THE ROLES OF ETHNICITY AND FAMILY IN THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF SECOND-GENERATION CHINESE CANADIANS

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Master of Arts, 2014

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Abstract

This study explored the career development of Canadian-born Chinese individuals. Applying a qualitative framework using a phenomenological approach, ten participants who had at least one year of work experience in their chosen fields were interviewed about their career development. Specifically, the roles of ethnicity and family were emphasized. Analyses revealed that second-generation Chinese Canadians were influenced by Chinese and Western values regarding career, which affected the factors that they considered in their career development, including interests, strengths, work environment, practicality and others’ opinions. Specifically, interests and financial compensation were two crucial factors that Chinese Canadians considered. Ethnicity and family intertwined to play different roles throughout Chinese Canadians’ career development: while some indicated no influence from either aspect, others described influential roles particularly at the beginning stages of their career development. Practical and theoretical implications as well as future research directions are discussed.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Charles Chen, my thesis supervisor, for his continuous support and guidance throughout this project. Your passion for research is truly inspirational. Thank you so much for helping me grow as a researcher.

This project could not have been completed without the generous contribution of the participants’ effort and time. Thank you so much for the genuine sharing of your experiences. It was a great pleasure learning about your career journeys.

A special thanks to my family and friends for all of their support. To my friends from my Master’s program, especially Claire and Shasha, thank you for your insight and encouragement. My thesis journey would have been different without your continuous validation and emotional support. Thank you to my family, especially my mother, who has always been supportive of my goals and endeavors. Thank you so much for your faith and confidence in me. I would also like to extend my thanks to Jerry, who witnessed the gradual unfolding of my project. Thank you for helping me with recruitment, and your continuous love and support throughout the good and bad times.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

With a population of over one million, Chinese represents the second largest visible minority group in Canada; they make up 21.1% of the visible minority population, and 4% of the total population (Lai, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2011). Chinese immigrants bring along a different set of values, beliefs and practices that influence the way they experience and perceive their personal experiences and surrounding environment in Canada (Klassen et al., 2012; Lai, 2007). Chinese Canadians adopt a different lifestyle, including health practices, dietary choice (Lu, Sylvestre, Melnychuk & Li, 2008) and parenting style (Klassen et al., 2012). Academic achievement, filial piety and the emphasis on family are values that are prominent in Chinese Canadian families (Young, Ball, Valach, Turkel & Wong, 2003).

Twenty-six percent of the Chinese Canadian population was born in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011). These Canadian-born Chinese children, also known as second-generation Chinese Canadians (Wu & Chao, 2005), are fluent in English and socialized in the Western culture. They fare well in the Canadian society but face challenges at home with their parents (Young et al., 2003). Previous research has shown that second-generation Chinese Americans are more similar to European Americans in terms of their career choice attitudes (Hardin, Leong & Osipow, 2001) and parenting style expectations (Chao, 2001). For instance, Chinese Canadian students are likely to advocate individualism (Cheung, Nelson, Advincula & Canham, 2005). Their immigrant parents, on the other hand, are more likely to adhere to traditional Chinese values, such as respect for elders and parents (Okubo, Yeh, Lin, Fujita & Shea, 2007). Due to these
discrepancies in values, second-generation Chinese individual living in North America are more likely to experience conflicts with their parents (Ma & Yeh, 2005). The current study focuses on second-generation Chinese Canadians because the literature suggests that this generation experiences the most cultural conflicts (Ma & Yeh, 2005; Wu & Chao, 2011).

In the Western culture, career is seen as a form of self-expression and self-interests dictate the career path that an individual pursues (Ma & Yeh, 2005). Career has a different meaning in the Chinese culture. Career achievement is highly emphasized in the Chinese society, and it signifies family status and honour (Hardin et al., 2001; Tang, 2002). Academic and career achievements are not individual success, but the accomplishment of the entire family (Leong & Chou, 1994). As such, there is high familial expectation to succeed for the sake of their families (Leong & Serafica, 2001). Coincidentally, Chinese American students tend to outperform European Americans in standard test scores and high school grade point average (Sue & Okazaki, 2009).

