all of the opportunities that it's given me, I would love to pay it back in the future, give someone else the opportunity the way it's helping me rise. I want to break that cycle. I don't want my kids to go through that. I want them to know that there's a better way of going through life and not being, "Hey, is it the first already? Alright, we're going to get our Food Stamps. Hooray! We're going to get the little bit of money that the county gives us". I want something different for my children....I have four kids and they are the bigger reason of why I'm doing this. I want

to break the cycle. I want to break the whole chain of what I grew up used to. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Angel realized that education will propel him/her to a higher socioeconomic status. Angel does not want his/her children to experience the shame and struggles that he/she had to endure growing-up. Angel wants to break the cycle of poverty and provide a different experience for his/her children. Angel will do this by achieving financial independence. He/she also wants to give back to those in need once he/she achieves this goal.

Jessie experienced a similar childhood and also aspires to provide a different life for his/her children. When asked to describe his/her experiences with the community college in relation to his/her major choice, and in relation to his/her career choice, Jessie stated:

Being a first-generation college student, it's like I'm more determined now, like I said. My kids are dependent on me, and I want to do this for them, and I hope that they'll understand I wasn't there all the time because they are sharing their time with school. But I don't want them to ever have to worry about how we're going to pay this bill, or great, now the electricity got cut off because that's something that I've always dealt with, as a child. My parents, my dad didn't even graduate high school. He dropped out the last quarter of his senior year. And then my mom went to school in Mexico, so to this day we're still struggling, trying to make ends meet where they're asking me and my sister, "Hey, we need \$40 for this light

bill. Hey, we need this.” And it kind of sucks, because we never know what's going to happen. We're never short on food, because my mom's great at couponing. But when it comes to paying rent, and doing all this stuff, I know we moved around a lot because, okay, well, you're late so many times on your rent, they didn't want us there anymore. And even though I was little, I understood everything that was going on. So I don't want my kids to worry about any of that. Like, it's set, what you need, just ask me, you're fine. You're not going to have to worry about how we're going to pay for college. I'll figure it out. I'm your mom. That's what I'm here for. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Jessie also wants to be able to provide a better life for his/her children and break the cycle of poverty for his/her family. Jessie does not want his/her children to worry about basic needs like having a roof over their heads. Jessie also sees education as a vehicle for socioeconomic mobility that will lead to financial stability. Jessie stated, that one of his/her main goals was, “Getting a well-paying job to get out of my parent’s house” (Personal communication, October 19, 2018).

When asked to explain what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, Val expressed similar sentiments, “I just had my son and I wanted to, I'm a single parent so I wanted to provide the better life for him, something better than what I had. So that was my motivation” (Personal

communication, October 12, 2018). Val is motivated by providing his/her son with a better life than the one he/she grew up knowing.

Pat also expressed being motivated by the desire to provide a better life for his/her children. When asked to explain what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, Pat explained,

And then I had a few other incidents where you know I wasn't doing so good with their [child's other parent] And so, I ended up being in domestic violence shelters because of [him/her]. And then after that, [he/she] passed away and so that's where I decided, you know what, I need something better. Not just for me but for my kids because first of all [he/she] never helped. And it was always just problems so I think need to set an example. Especially because I have a daughter you know?

(Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Pat realized that a college education would afford him/her and his/her children a better life. For these participants, providing a better life for their children is the greatest motivator.

Shawn is also influenced by the desire to break the cycle of poverty for a better life. Shawn explained,

Well, it's definitely hard. It's definitely hard, especially when you're the first one [to go to college] because I feel like there's a lot sometimes like for me at my age some of my friends would tell me "Man, what are you going to school for?" They want us to do something else and it's like "For what? At

this age for what?" I always tell them, "No, you know, don't think like that. As long as you're breathing there's a purpose. There's tomorrow. Do you want to be stuck?" And I always tell them "Do you want to be stuck there forever? Like when you can be doing much more. Living a whole different life." And some of them actually came back too. (Personal communication, October 8, 2018)

Shawn strongly believes that obtaining a college education will lead him/her to a better life. Although others discourage him/her from pursuing his/her goal, Shawn encourages them to strive for something better. Shawn's passion for breaking the cycle of poverty for a better life proves to be contagious as Shawn convinces others to follow in his/her footsteps.

The Desire to Set a Good Example

The desire to set a good example is another theme that was constructed from this study. First-generation college students described feeling a sense of responsibility to set a good example for their families, and the desire to set a good example influenced their decisions when choosing a college major and career. The need to create a college going culture in these cases stemmed from the aspiration of leading a better life. A life different than that of their parents or the one they grew up knowing. Angel was asked to describe his/her experiences with the community college in relation to his/her major choice, and in relation to his/her career choice. Angel explained,

Just I think in reality with this whole me being the first person, or the only person for that fact, out of my brothers and sisters and my mother going to school, or even just finishing it, I don't know if it was a fluke, I don't know if it was a blessing in disguise or what, but I don't regret it and I actually love it because it's given me an opportunity. Not only for my immediate family to show them a different way, but perhaps someone else down the road. Someone else that I can meet, maybe a neighbor, and give them just influence. I be like, "I'm going to school" I love that my kids see me sitting at the table when they're going to bed and they're, "What are you doing?", I'm doing my math homework. "What are you doing?" I'm writing a paper.... My oldest is 19. My girls are 11, 9, and 3. The 11 and 9 year old, they have their own set of homework too and we'll sit together in a room. I just want them feeling the vibe, like, "Hey, I'm dedicated too, so we're going to do this." Even the three year old will grab a paper and she'll start scribbling." I'm like, and she sees it and that right there is all worth it, to see that they're motivated like that. Like I said, I just want to break the cycle. I don't want something repeating. Being the first generation, I think it's actually a big blessing for me. I'm glad I didn't choose any other life styles that were available to me during my upbringing and that I was able to see some type of light somewhere, even though it took me a while, but that I'm pursuing it now. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Angel is now in a position where he/she can be the example for others. Angel feels that this is a very important position to be in because he/she can influence others to lead a better life, a life where education is a priority that can lead to upward mobility. Angel feels extremely fortunate to be the first and only person in his/her family to break the cycle and obtain a college education. By setting the example, he/she motivates his/her children to be engaged in their own education.

Similarly, when asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, Terrie explained,

Well, I've always wanted to go to college, but my, the reason that led me more to wanting to really go to college was that my parents didn't go to college, neither did my brothers. I have a two year old son, I wanted to set a good example for him and not have him use that as an excuse that, "My parents didn't go." That was kind of more of the reason why I want to be a good example for my son. That led me more to wanting to come to college and finish my goal, and my career, and stuff. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Terrie knows that by being the first in his/her family to finish college, he/she would set the example for his/her son. The fact that his/her parents nor siblings graduated from college is incentive enough for Terrie to finish his/her educational goal and start a college going culture in his/her family.

Val also stated that he/she wants to set a positive example for his/her child. When asked if Val had any worries about pursuing his/her dream career, Val said yes. Val explained,

I wanna be that example for him. Because I don't want um, I refuse to have, you know I guess you could say I refuse to have the streets you know take him. And so, by me being in school it shows him the right path I guess. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Val refuses to allow his/her son to get caught up in a deviant lifestyle. He/she is determined to be the positive example for his/her child and will demonstrate that an education leads to a better life.

Shawn also realizes that setting a good example for his/her children influenced his/her decisions in relation to his/her major and career choices. Shawn was asked to describe his/her confidence level in achieving his/her career goals, and to explain how his/her level of confidence relates to the college major chosen. Shawn explained,

...I thought about it a lot before coming back to school because of my kids, because being a single parent, I knew that it would be hard. But I wanted to set an example for them as well that it's never too late, and if I can do it they can sure enough do it. They're both in high school so it's challenging. (Personal communication, October 8, 2018)

Although it is difficult to be an older student and a single parent, Shawn knows that by obtaining a college education, he/she is setting the example for his/her children and creating a college going culture.

These students are influenced by the desire to set a good example for their families. Obtaining a college education for them means living a better quality of life. These participants know that they are in a position where they can impact the lives of their families in a positive manner. Being the first in their families to go to college comes with the power to transform their lives.

The Desire to Become Something Real

The desire to become something real was another theme that was constructed from the data and influenced the major and career choices that first-generation, community college students made. Interpreting the meaning of “something real” took deep reflection on what the data was conveying. The meaning of “something real” was personal for each participant. For some, the desire to become something real stemmed from their vision for the future. For others, it meant having a position that would allow them to help others. The desire to become something real came with a strong force of ambition and optimism. Becoming something real meant being a role-model to others. It also meant to be respected in society, hold a position with high status, and be someone who people trust. It encompassed choosing a career position that would provide security and financial independence versus a job that was taken out of necessity.

Chris, a business administration major striving to start his/her own advertising and marketing firm, stated that what was influential to him/her when choosing a college major and career was his/her desire to hold a position in society with high status. When Chris was asked, "How does your level of confidence relate to the college major you have chosen, Chris explained, "I'm gonna put all my energy towards me succeeding. Because the more energy I put into that, the more probability I have of it becoming to fruition and becoming something real" (Personal communication, November 7, 2018). Chris explained that he/she believes that hard work pays off and will lead to a fruitful career.

Parker hopes to one day start his/her own family, which is what influences this participant when choosing a college major and career. Parker wants to ensure that his/her career allows him/her to support a family. When Parker was asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding a college major and career, Parker stated,

I was more thinking about where I wanted to be in my life when I'm like from 20 to 40 [years old]. I was thinking I know I definitely want to have a family, probably about age 30. I was thinking, "Okay. Also, what interests me? Do the sciences interest me? Does medicine interest me?" I was like, "No. Science and medicine, engineering, that doesn't interest me." I think business would be good for me because I'm not really interested in anything else. I feel like business, I could get a regular job and I could have a family like I want to. I think that's it...I know that business majors,

they get a decent amount of pay right after college and you only had to do a bachelor's degree and it's probably easier than an engineering major.

Yeah. (Personal communication, October 23, 2018)

Parker reflected on his/her interests when making college major and career choices. His/her interest in business guiding those decisions. For Parker, becoming something real meant securing a position that would allow him/her to support a family. In his/her mind, a career in the business field would allow him/her this opportunity.

Terrie hopes to obtain a career of working as a pediatrician. For Terrie, this is becoming something real. Terrie was asked, "When deciding on your college major, what influenced your choices"? Terrie explained that his/her career choice influenced the major selected.

For biology, well, the fact that I want to be a pediatrician, that it leads to that, that's what it influenced, too. I've always wanted to be a doctor of something, after having my son I realized I wanted to work with kids, and that was what influenced biology major, because that's something that I can work for, to being a pediatrician. That influenced it. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Terrie, Parker and Chris envisioned a future where they reached their career and personal goals. For Chris it's the desire to become something real, or securing a career position with high status in society. Parker is influenced by having a career in an area he/she is interested in that will allow Parker to have a family of

his/her own. After having a child, Terrie realized that he/she wanted to work with children.

For others, the desire to become something real meant having a career where they can help others, which is what influenced the major and career decisions that they made.

When asked how his/her major relates to his/her career goal, Cameron explained,

I think it [Political Science] relates to my career goal because political science and government has to do a lot with what I wanna do with helping out immigrants and refugees, because you have to be familiar with all the laws and all of that stuff. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Cameron realizes that this major will allow him/her to contribute positively to his/her community.

Val also stated that he/she is a helper. When asked how Val came to pick his/her career, Val stated,

I guess you'd say it takes like a certain type of person, like you have to have that in your heart and just wanna help people. And at first I was just wanting to you know like, I know with that degree I can work with at risk youth or even do private counseling sessions too. But it was, it started out to be helping the youth in marriages too, couples, because also I wanted to on top of the marriage and family pursue in another special degree in

sexology". For to be also a sex therapist too... (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Val described how his/her degree in Marriage and Family Therapy will allow him/her to help others in many different settings and capacities.

Another participant, Pat, is pursuing a career as an embalmer. Pat also wants to help low-income families that cannot afford to pay for funeral services. When asked how his/her major relates to his/her career goals, Pat explained,

And so now I'm actually thinking about doing the embalming and on the side maybe do a program that maybe I can organize or get funded where I can help families who can't afford to pay the whole thing where I can offer my services not for free but for a very low cost. Or help them. I know there's places that just want to make money and then there's places who they're real, they really want to help. And so that's kind of what I really want to help families like I said because a lot of them don't have insurance and they can't get covered and it's just the whole suffering process.

(Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Pat wants to help families in mourning find affordable funeral solutions. Pat realizes that some companies take advantage of low-income families when they are at their most vulnerable. Pat wants to be there for them during those difficult times. Pat's altruism guides his/her decisions.

Similarly, Shawn aspires to be a social worker and explains how his/ her desire to help others comes naturally. When Shawn was asked to explain what it would take for him/her to reach his/her dream career, Shawn stated,

Honestly, I don't consider myself patient, but when it comes to other people I am patient. When doing something for others I do it with my heart. I have the patience, I don't know how, but it's a weird explanation.

It's weird to explain, but yeah. (Personal communication, October 8, 2018)

Shawn knows that helping others is a central part of the career he/she hopes to obtain. When helping others, Shawn realizes that he/she is his/her best self.

Exposure to Knowledge, Engaging Instructors, and to Their Authentic Careers During Their Educational Experience

This study determined that having exposure to knowledge during their educational experience through college courses, experiences and role models has influenced how these first-generation, community college students chose a college major and career. Having exposure to engaging instructors and their authentic careers during their educational journey were especially influential to the decisions that these participants made. An authentic career is one that is “a truthful reflection of one’s genuine values and ideals” (Craddock, 2004, p.1). For Cameron, it was a process of elimination due to his/her exposure to college courses in biology and political science. Cameron’s political science instructor engaged him/her in a positive manner and these factors influenced Cameron’s choices. When asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her

college major and career, and what influenced his/her decision about his/her college major choice, Cameron explained,

Okay. So, it was kinda hard for me because at first I wanted to do biology because I wanted to be a veterinarian, and I took a mammals class, it was a intro to mammals class I think, and I did not like it at all. So, I was like okay, I can't do that. And then I took an intro to government class here too and I liked it a lot. And I had professor [Political Science Professor] and she was amazing... She really showed me how interesting the political science major was. So, she was one of the big influences on it. So, from that I started taking the political science courses and I liked it and I stayed in it and I finished all the classes for that major and it's pretty nice.

(Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Cameron's personal narrative shows that instructors play an important role in influencing the decisions that students make regarding their college majors and careers. The fact that he/she encountered an engaging instructor that made learning interesting, changed the course of his/her educational journey.

Cameron went from majoring in biology to switching his/her college major to political science. Cameron's instructor introduced him/her to topics that resonated with him/her, which influenced the career that Cameron is now pursuing. When asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, and how he/she decided on working with refugees, Cameron replied,

Just, I don't know I took an international studies class as well, and that kind of, I just saw how some people need help when they're not from here. In today's day, there's a lot of stuff that goes on with immigrants and refugees so I wanna be able to be with some of the people that help them out...Well, because I know a lot of people, just to focus mainly on the immigration side, because I know that the refugee side also has to come with it, but on the immigration side I know a lot of people who are immigrants. So I wanna be able to help people like them...By being a lawyer, possibly, something like that. To do with law. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Cameron currently works at a grocery store. Although Cameron appreciates what he/she does, this position has motivated Cameron to seek out something different. Cameron is looking for a career that will provide a variety of opportunities throughout his/her day and help others.

