Parental Influence on Second Generation Chinese-American Youth’s Career Choice and Development

Yingli Huang

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PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON SECOND GENERATION CHINESE-AMERICAN YOUTH’S CAREER CHOICE AND DEVELOPMENT

by

YINGLI HUANG

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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Parental Influence on Second Generation Chinese-American Youth’s Career Choice and Development

by

Yingli Huang

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Parental Influence on Second Generation Chinese-American Youth’s Career Choice and Development

by

Yingli Huang

Advisor: Herbert Saltzstein

A large body of literature supports the claim that the role of parents in shaping Asian-American youth's career development is significant (Leong & Serafica, 1995; Leong & Hardin, 2002; Yuan, 2012; Sandhu, 2017; Qin, 2011). When considering the family impact on Asian-Americans’ vocational choices, researchers should examine the phenomena through culturally specific lens so that variables that are more cultural relevant are captured. This is a pilot study with the goal to provide a preliminary understanding of the ways in which first-generation Chinese immigrant parents influence the choice and development of a career to their second-generation young adult children. In this pilot study, I utilized qualitative research by using semi-structured, open-ended interview questions for both parents and adult-age children. Consensual qualitative research (Hill et al., 1997) was used to analyze all participants’ answers qualitatively. Tentative findings demonstrate that five categories were prominent in how the Chinese-American family is influential in the career decision-making of their children: familial/cultural expectations, perceived parents’ career expectations, emotional support, financial and instrumental support, and parent-child conflict. Limitations and future directions were also discussed.
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Keywords: parents, Asian-Americans, Chinese-Americans, second generation, career development, vocational interest, parental influence, immigrant culture

Introduction

As Confucius, the renowned and wise Chinese philosopher and scholar once said, "Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life." He stressed that vocational choice and development is very crucial across the lifespan of individuals. Also, it is widely acknowledge that one will be most satisfied if his/her abilities and interests align with the work role he/she takes. Indeed, career decision-making is widely considered to be one of the most critical decisions one makes in life. The essence of the proverb is still relevant today. Career development has major influences over one's social, educational, and occupational outcomes. More importantly, effective career development contributes to personal happiness and overall satisfaction of one's life.

Given the importance of career and vocational development, vocational and counseling psychologists have conducted a plethora of research about factors that directly or indirectly influence a person’s choice of a career. The world-famous American psychologist John L. Holland is one of the pioneers in the 1980s who conducted research about one’s career exploration and development. His theory that individuals tend to search for appropriate careers that can be linked to their personal characteristics, still has significant impact nowadays. For example, an individual who is extroverted is prone to look for jobs that require communication and group work whereas a more introverted person is more likely to look for and enjoy a job that requires individual effort and even solitude. However, as other researchers later argued, career
choice is rarely just a personal preference. Rather, there are contextual factors that one considers before making such a decision. The following literature review will focus on the family/parental impact on their children’s career choice.

*Parental Influence on Career Choice: A Historic Overview*

While a majority of the vocational literature focuses on the influence of individual differences and personality characteristics on career development, (Holland, 1985; Turner & Lapan, 2002; Truner & Lapan, 2005), other scholars have examined various social and relational factors that could potentially also have substantial influence. Specifically, family dynamics and parent-child interactions have been thought to be influential and strong factors in predicting young adult children’s choice of a career and development (Roe, 1956; Larson, 1995). Roe (1956) is one of the first scholars to theorize and systematically studied that family dynamics has significant effect on individual's choice of a career. The emphasis rooted on family influence stems primarily from developmental and psychoanalytic theory. The theory emphasizes family/parent as the primary source of care and love to children from the day they were born up to adolescence period. Following with the developmental trajectory, individuals are expected to begin to develop their independence outside the home and start to gain their autonomy during late adolescence (Blos, 1979). However, late adolescence is also a period in which family still exert powerful influences over their young adults' career decision-making process (Dumas, 2009; Blos, 1979). A mix of autonomy, self-consciousness and interdependence defines this period. Some studies even show that parents tend to exert more influence than counselors, teachers, peers, or role models in the desired career field (Otto, 2000).

As to how family influence has been examined, Schulenberg et al (1984) conducted a comprehensive literature review and provided insight that the family influence has been
knowingly divided into two subcategories: family demographic and family dynamic variables. Family demographic variables concern about family's socio-economic status, race, gender, parents’ occupations, etc. Family interactive dynamics involves attachment, psychological separation, conflict, etc. and each of these variables is discussed in the following literature review.

**Socio-Economic Status**

Socio-economic status is defined as a combination of several indices: parents’ highest level of education, parents’ current income, and parents’ current occupation and especially the social status of that occupation (Brown et al, 1996). It has long been established that family's socio-economic factors are vital in determining adult children's future career choices and development. However, since socio-economic status is an imprecise and multi-varied term and has been measured differently among vocational research, the role of SES in choice of a career appears to be inconsistent. A number of studies demonstrated that more privileged, middle-class parents have higher aspirations and encourage creativity, whereas less privileged working-class families prefer conformity to people in senior positions and compromise with authority (Brown et al, 1996; Chao & Otsuki-Clutter, 2011). In addition, middle-class families place less financial burden on their children regarding education and are more capable of affording higher quality schools; working-class families face more constraints financially and as a result of that, evoke more quarrel about careers between parents and children (Weinger, 2000). In addition, studies completed in the early 1990s demonstrate that parents’ education level is predictive of their adult children’s visions of attending college and ultimately entering a white-collar occupation. However, the findings are not always consistent; For example, Fisher and Padmawidjaja (1999)
interviewed African-American and Mexican-American undergraduates about their perceived
career influences and found that college-educated parents and high school-educated parents were
equally capable of instilling expectations in their children to become academically and
professionally successful. Since findings have been inconsistent, socio-economic status, a
complex factor, needs to be disentangled.

Parental Occupation

As previous studies have reported, parents’ occupations have been found to have a
profound effect on their adult children’s occupations (Otto, 2000; Watson & McMahon, 2005).
Young adult children often view their parents as role models and therefore are more likely to
follow in their parents’ career footsteps. In addition, parents’ occupation is relevant to their adult
children’s perceptions of that job/profession. A study completed in Madrid, Spain, compiling
data from 851 engineering and architecture students focused on entrepreneurial intention, which
is the necessary capabilities to succeed in business. The study concluded that parents who are
owners of business were found to be viewed as positive role models by their children, whereas
parents who work for the public sectors were found to be negative role models for
entrepreneurial intention (Pablo-Lerchundi et al, 2015). To further explore the association
between parent-child occupations, Schuette et al (2012) noted that with a sample of 89
preadolescents, parents aspired for their children to select a job which has similar occupational
status as their own occupational status. In other words, children envisioned themselves working
in a position with occupational status that resembles their parents’ occupational status. However,
some other studies have reported contrary findings. For example, in a study conducted by Fisher
and Padmawidjaja (1999), African-American and Latino/Latina participants indicated that
witnessing their parents struggle with the manual labor trying to make ends meet, inspired them to strive for white-collar jobs. The adult children had a desire to achieve higher education and career status than their parents had because they witnessed the hardship their parents had encountered. Thus, overall, the exact nature of parental occupations impact needs further investigation, and especially the role of culture in this process.

*Gender*

The role of family gender-based socialization in children’s career development is often critical in that many parents have different expectations toward their sons and daughters, and is widely recognized to be influenced by culture (Loo, 2005; Yuan, 2012;). In other words, gender-based socialization of adult children can be seen through their career planning. Kniveton’s (2004) questionnaire-based study on 348 young people from the ages of 14 to 18 revealed that career related parental guidance were perceived to be largely congruent with the existing gender stereotype. For example, parents tend to advise their daughters to pursue stereotypical ‘pink-collar’, i.e., ‘female’ roles, such as nurses, teachers and sales personnel; whereas they encourage their sons to pursue more stereotypical (e.g., assertive) and also higher status occupations such as doctors, lawyers and computer science engineers.