Second-generation Chinese Americans share a similar career attitude as European Americans; immigrant Chinese American parents, however, strongly adhere to the traditional perspective of career (Tang, Fouad & Smith, 1999). The same phenomenon might be found in second-generation Chinese Canadians. When faced with the familial pressure to succeed and emphasis on self-expression in the Western society, how do second-generation Chinese Canadians make career-related decisions?

1.2 Rationale of Study

To date, there is only one study that specifically examines family involvement in the career development of Chinese Canadians (Young, Ball, Valach, Turkey & Wong,
2003), and there is a scarcity of empirical studies that focus specifically on second-generation Chinese Canadians. Given that Chinese is one of the fastest growing populations in Canada, inadequacy of research in this topic is problematic. First of all, traditional career theories are often normed on middle class European males (Cook, Heppner & O’Brien, 2002). As such, many of the theories were derived from an individualistic culture, which emphasizes autonomy, equality and freedom when it comes to career decision-making. The application of these theories to second-generation Chinese Canadians is yet to be explored, as this population is exposed to values that stress collectivism and conformity. Secondly, the majority of the research on career development of Chinese or Asian immigrants was conducted in the United States (e.g., Chung, 2001; Ma & Yeh, 2010; Tsai-Chai & Nagata, 2008). Findings of these studies might not be applicable to Chinese Canadians because Chinese immigrants might encounter different experiences in Canada and the United States. For instance, ethnic diversity of each country could be different, thereby affecting the level of discrimination that these individuals encounter. Thirdly, Asian Americans are often treated as a homogenous group. For instance, Asian Americans students are all stereotyped to be well behaved and able to excel academically (Tang et al., 1999). This is problematic because Asian Americans are a diverse population in North America, differing in culture, generation status and acculturation level (Leong & Serafica, 1995). Thus, the current study solely focuses on the Chinese population that lives in Canada. Fourthly, the current literature tends to view Chinese Americans as a uniform population without distinguishing their generation status. Generation status and differences in acculturation level are important factors to consider when working with Chinese Canadians, because
such variability could lead to different values and expectations that these individuals hold (Sue, 1997). The current study focuses on the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians in order to bridge the knowledge gap in the existing literature.

This study aims to explore and describe the nature of family involvement in the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians. By conducting in-depth, one-on-one interviews, the researcher sought rich information from second-generation Chinese Canadians and explored the roles of ethnicity and family in their career development. As mentioned, second-generation individuals are likely to experience conflicts with their immigrant parents due to discrepancies in values regarding career development. The scarcity in research in this area also calls for more empirical investigation of this specific population. The current study fills the gap in the existing literature by focusing specifically on the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians who had at least one year of work experience in their current fields.

The major research question that this study attempts to answer is “What roles do ethnicity and family play in the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians?” Secondary questions that allow the researcher to better answer the major research question are:

1. What was the meaning of career for Chinese Canadians?
2. What was the career exploration and development process like for Chinese Canadians?
3. What factors did they take into consideration when choosing a career?
4. What role did ethnicity play in their career choice and development?
5. What role did family play in their career choice and development?
1.3 Definition of Terms

There are several key terms that are employed throughout the current study and they are defined as follow:

1. Chinese Canadians. Chinese Canadians are individuals who have at least one year of work experience in their current fields in Canada and their parents were born in Hong Kong, China or Taiwan.

2. First generation. An individual who left his or her country of origin and immigrated to a different country (Statistics Canada, 2014; Wu & Chao, 2005).

3. Second-generation Chinese Canadian. An individual who was born in Canada, whose parents were born in Hong Kong, China or Taiwan and immigrated to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2014; Wu & Chao, 2005).

4. Acculturation. It is the process of change in one’s beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviours due to exposure to a new culture (Berry, 1980; Le & Stockdale, 2008).