Similarly, Chris participated in the business academy in high school where he/she took business classes and participated in competitions. In this academy, Chris interacted with an engaging instructor that really helped shape the course of his/her future decisions. Participating in the academy was also where Chris was introduced to his/her authentic career that he/she is currently pursuing. Chris's teacher was a successful business owner and a role model to him/her. Chris's exposure to the business world is what influenced him/her to pursue a business administration degree and inspires Chris to create his/her own

advertising and marketing firm. When asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, and what influenced his/her choices when deciding on a college major, Chris recalled,

I was in the business academy. So my teacher was the owner of three Popeye's and a couple Papa John's, and he's also a pastor and he was a teacher as well. So, him being hands on in business and seeing the fruits of his labor and seeing how well he ended off, you know, obviously attracted me to the business field and it made me interested in it. And having him talk to me on a personal level just made it a lot easier too. So business academy was really great. It was something that I really enjoyed. Something that I got to put my efforts and all into. Beside of sports it kept me in the classroom. Kept me in my books and things like that...So obviously we had like competitions and stuff like that when I was in the business academy and when we go, 'cause we traveled to New York. We traveled to San Francisco, Barstow, Bakersfield, L.A., San Diego, all over. We would have, you know, we would sell because we made a product, we made websites. We actually had a product and selling stuff to people was I was always top seller. People told me thousands of times like, "You have the gift of gab." Just talking to people and being, not necessarily manipulation but knowing how to say things, when to say things, how to say it, what words to use to get the outcome that I wanted. So just the

reassurance of just life in general let me know that it was something that I was good at. (Personal communication, November 7, 2018)

It was because of Chris's participation in the business academy that he/she was able to gain hands-on experience and be a part of business competitions. This experience is where Chris realized that he/she enjoyed and was good at business. Chris referred to him/herself as being able to sell ice to Eskimos. This experience influenced his/her college major choice and career aspirations. Chris learned that he/she was a great communicator. Chris explained,

Everybody has things that they're good at and I'm good at talking to people, and I'm good at no matter who you are or what you like, what you think, what you know, I can make a connection with you. And the one place you get to do that and meet as many people and travel and, you know, the one place where it's good to be able to adapt in all circumstances is business 'cause you deal with different cultures, different people, different ethnics, different morals, different dealings. And plus, you know, I'm in tune with what people like. I'm in tune with what people are wearing, what people wanna see, what makes people wanna go out and buy things because I am one of those people. So business was just something that I knew I could excel at without trying. So I knew if I did try it would be something that I could really, really be good at. And plus the money isn't too bad either when it comes to advertising and marketing. It's definitely worth it. (Personal communication, November 7, 2018)

Chris shared that relating and connecting with individuals from diverse cultures comes natural to him/her and this reassures him/her that pursuing a career in advertising and marketing means success for him/her. Chris also shared that the people around him/her and what he/she observed helped shape Chris' decision, which currently helps him/her stay focused on his/her goals. When Chris was asked, "Describe your experiences with the community college in relation to your major choice, and in relation to your career choice. What could the community college do to support you in these areas"? Chris stated,

The people around me. Like I said, my mom, grandparents, stuff like that. And seeing other people not be prepared make me, it was like, "Yeah, I don't wanna be like that. I don't wanna be in their shoes 'cause I see how hard they have it so I'm gonna not follow in their footsteps and make sure that I have everything that I need to have in order."... Yeah, like the being scared or not knowing what to do or being here for three years and still being undeclared. Like, that's just not what you wanna do. (Personal communication, November 7, 2018)

Chris realized that he/she needs to have a plan in order to successfully reach his/her career goals.

Like Chris, Val's exposure to therapy is what influenced his/her major and career choices. Val has been in therapy for many years and it is something that he/she is very familiar with. When Val was asked how he/she came to pick his/her career choice, Val stated, "Cause I've seen that, that most of therapists

they have that degree. So, and I was like looking at all the options, different jobs and careers. And most of them want the Marriage and Family license or Degree, yeah” (Personal communication, October 12, 2018).

Val reflected on his/her experience of being exposed to multiple therapist’s offices and was informed by the degrees that he/she saw hanging on their walls when making career and major choices.

Jessie had an interest in learning about the human body at a very young age. However, it was when he/she was introduced to his/her authentic career of being a coroner that this participant was able to put a name to that interest. From that point on, Jessie’s exposure at school influenced his/her career choice of being a forensic investigator. When asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, Jessie recalled,

I can actually go back as far as the first grade, when they were asking everyone to do a presentation on what you want to be, and everyone’s saying, "I want to be a firefighter. I want to be a rock star." All these type of things. And when I went up there, I said I wanted to be an ER doctor. I was really specific on that. Even my teacher asked, "Why do you say ER doctor?" "I like blood and guts."...For a first-grader, that was a little odd. But I was always interested in it, and my parents were actually supportive of it. They said it’s a job, someone has to do it, and if she likes it, she likes it. So I always liked that. And then once I got into 7th grade, I actually learned about a coroner, so I thought that would be even cooler. I don’t

have to deal with people as much. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018).

Jessie recalled his/her early interest and fascination with the human body and how that interest influenced his/her career choices. Jessie also described his/her early community college experience as stressful and frustrating. Jessie had not yet declared a major, but was taking courses toward a biochemistry degree to get into the forensic field. Unfortunately, due to lack of space in the classroom, Jessie could not get into classes leading toward that major. However, he/she was able to take business courses. When asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, Jessie explained,

I got whatever classes I could. So I was able to get my basic GEs [general education]. But when it came to the classes I needed for the biochemistry, I couldn't really get them, so that's when I just started taking any classes I could, because I learned the more units you have, the more priority you have, so I started picking up business classes. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

At that point, Jessie decided to change his/her major to Business Administration. It was the exposure to those business classes that influenced the college major Jessie selected. However, Jessie still plans on pursuing a career as a forensic investigator in the future.

Alex's exposure to transportation also influenced his/her college major and career choices. The circumstances Alex was in helped shape his/her views.

Alex was asked, "When deciding on your college major, what influenced your choice"? Alex replied,

I feel like sometimes, it feels weird saying this but it kind of also chose me because I grew up being able to walk to school and then suddenly not being able to walk to school. Suddenly I had to be bused to school or driven to school. I don't know why, because I know this isn't the case for my siblings but for me, that just felt like my autonomy, having control of being able to go to places where I wanted to, I felt like that was stripped from me as I got older...If I wanted to take public transportation, it was inconvenient. You had one time frame and if you missed that you were incredibly late to school. Cycling and riding my skateboard to school were something, I don't know why, but I was drawn to. I would do it but it was three to four miles and I would still do it, not everyday, but I remember feeling like I wanted to do that...That goes back to, I feel like it chose me. I ended up growing up in a time where just getting sick and tired of having a chauffer and not being able to do things on my own. I feel like that's the same for people in different parts of the world. You could say that, for example, for minorities, at times they can be treated worse than others so they end up choosing careers where they can give other people a voice or minorities a voice. In a way, their lifestyle chooses for them and I feel like my lifestyle chose for me. I feel like I didn't choose, I feel like my lifestyle chose for me because of the boundaries of getting to school and whatnot

and not having my own autonomy and feeling like I wasn't really a citizen until I had a car. (Personal communication, October 10, 2018)

Alex's desire to pursue a career in active transportation stems from his/her past experiences and life circumstances. The fact that Alex felt that he/she lost autonomy inspired him/her to seek out alternate ways of commuting. Alex further shared that it was through his/her exposure to networking at his/her internship site that he/she was able to learn about different career options that further influenced his/her career choices. This internship experience is where Alex discovered his/her authentic career. When asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, Alex stated,

Choosing a career...the career was networking. Networking. Once I got to, once I started with ABC Transportation [Pseudonym], I started with outreach. Through questions, it kind of became self-evident that the careers that existed, I never knew that urban planning was a career that you could get into. Or being a director of planning regionally, that's not something I felt like cities plan their cities and that's it... from what you know you could almost predict the future careers that are going to emerge...Networking and learning your field really teaches you what's available... It was through the internships that you can really figure out what you want to do. (Personal communication, October 10, 2018)

Alex's internship exposed him/her to various professions and knowledge about the field which directly influenced Alex's college major and career choice. Alex's

dream career, and authentic career, is to work as a director of active transportation. To do this, Alex is aware that he/she will need a master's degree, experience and knowledge of urban planning in the transportation field.

Shawn worked as a dietary manager in a nursing facility for five years, where he/she was exposed to helping patients and realized that he/she had a passion for helping others. This work at the nursing facility is where Shawn was exposed to his/her authentic career. When also asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, Shawn explained,

I used to work for a nursing home, and I found myself that every time I would talk to the clients at a nursing home about their food preferences, because I was a dietary manager, I had to visit them and ask them about their food preferences or allergies. I always found myself doing a little extra for them, looking for other things that had nothing to do with nutrition, almost like a social worker would do. That's where I found my passion looking into that field, the social worker because I'm passionate about helping others and doing a little extra for others. (Personal communication, October 8, 2018)

Shawn described how he/she was able to put his/her passion into practice. At work, he/she found ways of helping others that were outside of his/her job responsibilities. By helping others with their varied needs and conducting research to learn about the field of social work, Shawn realized that social work was the career he/she was destined to pursue. However, with the hiring of a new

manager, Shawn's world turned upside down. When asked why he/she decided to enroll in college, Shawn explained,

So, we were in a small office, just like this one I had my desk, he had his desk. Short after he started sexually harassing me. So, oh my God, you're going to make me cry. So it started to become where I couldn't sleep. I couldn't sleep. It was just hard. I finally reported him and they let me go. Yeah, from one day to another, they just fired me. So I told myself, "I can do two things. Sit at home and be a victim and just do something about it for myself." I needed a distraction. I needed to do something, I needed a purpose again because that was my purpose. Going to work, supporting my kids, that was my purpose. I just said "What am I so passionate about helping others?" That's why I said "You know what, I'm just going to go back to school and I'm going to make something good out of it. (Personal communication, October 8, 2018)

That is when Shawn decided to pursue a career as a social worker. It was Shawn's experience from the past that steered him/her in that direction. Shawn also began volunteering which helped clarify the environment in which he/she wanted to work. When asked how his/her major relates to his/her career goals, Shawn explained,

Social work is, it could be different things because you could be working as a social worker, for example for the Child Protective Services or for the Adult Protective Services. Which I volunteered for a good eight months for

the Adult Protective Services. That's not what I wanted to, either Child Protective Services or Adult Protective, I wanted to go more like into the hospital social worker and then also I had a niece that was born premature, and her social worker was just so helpful and so very good to my brother and his wife that's where I developed that too...Volunteering into the Adult Protective Services helped me see that, yes I wanted to be a social worker, but not for that field...Yeah, my previous job and my volunteer work. (Personal communication, October 8, 2018)

Shawn's exposure to social work at a hospital, through volunteering, and his/her experiences at work helped him/her make an informed decision about pursuing a career as a social worker in a hospital setting.

Pat had been exposed to the mortuary business since a very young age. It was Pat's exposure to and familiarity with this profession that influenced him/her to pursue a degree and career in this field. Pat was asked, "What was it like for you to make your choice regarding your college major and career"? Pat was also asked, "How did you come to pick your career choice"? Pat shared,

Okay I was raised in Mexico so one of my godmothers they had their own business. And they had a mortuary business. They had a funeral, her dad was a funeral director and she did the embalming, and so every time I would visit her, I was kind of around that environment. So I grew up around all that. And I always just found it fascinating... Yeah, and the fact

that I grew around it. Yeah, I just always found the human body so fascinating. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Pat's fascination with the human body and familiarity with the funeral business are what directed him/her toward a career of working as an embalmer.

Ari studied abroad in London and was able to travel around Europe for three months. Gaining a different perspective from what he/she was used to enlightened Ari and influenced his/her major and career aspirations. Ari was asked what it was like for him/her to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career. Ari stated,

I went to London, and then from there I went to Paris...And Barcelona, and Italy, and things like that. So, I got to see everybody, like, a different perspective than living in the Valley. Cause I know there's people working in the district, people teaching, and counselors. The people around me is all I knew of. So, like, going over there I got to meet various people that were teaching in a different perspective and mindset, cause they don't know where I've been from, and I don't know where they've been from. So, the way they made it seem was so much more enjoyable than what I was seeing here...What you work in is what you get for your money and the things to survive, it's not something enjoyable. And the people over there seem more enjoyable in what they were doing. Like, I had theater teachers, and British civilization teachers that were so passionate about what they were doing and not just looking for that next paycheck is

essentially what I mean what I wanted to do at that time, at that time that I was there. So, I guess that's what pushed me away from it. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Prior to the trip to Europe, Ari aspired to be a Social Worker. However, his/her exposure to different ways of life and the passion that others felt at work made Ari seek out different career possibilities. Ari realized that in the United States, individuals live to work. In contrast, he/she observed that in Europe, people work to live. Ari also expressed the importance of exposing students to various major and career opportunities early on. Ari was asked, "Describe your experiences with the community college in relation to your major choice, and in relation to your career choice. What could the community college do to support you in these areas"? Ari responded by stating that he/she hoped that he/she would have experienced this sooner and recommended ways of early exposure. Ari elaborated,

Yeah, like they have their own little booth that a specific student that was chosen from that major could give, not necessarily a presentation, but like a demonstration for each major. Like an architectural major or a health science major, or art majors or things like that, or sociology. Like, there's specific things that can capture people attention from each major depending on how loved it is for a person. That can also help people... Yeah like a musician. And from an art major you could have a teacher pull aside one specific student who they think has great talent who

could go very, I know all students will go very, very far. Even if it's not in the major that they choose at this moment. But there's, I know some people can tell. Some people can tell. Like I have uncles and aunts that just know when to like, speak their mind and things like that. So I think that a teacher will see a specific student that they think will be able to attract other people to what they enjoy and try to like, bring out something that a student will enjoy as well. See if that's where they want to be or not. But to give them that option is a good idea. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Instructors play a powerful role in identifying student talent and making students aware of it. Exposing students to various options regarding college majors and careers is also essential in bringing awareness to students. Ari suggested putting on demonstrations highlighting diverse college major and career options for students.