In addition, father and mother may have a differential influence over their adult children’s academic and career pursuit. Yuan (2012) used open-ended interview questions to inquire 58 college sophomores about their perceptions of parents’ involvement in their budding career interests. On the one hand, most daughters in the study reported that their mothers encouraged them to pursue careers that would maximize their freedom and independence from their future spouses or significant others. Sons in the same study reported less involvement
concerning their careers from the mothers. On the other hand, sons in the same study did not report statistically different involvement between their fathers and mothers. Similarly, Steele and Barling (1996) incorporated the gender-role ideology scale for parents, and found that maternal gender-role beliefs, varied by gender, have a stronger influence over their daughters than comparable paternal influence on their sons. However, this finding can be limited because it could imply that the range of paternal beliefs regarding choice of a career is narrower than maternal beliefs regarding the same matter.

As one can see, same-sex parental impact theory has gained its popularity in the vocational literature regarding gender. However, researchers should be aware that different conclusions are made based on the different methodologies utilized. For example, previous research by Barling (1990, 1992) indicated that sons tend to take on similar occupations as their fathers. However, Kenny (1990) found that male and female college-age children perceived no sex difference regarding their parents’ support toward their career interest. Therefore, further careful analysis of gender-specific parental influence is needed.

**Parental Attachment and Psychological Separation**

Parental attachment is defined as the degree to which the child is mentally and emotionally attached to the parents. Psychological separation, as briefly mentioned above, refers to the process of becoming gradually autonomous and self-reliant from the family, typically during late adolescence. Scholars in the 1980s hypothesized that parental attachment and psychological separation are associated with vocational development because the exploration, development and implementation of a career choice also occur during late adolescence. Therefore, one would not be surprised to discover the connection between these two concurrent
processes (Lopez & Andrews, 1987). In other words, young adult’s choice and commitment to an occupation or a career is associated with psychological separation and parental attachment. At first glance, parental attachment and psychological separation seem contradicting to each other as one would think to be psychologically separated from one’s parent means to have no attachment to the same parents. In other words, how does one maintain a balance of becoming psychologically independent while at the same time maintaining a close emotional relationship with one’s parents?

Further, it is believed that individual identity development progresses at a smoother pace with moderate parental attachment (Rice, 1990) and the need for autonomy (Lopez & Andrews, 1987). For example, O’Brien (1996) investigated the shared contribution of psychological separation and parental attachment to the career development of 282 adolescent women. And these analyses showed that if the effect of psychological separation is controlled, the effect of parental attachment variable on career constructs is not statistically significant. In a similar vein, Blustein (1991) conducted a two-part study about career decision-making self-efficacy and found different conclusions: in study one, the relation between psychological separation and career indecision was not statistically significant. Nonetheless, study two demonstrated that psychological separation and parental attachment had an interaction effect on commitment to career. One explanation for the contrasting results of the two studies was “that the links between family relationship factors and career indecision making may best be viewed from a developmental perspective” (Blustein, 1991, p42). In study one, career indecision was viewed as temporary and ongoing career indecisiveness and can be transformed into another stage, such as foreclosure, which indicates choosing a career reluctantly before a comprehensive exploration of possible and desirable career paths. In study two, commitment to career, assessed by asking
participants about the number of years they stayed in their current occupation, is a more rigid stated construct of career development, therefore yielding a more affirmative answer than study one. As a result these findings, future studies, which emphasize the developmental perspective of young adults’ vocational choices, are warranted.

However, the factors influencing the choice of a career is no doubt varied across culture, age, socio-economic status, and family structure. In the following literature, I focus on the special case of Asian-Americans and specifically Chinese-Americans, where many stereotypes exist, but without enough empirically based knowledge exists.

_Career Development of Asian-Americans_

When considering the family impact of Asian-Americans’ vocational choices, researchers should examine the phenomena through culturally-specific lens so that variables that are more cultural relevant are captured (Leong & Hardin, 2002; Leong & Serafica, 1995). For example, Whiston and Keller (2004), in their comprehensive literature review and analysis concluded that parental support or lack thereof had more significant impact on the career development of African-American and Mexican-American adolescents than it had on Caucasian-American’s career development. Similarly, in a sample of Asian-Americans, young adult’s attachment to their parents was predictive of career indecision; while in a predominantly Euro-American sample, attachment orientation is negatively associated to career indecision (Keller & Brown, 2014). Societal and cultural factors underscore the roles in which Asian-American families play in the present society. When searching for a job, priorities and responsibilities for Asian-Americans are likely to be different than those for European Caucasians. This issue is discussed in more detail below.
It is imperative to emphasize the importance of the development of theory and research pertaining to Asian-Americans because according to the U.S. Census in 2010, Asian-American population is and has been the fastest growing immigrant group among all other groups in the United States (Leong & Gupta, 2007). Within the Asian-American population, the percentage of adolescents and youth is also increasing and they are expected to quickly acculturate and to be ready for their future careers. More empirical research about Asian-Americans would also facilitate a contextual and relational approach to understand career decision-making processes.

**Model Minority Myth**

One of the most prominent characteristics of Asian-Americans is that they are often described as the model minority. Over the past few decades, *Model Minority Myth*, which is the cultural perception of Asian-Americans as a group being socially and economically successful and hard-working, continue to exist. The Model Minority belief is also supported by numerous empirical facts: Asian-Americans are overrepresented in science and technology occupations (e.g., math, engineering, and medicine) while being underrepresented in other occupations (e.g., social service, fashion and film industry, and humanistic fields) (Shen et al, 2014; Fouad et al, 2008; Qin, 2011). More specifically, the U.S. Bureau of Census (2010) demonstrated that within the United States, 15.7% of Asian-Americans work in computer science, information technology fields; 12% in mathematical and physics occupations; 13.6% to 33.3% of them in biological, chemical and medical professions; 6.5% to 6.9% of them in liberal arts and performing music occupations. However, only 2.7% work in social service occupations; another 3.2% work as psychologists. The proportion of Asian-Americans who choose STEM majors and occupations is higher than comparable Euro-Americans or Hispanics and Latino proportion.
The overrepresentation phenomenon of Asian-Americans in sciences and technology has motivated scholars and psychologists from various educational, social, industrial and organizational disciplines to examine the psychological and sociological explanations behind it. Based on the statistics of overrepresentation phenomenon, one would assume that career interests are predictive of career choice, as Holland’s (1985) theory has hypothesized. However, scholars make the claim that the overrepresentation of Asian-Americans in technically-related occupations is not indicative of their having career interests in these fields; rather, there often is incongruence between career choice and career interests (Qin, 2011). Thus, career interest is not as predictive of Asian-American’s career choice as it is for white Caucasians’ (Leong & Hardin, 2002; Poon, 2014; Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). For example, Leong and colleagues (1995) have reported that Asian-Americans who were interested in visual and liberal arts careers eventually chose careers in medicine or engineering repeatedly because of their parents; Qin (2011) suggested in a recent study that Asian-Americans in traditionally stereotypical occupations have higher degree of mismatch between interests and choices than those who are in traditionally less stereotypical occupations. Therefore, the theory that occupational interest predicts one's choice and commitment of a potential future career may speak true for White Caucasian families (Leong & Serafica, 1995); but, it fails to capture the cultural nuances emanating from Asian-American families. In other words, Asian-American youth in the United States consider other factors as important as occupational interest when choosing their careers. Some of these factors will be illustrated in the Results section of this paper, below.