5. Acculturation level. It is the degree of which one adopts the mainstream, dominant culture and associated values.

6. Acculturation gap. It is also known as acculturation discrepancy or acculturative dissonance, which is the difference in acculturation level between second-generation individuals and their first-generation parents (Song & Glick, 2004; Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008).

7. Intergeneration conflicts. Conflicts arise between immigrant parents and second-generation individuals due to acculturation gap and the resulting divergence in values, lifestyle and attitude (Chung, 2001; Le & Stockdale, 2008; Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008).
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The existing literature on the career development of Chinese Canadians is scarce. The researcher was only able to locate one source that focuses specifically on the career development of Chinese Canadians (Young, Ball, Valach, Turkey & Wong, 2003). Research on the career development of Chinese Americans and Asian Americans, on the other hand, is more extensive. The researcher therefore mainly drew upon the literature on Chinese or Asian Americans. As visible minorities in North America, it is reasonable to expect that Chinese Canadians and Chinese Americans might encounter similar problems living in the Western society. For instance, both populations face clashing values advocated by the Chinese and Western cultures and struggle with issues associated with discrimination and prejudice (Hon, Sun, Suto & Forwell, 2011; Klassen et al., 2012; Lai, 2007; Sue & Okazaki, 2009; Wu & Chao, 2011).

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section discusses values and principles advocated by the Chinese culture. The second section outlines issues that Chinese Americans encounter, with a focus on acculturation level and familial conflicts. The third section describes the characteristics of the education and career development of Chinese Americans, as well as the applicability of some career theories to this population.

2.1 The Chinese Culture

“In the Chinese culture, a lot of it is not about individuality. It’s about serving the whole. In American culture, it’s about individualism, a role, personal freedom, self expression (Liu, 1998, p. 579).” This is the reflection of a second-generation Chinese American university student who experienced both the American and Chinese cultures (Liu, 1998). This section explores the values that are advocated in the Chinese culture.
Since values impact how we perceive and evaluate the world (Sue, 1997), having an understanding of the Chinese culture will help us better understand the career decision-making process of Chinese Canadians.

Confucianism and Collectivism

Confucianism is embedded in the Chinese culture (Holroyd, 2003). It is a set of obligations and duties of what is “right and proper”, and delineates what one should or should not do (Holroyd, 2003). For instance, an individual has the duty to conform and avoid conflicts (Cheung, Nelson, Advincula & Canham, 2005), to respect and care for one’s parents (Hon et al., 2011), and to sacrifice personal needs to fulfill familial needs (Lai, 2007). Confucian principles of obligation, duty and reciprocity lead to an ultimate goal of family and community harmony (Cheung et al., 2005). The Chinese culture is therefore also called a collectivist culture, which emphasizes values such as interdependence, filial piety and group reliance (Cheung et al., 2005). Family is the basic unit of the society and collectivistic needs (e.g., family, community) are prioritized over personal needs and autonomy (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Cheung et al., 2005; Kwak, 2003; Leong & Hardin, 2002). Parents are expected to make sacrifices for their children and children are expected to reciprocate the parental love by respecting and obeying them (Holroyd, 2003; Kao, 1995; Lai, 2007). Conflicts with family members are to be avoided to maintain the connectedness and harmony within a family (Kwak, 2003). When making decisions, meeting familial expectations and maintaining family reputation is more important than individual preferences and interests (Leong, 1993). In addition, individuals are educated to view themselves based on their relationship with significant
others and to prioritize strengthening the connectedness with others (Henderson & Chan, 2005; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Collectivist values are different from the values advocated in the Western society. In Western families, decision-making is an independent process (Ma & Yeh, 2005). Individuals think and behave autonomously based on personal needs and preferences (O’Keefe & O’Keefe, 1997). European Americans view themselves as independent entities that behave and think in unique ways (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). They therefore prioritize self-expression and self-actualization (Henderson & Chan, 2005). These values are opposite to those held in Chinese families because independence and self-expression threaten family harmony and are seen as a form of disrespect (Leong, Kao & Lee, 2004; O’Keefe & O’Keefe, 1997).