Parker is influenced by his/her exposure to his family business, brother and the media. When asked if he/she had done an internship or had been exposed to the business field before, Parker stated that he/she had not participated in an internship. However, he/she had been exposed to the business field by working for his/her family farming business. Parker explained, Yeah. Actually, I've always been a part of it [family business]. My mom would take me there a couple of times, a few times a month for work and they've always brought me into the business and showing me what they

do and it was having me help them with their work...Ever since I was a kid, my mom would always bring me in and she'd drive us around like the farm, show us the operations. She chose how they pack the vegetables because it's a vegetable farm and they've also always had me do work in the office too. That's where I mostly work and as I grew older, they always put more responsibilities on me for the work and I still work there now and I just do a lot of office work. (Personal communication, October 23, 2018)

Parker was exposed to, and learned about operating a business early on from his/her family. Business is something with which he/she is very familiar and comfortable. Parker's brother was also a business major in college. Parker's exposure to his/her brother's journey and diverse business careers through the media, helped inform his/her college major and career decisions. Parker was asked, "When deciding on your college major, what influenced your choices"? Parker shared,

One of my brothers, he's a financial analyst right now for a big company, and he was very involved or knew about business and he was also a business major except not exactly, an agricultural business major. I just see movies were business people, they go to work and I've heard that they make a decent pay right after college and business is not that hard of a major compared to engineering and stuff. (Personal communication, October 23, 2018)

Parker's brother serves as his/her role model. Parker is also influenced by what he/she sees in the media. Parker also stated that his/her brother set the example as he/she made decisions regarding college major and career choices.

Yeah, I base or compare my career goals to him because I just know that right out of college, he made 70,000 with a similar major to me...His job seems like a job that I'd probably see myself doing and I didn't want to be doing. (Personal communication, October 23, 2018)

Parker is influenced by his/her early exposure to the family business, his/her brother and the media. Parker values the importance of being exposed to careers early on in order to make informed decision about one's major and career. Parker was also asked, "Describe your experiences with the community college in relation to your major choice, and in relation to your career choice. What could the community college do to support you in these areas"? Parker recommended,

I guess just exposing us to those careers, people who have those careers. I think that's a big one. Seeing people who have those careers, like for example, a med school student might see a doctor and be like, "Oh, wow. If that guy can do it, I can do it." Yeah. Also maybe exposing us to places, those companies that have those jobs like for me, I guess. Exposing me to companies that have jobs or business majors just like me who were going to come up with San Francisco State and with the business major. I guess

just exposure to those careers, and people in those careers. (Personal communication, October 23, 2018)

Meeting and connecting with professionals in the field that one aspires to be in is powerful. Parker suggested creating opportunities on college campuses where networking and career exposure can take place.

Casey was also asked the same question and stated that he/she also sees the value in early exposure. He/she was also asked what it would take to reach his/her dream career. Casey stated,

Just try to expose people to find what's out there. It's going to be really difficult to do that, which is why I say that it's better to maybe perhaps make one of the classes in high school to bring that attention to students that they can have a goal set...I still right now have a lot to learn, I have a lot to expose myself to and I need to get as much work experience as I can to finally figure out and mold what I really want to do. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Casey feels like he/she has not had sufficient exposure to the working world and lacks the proper knowledge to fully understand how to enter into the field of his/her choice. He/she realizes that career exploration needs to start in the high schools before students are required to make these important decisions.

When asked to describe their confidence level in achieving their career goals, and how this level of confidence relates to their college major they have chosen, students responded that their level of confidence in achieving their

career goals and confidence in the college major they have chosen is also influenced by “exposure”. Angel is pursuing a nursing career and he/she explained,

I'm very confident in it [about his/her career choice]. Just for the fact of the time that did the eight-year stint there at the clinic, I got to see a lot. I go to see a lot of procedure. I got to participate in a lot of things that the doctors showed me but, just the communication with the patients was the bigger thing that gave me the confidence. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Angel realizes that the fact that he/she worked eight years in the medical field contributes positively to his/her confidence in achieving a nursing career. Angel also acknowledged the fact that he/she feels that the nursing major fits like a perfectly fitting glove. This is his/her authentic career.

Similarly, when asked how his/her confidence level related to achieving his/her career goals and college major chosen, Alex replied,

The more I go through with it [college major], the more of the, vocabulary that I've learned and the more vocabulary that I learn, I feel like, within that same industry, it's easier to talk to people within the industry. You can learn the terminology through a textbook or you can learn it through working itself, through the work experience. I feel like that has helped out a lot, work experience and interning. That's given me a way to succeed. (Personal communication, October 10, 2018)

Alex's internship has allowed him/her to gain hands-on experience and learn the industry jargon. This internship experience helps him/her feel confident about succeeding in his/her chosen career. Alex's confidence also influenced his/her comfort level with asking questions, which influenced the career opportunities that he/she learned about. Alex stated,

I have confidence in asking. I've had success because I've asked and asking is nerve wracking... If you don't ask, it's hard to get involved. I've found that asking once opens the door, you open one door and then that door opens three doors. Those three doors open three other doors.

(Personal communication, October 10, 2018)

Alex realized that asking questions is a powerful source for obtaining opportunities. He/she is confident in asking questions and knows from experience that it yields results.

Parker also agrees that his/her confidence level is associated with what he/she has been exposed to. Parker stated,

I'm pretty confident. One, because I know how to do school and work, so I know I'd be able to reach it eventually and...I guess a confidence comes from in high school, I always did really well. I was doing pretty well and I'm confident because of my high school grades that I can do well in college too... Yeah. My confidence was based on the grades I get in classes.

(Personal communication, October 23, 2018)

The fact that Parker experienced getting good grades in high school contributed to the heightened sense of confidence he/she was experiencing. Having exposure to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to their authentic careers during their educational experience influenced how these first-generation, community college students chose their college majors and careers. This knowledge was in the form of college courses, role models, and experiences. Their exposure to engaging instructors and their authentic careers especially helped shape and influenced their decisions.

Knowing There's a Future

This study showed that first-generation, community college students are also influenced by knowing there's a future when choosing a college major and career. Being gainfully employed after graduation from college is the goal. Alex was asked how he/she came to pick his/her career choice. Alex explained, "Knowing that there's a future in that, you know that there won't be, for example, I'll go through school and learn and reach a dead end and not be able to find a job afterwards" (Personal communication, October 10, 2018).

Alex fears that after investing so much time in learning he /she will not be able to secure a position in his/her field, and that having career prospects is key in being successful.

Val's choice in college major is also influenced by having a variety of employment options. Val went on to say,

Yeah, it's just like when I walk by offices and stuff you'll see MFT [Marriage and Family Therapist] and stuff like that. I know it opens a lot of doors to other areas I guess you would say, like whether you want to take the road of Drug and Alcohol Counselor or working at a program or working in like a safe house or anything like that, they all want that type degree. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Val understands that his/her chosen major will afford him/her varied career opportunities.

Jessie also expressed the importance of securing a position after completing his/her business degree. Jessie feels that majoring in business will provide him/her with career prospects. Jessie was asked, "When deciding on your college major, what influenced your choices"? Jessie stated,

I started working right out of high school. I got hired at Chipotle, and I was here for not even a year and they automatically jumped me up to management, and I was doing that. And that was just fun. I like numbers, counting money, all that. And then also, too, the way I see it, I'm not, it is kind of taking the easy route, because I'm not doing exactly what I want, but at the same time, businesses are everywhere. So I'm not going to ever have to really worry about, oh, I can't find a job in my major... So I know a lot of people that have gone to college, gotten their degrees, came back, and they're at McDonald's right now because what they want to do isn't available here. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

An important reason why Jessie is pursuing a business degree is because he/she is familiar with working in this field. He/she feels confident about securing a position after graduation.

Casey's decisions are also influenced by the career prospects that his/her major will eventually lead to. However, Casey realizes that he/she will need to conduct research to better understand what those opportunities are. Casey was asked, "Describe your experiences with the community college in relation to your major choice, and in relation to your career choice. What could the community college do to support you in these areas"? Casey stated,

I've also had some peers had the same thing. They would study outside of college and they would just go back to how they started. Trying to look for a job and stuff. I actually have an autistic cousin. My mom told me about this. She graduated with the bachelor's degree and she works at a kind of like a specialist but from a date like company, like small company. She can't find a job in that field that she graduated from. But I feel like the only reason she can't get a job was because she didn't expose herself enough to see where she can end up in regards to the sociology major. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Casey is all too familiar with the struggles of being unemployed from hearing about what his/her family and friends have experienced. He/she is convinced that exploring careers is necessary to figure out what type of career opportunities exist.

For Angel, pursuing a nursing degree is the logical thing to do since he/she has already earned a medical assistant diploma. Angel knows first-hand the devastating feeling of defeat from seeking employment and not having any luck. When Angel was asked how he/she came to pick his/her career choice, Angel explained,

Last year I came and I kept looking for work and I kept knocking on people's doors and nobody wanted to open the door for me. They said too much time had happened and all this other stuff and I knew it was going to be a repetitive thing. If I didn't do something about it and say, "Hey, you just need to go for your degree. Stop messing around." This way people can't turn you away as easily and say you don't have the proper training or the proper education. I got tired of it. I said, "OK. This is what I need to do then." In order for me to pursue what I like doing, I have to go into nursing. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

At that point, Angel was convinced that a nursing degree will afford him/her a rewarding career in nursing. Angel stated,

I knew that, what was the next logical step for me. All I had was a medical assistant diploma that I obtained. In order for me to do what I want to do now, I needed that degree [Nursing Degree]. I knew that I needed to come and take all my generals and get everything out of the way and eventually make that jump over to the university and say, "OK. Here we go." (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Angel experienced what it was like to be unemployed after working as a medical assistant for many years. He/she applied for jobs but was passed over because of his/her lack of relevant education. Being passed over for jobs was a turning point for him/her as Angel decided to enroll in college and pursue a nursing degree. Angel is currently completing his/her general education and plans to transfer to a four-year university to earn a bachelor of science degree in nursing. Angel is convinced that this will help him/her secure a nursing position.

Ari fears that upon graduation, he/she will not be able to secure a position. What scares him/her is not knowing there's a future, with respect to the job that he/she hopes to secure. Ari was asked what it will take to reach his/her dream career. Ari explained,

I think what worries me is that everybody's going into college. Everybody wants a higher degree to get a better job. So I think by the time I'm done, there'll be more people going for the job that I'll know I want going for it...So I'll go through college for so long without getting the job that I want.

(Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Ari is concerned with having too much competition from other career seekers once his/her degree is conferred.

In contrast, Parker is convinced that by majoring in business, he/she will be able to secure a position upon graduation. This influenced his/her decisions. When asked how his/her college major relates to his/her career goal, Parker stated,

I think in the realm of business, there's also a lot of jobs available that I could take on when I graduate from college. I just know that the business world has a lot of jobs available and I can take one of them and they pay pretty well decently right after college. (Personal communication, October 23, 2018)

Knowing there's a future is a common thread that these participants shared. Job security is of optimal importance and an influencing factor when selecting a college major and career for these first-generation, community college students.

The Support and Guidance They Received

This study found first-generation, community college students are influenced by the support and guidance they receive from family, counselors, and through membership in special groups when choosing a college major and career. Having support, both moral and financial, helped these participants feel a sense of confidence in reaching both academic and career goals and influenced the choices that they made. Therefore, bolstering their career self-efficacy.

Parker revealed that his/her parents were very influential with his/her choice of college major and career; their expectations have always been high. He/she stated that the fact that they are Chinese contributed to that. Parker was asked, "What was it like for you to make your choice regarding your college major and career?" Parker responded,

I think being Chinese and Asian contributed to me thinking about my career choices because my parents also followed that stereotype and that

thing. Because throughout school, my parents always pressed me really hard to get As and do really hard in school. I feel like it was going along with Asian thing. But some of my friends who aren't Asian, I feel like they don't have that pressure like my parents did. Some of them do. But I feel like a lot of the academic pressure my parents gave us was because of their, because they were Asian. Because they themselves didn't even go to [university]. They didn't finish college, they just went to, they took some community college classes but then just went ahead and started their own business. I think being Asian contributed to my career thinking, whereas some of my friends who aren't Asian, they don't have, their parents weren't Asian and pushed them that hard in academics. Their parents probably pushed them more like sports or getting a job, thing like that. So, yeah... They put pressure on me to get college degrees and get good jobs after college and just be successful and independent. Yeah. They really encouraged us and supported us in that. I guess in my life, I always expected that to happen like, "Oh, yeah. I'd go to college and get a degree, and get a job." The only confusing part for me was picking what career? I was considering engineering, but I was like, "No. I'm not really interested in science and engineering." (Personal communication, October 23, 2018)

Parker's parents pushed him/her very hard to focus on school, obtain high academic marks, and pursue a lucrative career. Their guidance directed him/her

to focus on preparing for a high paying job with high societal status that would lead to financial independence. Unlike his/her non-Asian friends, Parker feels that his/her parents expected him/her to prioritize school as opposed to co-curricular activities or working.

Parker was also asked to describe his/her confidence level in achieving his/her career goals, and how his/her level of confidence relates to the college major chosen? Having support contributed positively to the level of confidence Parker felt about obtaining his/her career goals. Parker stated, "My parents have the finances to support me through all of that. I'm pretty confident I will reach it [his career goal]...I'm confident that my parent's finances will be able to finance all my school through college" (Personal communication, October 23, 2018). Unlike Angel, Jessie, Pat, and Shawn who reported living in situations where finances were extremely tight and the possibility of change motivates them to push forward, Parker acknowledges the fact that with financial support from his/her parents, Parker will be able to complete his/her college education and reach his/her career goals because he/she has the economic capital. Therefore, having, or the desire to have financial security is a key motivator for all of these participants.

Terrie shares similar thoughts as Parker regarding reaching their career goals. Terrie explained,

I'm pretty confident that I want to finish school and that I'm going to finish school. With the help that I get financially with school I feel like it helps me

a lot to ... with the stress of classes and stuff, I feel like I'm really confident that I'll finish, and I'll get to my goal. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Terrie's financial support gives him/her a sense of confidence toward completing his/her education in biology and realizing his/her dream of becoming a pediatrician.

Cameron is also influenced by the support received from his/her family. Cameron explained, "I think I'm pretty confident. I have a lot of support that'll help me get there too, so I think I got it [career]" (Personal communication, October 19, 2018). Cameron's family is his/her primary source of support and guides him/her through school matters. They provide the guidance that he/she needs to stay on the right track to reach his/her goals. When asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, and to describe his/her confidence level in achieving his/her career goals, Cameron explained,

My parents, my parents' support. They help me a lot... Like they would say oh, I see that you like this, and I see you're passionate about this, so maybe you should do this. So they helped me a lot. Just the people around me too...Like my family, my aunts, my uncles, my cousins. Most of my cousins have their master's degrees, so they also push me to go through the right path. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Cameron's parents encourage him/her to explore what he/she is passionate about. Cameron also mentioned that the guidance he/she received from college

counselors had a lot to do with the major he/she selected. Cameron was also asked to describe his/her experiences with the community college in relation to his/her major choice, and in relation to his/her career choice. What could the community college do to support him/her in these areas? Cameron went on to say,

Well, the counselors helped me a lot with picking the major that I wanted...In the guidance for the career. The counselors, they helped a lot. They helped me go through the right path too. Because I talked to them and I told them that, at first, I didn't like what I was studying and then they gave me different options and that's when they put me in the intro to government class and then that's how I ended up going [Into the Political Science Major]. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Cameron's counselors allowed him/her to safely explore various options until he/she found the college major that he/she was excited about. Cameron received direct guidance and support to ensure that he/she wasn't taking random classes that would waste his/her time and money.