The question of “Why does a disproportionate number of Asian-Americans graduate, excel and eventually pursue a career in the sciences fields?” remains partially unanswered until today. Why would Asian-Americans choose science and technical occupations over liberal arts
and humanities positions? How much of that motivation is interest-driven and how much culturally-expected?

In an effort to provide insight to the career development of Asian-Americans, researchers consider level of acculturation and racial identities as imperative framework to understand Asian-American's career development. In Tang, Fouad, & Smith's (1999) qualitative analysis of Asian-American’s career development, acculturation and self-efficacy are highly related to career development. A more thorough examination of the study indicated "individual’s confidence (similar to self-efficacy) is shaped by contextual factors such as ethnicity, age, gender, support system, and also past learning experiences" (143-144). Therefore level of acculturation is associated with career aspirations through individual's self-efficacy. This pathway explains why, those Asian-American immigrant youth, who are less acculturated, are less likely to pursue non-stereotypical careers than their counterparts who are more acculturated. This is because less acculturated individuals fear that they will not have the competence to succeed.

Scholars also believe that family influence reinforces the Model Minority Myth because Asian-American families overwhelmingly integrate prestige of an occupation in their children’s choice of a career (Fouad et al, 2008). Some scholars emphasize that family plays an even more critical role in Asian-American adult’ children’s lives than in the general population (Leong & Gupta, 2007). Therefore, a literature review of family/parental influence on Asian-American's career development is provided.

*Family Influence on Asian-American Adult Children's Career Choices*

Parental influence has been found to be one of the major influences in Asian-American adolescents’ career developments (Kim, 1993; Okubo et al, 2007; Leong & Serafica, 1995; Poon,
Asian-American parents tend to exert more pressure and guidance on their offspring’s career development through both implicit and explicit processes. "Tiger Mom" and the Chinese-American "whiz kid" are commonly used terminology, which describes the traditional ways of strict upbringing and desires for high-achieving success in Asian-American families. While these stereotypes capture some empirical truths, I believe that they, like other stereotypes, are oversimplifications, as I believe my pilot study findings (below) will demonstrate.

A large body of literature supports the claim that the role of parents in shaping Asian-American youth's career development is significant (Leong & Serafica, 1995; Leong & Hardin, 2002; Yuan, 2012; Sandhu, 2017; Qin, 2011). As Fouad and colleagues (2008) have observed in their study, all twelve of their Asian-American participants reported parents being involved in the career decision-making process in one way or another. In addition, these involvement can be pervasive and influential beginning from late adolescence up until middle adulthood. There is also a reciprocal effect on the parent-child dyad. Not only are parents actively engaging in their offspring's career development, Asian-American youths and adolescents are more likely to turn to their parents for career advice than their Euro-American peers do, and they also value their parents' opinions than do adolescents from other cultural backgrounds (Gim, 1992; Loo, 2005).

Gradually, the focus of Asian-American youth’s career development has shifted from examining whether there is parental impact to investigating specific roles family members play. Fouad et al (2008)'s study summarized a few categories within the domain of family influences: Family obligations, family values, family expectations, family support, friction between the family and the U.S. culture, etc. A deeper analysis of the study reveals that each of these categories emerges as a different form of influence on the youth’s career decision-making process. Both financial and emotional family obligations restrict the adolescents geographically...
because they are expected to stay close home and help take care the family members. However, Yee et al (2007) argued that family obligations could also facilitate the adolescents' sense of interdependency within the family, therefore providing a strong and powerful shelter for them when they encounter dilemmas at work. More research should shed light on each of the categories, whether they serve as barriers or facilitators for Asian-American youth's career choices. The following review will touch upon several of the prominent themes within the umbrella term of parental/family influence.

The Case of Chinese-Americans

Within the Asian-American population, there is a variety of cultural and ethnic differences, and relational experiences embedded in different cultures that are distinct. I examine the case of Chinese-Americans because it is the largest ethnic minority group in the New York City metropolitan area and because I come from this cultural background and therefore have intimate knowledge of it.

Through deeply rooted cultural ideologies and traditions, Chinese-American parents have direct and indirect ways of influencing their children’s career decision. Typically Chinese-American immigrant families prioritize family rights and responsibilities over individual goals and responsibilities. Because of this cultural ideology, parents typically teach their children from an early age to always sacrifice self for the well-being of the family. This concept is a reflection of the traditional Chinese cultural ideology with an emphasis on collective-oriented approach (e.g., family expectations) over individual-oriented approach (one’s own career aspiration). Under such influence of the cultural ideology, Chinese-American culture stresses and prioritizes
maintaining harmony, family values, saving face, marital stability, and hard work over individual achievement (Chung, 2013; Qin, 2011; Sandhu, 2017).

In addition, Chinese-American families commonly practice and adopt an authoritarian parenting style (e.g., Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The Chinese-American parents view education as the primary way to achieve the American Dream and they expect their children to excel academically and also in terms of careers. Therefore, the influences of Chinese-American immigrant parents on their young adult children's career choices are more assertive and even sometimes forceful. As a result of that, children from Asian-American households are typically obedient and show respect their parents, at least overtly. When a conflict occurs between the family and the child, the child frequently yields to their parents, often as much as possible. For example, adolescents especially those from low-income Chinese families, feel more obligated to find high prestige jobs to contribute financially to the family than those who are more economically privileged (Fuligni et al, 2002). In the same study, adolescents reported that they made an effort to balance the varying types of family obligations and their social activities, including spending time with peers and schoolwork. Given the context of family and collectivism’s emphasis of Chinese-American families, it is understandable that relational closeness with the parents is significantly related to their adult-age children’s career-related decisions. The career choice and career advancement of the individuals are intertwined with their family’s social well-being. These adult-age children try to contribute to their own families by helping out siblings, assisting with household chores, caring for elder members in the family while at the same time attempting to follow their own individual goal and ambition.
Parent-child Role Reversal and Shifting Powers

The literature on immigrant families has made claims that when parents and children immigrate into a new country, both experience a kind of *Role Reversal* and subsequent psychological and emotional power reversal (Ma et al, 2013). ‘Role reversal’ refers to the switch of traditional parent-child roles so that parents become dependent on and even vulnerable to, even seeking reassurance from their children, while children take on care-taking responsibilities and nurturing roles (Lopez, 1986, Orellana, 2009). This is a very prevalent and common experience in the first and second immigrant households because children serve as “cultural brokers” for the family (Chung, 2013; Orellana, 2009; Dreby, 2015). ‘Cultural brokers’ refers to individuals who are equally exposed to two or more cultures, and they play the mediator role to bridge between two groups of different cultural heritages. For children growing up in immigrant families in the U.S., they must translate both literally and figuratively this new culture to their parents. Thus, role reversal is especially prominent among first- and second- generation immigrant families. Furthering this process is the fact that children are especially capable of learning the language and thus adapting to the new country more easily than their parents. In the powerful book titled *Translating Childhoods: Immigrant Youth, Language, and Culture*, Orellana documented the work that children of immigrants do as they constantly switch and translate two languages to assist with their parents as well as extended family members. Indeed, this is captured by the phrase, *code switching*, now a common term in the study of development and culture (Yow et al, 2016). In other words, from an early age, children of immigrants serve as "language brokers" for the family as they interact with teachers in schools, facilitate civil engagement and participation as well as seeking social service and assistance. The translation work that these immigrant children does introduces them to the larger social society
outside of the family unit and empower them to make the changes they wish to happen in the social world. On the other hand, immigrant parents, due to language barriers, become insecure in their parental role as they rely on their children to help negotiate with the outside world (Oznobishin & Kurman, 2009).