**Deference to authority and obedience.** In collectivist Chinese culture, respect, obedience and devotion to the elderly and authority are emphasized in children’s upbringing (Henderson & Chan, 2005; Holroyd, 2003; Ma & Yeh, 2005). Adults are expected to be respectful to their parents and provide for them financially (Henderson & Chan, 2005; Holroyd, 2003). Unquestioning obedience and compliance are expected when authority and elderly are involved. While negotiations and discussions are ways to maintain democracy and autonomy in Western families, these behaviors could be seen as defiance against authority and a threat to societal harmony in the Chinese culture. Values such as autonomy and independence are therefore frowned upon (Sue, 1997). When making important life decisions, Chinese Americans are likely to be attuned to parental wishes (Leong & Serafica, 1995; Ma & Yeh, 2005). Chinese Americans might therefore be
indecisive because of the need to balance personal fulfillment and family obligation when making important life decisions (Ma & Yeh, 2005).

**Filial piety.** Filial piety represents obligations, respect and duty that children have for their parents (Sue, 1997). There are three levels of filial piety (Chow, 2001): a) tend to parents’ physical needs and comforts, particularly when they are ill; b) be attentive to parents’ wishes and comply with their preferences; and c) bring honour and respect to the family. These behaviors are expected even when children reach adulthood. Filial piety is also associated with values such as parental respect and a sense of obligation.

**Parental respect.** In the Chinese culture, parental respect is prioritized over closeness or intimacy in parent-child relationships (Chao, 2001). Children are expected to respect and obey their parents without judgment, reflecting the “parents are always right” notion in Confucius ideology (Lin & Fu, 1990). Parental control is high in Chinese families, where parents make important life decisions for their children (Kuo & Spees, 1983). Chinese parents are expected to instill values of diligence and self-discipline in their children’s upbringing (Chao, 1994). Chinese parents also have the right to control their children’s education and future development (Chao, 1994). One of the ways to demonstrate parental respect is when children bring honor to the family and avoid disgrace (Ma & Yeh, 2005).

**Obligation and duty.** The Chinese culture and Confucius ideology highlight each individual’s role, as well as the associated obligation and duty one has (Holroyd, 2003). In parent-child relationships, Chinese children are obligated to respect their parents and care for them even at the expense of personal resources (Cheung et al., 2005). Chinese parents have the same obligation and duty to take care of their children. Some Chinese
parents immigrated to Canada and sacrificed their career and personal lives in China in order to pursue a better life for their children (Bornstein & Cote, 2006; Hon et al., 2011; Louie, 2004). In the Canadian culture, parents are respected. However, the emphasis on independence minimizes the focus on one’s family of origin. In addition, obligation to children is often more frequently stressed than the obligation to parents (Sue, 1997).

**Emotion control.** To maintain harmony in the community or family, emotion control is necessary since strong emotions are perceived to be harmful to one’s health, relationships, tradition and order (Wu & Chao, 2005; Sue, 1997; Uba, 1994). This view is different from the Western perspective, where emotional expression is seen as healthy and essential to psychological wellbeing (Sue, 1997). The emphasis on emotion control strongly influences the interaction between Chinese parents and children. Chinese parents rarely show their love and affection openly (Wu & Chao, 2005). Instead, parents show care and warmth for their children through instrumental support and sacrifice (Chao, 1994; Uba, 1994). Behaviours such as holding hands and saying “I love you” are rare in Chinese families (Shon & Ja, 1982), because parental love is expressed through the things parents do for their children, instead of what is said. Behaviors and decisions that benefit family members serve as a channel to express such love. This is consistent with the Confucian principal where good intentions, care and love are conveyed through actions, not words (Confucius, 500 BC/ 1992).