Like Cameron, Chris was asked the same question. Chris revealed that he/she was also influenced by family. Chris stated,

'Cause my brother had been through college before and my stepdad helped him. So they had me set up for my first semester. And I already knew what I wanted to do. So it was just kind of like I don't know how they could make it easier. Because I kind of had it easy already for myself

'cause I had them and then I went from them straight to the counselor... I felt like I was very prepared. Right now, how calm and well put together, it has a lot to do with my counselor. He definitely helped out a lot. (Personal communication, November 7, 2018)

Chris's step-father, brother and counselor provided him/her with the guidance to help him/her feel prepared and confident about college and the choices he/she was making. Chris also mentioned that other adults in his/her life provided valuable advice that also influenced his/her choices. Similar to Cameron, Chris feels that his/her counselor has also provided a significant amount of guidance. Chris was also asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career. Chris stated,

My parents, grandparents, people who knew me on a personal level like some teachers that I got close with or just mentors around my life that, you know, made it a point to let me know that you don't need to pick a job, but you wanna know the direction that you wanna head in whether it be business, whether it be medical field, whether it be teaching. You wanna know kind of what you wanna do. And then the further you go the more specific you can get. So kind of just a supporting like, you know, making sure that they gave me as much advice and jewels as possible to make a decision as easy as it could be. (Personal communication, November 7, 2018)

The adults in Chris's life provided him/her with advice that encouraged him/her to confidently make decisions about majors and careers. They advised him/her that there is no need to think too specific about one's specialty in a given field. One can start broad and narrow down one's specialty later. Chris is also part of a student group on campus. He/she finds this group to be an influencing force when it comes to reaching his/her goals. Chris was asked if he/she was part of any special programs on campus and if so, which ones and for how long? Chris shared,

I'm part of Students Connected [Pseudonym], which is an Africa-American educational group that pushes African-Americans and other minorities to transfer and finish school because the retention rate for people who transfer or continue school is the lowest in the minorities, specifically African-American males and Hispanic males. So part of that. I've been in that for two years. (Personal communication, November 7, 2018)

Student groups and special programs on campus have been an important resource to not only help guide students, but to also provide them with the resources necessary to reaching their college major and career goals. This is especially true since through these special programs students have access to personalized counseling services.

Val was asked to describe his/her experiences with the community college in relation to his/her major choice, and in relation to his/her career choice. What could the community college do to support in these areas? Val described how

he/she learned of these special programs and what they have done for him/her.

Val explained:

There was a couple of people that told me, one was a therapist and one was somebody another one a case manager in Orange County, told me cause I just came out here. I'm from out there and they were kinda giving me a little programs that they have over there at their community college that's look over to you know in here. And so, that's when I started asking and I met with a counselor I asked about whatever this program is or if they have any help for like single parents. And then once I got into that program then I found out about CalWORKs and the Foster Program. And had those helping... If it weren't for the programs I probably would have quit a long time ago. Cause I wouldn't have been able to support any of my schooling with the books, supplies, getting to school. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Val is part of CalWORKs and the Foster Youth Program on campus. He/she credits these programs with providing the support and resources necessary to reach his/her goal. Val went on to say,

Yeah. And the different, and they have different groups here too like clubs or whatever but I was in the Foster Youth one. That helps because they're a lot of support. I mean you're around other students that've been in the system too. More people you can relate too. And the resources that they have in those offices for whether you need a snack. And from what I

understand they're opening up the gym in the mornings for students to take showers. So I mean just like those types of resources basically there's no reason for nobody to not to succeed. They're giving all these resources to help in any way. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Val described his/her strategy for successfully completing his/her goals by stating, "Put your pride away. Cause you know, a closed mouth don't get fed so I mean you gotta ask questions. Yeah." (Personal communication, October 12, 2018).

As Val and Chris described, Terrie also sees the value in being a part of a special program on campus. The counseling component of this special program provides Terrie with much needed guidance and information. He/she was asked, "Describe your experiences with the community college in relation to your major choice, and in relation to your career choice. What could the community college do to support you in these areas"? Terrie responded,

Well, I feel like the programs that I'm in and stuff, they already do help me a lot with information. I get a lot of emails and stuff on information, and things that I can go to. For example, the transfer center, they help me ... I know my professor said that before they didn't have that at her college and that was very difficult for her. I feel like if I didn't have the right steps into guiding me on how to transfer and how to send the letters and stuff. Or financial wise, the programs that I'm in help me with my books and even

gas for transportation. I feel like that helps me with finishing my classes and helps me keep going to the next level in college. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Becoming informed is an important part of being a student. Lack of information can hinder one's chances of completing their goals. Terrie shared how being a part of special programs on campus has really helped him/her stay informed and contributed to his/her success in college.

Jessie also feels that belonging to CalWORKs has influenced his/her ability to complete his/her goals. Students attending a community college who are receiving financial assistance through the county and state programs of CalWORKs/GAIN or DPSS may receive services through CalWORKs. Jessie is also a part of the EOPS program on campus, which is another student support program. Jessie was asked if he/she was a part of any special programs on campus. If so, which ones and for how long? He/she was also asked, "Describe your experiences with the community college in relation to your major choice, and in relation to your career choice. What could the community college do to support you in these areas? Jessie described the support received,

CalWORKs it's, well, I was referred by the county, so anyone that has a financial need, and I even have dependents, so I get cash aid. And they actually helped me with paying for my books, so that is great. And they also pay for my parking pass, and then my health fees, as well. So along with the BOG waiver, I'm not really paying anything to come, which is

huge. I'm getting as much done as I possibly can... Now that I was in the CalWORKs program and the EOPS program, the counselors that I see, I probably bug them, and I always apologize for it but I'm always in there, like, "I need to change this on my Ed plan, I need to do this. I was able to get this class, but not this one, so we're going to move that." They helped out a lot. If it wasn't for them being there for me to ask these questions, like I said before, I was trying to figure out everything on my own. Now it's like, okay, by what deadline do I have to apply for this for? Oh, they have this program, or hey, they're going to have a food truck out here. And then as well as the financial aspect where they're helping me out. They give me gas vouchers, and then the food vouchers, so I'm not even spending my own money wondering, oh, what am I going to eat? I'm going to have to go spend money on McDonald's to buy something. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

The support and guidance that Jessie receives from the program has helped him/her achieve his/her goal. If Jessie did not have this support, he/she would not have been able to advance as far as he/she has in the major he/she's pursuing. Therefore, CalWORKs and EOPS have influenced the major Jessie has selected.

Prior to enrolling in college, Pat's sister encouraged him/her to visit the campus and speak with a counselor. As a result, Pat enrolled that same day. Pat was asked what it was like for him/her to make his/her choice regarding

his/her college major and career. He/she stated that the counselor helped through the process. Pat said,

And we even went out there. We took a tour and everything. And I was like, you know what? I'm gonna start coming. Then I talked to my sister, and my sisters all like, " I'm pretty sure you can do the basics here and then transfer out later when you're ready." And she's all like, "Why don't you talk to a counselor?" And I was like, "No I don't think it works that way." And she's like, "Trust me, you don't even know try it, go talk to them first." And so I did... I enrolled that same day. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Pat's sister's encouragement motivated him/her to visit the college campus and speak with a counselor. Pat's lack of knowledge about college caused doubt in his/her mind about how the matriculation process worked. The counselor that worked with him/her influenced and guided him/her through the enrollment process. Pat realized that attending college was possible and not such a mystery after all.

Being a member of a special program has also influenced Angel's major and career decisions. He/she was asked, "Are you or were you a part of any special programs on campus? If so, which one(s) and for how long?" He/she said yes and described the support received,

Well, I'm part of the EOPS. I'm part of the CalWORKs. I had been part of CalWORKs ever since the very beginning. EOPS, I just started. I actually

started working with them this semester. Right mid-August I started working with them. They're a great program. I love what they do for their students, both of them CalWORKs and EOPS. I see how they help a lot of students who are in the current situation that I am, where we don't have a lot of funding, or even income to bring in that they get that extra help.

(Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Angel also credits the counselor's guidance with staying informed about his/her major and being prepared for his/her career. The following question was asked. "Describe your experiences with the community college in relation to your major choice, and in relation to your career choice. What could the community college do to support you in these areas?" Angel shared,

The counselors answer questions in detail for me. Even when I don't ask they'll pull out papers and, "Here, look at this. Here." So the community college itself, I see it more of like a parent figure in the sense that they prep us. They prep us completely and thoroughly, as long as you want it though. You really have to have that passion. You really want to make sure you finish that race and not be like, "Well, here's some courses you can take." No, you have to really push yourself. All the information is here... They're always with my emails and passing information along, they're very great at just keeping us informed. As far as anything that has to do with our major or our passions. "Hey, did you hear about this?" "Look

into this." I'm like, "OK." The community college has really helped me a lot.

(Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Counselors are an integral part of student success. Angel explained how counselors contributed to his/her own personal success in college.

As Angel, Terrie, Pat, Cameron, Jessie and Chris have stated, Shawn also agreed that counselors have been influential in guiding toward his/her chosen career. He/she was asked how he/she came to pick his/her career choice. He/she shared, "I spoke to my counselor and she directed me to that. I told her what is it that I wanted to do and that's what she, she guided me to that [Sociology Major]" (Personal communication, October 8, 2018).

Shawn's family was also instrumental with providing the support needed to reach his/her goal. This support allows him/her to pursue a sociology degree and stay on track to work as a social worker. When Shawn was asked what it will take to reach his/her dream career, this participant responded,

I believe just the support I have from my family, because I have a lot of support from them. Especially from my parents. I feel that without that support, the kids support, it would be harder for me and I probably would have already left it at a back burner again. So I feel like the support would, I mean as long as my parents are there to keep me going and help me out. I feel like that's pretty much all I need. (Personal communication, October 8, 2018)

Shawn's parents are a central part of his/her support system. He/she credits them for providing the support that motivates him/her to keep moving forward towards completing his/her degree.

These first-generation, community college students shared that the support and guidance they received from family, counselors, and through membership in special groups influenced the choices they made regarding their college major and career. They provided the necessary support and guidance to stay on track to complete their academic goals and remain motivated when pursuing their chosen careers. These students further indicated that having the proper support, both moral and financial, helped them feel a sense of confidence in reaching both academic and career goals and influenced the choices that they made. Therefore, bolstering their career self-efficacy.

Table three below highlights how each research participant's experiences contributed to the construct of the six interrelated themes that answered research question one, "What influences first-generation, community college students when choosing a college major and career"? Although some responses were intentionally not highlighted in the data analysis, some participants contributed to multiple themes. For example, Pat also mentioned that he/she was influenced by the desire to set a good example for his/her children. Also, Casey was influenced by the support and guidance he/she received when choosing college major and career. Furthermore, all research participants were influenced by the

desire to become something real. The meaning of “something real” was personal for each participant.

Table 3. Research Question 1: What Influences First-Generation, Community College Students When Choosing a College Major and Career?

	Alex	Angel	Terrie	Shawn	Parker	Pat	Cameron	Jessie	Ari	Casey	Val	Chris
Breaking the cycle of poverty for a better life		X		X		X		X			X	
The desire to set a good example		X	X	X							X	
The desire to become something real			X	X	X	X	X				X	X
Exposure to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to their authentic careers during their educational experience	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Knowing there's a future	X	X			X			X	X	X	X	
The Support and guidance they received when choosing a college major and career		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X

Research Question 2: Results

Following are the results addressing the second research question, "How do first-generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process?"

Results indicated that first-generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process as confronting unclear futures with determination and resilience, encountering and overcoming financial barriers, being stressful, and as a process of searching. Participants in this research shared they had high levels of confidence about reaching their career goals; thus, possessing a high level of career self-efficacy. They expressed that confidence made them determined to overcome and be resilient to anything that may come their way. Being confident about reaching their career goal gave them the resiliency to keep moving forward no matter how unclear the future seemed for them. However, the financial uncertainty is what worries them most. Some participants described their college major and career choice process as stressful. Stressors included lack of knowledge and experience, the fear of being deported from this country, relapsing from drug addiction and violence, not making the grades, lack of ambition to pursue internships and obtain work experience, and time to degree completion. The process of searching was another common thread that connected these first-generation, community college students as they search for meaning regarding their college major and careers. Searching through books, internet, experiences, classes and connecting with others as

resources are ways in which these students described their college major and career choice processes.

Confronting Unclear Futures With Determination and Resilience

First generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process as confronting unclear futures with determination and resilience. Being confident about reaching their career goal gave them the resiliency to keep moving forward. Val, a psychology major pursuing a career working as a Marriage and Family Therapist is resilient. When Val was asked, “Describe your confidence level in achieving your career goals. How does your level of confidence relate to your college major you have chosen”? Val explained,

One minute ups and downs. There was times when I got discouraged and wanted to give up but I said from day one that no matter how long it took, it could take me 10 years, 12 years whatever that I was gonna finish and get the degrees. Yeah, I've had a lot of say, set-backs but I don't stop, I just keep trying. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

No matter how difficult it got, and how unclear the future may be, Val’s resilience fueled his/her stamina to keep moving forward.

Terrie’s confidence also provides him/her with the resiliency needed to reach his/her career goal. Terrie stated, “I mean, I'm not sure how difficult they'll [college courses] be. But, since I'm so confident about my goal, I feel like I'll work

through it no matter how difficult my classes are” (Personal communication, October 12, 2018).

Jessie, a business administration major pursuing a career as a forensic investigator, also expressed having strong confidence in reaching his/her career goal. Jessie explained “Very confident. Again, it's not going to happen anytime soon, but I know it will happen. I will make it happen. I'm very determined” (Personal communication, October 19, 2018). Jessie expressed his/her determination and resiliency in reaching his/her career goal aside from the fact that the future is unclear.

Similarly, Pat a liberal arts major pursuing a career in mortuary science, is also very confident about reaching his/her goal. Pat's resilience was demonstrated in the following statement. “With my major I know it will take me about the same amount of time but I know I can push myself. If I push myself this far I know I can continue” (Personal communication, October 12, 2018).

Shawn's level of confidence is also high. He/she is majoring in sociology in hopes of becoming a social worker. Shawn explained,

I'm very confident because I like to finish what I start. Since I started in 2016, I haven't stopped coming to school, even though it's been hard. It's actually harder than what I thought it would be, but I just tend to stay focused and just go all the way, finish what I'm doing...I'm very confident. I honestly, I understand that there's a big responsibility and a high stress level with that job [social worker]. But I think I can manage the stress level

and I like the environment, so I'm pretty sure I won't have a problem going through with it. (Personal communication, October 8, 2018)

Shawn acknowledges that he/she faces a challenging road ahead.

Despite this, he/she remains confident. Shawn's resilience will allow him/her to stay focused and push forward until reaching his/her career goal no matter how long it takes.

Encountering and Overcoming Financial Barriers

Seven of the twelve participants reported that they worry about their finances and feel that this could hinder them from reaching their dream careers. When asked if they have any worries about pursuing their dream careers, Cameron explained his/her financial concerns "Financial reasons, not having enough money to pay bills and stuff like that" (Personal communication, October 19, 2018).

Val expressed the need for financial aid beyond the community college. Val stated, "Oh yeah! Yeah. Cause here I've maxed out all my financial aid" (Personal communication, October 12, 2018). Terrie also provided insight by stating, "What worries [me], maybe, is to not be financially ready once I do get closer to that goal, is to not be financially stable enough to pay for all of my classes and my books once I get closer to my degree" (Personal communication, October 12, 2018).