There are numerous empirical studies investigating the psychological implications of role reversal of immigrant parents and children. However, it is not as clear how role and power reversal have implications for the negotiation of children's choice of a career within the family. How do children understand and conceptualize the aforementioned role reversal? With regards to future career plans, to what degree children consider their parents' suggestion valid and feasible? For the immigrant parents, how do they make sense of their newly adopted dependent role and still manage to offer career expertise to their children? What are the implications (e.g., costs) of this parental influence?

The Current Study

This is a pilot study with the goal to provide a preliminary understanding of the ways in which first-generation Chinese immigrant parents influence the choice and development of a career to their 1.5 or second-generation young adult children. The 1.5 generation is defined as individuals who immigrated into the United States as children or adolescents, and this generation typically still has close ties with their home culture and yet embraces the new culture as well (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Specifically, how family contributes to the adult children's choice of a career and vocational commitment? My aim is to explore the impact of the most commonly cited themes and aspects in previous literatures about Asian-American's career choices---parental expectations, adherence to traditional Chinese culture ideology, family acculturation, immigration, and parent-child relations on young adult children's choice of a career. More
importantly, from a relational perspective, how do the aforementioned variables influence young adult children’s career decisions? I have conducted the current study in the hope of providing some insights to these research questions:

A. What factors accelerate or impede the attainment of their career goals?

B. How does each and every of these themes shape, facilitate and/or impede Chinese-American youth's career development?

C. To what extent are career aspirations of this ethnic group mainly interest-driven or opportunity-driven?

D. How actually important are parental influences for explaining their children's career decisions?

The current literature on young adults' career choices is extensive. It illustrates and highlights contextual factors these younger adults take into consideration when making career-related decisions. For example, family background, vocational interests, culture and family values are among the most commonly investigated factors. However, the studies concerning the Asian-American youth population and its career development are limited and incomprehensive. A lot of the variables in these studies need further and more thorough investigation.

In addition, majority of the research literatures concerning the influence of relational variables on career progress focus on quantitative methodology in which large samples and systematic data were obtained (e.g., Qin, 2011; Yuan, 2012). While these studies frequently offer compelling patterns of parental influence on career choice, responses from participants may be oversimplified due to forced-choice questionnaires, and the constraints these impose. Furthermore, most of the existing vocational literatures utilizing qualitative methodology rely on the young adults' opinions only. For example, the self-reports method, which young adult
children fill out surveys and questionnaires about their thoughts regarding their own choice of a career, has been one of the most widely used research methodologies. As a result of this, parents often lack the opportunity of having *their* voices heard (e.g., Kim, 1993; Ma et al, 2013). Parent-child relationship, similar to other kinds of close relationships, is reciprocal and each party has influence with the other over the course of interaction (Bratcher, 1982). Therefore interviewing both parties is really necessary. Qin (2011) measured young adults' perceived family obligations and perceived opportunities to measure interest-occupation congruence, acknowledging the importance of parent-child interaction with regard to the topic. Hopefully, the current pilot study will provide an addition to the current literature by illustrating the ways in which parent-child relationships and career choices are intertwined and unfold naturally. Interviewing the parents' opinions on the development of their adult children's career selections allows the researcher to compare and contrast the responses provided by both parents and children, therefore enhance the understanding of parent-child dyad as an interactive not uni-directional entity. What are the differences in presentations and perceptions of their goals and expectations regarding career choice, between the parents and the youths, if there is any?

**Methodology**

*Participants and Recruitment*

Twelve young adults (5 men, 7 women), who are New York City residents, participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 23 to 30 ($M=26.83$, $SD=2.65$), and they self-identified as Chinese-Americans or they came from a family of Chinese (ethnic) origin. Three of them were born in the United States with foreign-born parents; the rest of them were born in different regions of China and had immigrated with their family to the United States sometime in the middle of their elementary or middle school period. These adult children's educational level were
as follows: three indicated that they graduated from a community college, eight indicated that they graduated from a four year university/college; one indicated that she had some level of college education and three of those who graduated from a four year university/college also had a Master's degree or higher. Six of the parents of the younger adults also participated in this pilot study. All the parents were born in China; their ages ranged from 55 to 66 \( (M=59.83, SD=3.54) \).

Parents' educational levels were as follows: three indicated that they graduated from a four-year university/college and the other three had associate degree or some college education (In the current study, education and degrees received in the United States or overseas are viewed as equivalent). Socio-economic statuses were assessed by obtaining information about approximate annual household income, parents' and adult children's education levels.

I recruited my participants through a community organization called Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC). This is a citywide private agency within neighborhoods of Queens, Manhattan and Brooklyn and it provides service to Asian-Americans, especially low-income immigrant families in New York City. Its mission is to provide community service to its neighborhoods. The agency offers community/extra-curricular activities credit to college students/recent graduates. The volunteer body of CPC is a combination of both first- and second-generation immigrant children from East Asian families, including but not limited to families from China, Malaysia and Singapore. However, all participants in the current study are ethnically Chinese.

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

First, I provided all the participants a set of preliminary demographic questionnaire to assess their gender, age, socio-economic status, ethnic background of family, education level,
and other related variables. The demographic questionnaire served as a baseline measure for the further investigation of my study. Please see Appendix A for the list of demographic questionnaires.

**Open-ended Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

Supplementing previous quantitative approach, the qualitative approach to the current research question is an innovative one designed to uncover family influences in career selection. I developed a set of open-ended, semi-structured interview questions based on a few major themes present in the vocational development literatures: A) Family structure information; B) Current/future career ambition; C) Parent-child relationship in general; D) Parent-child disagreements, and how these negotiated. These in-depth interview questions were meant to explore the various pathways by which parent-child relationship dynamics influence career-making decisions. (Please see Appendix B for the interview schedule for both parents and adult-age children.)

**Procedures**

CUNY human research protection program (HRPP) approved the procedures for this study. Potential participants, including parents and young adult children, were recruited through a number of different strategies. First, I decided to include family members with whom I am acquainted. Second, participants were recruited through snowball sampling, in which I invited those young adult children with whom I have contact to participate, and also asked them to provide names of their friends and acquaintances who were then contacted to become participants of the study. Third, I recruited through the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) organization in Southern Brooklyn.
I reached out to these young adult children via email and in-person invitation. In the initial email, I asked for volunteers to participate in a thirty to forty-five minute interview examining parent-child relationships and career development, and briefly introduced the purpose of the interview I was going to conduct. I also invited their parents to participate, if they were interested in the study. See Appendix C for the invitation email script. In addition, I contacted various Asian-American clubs and organizations among the CUNY campuses and I gave brief presentations about my study during their general body meetings. (See Appendix C for the in-person recruitment script.)

After either the young adult child or the parent agreed to participate, I scheduled in-person meetings with the parents and children, separately, at convenient times and locations (preferably at their homes) for the upcoming interview. After the participant signed the consent form detailing the study, I began the interview. With permission, I audiotaped the conversation using a SONY recorder and I also took notes during the conversation to help disambiguate unclarities and provide contextual information. These procedures helped to capture the casual parent-child conversation dynamics more accurately for coding and analytic purposes. Not only did I pay attention to the content of the conversation, but the tones they spoke and responded, the facial expression/ body gestures that gave away any hint about the family relationship. Interviews were conducted in English; however, two parents prefer to speak in their own language (one in Mandarin and one in Cantonese). I provided translations of questions to them and also translated their answers.

After I completed all interviews, I had all the interviews professionally transcribed and carefully checked for accuracy with my advisor.
Data Analysis

Since this was a pilot study, with a small sample range, I was unable to perform any significant statistic test. However, consensual qualitative research (Hill et al., 1997) was used to analyze all participants’ answers qualitatively. Major components of consensual qualitative research includes the use of open-ended questions, studying a few examples intensively, and also reasoning with inductive process.