**Learning Virtues**

**Academic and career achievement.** The Chinese culture views hard work and education as a means of upward social mobility (Ma & Yeh, 2010). As such, education and occupational achievement should be one’s top priorities in life (Sue, 1997).
Individual achievement and self-discipline are greatly stressed in children’s upbringing (Louie, 2001; Yee, DeBaryshe, Yuen, Kim & McCubbin, 2007). Chinese parents expect their children to succeed academically because it is believed that one’s academic degree determines the life that one would be leading (Pearce & Lin, 2007; Qin, Way & Mukherjee, 2008). Academic and occupational achievements also influence one’s family because individuals are expected to take care of their parents’ welfare and happiness when they grow old (Liu, 1998). A reputable career will allow Chinese individuals to support their parents financially. Additionally, individuals are obligated to bring fame and social status to the family by pursuing occupations that are deemed “prestigious” in the Chinese community (Tang, 2002). These standards and expectations exist in the Chinese community and within the family (Tang, 2002), consequently exerting pressure on Chinese Americans to excel at school and in their career.

Chinese American students excel academically out of a sense of duty and obedience. These individuals understand that in order to reciprocate their parents’ upbringing and to bring honor to the family, it is their primary responsibility to do well at school (Louie, 2001; Sue, 1997). Family reputation, obligation and respect for parents’ wishes are often the factors that contribute to students’ academic achievement and career decisions in the Chinese culture (Okubo, Yeh, Lin, Fujita & Shea, 2007). Chinese American students understand that their individual achievement is an indicator of their family’s accomplishment (Leong, 1986). As such, these students experience high internal and external expectations to succeed.

**Self-discipline, diligence and perseverance.** To fulfill external and internal expectations to succeed, personal agency and self-discipline are necessary (Chao, 1994;
Koh, Shao & Wang, 2009). Learning virtues such as diligence, endurance, perseverance and concentration are instilled in the Chinese culture (Koh et al., 2009). Confucianism emphasizes putting duty above enjoyment; it views career and personal achievement as a way to contribute to family wellbeing (Bu & McKeen, 2000). Not surprisingly, it was found that highly educated Chinese professionals are determined to achieve education advancement and career growth at the expense of leisure and personal lives (Bu & McKeen, 2000). This is different from European Canadians, who strive for work-life balance and prioritize their personal lives over career (Bu & McKeen, 2000). The superior educational attainment demonstrated by Chinese American students is in fact rooted in the culture’s emphasis on diligence and hard work (Pearce & Lin, 2007).

2.2 The Characteristics of Chinese Americans

Stereotypes of Chinese Americans

There are many stereotypes associated with Asian Americans or Chinese Americans. For instance, Chinese Americans are stereotyped to be diligent, passive, indirect and polite (Cheung et al., 2005). The stereotype of Chinese Americans as model minority is the most prominent (Okubo et al., 2007; Qin et al., 2008). For instance, Chinese American students often outperform European Americans in standard test scores and high school grade point average, they also attend prestigious universities at extreme high rates (Sue & Okazaki, 1990). As one Chinese American university student expressed, “Immigrants from Asia are very hard working, they try to establish themselves and also teach their kids to be hard working too (Louie, 2001, p.448).” The earlier section explained how such phenomenon and stereotypes are formed from the cultural
perspective. The subsequent section focuses on the issues faced by Chinese individuals living in North America because of these stereotypes and values.

**Issues faced by Chinese Americans**

**Acculturative dissonance and familial conflicts.** The majority of Chinese American adolescents reported a negative and challenging relationship with their parents because of familial conflicts and cultural differences (Qin, 2006; Qing et al., 2008). These familial conflicts occur because Chinese Canadian parents and youths acculturate and learn Western values at different rates (Portes, 1997). The divergence in values, lifestyle and attitudes could result in intergeneration conflicts (Chung, 2001; Le & Stockdale, 2008; Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008). Given that second-generation individuals are born in North America, they are exposed to the mainstream culture since childhood (Song & Glick, 2004), whereas immigrant parents remain traditionally Chinese since they spent part of their life in their country of origin (Okubo et al., 2007). Chinese Americans could even lose attachment to their traditional culture, and this could create dissonance and conflicts between parents and children (Song & Glick, 2004; Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008). Acculturative gap widens when immigrant parents insist on passing their traditional culture and values onto their second-generation children, who might not appreciate their parents’ emphasis on biculturalism (Young et al., 2003). Due to the acculturative gap, second-generation Chinese Americans experience higher level of intergenerational conflicts, when compared to first-generation Chinese American and European American counterparts (Ma & Yeh, 2005).