Cameron, Val, and Terrie are concerned about their finances and the negative impact that lack of funds could have on their college completion.

Alex will attend a four-year university next year and also stresses about finances. Alex stated,

I know that what I have to do to get there but financially, just student loans is something that I'm really afraid of. Pulling out student loans and getting into debt and just, I feel like financially not having the resources"..."Wanting to be closer to the school but not having the resources financially to do so financially speaking, is my biggest worry.

(Personal communication, October 10, 2018)

Alex fears getting into debt from student loans. He/she is worried about not having the sufficient funding to live near campus.

Ari is a double major in sociology and psychology and striving for a people-centered career helping those who cannot help themselves. He/she also worries about not having the financial means to provide a roof over his/her head and money to eat. Ari stated, "Of course money. Money is like the gold in this economy. So I know that if I don't have a job to support myself, how will I be able to focus more on school if I won't be able to sustain a roof over my head, essentially. And food in my stomach, things like that" (Personal communication, October 12, 2018).

Ari worries about not being able to meet his/her basic needs. He/she realizes that he/she must work in order to continue going to school and supporting his/her self.

Angel is pursuing a nursing degree and stated, Finances are definitely a worry. Like I said, I'm stuck in the system right now. Even when I was working I wasn't making enough. That is definitely a big worry for me. It's more like, can I keep this up long enough to obtain a degree? Can I keep this up long enough to start working and actually make some decent money so we don't have to worry? And so my family doesn't have to sit here and be like, ah, the light bill is coming up. How are we going to do it? I'll call and see if we can break it up into payments or if they can postpone it. I don't want them worrying about this stuff anymore, but that is definitely a worry. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Angel is exhausted of being dependent on others to provide for him/her and his/her family. He/she is barely making ends meet. Finances are a huge stressor. Angel is motivated by one day achieving financial independence.

These participants suggested that the community college is a safe place where they can continue their education. The community college provides an affordable choice to pursuing their goals. However, according to them, the future is not so clear. This financial stress is especially the case as they transfer to a four-year university and get closer to completing their goals. They explained that in order to achieve their dream careers they will need sufficient funding. The financial uncertainty is what worries them and can impact their chances of reaching their dream careers. Although they are currently making ends meet,

having the means to afford their basic needs such as housing and food, and a university tuition, is a major stressor for them.

Jessie revealed that time and money are what worry him/her. Jessie's ultimate goal is to become a forensic investigator and he/she realizes that it will take additional education beyond his/her current goal of earning a bachelor of arts degree in business administration. Jessie is a single parent of two girls. When Jessie was asked when deciding on a college major, what influenced his/her choices, Jessie explained,

The main part was that I would get it over with sooner. Because I do have two kids to depend on me, so I don't want it to take forever...I don't have a set time that I want to have it done, but definitely after my kids are done being dependent on me, because they're already taking so much, sharing so much of their time with me pursuing my education right now, to do it while there's, okay, I'm done right now. You have me full-time for two years, and to go back to school again, I feel would be unfair to them... Well, their [other parent] isn't in the picture. [He/she] wants absolutely nothing to do with them. [He/she] doesn't pay child support, so financially I'm responsible for them. I do have help from my parents, so I'm not worried about them not having a family, because we're their family. They don't have [two parent]...But I know there's always that void... So once they're grown, out of the house, that's when I'm planning to go back. How most people just stay at home, they'll do their little gardening or

something, my thing will be going back to school and trying to pursue that...Oh, yeah, and then the money, too. Just how I'm going to be able to finance it, but if I can do well in business and find a really good career that will help me pay for it, then I'll be okay, even if it's slow. I'm doing this slow right now, so it's really two things. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Jessie will put his/her dream career of becoming a forensic investigator on hold to pursue a career in business after the completion of his/her degree. Jessie will do this in order to support his/her children financially until they are no longer dependent on him/her.

Being Stressful

First-generation, community college students also describe their college major and career choice process as being stressful. For some students, these stressors could hinder their chances of reaching their dream careers. These stressors included lack of knowledge and experience, the fear of being deported from this country, relapsing from drug addiction and violence, not making the grades, lack of ambition to pursue internships and obtain work experience, and time to degree completion.

When Ari enrolled at the community college for the first time, he/she experienced stress due to his/her lack of knowledge and experience about college majors and careers. The following question was asked, "Describe your experiences with the community college in relation to your major choice, and in

relation to your career choice. What could the community college do to support you in these areas”? Ari responded,

Well it's kind of stressful not knowing what you want to be and people already asking me what do you plan to be. So I understand why people are always undecided, because it takes a while to get your feet wet and to see what you actually enjoy while taking classes, mostly the general classes. So I think of it more of a deepened explanation of all the majors would have been much better to see what connects you based on what you've done in high school and what you learned in your environment, things like that would have been more helpful. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

When matriculating at the community college, students are required to list their college major. Ari described this situation as stressful since he/she had not yet decided on a college major or career.

Angel also described the stress he/she felt when initially enrolling at the community college. Angel described this stressful situation as feeling lost, confused and overwhelmed. Angel was asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career. Angel stated,

Once I got here and I started looking at classes and what I needed, I was very lost. I was very confused. Even with the help of the counselors, I felt overwhelmed because I didn't know what really entailed obtaining a degree was going to be. It was a choice that I had to sit down with my wife

and we sat down and I said, "Hey, this is what we need to do. Look at the situation that we're in. Every end of the month, we're sitting here scraping pennies to see if we can make it through the last five days. I need to go back to school. If this is going to be too much, you need to let me know." And no, she's behind me and I'm losing a lot of time at home, but like I tell her, "This is all for us." At the end we can be OK and make sure that we're OK. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

At that point, Angel decided to enroll in college and pursue a nursing degree.

Jessie was asked the same question and he/she also described his/her initial experience at the community college as stressful and frustrating. Jessie said,

I would say stressful. Well, I don't really want to say stressful, but it was a lot, just because I did have a lot going on. But it was frustrating, really, because I couldn't get into the classes. How long am I going to be here? That was really the thing. And so that's really what I felt, frustrated.

(Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Jessie described his/her frustration with not being able to get into the classes for the major he/she selected. He/she felt that this would increase the time toward completing his/her degree. As a result, Jessie eventually changed his/her major. Jessie stated,

I got whatever classes I could. So I was able to get my basic GEs [general education]. But when it came to the classes I needed for the biochemistry,

I couldn't really get them, so that's when I just started taking any classes I could, because I learned the more units you have, the more priority you have, so I started picking up business classes. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Since courses in the biochemistry major were hard to come by, Jessie took general education courses and courses leading toward completing a business degree. These courses were selected based on course availability. Jessie also shared his/her frustration with not being able to meet with a counselor and receive information about the classes needed for his/her major. Jessie feels that having no counselors available also affected the choices he/she made. The following question was asked, "Describe your experiences with the community college in relation to your major choice, and in relation to your career choice. What could the community college do to support you in these areas"? Jessie responded,

I feel like if we had more counselors. I know there's a lot, but if I would have been able to see a counselor, like, "Okay, yeah, they'll see you in 15 minutes." "Okay, I'll stick around", I would ask more questions. That would help me out at first. I wouldn't be as scared to go and ask them all these questions. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

The lack of sufficient counselors made the wait time to see a counselor very long. This caused Jessie to feel anxious and discouraged about asking important questions regarding the courses needed for his/her major.

Similarly, Shawn also chose random classes due to not having the proper information. He/she initially did not meet with a counselor. Shawn described his/her frustration,

Well, at first it was kind of a little frustrating because I was trying to talk to a counselor and it took me a while to talk to a counselor so I just got classes. Maybe I did need them, I just tried crashing the classes that I could before talking to a counselor. (Personal communication, October 8, 2018)

Shawn did the best he/she could given the resources available. The lack of knowledge and experience affected the choices that he/she made.

Casey is an undocumented student from Mexico whose parents do not speak English. He/she is majoring in sociology and wants to work in the area of public administration. Casey grew up being the translator for his/her family. Casey finds ways to try to excite them about learning English, especially his/her mother. However, she does not want to hear it and becomes angry anytime Casey brings it up. Being undocumented is his/her biggest stressor. When asked if he/she has any worries about pursuing his/her dream career, Casey went on to say,

It's being an undocumented student, because right now, especially with this administration it's really being tossed around a lot. Even though I have my goals, my future is really uncertain because one day I can [be deported], the government has my information, they know where I live, so

if they make a choice one day to just locate us, that's it for me. That's the biggest challenge I have. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Casey lives in constant fear of being deported from this country due to his/her legal status. Regardless of his/her career goals, Casey is not certain that he/she will ever be able to reach them. The future is unclear for Casey.

Just as others have described, financial stressors are also a reality for Casey. He/she works two part-time jobs to help his/her family. Casey explained, Yeah, and also my family, because I have my parents and I have a sister too, but she doesn't even have her DACA, so she's not even going to be able to work. She can qualify for, what, AB 540 which allows her to pay in state tuition rather than out of state, but it's still going to be a burden to the family to pay for her college. I don't ask for money from my parents. You know right now I work here [community college] and then I work at the Bargain Barn [Pseudonym] and I've been helping my grandma out, because she's 72 years old and she still does basically hard labor. She does gardening, that's really big for her because she's already elderly. I help her out and I try not to ask much of my parents, not financially anyways. So I try to help them out as best as I can too. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Casey fears that he/she will be deported and never complete his/her education or reach his/her career goal. The current administration and climate of the country fuels his/her worries. Casey's family's socio-economic and legal status

contribute to his/her stress and fear of the unknown. The fact that his/her parents do not speak English limits their work opportunities. Casey feels responsible for helping them, his/her grandmother and his/her siblings.

Val is recovering from drug addiction and is a victim of domestic violence. He/she has relapsed once before while attempting to complete his/her college education. That is one of his/her biggest stressors and barriers to success. Val explained,

I've had a lot of obstacles with like substance abuse, relapsing, domestic-violence. And those have set me back, and those have been the obstacles so that's pretty much what it's been...So that was in like 2013 or 14 and I had to go through certain academic probation periods and with financial aid and everything and just had to get over that. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Val's relapse caused him/her to fall into academic probation and jeopardized his/her financial aid. Val stresses about relapsing from drugs again and failing more classes.

Cameron's only fear is that he/she will not be satisfied with his/her chosen career. Cameron shared,

I would say yes that it ends up being the wrong thing. Like I didn't choose the right thing at the end. So, that would be my only fear. That I chose the wrong thing and that I don't like what I'm pursuing. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Cameron's lack of confidence about the major he/she has chosen causes him/her stress. He/she fears not enjoying his/her career once he/she graduates from college.

Angel and Parker are worried about not making the grades to graduate from college. Parker also fears not obtaining the experience necessary to secure his/her career goal. Parker stated, "I guess not getting good grades in my classes, and not being ambitious enough to get those internships and work experience. Yeah. I guess getting bad grades. That's what scares me from getting my career goal" (Personal communication, October 23, 2018).

Similarly, Angel stresses about not getting good enough grades to earn a spot at the local university. Angel stated,

I'm just worried that if I get a bad mark on my classes, if I don't do as well as I expected on something, is it going to affect my GPA? Is it going to limit me to perhaps a selection process for the program that I'm applying for? I know in my heart that's what I want to do, but that doesn't mean that on paper that's what people are going to see. Nobody else sees the history that I have with patients or doctors or anything like that. All they're seeing is a piece of paper with some numbers on it and that's what they're basing it on. I think that's what worries me because in the end, I know that they have interviews, from what I've been told, I haven't really looked deep into it, because I'm still a year away from transferring, but, I just hope that I make good enough grades to be selected right off the paper and not be

looked over and be like, " Let's see if there's somebody better." That's the one thing that scares me. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Angel feels that he/she has the passion and experience to thrive in the nursing profession. Grade point average is a key factor that is consider when admitting candidates into a nursing program. Angel fears that his/her grade point average will hinder him/her from being admitted into the nursing program that he/she is hoping to attend.

The time to degree completion is something that stressed Terrie. When asked what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, Terrie said,

I was kind of stressed about it, time wise. It stressed me out to think that I was going to go to school for that long. It wasn't difficult to choose biology as my major because, like I said, it interests me. Even now, starting my biology classes, it's something that I kind of look forward to going to it, and to learning about that. But what did stress me out was the time. My dad would always be like, "Oh, you have to go to college for this long. You might as well work." That's something that stressed me out, was the time. When they gave me my Ed plan, and they're like, "Oh, you're going to graduate in so-and-so." I'm like, "It's still four years from now." But the major itself, it's not something that stresses me out. Or the classes, it's not something that it's hard for me to choose biology for. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Terrie feels he/she selected the right major, however, Terrie realizes that there is still a long road ahead. This realization is what gives him/her stress. His/her father also discourages Terrie from continuing his/her education because it will take so long to complete the degree. He pushes Terrie to get a job instead. Similarly, Pat enrolled at a community college right after high school. He/she also stressed about the length of time it would take to complete his/her degree. Therefore, Pat left college and enrolled in a vocational school that provided him/her with a short training as a massage therapist. He/she later returned to college. Pat explained,

I first enrolled here right after high school... But I saw it was gonna take a lot longer to major in my career. And I was young so I was no longer at home, so I really didn't have that kind of counseling with my parents or that one on one talk with them. So, I wasn't able to really get any type of advice. And then I noticed that they had just opened this new vocation school, or the training school. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Pat's lack of parental guidance and support caused him/her to drop out of college and enroll in a vocational school instead where it would take him/her less time to complete a training as a massage therapist.

These students described their college major and career choice process as "stressful". The stress came as a result of the lack of knowledge and experience, the fear of being deported from this country, relapsing from drugs

and violence, not making the grades, lack of ambition to pursue internships and obtain work experience, and time to degree completion.

The Process of Searching

First-generation, community college students also described their college major and career choice as a process of searching. Alex was asked what was it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career, Alex explained,

I think the process was one of searching...What I had to do was just test things. I tried different classes, I tried business classes, I tried computer classes, programs, certificate programs and just by sampling was the way that molded and shaped what I wanted to do and what I, more importantly, did not want to do. It was more of a searching and once I found it with the classes that stood out and really grabbed my attention, that's when I felt grounded and taking math classes or just general classes, period, now had an importance. Where when I was taking them before I would sit in the chair thinking, "why am I here"? I felt like I didn't belong. Until I figured out what I wanted to do... I guess you can say that is how I found what I wanted to do, just sampling. (Personal communication, October 10, 2018)

Searching for the right fit was the process that Alex used to figure out what the right college major and career choice were for him/her. Alex mentioned that it feels like you're carrying a lot of weight on yourself when you're pursuing something that you are not really passionate about. However, once he/she

identified the coursework that complemented his/her interests, Alex felt that college had a purpose. Alex described this process when asked, "Tell me a little bit about yourself including your ethnicity, age and your career goals". Alex responded,

What I did was I grabbed a catalog, a school catalog and I just started highlighting classes that I liked and Intro to Recreation stood out. When I took that class I knew that that's what I wanted to do, get involved in the community through recreation because recreation was more of a proactive way of helping people rather than the reactive way. (Personal communication, October 10, 2018)

Alex searched through the college catalogue to identify a college major that resonated with him/her. At that point, Alex knew he/she had found the major that complimented his/her interests.