Please see Appendix D for the coding book. I developed an initial list of categories based on the first interview response I obtained. These categories and subcategories emerged from the dialogue of the participant. I also incorporated prominent themes in the preexisting vocational literature and I provided encoding rules and anchoring examples for my team of three codes to facilitate consensus in coding. The coding book was developed to accurate pinpoint and capture relational conflicts during the process of career development. Then each member of our team gathered collectively and we clarified any misunderstandings and also discussed about confusions regarding the coding book. Then each member of our team independently coded all eighteen transcripts and we met as a team to discuss our coding strategy so as to achieve consensus. Both the content and the flow of the conversations were coded. We performed validity and reliability check to make sure that each members of the team agreed on the definition of coding and the coding process itself. The inter-rater reliability rate was 71.7%, indicating a fairly high and agreeable consensus.

Results and Discussion

Refer to Table 1 for the number of participants, including both parents and adult-age children that were assigned to each of the categories and subcategories within the Family Domain. Recommended by Hill et al (1997) about making generalizations about the results, a
category is considered as *general* if it is evidenced by all twelve participants; *typical* if it is evidenced by six to eleven participants; and *occasional* if it is evidenced by two to five participants. Any category that is evidenced by fewer than two participants is negligible.

Table 1

A list of family categories and subcategories and number of cases reported by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>SUBCATEGORY</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Characteristics/Expectations</strong></td>
<td>Traditional Chinese (T)</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More westernized (W)</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral (N)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupations/Career/Job</strong></td>
<td>Stereotypical (S)</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-stereotypical (NS)</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral (N)</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influence Over Choice of a Career</strong></td>
<td>(I) Instrumental influence (a)</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(E) Emotional influence (b)</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(F) Financial influence (c)</td>
<td>Typical</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Influences</strong></td>
<td>Influence by teachers, mentors or tutors, counselors and advisors</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence by peers, friends, siblings and classmates</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence by the media depiction of a perfect career</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None of the above influence is present; Influence of oneself</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Practical career-related suggestions, assistance or advice provided by parents in a tangible and physical way.
b. Mental and emotional support of one's choice of a career or the career decision-making process. Includes empathy, compassion, and genuine concern for one's career. Also include encouragement when one's feeling stressed about the pursuing of one's career.

c. Monetary support or lack thereof

Based on both parents’ and adult-age children’s responses, familial influence over career decision-making appears to be pervasive and in overt and covert ways. This is consistent with the existing literature that family relationships are linked with the career selection of Asian-American children in one way or another (Sandhu, 2017; Fouad et al, 2008; Leong & Hardin, 2002; Leong & Serafica, 1995). The following five categories were prominent in how family is influential in the career decision-making of their children: familial/cultural expectations, perceived parents’ career expectations, emotional and financial and instrumental support, and parent-child conflict. I organized and divided the discussion into six parts correspondingly. The quotes from young adult age children as well as parents were illustrated under relevant categories.

Familial/Cultural Expectations

Among the answers from twelve adult-age children participants, seven adult-age children recalled that their parents stressed the importance of financial advantage of a career, e.g., computer science engineer or medicine. A similar pattern emerged in parent participants as well: five out of the six parents in the study expressed their keen interest in directing their adult-age children to pursue financial advantageous occupations. These preliminary results supported the claim made in existing literature that first-generation Chinese-American parents encourage their adult-age children to pursue high prestigious occupations (e.g., Yuan, 2012, Chung, 2016). Consider the following example from participant C:
As of now, I am actually pretty sure they don’t have any problems with it. They say just do whatever I want for myself. They still hope that I get a job related to my major, but they stopped mentioning anything about “oh, I wish you be a doctor or lawyer, so (chuckled) I am kinda relieved right now. They say, I wish you could do a job that you like, they always tell me like, especially my mom says, ‘I used to be an accountant in China, right now I am actually working in a clothing factory, not to say that I don’t enjoy making clothing, but the working environment is really dirty, she can never take a day off, seven day straight, crazy, rarely get any day off. But I want you (her daughter) to choose your job as freely as you could’.

This quotation illustrated her mom’s expectation for her daughter to fulfill the immigrant dream, which is commonly seen in first-generation Chinese immigrant families. First-generation immigrant parents who were middle-class had to take on manual labor jobs in the U.S., due to language barriers and difficulties in adapting to the new culture. In this case, the participant’s mother, who used to be an accountant, became a garment worker and she had great hopes for her daughter’s career. In a sense, parents are trying to make up for their loss of their careers and they are counting on their adult-age children. However, it is still unclear whether the parents’ over involvement with their adult-age children’s careers will exacerbate the parent-child relationship or not.

In addition, although to varying degree, all twelve adult-age children participants mentioned that their parents have expectations about their current/future career path that are specific and unique to the Chinese culture. As a result of that, adult-age children form their views and values on work and occupations based on the familial expectations. For example, one participant who was a medical student emphasized her parents’ influence over her career decision:

It would have been simple to say it was because my family does it, but that was not it. I saw the impact that being in medicine had on my family. It affects the way you carry yourself, how you interact with people, the compassion and devotion you have...and of course, you know, being a physician brings pride and dignity to my family. I want to make a difference in people's lives on a daily basis.
It is clear that this participant developed her interest in medical field through a combination of family influence and self-exploration. Her parent’s expertise in medicine made her more confident in preparing herself to enter the profession. Other participants indicated that when their own expectations come in conflict with their parents’ expectations, they negotiate and come to a “middle ground”. A participant reported that she dreamed to become a forensic scientist when she was little:

“My interest in science stemmed from forensic TV series. Those shows inspired me to become a forensic scientist, who collects and analyzes evidence from crime scenes. My parents thought it was too dangerous and tried to persuade me out of it… My family wishes my career to be stable, both financially and in terms of availability. They didn’t expect me to be someone in a high power position nor be extremely talented in my field.”

The interview data showed that parents have career expectations as well as general expectations toward their adult-age children that might be very different from the adult-age children’s own expectations. However, in this case, the participant reported that “After doing research about jobs in related fields, we came to a middle ground, which is my current field [Clinical laboratory scientist].” Thus, the family as a whole compromised and negotiated their differences in opinions regarding career paths and came into an agreement.

However, disagreements and conflicts within the family do not always lead to compromise and negotiations. Results from the current study indicate that Asian-American immigrant parents’ views are more acceptable and accommodating only if their adult age-children propose alternative careers that are associated with high levels of prestige than they are with blue-collar and manual jobs. The following case involves a son who is currently in managerial position. As his mother revealed, she was extremely disappointed at her son after she heard that he first wanted to become a chef:
I am OK with his current position [human resources information analyst]. If you ask me what I prefer he does, well I cannot think of a career that he could pursue alternatively, but I can tell you off the top of my head what kind of career I absolutely do not want him to pursue that he might have been: a chef… I told him that it is absolutely unacceptable for him to go. Plus, what made him think that he could have a career as a chef? I don’t think he understands what he has to deal with if he ever becomes a chef: he would spend all his time in the kitchen, with the smoke and greasiness of cooking. Who would like to deal with a person like that?

In this excerpt, the mother of the participant has expressed her negative view on occupation as a chef. She influenced her son’s choice of a career by placing a negative value on being a chef. Although her son did not become a physician, lawyer or engineer, he is in a managerial position, which is equally high in prestige. Similarly, the mother of another participant who works as a police officer reported that she was baffled about her son’s career:

Why can't he follow his siblings' path and just get a regular nine-to-five job? Both Amanda and Adam, my other two children, are white-collar workers and their jobs are safe and easy. That is what I want for him, too. I wish he could get a job that he could sit in the office comfortably, with the air conditioner on, and perform managerial or professional work on a computer. I don't care so much as to what type of career he wants, as long as it is an office job I will be OK with it.