**Ethnic identity.** Second-generation Chinese Americans tend to experience constant cultural struggle (Cheung et al., 2005; Okubo et al., 2007). On one hand, their
behaviours and attitudes are influenced by the mainstream culture through friends, peers and the media (Le & Stockdale, 2008). On the other hand, immigrant parents strictly adhere to the Chinese culture at home and intend to pass on their traditional values and beliefs (Chung, 2001). Acculturation is likely to reduce one’s loyalty and commitment to their culture of origin, as well as one’s sense of belonging to the specific culture (Berry, 1980). Therefore, second-generation Chinese Canadians may struggle with their cultural identity. Confusion is likely to arise as they attempt to make sense of the native and mainstream cultures, as well as their ethnic identity.

**Parental pressure.** The emphasis on academic achievement in the Chinese culture leads to high parental pressure to succeed academically (Ma & Yeh, 2010; Qin et al., 2008). This creates tension within the family. For instance, Chinese American adolescents reported that their parents expected them to succeed in everything and that it was impossible to meet their unattainable expectations (Qin et al., 2008). In addition, second-generation youths are expected to shoulder parental responsibilities (e.g., bridging the family with the society) due to their fluency in English and knowledge about the society and culture (Leong & Gim-Chung, 1995). Family obligations, on top of academic work, further intensify the pressure that these youths experience.

**Diversity Among Chinese Americans**

As mentioned, Chinese American individuals are influenced by their culture of origin to different extents depending on their level of acculturation. As such, Chinese Americans is a diverse population because they adopt different values and lifestyles.

Asian Americans are more likely to involve their parents and family when making important decisions (e.g., following their advice, compromising). For instance, it was
found that family involvement is a significant predictor of career choice in Asian Americans (Tang et al., 1999). Research shows that while Asian American and Chinese students are more likely to compromise with their parents when making career choices, European Americans are more likely to make decisions independently (Tang, 2002).

On the contrary, Hardin, Leong and Osipow (2001) found that highly acculturated Asian Americans exhibited similar career choice attitudes when compared to European Americans. Another study indicates that highly acculturated Asian Americans regard work as a form of self-expression, whereas those who endorse traditional values tend to view career in the context of family obligation and respect (Leong & Tata, 1990). This indicates that acculturation level influences the career choice of Chinese Americans.

In terms of parent-child relationship, second-generation Chinese Americans are found to be more similar to European Americans than first-generation Chinese Americans, in that second-generation Chinese Americans benefit from a close and intimate relationship with their parents, but not first-generation Chinese Americans (Chao, 2001). In addition, second-generation adolescents experience more emotional distance with their immigrant parents than their first-generation counterparts due to discrepancies in their acculturation levels (Chao, 2001).

The discrepancies in these findings demonstrate the importance of taking generation status and acculturation level into account when working with Chinese Canadians. This is evident in a study conducted by Song and Glick (2004), which proposes that immigrant status affects the extent that one maintains their traditional culture and level of acculturation, and consequently their choice of college majors. A traditional Chinese belief is that an individual’s career involves the entire family (Liu,
Thus, the more attached one is to the Chinese culture, the more likely that one would choose a career that benefits the family (Song & Glick, 2004). On the contrary, a highly acculturated Chinese American would value independent decision-making (Leong & Tata, 1990). Chinese Americans who are less acculturated are more similar to Chinese individuals, whereas highly acculturated Chinese Americans are more similar to their European American counterparts. It is therefore important to consider factors that affect the level of acculturation when working with Chinese Canadians, including immigration status, length of residence in Canada and language fluency (Lai, 2007).