Val was in foster care throughout his/her life from elementary school through high school. Val is recovering from substance abuse and was a victim of domestic violence. He/she has been in therapy throughout his/her life. Val searched for the right major until it clicked. Val was asked, "When deciding on your college major, what influenced your choices"? Val explained,

Just my background and upbringing. Like first I wanted to do drug and alcohol counselor but then I found that with the psychology major there's more doors, more opportunities... But I think from the start I started that and then I switched to culinary and then I went back to

psychology...cause the feel I'm familiar with [experience with being in therapy]...going through therapy all my life. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Val enjoyed studying culinary arts when he/she initially enrolled into college but realized that psychology was more in-line with his/her calling and would provide him/her with more career opportunities. Val's background and familiarity with therapy were a reference point for him/her to work from in making major and career choices.

Similarly, Casey had trouble with selecting a college major. Casey was asked to describe his/her experiences with the community college in relation to his/her major choice, and in relation to his/her career choice. He/she was also asked to describe what the community college could do to support him/her in these areas. Casey stated,

I feel once we're in college we have to make up our minds ASAP, because if we don't it pushes us to do more school, to have more years of schooling and then more money. Sometimes money that we don't even have. That was one of the issues that I had with myself, besides with my general ed [education], I could have taken some classes and transferred in two years if I had known more about sociology when I began. That could have shifted my entire process. (Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

Casey explored classes in automotive technology, consulted with over ten counselors, took the Strong Interest Inventory career assessment test and consulted with friends. A culmination of this resulted with deciding on his/her current major of sociology. However, that was not always the case. Casey started college as a math major based on a counselor's recommendation, however, after taking two college level math courses, he/she realized that major was not for him/her. Casey found sociology and took classes that really opened his/her mind. That's when he/she decided to major in sociology. Since Casey is an undocumented student, he/she had no room for error. Time is of the essence. This time issue is especially the case with financial aid. He/she needed to stick to a four-year plan. Casey went on to say,

Because I was struggling with just trig [trigonometry] and pre cal [pre-calculus] I wasn't too sure if I was going to be able to pass my other [Math] classes. Especially because of mathematics, engineering field is extremely competitive... the thing was with math there was really no room for me to make mistakes, because I was already looking at a four-year student plan... The only reason why I found myself in the sociology major was because I went out there and looked for that help and it was here.

(Personal communication, October 19, 2018)

After struggling with trigonometry as a math major, Casey realized that he/she needed to change college majors. Given his/her legal status and for financial reasons, he/she is forced to complete his/her degree in four years. There is no

room for error. Casey's inquisitive nature led him/her to be introduced to the sociology major that he/she is currently pursuing.

Similarly, Cameron also searched until he/she found the career that excited him/her. When asked how he/she came to pick a career choice, Cameron stated, "I actually just picked it recently because I didn't know what specifically, once I get the political science major, I didn't know what specific area I wanted to go. But once I started looking into it I liked the international studies side" (Personal communication, October 19, 2018). As Cameron took more classes in political science, he/she became aware of his/her interest in international studies.

Ari also took advantage of the resources that were available. He/she searched through books and spoke to individuals in the field to get a better understanding of what social workers do. Ari searched until finding the major that fit him/her best and complemented the career he/she wanted to pursue. When asked, "When deciding on your college major, what influenced your choices" and "How did you come to pick your career choice"? Ari responded,

...It's based around people, what I wanted to do. And originally, I wanted to do things in music, and then I found out I can do things that revolve around music and people, like being a socio-musicologist, and that helped me, like for me like to see what other possibilities there were inside a sociology major, cause I can also be an editor, which I love reading, so that's something I look forward to, see if I enjoy having a career in. But it

essentially, it's all based around what I can do for other people. So, that's why I chose sociology...Like I said, I'm a very big, big reader, and when I first started reading, in those books that I was choosing it talked about people in social work, and people in attorneys, and things like that. And it was showing both sides to everything, the pros and cons, but I saw more of the cons of what I liked in social work. So, I chose social work because of the whole part of helping those, mostly focused on children that are in situations they shouldn't be, and things like that, and helping families. Sort of that concept. So, that's what chose me to sociology and how I chose social work. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Ari has varied interests that he/she explored. However, his/her passion for helping others is what determined his/her college major and career choice.

Parker also described his/her career choice process as searching for the right fit by taking a variety of business classes to identify the areas of business he/she was interested in. Parker was asked to describe his/her experiences with the community college in relation to his/her major choice, and in relation to his/her career choice. What could the community college do to support him/her in these areas? Parker explained,

Yeah. For business major, if you take accounting classes and then you take management classes and then you take marketing classes and those different classes, taking those different classes shows you like, "Oh, this is what I would be doing if I was doing marketing for a company or

accounting for a company or international business or just administration or management." Taking those classes helps you see like, " Okay. I freaking hate marketing, but I like accounting," or, "I hate my accounting class, but I love my marketing class." That's how it helps you see things. (Personal communication, October 23, 2018)

By being exposed to different courses in their major, students can determine what areas within the major they are most interested in. Parker described how this process helped him/her discover his/her interest in accounting and finance.

Likewise, Shawn searched the internet to find out what type of degree was needed to land the position of his/her dreams. Shawn said,

I would go into the computer and say you know like "What", because I know there's short courses you can take for social worker, but if, for example like at a hospital, since it has more than 99 beds, you need to have a bachelor's. For a nursing home, if you want to be a social worker, it needs to be just a three month course and the place has to have 99 beds or less...so that's where I saw what courses, or what major is it that I needed to go for to be a social worker. (Personal communication, October 8, 2018)

Shawn set goals based on what he/she learned while researching the internet about social work.

Pat enrolled at the community college right after high school. Fearing his/her goal would take too long, Pat left and attended a vocational school

instead. He/she took courses leading to a career as a massage therapist, however, he/she was unsuccessful at passing the state exam. Pat also encountered a stressful situation during his/her internship that led him/her to pursue other career ventures instead. Pat then returned to the community college and was focused on preparing for a career as an embalmer. Through research, Pat found that he/she could pursue other ventures that complemented his/her career aspiration and at the same time, help society. When asked how his/her major relates to his/her career goals, Pat stated,

The only thing is I mainly want to focus on the embalming but it wouldn't hurt to learn everything else either...when I first started I just started thinking about embalming and that was it. And that's all I wanted to focus. Embalming, preparing the body, and that was it. And helping the families. But then as I started getting more into here, and then certain subjects that would. How can I say? Like that would mainly pinpoint my degree, and certain professors that would be like, "Well you could write this paper, but why don't you do it on the major that fits you?" And that helps you look more into whatever it is. And so as I started doing that I started realizing that it's expensive. It's expensive to die. And so now I'm actually thinking about doing the embalming and on the side maybe do a program that maybe I can organize or get funded where I can help families who can't afford to pay the whole thing where I can offer my services not for free but

for a very low cost. Or help them. (Personal communication, October 12, 2018)

Pat described how instructors encouraged him/her to explore careers that fit him/her through class assignments. That is how Pat realized that dying is expensive and came to the realization that he/she wanted to help low income families mitigate their funeral expenses.

The process of searching is the common thread that connects these first-generation, community college students as they search for meaning regarding their college major and careers. Searching through books, internet, experiences, classes and connecting with others as resources are the ways that these students described their college major and career choice processes.

Each research participant's experiences contributed to the construct of the four interrelated themes that answered research question two, "How do first-generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process (See Table 4). Although some responses were intentionally not highlighted in the data analysis, some participants contributed to multiple themes. Casey's undocumented status has him/her confronting an unclear future. However, his/her determination and resilience keeps him/her focused on completing his/her goals. Casey has also encountered, and is overcoming financial barriers. Casey works two part-time jobs to help his/her family stay afloat.

Table 4. Research Question 2: How do First-Generation, Community College Students Describe Their College Major and Career Choice Process?

	Alex	Angel	Terrie	Shawn	Parker	Pat	Cameron	Jessie	Ari	Casey	Val	Chris
Confronting unclear futures with determination and resilience				X		X		X			X	
Encountering and overcoming financial barriers	X	X	X				X	X	X		X	
Being stressful		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
A process of searching	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	

Summary

This chapter highlighted the results from two interview questions, “What influences first-generation, community college students when choosing a college major and career?” and “How do first-generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process?” Interview transcripts, significant statements and participant experiences were analyzed to construct 10 interrelated themes. Meanings were constructed based on these diverse perspectives. The factors that influenced their college major and career choices were the desire to break the cycle of poverty for a better life, the desire to set a good example, the desire to become something real, exposure to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to their authentic careers during their educational experience, knowing there’s a future, and the support and guidance they received.

Participants reported living in conditions where finances were limited. They expressed the desire to break the cycle of poverty that they had lived in for so long. Education and one’s career are vehicles to break the cycle and they were motivated by their desire for a better life. They also reported feeling a sense of responsibility to set a good example for their families and friends. Their vision for the future and the desire to help others also influenced their decisions regarding their college majors and careers. Their exposure to knowledge through college courses, experiences and role models also contributed to their college major and career decisions. Their exposure to engaging instructors and

exposure to authentic careers was especially influential. The knowledge acquired through hands-on experiences in their authentic careers was especially impactful when clarifying their college major and career choices. These students also reported being influenced by their confidence in knowing that they would find a job in their field, and by the support and guidance they received from parents, counselors and being a part of a special program on campus.

Participants described their major and career choice processes as confronting unclear futures with determination and resilience, encountering and overcoming financial barriers, being stressful, and as a process of searching. Furthermore, students reported that being exposed to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to their authentic careers during their educational experience, and the support and guidance they received helped bolster their level of confidence about reaching their career goals, thus, providing them with a heightened sense of career self-efficacy. Being confident about reaching their career goal gave them the determination and resiliency to keep moving forward.

Research participants shared that no matter how difficult it got, and how unclear the future may be, their resilience and determination helped keep them focused on their goals. They also expressed that finances are a major factor for them and a primary cause of their worries. Student participants described their main stressors to be the lack of knowledge and experience, the fear of being deported from this country, relapsing from drug addiction and violence, not making the grades, lack of ambition to pursue internships and obtain work

experience, and time to degree completion. These students also described their college major and career choice process as a process of searching. In order to make college major and career choices, participants in this study searched through the college catalogue, took college courses, read books, searched the internet, reflected on personal experiences, spoke with others including counselors, professionals in the field, and friends, and took a vocational assessment test.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter includes an overview of the research study, summary of findings and policy recommendations for educational leaders, recommendations for future studies, limitations of study, and conclusion.

Overview

The aim of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the decision-making process that first-generation, community college students experienced as they made their college major and career choices. Attention was placed on understanding the factors that influenced their college major and career choices. This new knowledge will assist counselors in utilizing effective counseling approaches in order to maximize the assistance provided to first-generation, community college students based on their actual career development needs. It will also help in directing the development of intervention programs focused on career development at community colleges and pre-collegiate institutions. The two research questions that guided this study were, “What influences first-generation, community college students when choosing a college major and career?” and “How do first-generation, community college students describe their college major and career choice process?” The factors that influenced their college major and career choices were the desire to break the cycle of poverty for a better life, the desire to set a good example, the desire

to become something real, exposure to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to their authentic careers during their educational experience, knowing there's a future, and the support and guidance they received.

Students reported that their exposure to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to their authentic careers during their educational experience, and the support and guidance they received, helped bolster their level of confidence about reaching their career goals, thus, providing them with a heightened sense of career self-efficacy (Butz & Usher, 2015; Choi et al., 2012; Harlow & Bowman, 2016; Kelly & Hatcher, 2013). Results further indicated that having the proper support and guidance, both moral and financial, influenced the choices that they made. Being confident about reaching their career goal gave them the determination and resiliency to keep moving forward.

Participants described their major and career choice process as confronting unclear futures with determination and resilience, encountering and overcoming financial barriers, being stressful, and as a process of searching.

Implications from this research revealed the need for policy reform to the traditional school experience, which includes the need for involving family in college activities, strengthening community college career centers, engaging students in experiential education, enhancing career and technical education, creating a universal special programs experience for all community college students, engaging students during counseling sessions and providing professional development for counselors, targeting low-income students and

providing financial resources, and engaging students in career exploration prior to enrolling at the community college.

Summary of Findings and Policy Recommendations for Educational Leaders
Breaking The Cycle of Poverty For A Better Life

The findings from this study were consistent with the literature reviewed. Tate, et al. (2015) posited that first-generation, community college students come to college from low socioeconomic backgrounds and primarily belong to marginalized ethnic minority groups with little familial context for pursuing higher education. The Tate, et al. demographic finding was also largely reflected in the results from this study, especially among the older students whose ages were 43, 32, 29 and 24. Student interviews from this study revealed that socioeconomic status played a significant role in the college major and career decisions that these first-generation, community college students made. They expressed the desire to break the cycle of poverty for a better life.

For most, being a first-generation college student meant having to figure things out on their own. Students shared that because they come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, they viewed their college major and career as a means to a better life. Through their career choices, they felt they would build on existing Social and Cultural Capital that would contribute to a better life such capital as familial, aspirational, linguistic, resilient, social and navigational (Yosso, 2005). This Social and Cultural Capital would then be turned into Economic Capital. They aspired to break the cycle of poverty that for so long

they have been a part of, and they articulated that education and one's career are vehicles to break the cycle. Participants reported living in conditions where finances were limited and they were motivated by their desire for a better life.

Raque-Bogdan and Lucas (2016) argued that first-generation college students of lower working class have less career-related parental support than do upper-middle-class students. This study offered further support for this argument, and the importance of exploring the role of socioeconomic status on career-related parental support. This finding was evident in the research results where some participants had no parental support in making decisions about his/her college major or career. The results also indicated that socioeconomic status and family support influenced career choice outcomes. Metheny and McWhirter (2013) examined this notion and found that both economic and social resources have a role in the career decision making process of college students. Socioeconomic status played a significant role in the Metheny and McWhirter study as well as in this study.

Policy Recommendation #1: Involve Family in College Activities

Community Colleges need to involve parents and entire families in the process of learning about the community college and the resources available to them. Community colleges need to create programming that specifically targets parents to inform them of the student support resources and educational, and career options available to them and their children. Parents are knowledge carriers, but not knowledge that is valued within institutions of higher education.

These events could be sponsored in partnership with the local high schools and promoted through community organizations such as churches, local businesses, K-12 schools, and through the local media. An anchoring “Family Night” event would create excitement about going to college and be a place to promote additional educational workshops for families. Delivering workshops in foreign languages that are prevalent in the area where the college is located would also be extremely beneficial and inclusive of those individuals that would otherwise not participate in college sponsored events because these events are unwelcoming to non-English speakers.

The Desire to Set a Good Example

First-generation college students were influenced by feeling a sense of responsibility to set a good example for their families, and the desire to set a good example influenced their decisions when choosing a college major and career. The need for these research participants to create a college-going culture stemmed from the aspiration of leading a better life, a life different than that of their parents or the one they grew up knowing. As Ayala and Striplen (2002) suggested, first-generation college students are influenced by their parent’s desire for them to seek security, a job that does not require physical labor, and one that permits the student to live at a level in society above that of their parents. Angel, Terrie, Shawn and Val shared this in common. They were motivated by setting a good example for their children.