The parent-child disagreement was rated with a score of 4 and 8 on a scale of 1 to 10, correspondingly. In both cases, the mothers had high academic and career expectations of their children. However, levels of parental satisfaction, as measured by parent-child disagreement toward their children’s career varied because the first child chose a more stereotypical occupation compared to the latter. Therefore, one can speculate that parents are more open and accommodating to their adult age-children’s career path only if they choose high-prestige and high social status occupations. In future studies, researchers should ask interview questions concerning alternative career paths of adult-age children to the parents. The proposed alternative career paths should be varied in both high- and low-prestige so that researchers gain a thorough understanding of parental expectations.
Perceived Parents’ Career Expectations

Perceived career expectations is defined as adult-age children’s perception of their parents’ various prospects of what they look for in a job. A pattern has emerged in the existing vocational literature that Asian-American parents expect excellent education and prestigious occupations for their adult-age children (Tang et al., 1999; Leung, Ivey & Suzuki, 1994). The preliminary findings of the current study support the preceding claim. Three of the six parents interviewed expressed their expectations of their young adult children to pursue physicians, higher-up managerial positions or computer related and IT engineers. These occupations require decent levels of expertise and also align with the stereotypical Model Minority depiction. In comparison to parents’ responses, young adult children reported a spectrum of expected career choices. Moreover, the reported career expectations towards their children by parents resemble with perceived career expectations reported by young adult children most of the times. Consider the following excerpt from participant X who currently works as a credit risk analyst:

My parents have high expectations of my career. I went to University of Rochester for my college education and my parents paid for my four-year tuition. I will never forget about this because I didn't know until I graduated that they used 40% of their retirement fund to pay for it. Therefore it makes sense that they expect me to have a well-paid job so that I could make a good living.

The father of participant X, when asked about expectations about his daughter’s profession, also implied that the college education for his daughter was probably one of the most enormous investments the family had ever made and that he hoped his daughter could make use of such a degree and look for a decent job. It appears that, in this case, both the adult-age child and the parent agreed that the expanse on education was a little overwhelming to them. However, none of them regretted such a decision.
Additionally, majority of the adult-age children participants reported that they had meaningful conversations in the past six months with their parents about their career explorations and career planning. In regard to parental support of one’s career development, some adult-age children recalled their parents actively involved with the career decision-making process with immense zeal, while other participants felt reluctant to discuss their potential interests openly and freely with their parents. These variances in openness to discuss career-related topics appear to have associations with both parents’ and children’s gender. For example, a parent interviewee revealed that:

I have different expectations of my sons and my daughter. For my sons, I want them to be tough, responsible, and ambitious. No crying over small things, because them crying is a sign of their emotional vulnerability. And I hope my sons be responsible for themselves as well as others. I always tell my son that he should never break his promises. I also expect them to be ambitious in life and always be confident about themselves. I encourage them never give up on themselves, that they are capable of achievements if they have great tenacity. For my daughter, I want her to be very intelligent. It doesn’t have to be book smart, you know, however I do want her to have the education/career training that she desires. I want her to have manners, to have a positive view of the world, and most importantly, to stay optimistic and upbeat despite life’s unfairness and cruelty.

Although these gender-specific expectations are not necessarily about their adult-children’s career path, they could still have implications for their adult-age children’s career decision-making. In the previous example, the mother’s different expectations for her son and daughter may demonstrate that she also has different views regarding her son and daughter, even if they happen to choose the exact same career. Thus, parental preference and expectations about their children’s personalities could transform into similar desires that they think are appropriate for their children. In order to further investigate this issue, a study with larger sample of both fathers and mothers needs to be conducted.
Emotional and Financial Support

Emotional support is defined as mental support of one's choice of a career or the career decision-making process. It includes empathy, compassion, and genuine concern for the other’s career. It also includes encouragement when one's feeling stressed about the pursuing of one's career. Consistent with previous findings (e.g., Otto, 2000), a number of adult-age children participants narrated and validated emotional closeness with and encouragement from family members about their career paths. Consider the following example from a male adult-age child participant:

My parents have always been very supportive of my career path, especially my father. To this date I still remember how ecstatic he was at my master’s graduation ceremony. He always has faith in what I want to achieve. When I got accepted into UC Berkeley and was about to start to pursue my MBA degree, which is very far away from home, he was happy for me and he offered to help me with the move. I don’t know where I would be without my father’s support.

Other times, parents express their emotional support and encouragement during dialogues with their adult-age children about a particular stressful work situation. This is portrayed in the following example:

I remember it happened during the last July 4th vacation. My family and I were spending our time in Maine together. We went to a lake and spent the afternoon there. Then I received a call from work and I had to log on to the computer to do some analysis as soon as possible. I stayed on the phone for a while and the call stressed me out a little. When I told my parents that I might need to head back to the hotel soon, they were totally OK with it and my dad even offered to drive me back to our hotel. My parents have learned to accept the demanding nature of my job and I appreciated it.

In this sample, the parents’ emotional support towards their son is evident because it serves as an emotional buffer to counter his work-related stress.

Another type of support frequently mentioned in the interview data is financial support. Financial support includes, but not limited to, parents’ monetary and material support in the past, in the current or in the future. In addition, instrumental support refers to practical career-related
suggestions, assistance or advice provided by parents in a tangible (and physical) way. Similar to emotional support, the significance of parental financial or instrumental support to their adult-age children has been highlighted and appreciated in adult-age children’s account. Over half of the adult-age children participants recalled that they received considerable financial support by parents during and after college. Actually, compared to white, non-Hispanic low-income households, which the parents would advise their children to take loans to pay off the tuitions, Asian-American families with comparable SES typically try with a tremendous effort to help with their children’s college tuition and other life expanses (Chung, 2013). An interesting pattern emerged in the interview data that emotional support and financial support do not always simultaneously occur. For instance, adult child participant Z, who majored in interior design in college, described her mother as being “passive aggressive because she did not like interior design as a career at all.” However, the daughter’s response to a latter question item about parental support indicated that her mother still “voluntarily offered to pay for part of my tuition and also other college expanses”. How do we make sense of the parent’s contradiction? And what are the implications of the incongruent types of support offered by parents? These are some of the research questions that are worthwhile considering in future studies.

**Parent-child Conflict**

In the current pilot study, quality of parent-child relations was assessed by inquiring both from parents and adult-age children about career-specific arguments and general disagreement. Preliminary findings seem to support that both career-specific disagreement and general disagreement are predictive of career-related outcomes. For example, mother of participant Y
recalled an incident in which her daughter was seeking assistance regarding a quarrel between her and her boss at work:

After hearing her complained about the situation, and knowing that she had already reached out to the intern the very first time that he failed to meet the deadline and also offered her assistance, I suggested that she should report all the matter to her boss in a nonaggressive way. In addition, I thought her boss would appreciate it if she let her know sooner than later, because then the boss would assign tasks and projects accordingly, knowing everyone's capabilities. However, Erica disagreed with me. She was very concerned that, her boss would not be happy to hear about the delay of the completion of the project. Furthermore, she was concerned that the boss would deem her incompetent because of her inability to effectively communicate with her team for the matter concerned. I thought she was just taking on too much responsibility that I was afraid she might shut off herself. So I convinced her to talk about this with her cousin. She has always been very close with this cousin and she sees her as a role model in many ways. She did not want to listen to me, but she might listen to her cousin. And it worked! Her cousin suggested that she should at least notify her boss about it. The boss should be able to understand that it was not her own fault. The disagreement between her and I was solved----by her cousin!