These students were influenced by the desire to set good examples for their families. Setting a good example for their children is the key motivator that will continue to move these students closer to realizing their academic and career goals. Career counselors are essential with guiding students towards realizing these goals. The need for full-time career counselors and comprehensive career centers is discussed further in the recommendations below.

The Desire to Become Something Real

Study results revealed that participants were also influenced by the desire to become something real when choosing a college major and career. The meaning of “something real” was personal for each participant. For some, the desire to become something real stemmed from their vision for the future and for others, it meant having a position that would allow them to help others. The desire to become something real came with ambition and optimism. Becoming something real meant being a role model to others, and it also meant to be respected in society, hold a position with high status and be someone who people trust. Becoming something real encompassed choosing a career position that would provide security and financial independence versus a job that was taken out of necessity. Chris aspired for a position in society with high status. Parker hoped for a career that would allow him/her to support a family. Terrie was focused on obtaining a career working as a pediatrician.

Terrie, Parker and Chris envisioned a future where they reached their career and personal goals. Other participants pursued a career where they could

help others. Cameron's focus was on a college major and career that would allow him/her to contribute positively to his/her community. Val also stated that he/she is a helper. Pat wanted to help families in mourning by offering affordable funeral services. Similarly, Shawn aspired to be a social worker where he/she could make a positive difference in the lives of others.

Policy Recommendation #2: Strengthen Community College Career Centers

Career Centers are an essential part of any community college and facilitate the process of "becoming something real". The Career Center plays a central role in assisting students with their college major and career choices (Dey, & Cruzvergara, 2014). Career counselors are essential with guiding students through this process and educating them on vital career development skills such as job/internship search strategies, resume writing, interviewing skills, networking, and professional etiquette. A dedicated employer relations department should exist within a Career Center to maintain and develop new relationships with the business community. Hands-on experiences are obtained through internships coordinated by the Career Center on campus. The Cooperative Work Experience Education program is one example of how synergies between the Career Center and academic departments can exist. Career counselors housed in the Career Center prepare students for experiential opportunities. The employer relations staff foster partnerships with employers to secure experiential opportunities within the business community. The Cooperative Work Experience Education academic program offers students

academic credit for their experience outside of the classroom. Community colleges need to see the value in investing in, and creating fully-operating career centers within their campuses that house these key positions and components in a full-time capacity. Employing more than one full-time career counselor is imperative in order to meet student demands and needs.

Exposure to Knowledge, Engaging Instructors, and to Their Authentic Careers During Their Educational Experience

The literature reviewed for this study highlights the important role that experiential education plays in helping students clarify their career goals. Schnorr and Ware (2001) focused their study on examining an integrated career and academic program. They correlated program participants' career maturity to their career beliefs and to length of time in the program. Length of time in the program correlated to career maturity, as did believing that they could overcome obstacles such as a vision for their future and self-efficacy. The program participation gave them exposure to a broad range of careers. Some of the participants in the Schnorr and Ware (2001) study required a higher education and others needed on the job training. Those requiring on the job training received it while participating in the program. During the interviews, in this study, it became evident that the hands-on experience from the program gave them a sense of certainty that they could be successful in that field. The hands-on training gave them a sense of optimism that their experiences would lead to something viable.

Lent et al. (2002) also investigated influences on career choices and focused primarily on first-generation college students. Three main areas were examined, including factors that affected choice of occupation and barriers that affected pursuing their career choice. A third area that was also studied examined methods students used to cope with barriers hindering their career choice. Results indicated that students perceived their interests, values, and abilities as important factors with respect to both choice options they expected to pursue and those they had ruled out. Work experiences, including performance feedback, modeling and contextual factors were also important in the career choice process. The results of the Lent et al. (2002) study also suggested that students viewed barriers as important factors affecting career selection and implementation. However, most students reported that they expected to pursue their chosen careers even though they experienced implementation barriers. The support that they received from individuals that are considered important in their lives, and their own resourcefulness, were key for overcoming and coping with obstacles.

Similarly, results from this research indicated that having exposure to knowledge during their educational experience in the form of classes, experiences and role models influenced first-generation, community college students when choosing a college major and career. Exposure to engaging instructors and to their authentic careers were especially influential. It was through various experiences that Alex, Angel, Shawn, Parker, Pat and Chris

were able to clarify their career goals. Parker was influenced by his/her exposure to his/her family business. As Alex stated, "It was through the internships that you can really figure out what you want to do" (Personal communication, October 10, 2018). These examples illustrated the impact that hands-on experience can have on clarifying one's college major and career choice.

Policy Recommendation #3: Engage Students in Experiential Education

Given the impact that having exposure to knowledge during their educational experience in the form of classes, experiences and role models has on first-generation, community college students when choosing a college major and career, all students should have access to experiential learning. Along with academic rigor, an experiential learning component must be embedded into the high school and college experience. Experiential learning can be in the form of internships, volunteering, or job shadowing. Augmenting the theoretical perspective with actual hands-on experience is vital. Therefore, mandatory professional development for instructional faculty in the area of linking learning to relevant and contextualized career related activities is needed. Professional development must focus on instructional strategies to promote student engagement in career related areas.

Obtaining experience in a specific field also makes students more marketable upon graduation (Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010), which is especially important in the current climate where parents and students are questioning the

value of investing in higher education; they question the true return on their investment (Barrow & Malamud, 2015). Being more marketable yields more career opportunities upon goal completion. In addition to learning the skills necessary for work, students participating in an experiential learning opportunity will make important contacts that can help them secure employment upon completion of their goals. Furthermore, they can also meet professionals in the field that can serve as their mentors as they continue to progress through college.

Knowing There's a Future

This study's results indicated that students choose their college majors and careers based on their understanding of the career prospects after graduation. Therefore, these students' choices were influenced by knowing there's a future. Results from this study were consistent with the results found in Abi-Nader (1990), where students projected a future in which they had control over, developed self-confidence, reversed stereotypes, and engaged in a supportive community that promoted success. Many students defined success as having the ability to buy a house for their mother.

The meaning of "knowing there's a future" in this study was consistent across student responses. Alex explained, "Knowing that there's a future in that, you know that there won't be, for example, I'll go through school and learn and reach a dead end and not be able to find a job afterwards" (Personal communication, October 10, 2018). Casey and Val's choices in college major

were also influenced by their confidence in knowing that they would find a job in their field. Parker and Jessie felt that majoring in business would provide them with multiple career prospects. Furthermore, Angel was convinced that a nursing degree would afford him/her a rewarding nursing career. In sum, knowing there's a future was the interwoven thread that shaped these students' decisions about choosing their college majors and careers.

Policy Recommendation #4: Enhance Career and Technical Education

Students can be exposed to, and trained in careers with promising employment trends through career and technical education (CTE). Therefore, when it comes to CTE, student voices need to be represented as part of the process of bringing new programs to community college campuses. Involving students would provide essential information as to what programs would be popular and what the perceived needs are. There are large monetary benefits associated with CTE programs for California Community Colleges. An annual recurring investment of \$200 million is made available to grow career and technical education at all 114 colleges (Doing What MATTERS for Jobs and the Economy, 2017). The incentive to develop and grow current programs is a benefit to colleges. Colleges need to be accountable for creating a certain percentage of new programs and not just enhance the same programs that already exist.

A committee needs to be developed made up of faculty, staff, students, administrators and members of diverse industries and local businesses to

provide oversight of CTE program development and how program monies are spent. California Community College Chancellor Eloy Oakley stated, “I’m proud to say that California Community Colleges are taking the lead on Career and Technical Education nationally to ensure that we’re creating programs and curriculum that allow students to quickly get into the workforce and take advantage of the jobs that are out there” (Doing What MATTERS for Jobs and the Economy, 2017). The LaunchBoard, supported by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and hosted by Cal-PASS Plus, should be utilized to research current data about California community college students’ progress toward employment and wages.

A way to engage CTE students in contextualized career related learning would be through learning communities. Learning communities are an excellent way to engage students in a smaller classroom setting. Writing workshops should be coordinated with CTE milestone courses to help students become better readers and writers while giving them an analytic framework through which they can analyze and write about the material they are learning in the their CTE courses. Participating in learning communities will help keep students interested and engaged in the material they are learning about while promoting critical thinking, reading and writing skills.

The Support and Guidance They Received

In cases where parental support and guidance were present, it had an influencing effect on the college major and career choices students made. This

study found that having support and guidance from parents, counselors and being a part of a special program on campus had an impact on the choices that first-generation, community college students made. Such was the case of Parker, whose parents pressed him/her very hard to do well in school. They expect him/her to earn his/her college degree and secure a lucrative position that would allow Parker to be successful and independent. These findings were also consistent with the literature reviewed. Gibbons and Woodside (2014) examined the career development experiences of adults from families without a college education from a southeastern state and found familial influence played a significant role in their educational and career choices. This finding was similar to the case with Parker and the overwhelming majority of the research participants including Shawn, Pat, Cameron and Chris who were also influenced by their family members. Furthermore, counselors also had a major influence on majors these participants selected. Angel, Terrie, Pat, Cameron, Jessie, Chris, and Shawn all agreed that counselors were influential in guiding them toward their chosen careers.

Partnerships with families, counselors and support programs were all important in the process for this study's participants. Chris's grandparents, teachers and mentors all played a role in his/her decisions as well. However, it is Chris's membership in the Students Connected [Pseudonym] student group that helps him/her stay motivated. Student groups and special programs on campus were an important resource to not only help guide students, but to also provide

them with the resources and counseling services necessary to reach their college major and career goals. Messinger (2014) examined the partnership between a mid-west university's school of social work and an inner-city community college where they developed an undergraduate bachelor's degree in social work (BSW). This degree program was created in an effort to grow the pool of perspective social workers by enrolling first-generation, non-traditional ethnic minority students and fostering their completion of the program to earn a BSW degree. Results indicated that built-in processes to support non-traditional students and encouragement of degree completion are essential.

Similarly, Abi-Nader (1990) sought to find out what characteristics motivate student success in school. Results indicated that after participating in this program, students projected a future in which they controlled, developed self-confidence, reversed stereotypes, and engaged in a supportive community that promoted success.

Angel, Jessie, and Val all shared that belonging to the EOPS and CalWORKs programs on campus had influenced their choice in major and career goals. Angel mentioned, "I love what they do for their students, both of them CalWORKs and EOPS. I see how they help a lot of students who are in the current situation that I am, where we don't have a lot of funding, or even income to bring in that they get that extra help" (Personal communication, October 12, 2018). Angel also mentioned that his/her counselor's guidance helps him/her stay informed about his/her major and the requirements for a nursing career.

Policy Recommendation #5: Create a Universal Special Programs Experience for All Community College Students

This research provided narratives suggesting that special programs like EOPS and CalWORKs on college campuses are effective in helping first-generation, community college students with making college major and career choices because they provide the necessary support and guidance to foster student success and goal completion. Therefore, it is imperative that students are directed toward support programs like the EOPS and CalWORKs. This research demonstrated the impact that these programs have on students and the influence that they have on choosing a college major and career.

Educational leaders need to look at the current models used in special programs such as EOPS and CalWORKs to provide a universal experience for all community college students. These experiences need to be scaled for all students to benefit and would include caseload type counseling models, tutoring, book assistance services, assistance when transferring to a four-year university, among other services. These experiences and services would be achieved by hiring more counseling faculty and support staff for counseling offices. Developing a caseload counseling model would allow students to meet with the same counselor throughout their educational journey. The benefits of this model would include a stronger counselor-student relationship, and consistency in the information received by the student. A counselor's caseload could be divided by meta-majors, or collections of academic majors with related courses. Another

way to provide a universal experience for all students is to embed a supplemental instruction component in courses where students traditionally struggle academically. Tutoring should also be an option and available during various days and times including nights and weekends. Furthermore, instructional faculty should adapt open educational resources to provide free textbook to all students, which would alleviate additional financial strains on students.

Confronting Unclear Futures With Determination and Resilience

First generation, community college students described their college major and career choice process as confronting unclear futures with determination and resilience. The study findings reflected the literature reviewed for the study. Being confident about reaching their career goals gave these first-generation, community college students the determination and resiliency to push forward. Shin and Kelly (2015) examined the influence of resilience and decision-making strategies as predictors of difficulties experienced during the career decision-making process. The findings of their study suggested that the more resilient a person is, the more likely they will be to employ effective career decision strategies in responding to the challenge of career decision-making. Resilience was associated with success in navigating the challenges of the career decision-making process. No matter how difficult it got, and unclear the future may be, resilience helped keep these research participants focused on their goals.

In Terrie, Shawn, Pat, Jessie and Val's cases, their confidence provided them with the determination and resiliency needed to reach their career goals. Terrie stated, "I mean, I'm not sure how difficult they'll [college courses] be. But, since I'm so confident about my goal, I feel like I'll work through it no matter how difficult my classes are" (Personal communication, October 12, 2018). The results indicated that these participants stay focused on reaching their career goals amongst unclear futures because of their determination and resiliency.

Policy Recommendation #6: Engage Students During Counseling Sessions and Provide Professional Development for Counselors

It is important for counselors to understand the influential role that socioeconomic status plays on the reasons why first-generation, community college students choose certain college majors and career goals. This insight can provide college counselors with information that can help students in the area of major and career exploration. Counselors can ask probing questions that will get students thinking critically about the college major and career options available to them. Counselors should view the student holistically and help him or her understand how certain careers can afford them a better life. Using a narrative approach to counseling is one way of having a direct impact on a student's involvement and understanding of the career development process during counseling sessions. "In narrative career counseling, the counselor and student work together to construct and reconstruct the student's story. From this life story, they identify themes, life roles, and indecisions. The narrative approach

considers career to be one part of the whole person” (Hughes, Gibbons & Mynatt, 2013, p. 43).

Providing counselors with professional development opportunities to learn about effective approaches to working with first-generation, community college students is also necessary. Organizations such as the National Career Development Association, National Association of Colleges and Employers and California Association of Internships and Work Experience Association are essential with staying connected to other career professionals and current on industry trends. Also, counselors should be given the opportunity to learn strategies to avoid burnout. Being involved in a one-way, high touch caring relationship can be taxing. Topics addressing self-care and mindfulness practices are needed in order for counselors to continue feeling engaged and stay healthy while serving the diverse needs of thousands of students.

Encountering and Overcoming Financial Barriers

A common experience that seven of the twelve participants reported was that finances are of paramount importance to them and a primary cause of their worries. These findings also mirrored those of the literature reviewed for this study. Swanson and Woitke (1997) described career barriers as events or conditions in an individual’s life that make career development difficult. However, the community college provides an affordable option for continuing their education. It is a place that will catapult them to completing their college major and career goals. Lent et al. (2002) examined the perceived influences on

college students' selection and implementation of career choices. They found that students view barriers as important factors affecting career selection and implementation. However, most students reported that they expected to pursue their chosen careers even though they experienced implementation barriers. The support that they received from individuals that are considered important in their lives, and their own resourcefulness, were important for overcoming and coping with obstacles.