According to the mother, she and her daughter disagreed with each other regarding resolution strategy. Sensing there would be confrontational conflict between her and her daughter, the mother sought assistance from the cousin and avoided deterioration of the parent-child relationship.

However, in a couple of interviews with the adult-age children, the reported disagreement about careers with parents appears to have been minimal although reported general disagreement/conflict was high. In other words, the association between career-specific conflict and general conflict seems to be absent. Participant M, who is a translator at a health care organization, reported that her parents were supportive about her choice of a career, and that “For sure there were debates about my current/prospective career, but most of them were not serious or confrontational.” However, she revealed a disagreement about her romantic relationship with her parents in another question:

My parents have had multiple conversations with me about marriage lately. They claim that I’ve reached an age when it’s “time” to get married. They believe that the sooner I get
married and have children, the younger I would be when my kids finish college and won’t need my financial support anymore. In addition, in my parents’ mind, if I have children when they’re still relatively young, they would be able to help me raise my children. Although I understand they have good intentions, I do not appreciate them pressuring me into doing things society deems “appropriate”. I don’t believe there should be “set points” in people’s lives. Societal norms should not dictate milestones. Just because many people get married by a certain age doesn’t mean that everyone needs to follow the same path. After I elaborated my thoughts about this to my parents, they seemed to have repressed themselves about bringing it up frequently. However they still bring it up from time to time which annoys me quite a bit.

Interestingly, her parent’s attitude toward her career choice and her romantic relationship was incongruent. It is certainly plausible for her parents to agree with her choice of a career while disagreeing with other aspects of her life. However, I interpret that the mother, while considering her daughter’s job unsatisfactory, did not choose to voice her disagreement directly to her daughter. Instead, she found flaws in other aspects of her daughter’s life and quarreled with her. In addition, it is also possible that the adult-age child participant was reluctant to share the stories about her argument with her parents with the interviewer. The reason behind that is for ‘saving face’, which means the maintenance of one’s social standing, reputation and honors. The participant would try to depict a rosy relationship between her parents and her so that she would not disgrace her family by ruining her family’s reputation. Thus, researchers who are interested in qualitative interviewing methodology should be knowledgeable and aware of the intricate interviewer-interviewee interactions. That said, researchers need to construct the interview questions in an open and honest manner in order to solicit frank answers from participants.

One of my important tentative finding in this study is that in families that adult-age children have careers that are traditionally stereotypical, the less reported conflict regarding career and also general conflict there were. Continuation of education, which is a form of investment, is also dependent upon if the career being pursued is in STEM. For example, a
participant who is currently in her second year of medical school described her parents always being encouraging and supportive:

“Both of my parents are supportive with my prospective career choice of becoming a physician. Back when I was still in college, my dad promised me that as long as I get accepted to medical school and I decide to pursue my career in medicine, he would pay for all my tuition and also cover my life expanses. While I was certainly grateful for that, I told him I could work part-time while in medical school. However, now that I am actually enrolled in medical school, I will be dead if I go to school and work at the same time! Thanks to my dad, I can focus solely on my medical school training and not worry about money.”

On the other hand, another participant expressed difficulties and quarrels with parents about her interior design career path:

“They have doubts about whether I can make money out of this major…I my previous upstate college, I need money for commute and for food, and I couldn’t support myself. Also in my previous school, I need to pay for my dorm. When I called my mom and told her, I cannot come home very often because I don’t have money for the transportation, you know for the bus, our situation is kinda awkward, we stopped talking and we have arguments…”

It is apparent that tension between one’s own career goals and ambitions and family expectations exists to greater or lesser degree. However, results lead us to hypothesize that both parents and adult-age children make an effort to minimize disagreement about career choices.

**Conclusion**

The pilot study seeks to begin the process of understanding the reasons and motivations behind Asian-American youth’s career decision-making and also the family member's influence. Specifically, the aim of the study is to explore how parents and family could have an impact on Chinese-American’s young adult children’s career development with qualitative analysis of interview transcripts. The tentative findings of the study stressed the continuation of counseling and vocational psychology toward a contextual and relational perspective-taking of career decision-making.
One of the advantages of conducting qualitative research is that it is capable of uncovering the emotional component of individual responses. Emotional dimension, along with the content of the interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, provides a rich and powerful path to analyze and reanalyze human behaviors including social relations. As Gilbert in her book *The Emotional Nature of Qualitative Research* argues, acknowledgement of emotions in research is a legitimate part of obtaining useful and rich information from the data. It enhances the researcher’s understandings of interviews as an interactive and reciprocal process. Together with the content of individual interviews, the emotional component provides insight as to how interpersonal relations are described and perceived. The current study seeks to utilize emotional component of participants to discover the intricate parent-child relations within the context of career decision-making. More specifically, the flow of the interview conversation and the organization of the dialogue have been taken into account as indirect measures of parent-child conflict. The overall emotional reaction of the conversation was assessed by emotional scale from 1 to 10. The research team as a whole determined whether the description provided by participants were coherent, indifferent or emotionally aroused. An interesting pattern has emerged that with the adult-age children participants who are pursuing stereotypical STEM occupations, most of them spoke with an assertive and confident tone. For those participants who are in transitional jobs or are pursuing a career in which their parents do not expect, some of them stumbled over themselves, and others became very repetitive in recalling past events. It is possible that these variance in expression of emotions could be due to individual differences. However, these variations in expression of emotions also provide invaluable and practical insight to interpret familiar, social and interpersonal relations.
Limitations and Future Directions

The pilot study has some limitations. First, I was not able to draw conclusion statistically due to the small sample size of participants. Thus, researchers should be cautious when they generalize conclusions from the evidence and observations provided in the current study. The inability to recruit more participants may be due to the lack of compensation for participants for their time. For future studies that attempt to collect information with similar qualitative interview methodology, greater compensation needs to be offered to participants who complete the study. Second, due to time and resource constraints, I only included participants who are of Chinese (ethnic) origin and culture. As a result of that, conclusions cannot be drawn on young adult-age children regarding other Asian-American families, e.g., Korean-American families or Japanese-American families. With the Asian-American population, there are different cultural ideologies, societal values and career expectations. Important values that may be specific to Chinese-American families may have less significant meanings to Korean-American or Japanese-American families. Thus, I suggest researchers who are interested in future research on Asian-American population to be mindful about the diversity and complexity of family relationships in different cultures.

Nonetheless, this pilot study may have some important implications for academic and career counselling for adolescents and adults, both in theory and for practice. In theory, scholars and researchers should continue to adapt a more culturally inclusive approach to career decision-making processes. The various contextual factors explored in this pilot study---family’s socio-economic status, culturally-specific parental expectations, parent’s and children’s gender, financial and emotional support systems, as well as parent-child dyad, all possibly have potential influence over the career aspirations and development of young adult children.
In practice, career counselors need to raise awareness of the contextual-based model of career development. Career counselors should also realize that the traditional model which fails to account for contextual factors possibly needs to be radically revised. Also, as Chung (2016) suggested, when working with the Chinese-American families specifically, culturally relevant professional school counseling service should be made available at the local community level, so that immigrant parents, adolescent and adult-age children are able to obtain more accurate information about the job market and availability for different jobs/professions. In addition to that, bilingual counselors will enable the recent immigrant parents to discuss any concern about communicating with their children more effectively, and career center events hosted at the school level will enhance parents’ communication skills with their children about work-related skills and values. Overall, the findings in the current pilot study hopefully underline the continuing effort to provide more institutional support for Asian-American immigrant families.
Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

(For both parents and adult age children)

1. Could you please tell me your age to your nearest birthday?
2. How many years have you live in the U.S.?
3. Which part of China are you from?
4. Did you grow up there? If not, where?
5. Could you please tell me what is your parental family's approximate annual household income? Please choose one from the following:
   A. 0-20k B. 20-40k C. 40-60k D. 60-100k E. 100k or above
6. Are you the only child in your family? How many siblings do you have?
7. What is your current job/occupation? How long have you been working in the job/position? If unemployed, for how long?
8. (For children only): If in school/college, what kind of school you go to?
   A. Religious school B. Private/Public universities C. Vocational-technical college D. Community college
9. What is your current major and GPA?
Appendix B

Interview Schedule

For Adult Age Children

1. Please tell me some information I should know about your family background. For example, identify a few of the family values/characteristics your parents have taught you.
2. Please tell me about your current career choices/ambitions. What kind of organizations/companies do you work for? Describe a typical day of your work, if possible.
3. How do you like your current job? How did you decide on your choice of a career?
4. Do you think your current career choice is related to your career dreams earlier in your life? If so, how?
5. What factors influenced your choice of a career (e.g., friends, family, job outlook, salary, opportunities, etc.)?
6. Who, if anyone, influenced your choice of a career and in what ways?
7. Did your family/parents support your career choice? How/how not?
8. If you did not have existing support, what would be different in your career?
9. Have you ever had a time when you had a disagreement with your parents about a career choice? What was the disagreement about?
10. Did you or your parents take any steps to resolve the disagreement? How did the disagreement work out?
11. Describe a recent talk (in the past six months) that you have had with your father/mother. You consider the talk to be extensive about a certain topic. What was the topic about specifically?
12. How long did it last? Who initiated the conversation? How did the conversation go?
13. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being not at all committed and 10 being totally committed), please rate your level of commitment to your choice of a career.

For Parents

1. Please tell me some information I should know about your family background. For example, identify a few of the family values/characteristics you expect your son/daughter to have.
2. What is your current occupation/job? Are there any colleagues from a different background? Who do you go to for advice if you have questions at work?
3. Please tell me your son/daughter’s current or prospective career/career choices.
4. What are your opinions about him/her choosing the particular career path/choice?
5. What do you expect of your son/daughter’s profession?
6. Alternatively, tell me another career that you think he or she should have pursued/ might pursue and explain why.
7. Tell me about a time when you had a disagreement about careers with your child. What was the disagreement about?
8. Did you or your child take any steps to resolve the disagreement? How did you negotiate/settle the disagreement?
9. What was the outcome?
Appendix C

Email and In Person Recruitment Script

For Adult-age Children

"Greetings,

My name is Yingli Huang and I am about to conduct a study about Chinese-American adult-age children’s choice of profession. To this date, work and occupational choices have remained the prominent issues within the Asian-American communities. I hope to better understand the meanings and significance of Chinese-American adult-age children's career decisions to themselves as well as to their families, which will eventually lead to a greater and deeper understandings of the Chinese-American population and the community. I am reaching out to you because I think your voice and feedback will be valuable to my study and therefore I want to invite you to participate in my study. I will be interviewing you about your decision-making progress of your choice of a career. If interested, please do not hesitate to reply, or contact me at 347-445-1800. I will set up interview time and location at your convenience and also provide informed consent for you to sign prior to the interview."

For Parents

"Greetings,

My name is Yingli Huang and I am about to conduct a study about Chinese-American adult-age children’s choice of profession. To this date, work and occupational choices have remained the prominent issues within the Asian-American communities. I hope to better understand the meanings and significance of Chinese-American adult-age children's choice of a career. As parents, what do you think of your children’s career interest/choice? I am doing the study in the hopes that it will eventually lead to a greater and deeper understandings of the Chinese-American population and the community. I want to invite you to participate in my study because I think your voice on this topic will be important and relevant. I will be interviewing you about your thoughts and feelings of your adult –age children’s career interest/ choice. If interested, please do not hesitate to contact me at 347-445-1800. I will set up interview time and location at your convenience and also provide the informed consent for you to sign prior to the interview."
Appendix D

Coding Book Categories and Grouping of Themes

*Overall Emotion Reaction (Flow of the conversation)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disorganization of words</td>
<td>Stumble over oneself when talking about a specific topic, going back and forth about the same topic, lost track of one’s own speech</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional arousal</td>
<td>Participant raises his/her voice, speaks more rapidly or in a more serious tone</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Indifference</td>
<td>Detachment of parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity</td>
<td>Uncertainty of affection/detachment of parents, emotions fluctuate as the conversation goes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest coherent/ least organized and 10 being the highest coherent/ most organized, rate the OVERALL coherence and organization of the interview conversation.

1                                                                    5                                                       10
Minimal                                                        Moderate                                         Maximum
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>ENCODING RULES</th>
<th>ANCHOR EXAMPLES</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family characteristics</td>
<td>Traditional Chinese (T)</td>
<td>a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family characteristics</td>
<td>More westernized (W)</td>
<td>b.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family characteristics</td>
<td>Neutral (N)</td>
<td>Values that are generally emphasized by both Western and Eastern cultures, or cannot be attributed to either one culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupations/career/job</td>
<td>Stereotypical (S)</td>
<td>Occupations in STEM-Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics or other fields which Asians are overrepresented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupations/career/job</td>
<td>Non-stereotypical (NS)</td>
<td>Occupations in fields which Asians are underrepresented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupations/career/job</td>
<td>Neutral (N)</td>
<td>Other occupations that do not fall into the previous two groups</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

a. Characteristics or values related to: harmony, benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, and filial piety. These are the fundamental family virtues of traditional and modern Chinese families.
b. Characteristics or values related to: creativity, capitalism, individualism
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>ENCODING RULES</th>
<th>ANCHOR EXAMPLES</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence over choice of a career</td>
<td>Parental influence</td>
<td>(I) Instrumental influence(a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence over choice of a career</td>
<td>Parental influence</td>
<td>(E) Emotional influence (b)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Influence over choice of a career</td>
<td>Parental influence</td>
<td>(F) Financial influence (c)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Influence over choice of a career</td>
<td>Teacher/mentor influence</td>
<td>Influence by teachers, mentors or tutors, counselors and advisors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence over choice of a career</td>
<td>Peer culture</td>
<td>Influence by peers, friends, siblings and classmates</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Influence over choice of a career</td>
<td>Popular culture</td>
<td>Influence by the media depiction of a perfect career</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influence over choice of a career</td>
<td>Self-motivation/others</td>
<td>None of the above influence is present; Influence of oneself</td>
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</table>

- d. Practical career-related suggestions, assistance or advice provided by parents in a tangible and physical way.
- e. Mental and emotional support of one's choice of a career or the career decision-making process. Includes empathy, compassion, and genuine concern for one's career. Also include encouragement when one's feeling stressed about the pursuing of one's career.
- f. Monetary support or lack thereof
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>ENCODING RULES</th>
<th>ANCHOR EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental influence</td>
<td>(P) Positive</td>
<td>Indication of parental support, encouragement, both general or career related</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental influence</td>
<td>(NE) Negative</td>
<td>Indication of parental conflict, disagreement, both general or career related</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental influence</td>
<td>(N) Negligence</td>
<td>Carelessness or not paying attention, causing damage or harm in adult children’s career decision-making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental influence</td>
<td>(NL) Neutral</td>
<td>Parents’ involvement has no apparent positive or negative interference</td>
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**Cross-Comparison Scale**

On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, rate the parent-child conflict pertaining to adult children’s career.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Maximum</td>
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</table>

On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, rate the OVERALL parent-child conflict.

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References


Kniveton, B.H., 2004. The influences and motivations on which students base their choice of career. Research in Education, 72, pp 47-57