Alex, Angel, Terrie, Cameron, Jessie, Ari, and Val all perceive finances as a barrier. As Ari stated, "Of course money. Money is like the gold in this economy. So I know that if I don't have a job to support myself, how will I be able to focus more on school if I won't be able to sustain a roof over my head, essentially. And food in my stomach, things like that" (Personal communication, October 12, 2018). This statement encompasses the sentiments described by the participants mentioned above. The community college provides an affordable choice to pursuing their goals. Alexander, Bozick and Entwisle (2008) posited that community colleges serve as a supportive resource for students to grow from their ambition and pursue their career goals. However, as findings from this research revealed, the future is not so clear. The financial uncertainty is what worried these first-generation, community college students. Money is the motivator to keep these students focused on completing their goals.

Policy Recommendation #7: Target Low-Income Students and Provide Financial Resources

Community colleges have been a place where students go to improve their lives and break the cycle of poverty (Cohen & Brawer, 2014). By targeting low-income students and providing the necessary support, community colleges will set up low-income first-generation, community college students for success. Community colleges in California can aggregate data based on those students that qualify for the “California College Promise Grant”, “Cal Grant” eligible and “California Dream Act” applicants. Financial aid workshops guiding students through filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the California Dream Act Application, need to be scheduled during the school day, in the evenings and on weekends. Students also need to be directed towards applying for multiple scholarships and instructed on how to fill out scholarship applications.

Being Stressful

Being stressful is not a construct in the literature reviewed for this study, but emerged as a finding in this study. First-generation, community college students described their college major and career choice process as being stressful. Students described their stressors to be a lack of knowledge and experience, the fear of being deported from this country, relapsing from drug addiction and violence, not making the grades, lack of ambition to pursue internships and obtain work experience, and time to degree completion. Lack of

knowledge and experience about college majors and careers caused Ari stress. Jessie also described his/her initial experience at the community college as stressful and frustrating. Jessie was not able to meet with a counselor and enroll in the classes for his/her biochemistry major and Jessie felt that this would increase the time toward completing the degree. As a result, Jessie eventually changed his/her major to business administration. Terrie also expressed the stress felt from the amount of time it would take to complete his/her degree. The fact that Terrie's father discouraged him/her, and instead tried to steer him/her into getting a job contributed to this already stressful situation.

Shawn also chose random classes due to the lack of knowledge from not meeting with a counselor and the lack of knowledge and experience affected the choices that Shawn made. Furthermore, Val stressed about relapsing from drug addiction once again and failing classes. It was Cameron's uncertainty about his/her job satisfaction that brought him/her fear.

Academic success is something that also worried some of this study's participants. Angel and Parker stated that they are worried about not making the grades to graduate from college. Angel stressed about not getting good enough grades to earn him/her admission into nursing school.

Research participants described their college major and career choice process as being stressful. The stress was related to a lack of knowledge and experience, the fear of being deported from this country, relapsing from drug

addiction and violence, not making the grades, lack of ambition to pursue internships and obtain work experience, and time to degree completion.

Stress can have devastating consequences for students on their academic performance and health (Applewhite, Livingston, & Negga, 2007). Feeling a heightened level of stress is especially prominent among students that suffer from low self-esteem (Abouserie, 1994). The transition from high school to community college is stressful. Stress can be mitigated by engaging students in the process of career development prior to enrolling in college as will be discussed below.

A Process of Searching

A process of searching was not a construct in this study's literature review but emerged through the study's findings. First-generation, community college students described their college major and career choice as a process of searching. Alex explained what it was like to make his/her choice regarding his/her college major and career. "I think the process was one of searching" (Personal communication, October 10, 2018). Alex searched through the college catalogue to find the best major for him/her. He/she looked for coursework that complemented his/her interests until finding the recreation major. Val explored various majors until he/she eventually returned to what he/she knew best, psychology.

Similarly, Casey met with a counselor, explored classes in automotive technology, took the Strong Interest Inventory career assessment test and

consulted with friends. These actions resulted in deciding on his/her current sociology major. Cameron took classes in political science and knew he/she found his/her passion when he/she learned about international studies. Ari searched through books and spoke to individuals in the social work field to get a better understanding of what they do. Ari searched until he/she found the major that fit best and complemented the career he/she wanted to pursue.

Parker also searched for the right fit by taking a variety of business classes until he/she identified the areas of business he/she was interested in. Shawn searched the internet to find information about becoming a social worker. Similarly, through research, Pat found that he/she could pursue his/her career of becoming an embalmer and help society at the same time.

These participants described their college major and career choice as a process of searching. They searched through the college catalogue, took college courses, read books, searched the internet, reflected on personal experiences, spoke with others including counselors, professionals in the field, and friends, and took a vocational assessment test. This process of searching is what helped them make important decisions about their college majors and careers.

Policy Recommendation #8: Engage Students in Career Exploration Prior to Enrolling at the Community College

Career exploration for students prior to starting at the community college is critical. The “searching” process needs to start before entering college. Changes in the traditional high school experience are needed. At California

Community Colleges a new framework titled “Guided Pathways” is scheduled to be implemented, it creates a highly structured approach to student success involving the promotion of better enrollment decisions (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2016, para. #1). The results from this study support the needs that this new framework proposes to address. However, guided pathways occurs once the student has already entered college. Career exploration needs to happen before this point. Career exploration is essential at the high school level. A career exploration course should be mandatory at every high school campus. This career exploration course would provide high school students with knowledge about viable career options and give them the confidence to make informed decisions about possible careers and college majors. In high schools where career academies exist, students should not be tracked in any given career area but be given the flexibility to move in and out of any chosen career academy. This would provide them with the experience to know whether or not they would want to pursue a particular career path. Also, it would be impactful to develop a career exploration academy where students could gain multiple career perspectives and experiences that would empower them with the knowledge to make informed decisions about their careers and college majors.

High school campuses and community colleges also need to establish strong partnerships to offer a varied curriculum as part of dual and concurrent enrollment programs. Through dual and concurrent enrollment, students can get

an early start on their college careers and at the same time, gain exposure to careers and build their confidence. Also, career assessment tests should be administered to help identify students' interest areas. An example of such a test is the Strong Interest Inventory (Nauta, 2010). The core idea behind this assessment is to identify work environments that resemble the student's interest areas or RIASEC code. If students participate in career exploration in high school, they will then make informed decisions about their college major and career choices. As a result, this high school career exploration will alleviate some of the stress associated with being a new college student. At the community college, a summer bridge program would educate students in the area of career exploration and provide them with the right mix of resources to assist with student success.

Summer bridge programs support the retention of first-generation college students at colleges and universities. A study conducted by Suzuki, Amrein-Beardsley and Perry (2012) indicated that participation in a summer bridge program resulted in a heightened sense of confidence about what to expect in college. Their level of comfort at the university also increased. Meeting new people and forming friendships were critical in developing a supportive community for those students. Implementing a summer bridge program at the community college could be a way to integrate career exploration and development, gain hands on experience in career areas, strengthen study skills, and introduce students to resources vital for college success.

Developing a summer bridge program at the community college level can include discussions on issues pertinent to first-generation college students such as those discovered by this research study. Such topics included career exploration, financial aid and financial literacy, study skills, resources for undocumented students, and mental health. Students can also work with counselors to identify courses required for their specific majors, which would prevent students from taking unnecessary courses and reduce the time to complete their educational goals. By participating in the summer bridge program, students would earn one transferable unit towards their academic goals. The summer bridge program could be developed and offered through the Counseling Department and the units earned would be applied toward meeting the minimum unit requirement for goal completion. Having a head start on completing their academic goals and preparing for college will help students build their confidence and reduce the stress levels that the research participants expressed affected their college experience. For those students that are unable to attend the summer bridge program due to other life obligations, an online program could be developed so that students can access it anytime. As a result of participating in the summer bridge program, students would be given special priority during their first semester in college to register for classes to ensure that they register for the appropriate classes in a timely manner. A pre-enrollment career assessment must also be administered to help students make informed decisions prior to registering for classes at the community college and should be included as part

of the summer bridge program. Furthermore, there needs to be a concerted effort by all California community colleges with regard to revamping the current California community college application so that students aren't required to make a college major choice prior to having the information and knowledge to make informed decisions.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research captured the experiences of first-generation, community college students as they made their college major and career choices. To continue this work, it is recommended that a longitudinal research study be conducted that follows the research participants until the completion of their college major and career goals. Documentation focusing on the reasons why, if any, changes in their goals occurred would further help inform counselors and community colleges with developing intervention programs and provide counselors with further information to help guide their sessions with first-generation, community college students. Also, it is recommended that further research on this topic be done with a larger sample of first-generation, community college students from across community colleges in California including those students who may not be participating in programs designed to support the decision making process. Having a larger sample would provide various student perspectives regarding the process that students go through as they make decisions about their college majors and career choices. Additional research studying this phenomena from a different design and methodological

perspectives will further help understand the factors that influence first-generation, community college students' college major and career choices.

Limitations of Study

The limitations of this study are that only a single interview per participant at a single site was conducted. Broadening the scope of the study would provide diverse perspectives. Furthermore, a great majority of those interviewed were participating in a special program that provided specialized counseling and various resources that may have affected the way they processed their major and career choices. Since the majority of the research participants were involved in a special program, it limits the scope of recommendations to community colleges that would come from the lived experiences of those not involved in these special programs. Also, gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation were not considered in the analysis.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the decision-making process that first-generation, community college students experienced as they made their college major and career choices. Attention was placed on understanding the factors that influenced their college major and career choices. The problem identified in this study was that most first-generation college students encounter complexities when it comes to selecting a college major and their career choice. They navigate unfamiliar territories since they may not have been exposed to the

proper knowledge and experiences to make informed decisions. First-generation college students of color in particular, feel a pull toward, and are often times systemically directed toward lower paying jobs that require little or no formal education. According to Title 5, Section 55530 of the California Code of Regulations, students at California Community Colleges must identify an academic and career goal upon applying to college (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2016). Students are required to select their college major from a list of 179 choices listed in alphabetical order (Fulks, 2019). Their financial aid eligibility is based on the major they select. However, many first-generation, community college students need to be exposed to the proper knowledge and experiences to make informed decisions about their college major and career. Being undecided about their college major and career causes them stress and affects their time to degree completion, keeping them at the community college for additional years.

The findings from this study will assist counselors in utilizing effective counseling approaches in order to maximize the assistance provided to first-generation, community college students based on their actual career development needs. The findings may also assist in directing the development of intervention programs focused on career development at community colleges and pre-collegiate institutions. The results from this study showed that first-generation, community college students were influenced by the desire to break the cycle of poverty for a better life, the desire to set a good example, the desire

to become something real, exposure to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to their authentic careers during their educational experience, knowing there's a future, and the support and guidance they received.

Participants described their major and career choice process as confronting unclear futures with determination and resilience, encountering and overcoming financial barriers, being stressful, and as a process of searching. Results also indicated that having the proper support and guidance, both moral and financial, and exposure to knowledge, engaging instructors, and to their authentic careers during their educational experience provided research participants with a sense of confidence about reaching both academic and career goals and influenced the choices that they made, therefore, bolstering their career self-efficacy.

Implications from this research revealed the need for policy reform to the traditional school experience, which includes the need for involving family in college activities, strengthening community college career centers, engaging students in experiential education, enhancing career and technical education, creating a universal special programs experience for all community college students, engaging students during counseling sessions and providing professional development for counselors, targeting low-income students and providing financial resources, and engaging students in career exploration prior to enrolling at the community college. If implemented, these initiatives will

positively benefit first generation, community college students by helping them to break the cycle and live a better life.

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



July 17, 2018

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Expedited Review

FY2018-145

Status: Approved

Mr. Frank Ramirez and Prof. Donna Schnorr

Doctoral Studies Program
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Mr. Ramirez and Prof. Schnorr:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Understanding the Decision-Making Process that First-Generation, Community College Students Experience When Making College Major and Career Choices" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document you submitted is the official version for your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended using the IRB Cayuse system protocol change form.

Your application is approved for one year from July 17, 2018 through —.

Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is up for renewal and ensure you file it before your protocol study end date. Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located in the Cayuse IRB Application Submission System. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

- 1) **Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,**
- 2) **If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,**
- 3) **To apply for renewal and continuing review of your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,**
- 4) **When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.**

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG

APPENDIX B
INCLUSION CRITERIA

	First-Generation College Student (Parents Did Not Graduate From College)	Completed 15 Degree Applicable College Units
Yes		
No		

Diversity Recruitment

Age	Gender	Ethnicity	College Major

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to understand the decision-making process that first-generation, community college students experience when making college major and career choices. This study is being conducted by *Frank Ramirez, CSUSB doctoral candidate*. *Dr. Donna Schnorr is the Dissertation Chair.*

PURPOSE:

The primary goal of this study is to understand the decision-making process that first-generation, community college students experience when making college major and career choices.

DESCRIPTION:

To collect data for this study, we will include semi-structured interviews with first-generation, community college students.

PARTICIPATION:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.
You can decide not to answer all or specific questions in the interview, even if you have signed this letter of consent.

Your decision not to participate in this study's activities will have no penalty of any kind.

Only individuals who agree to participate at those times will be included.

Participants can decide to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

CONFIDENTIAL:

To maintain confidentiality of participants, we will use pseudonyms for the participants in reporting any data. Audio recordings of the interview will remain stored in a locked file cabinet and in a password protected computer.

Audio recordings will be transcribed word-for-word. All files, including audio files, pertaining to the study will be destroyed after the research is completed.

DURATION:

Semi-structured interviews will last approximately 30- 60 minutes.
However, you are not required to stay the entire time and can end the interview early, if needed. We will email you the transcript of the interview and ask that you provide any additional clarification or feedback, as you see fit.

909.537.5651 • fax: 909.537.7056 • <http://edd.csusb.edu>

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College of Education
Office of Doctoral Studies

RISKS: There are no foreseeable physical risks or discomforts for participating in this study. You may be uncomfortable answering questions because they are personal to you and you may skip questions as needed.

BENEFITS:

This research will build on the literature available in regard to first-generation, community college students and their career development.
The results will be used to inform counselors and instructional faculty and develop interventions and counseling techniques to help bolster the factors that influence their career development.

AUDIO:

As part of this research project, we will be making an audiotape recording of you during your participation in the study. Please indicate what uses of this audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your response will in no way affect your credit for participating. We will only use the audiotape in ways that you agree they can be used. In any use of this audiotape, your name would *not* be identified.

I understand that this research will be audio recorded

Please Initial: _____

The audiotape can be transcribed and studied by the research team for use in the research project.

Please initial: _____

CONTACT:

Should you have questions about the research and research subjects' rights, contact:

Frank Ramirez, M.Ed
Doctoral Candidate
College of Education

California State University, San Bernardino

RESULTS:

The results of the study will be disseminated to you by email prior to submitting for publication.

Once the study is published, I will email you the manuscript and you can contact me:

Frank Ramirez

909.537.5651 • fax: 909.537.7056 • <http://edd.csusb.edu>

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Office of Doctoral Studies

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study. I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the audiotape as indicated above.

SIGNATURE:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The extra copy of this consent form is for your records.

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