### 2.3 Chinese American Parenting Style and Familial Relationships

#### Parenting Style in Chinese American Families

**European American parenting style.** A good parenting style in the western culture stresses parental warmth and physical expression of affection (Wu & Chao, 2011). Hugs, kisses and open praises are deemed as important and are commonly seen in European American families. An open and intimate relationship is fostered (Chao, 2001; Wu & Chao, 2005; Wu & Chao, 2011), where parents spend time talking to their children and communicate their feelings and experiences with each other. Such open and expressive way of parenting fosters self-expression and autonomy in North American children (Wu & Chao, 2011).

**Chinese American parenting style.** Emotions are deemed harmful to one’s health and relationships in Confucian ideology (Wu & Chao, 2005). It is also believed that love is better shown through action than words (Confucius, 500 BC/ 1992). As such, self-control and restraint of emotional display are advocated in the Chinese culture (Wu & Chao, 2005; Uba, 1994). Such perception of emotional expression affects parenting
style and parent-child relationships in the Chinese culture. Chinese parents seldom express affection and warmth openly (Sue, 1997; Wu & Chao, 2011). Good parenting in the Chinese culture involves the provision of instrumental support and the ability to anticipate and meet the needs of children, particularly in the academic domain (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Wu & Chao, 2011). Chinese parents do not directly praise their children for their good work. Instead, they show their pride by telling others about their children’s achievement (Sue, 1997). Parents would sacrifice their personal interests, health and career in order to meet their children’s needs (Chao & Tseng, 2002). For instance, many immigrant parents give up their career in China and move to North American to provide better education opportunities for their children (Hon et al., 2011; Louis, 2004).

Chinese parents follow an authoritarian parenting style, where hard work, self-discipline and obedience are emphasized (Chao, 1994; Louie, 2001). In addition, hierarchical relationships are fostered between parents and children, where parents exert control over their children’s lives and demand complete obedience (Chiu & Ring, 1998). While the Western culture stresses intimate and close parent-child relationships, good parent-child relationships in the Chinese culture emphasize parental respect and obedience (Chao, 1994; 2001).

**Parent-child intimacy and its effect.** Parenting styles hold different effects on different ethnic groups (Chao, 1994). While closeness and intimacy in parent-children relationships are predictive of academic success in European youths, they are not predictive of academic performance in Chinese American youths (Chao, 2001). In addition, relationship closeness is not related to school grades and effort in first-generation Chinese students (Chao, 2001). In contrast, second-generation Chinese
American students demonstrated similar results as European Americans – relationship closeness and intimacy are beneficial for their academic performances (Chao, 2001). This demonstrates that immigration status, and possibly acculturation level, mediate the effect of different parenting styles.

**Communication Style in Chinese American Families**

Verbal communication in Chinese parenting serves the purpose of teaching or lecturing, rather than of facilitating discussions (Wu & Chao, 2011). Chinese parents tend to incorporate explanations and clarification of their expectations in their verbal communication with children (Wu & Chao, 2011). In addition, parents use guilt-inducing techniques to maintain discipline and convey expectations (Sue, 1997). Chinese American students express that academics and expectations to excel are the main topics of conversation with their parents (Liu, 1998).

Young and colleagues (2003) conducted a study on the communication style of Chinese Canadian families. They found that Chinese Canadian parents tend to use information and reasoning to convince their children to accept their opinions. In the conversations with their children, parents stress the importance of a positive relationship, and that they want what is best for their children. To these parents, love is demonstrated when they provide for their children and help them make good educational and career decisions to achieve career success. The importance of maintaining one’s ethnic culture also surfaces in their conversations. In terms of the communication style of Chinese Canadian youths, Young and colleagues (2003) observed that they tend to respond to their parents’ opinions with minimal responses. They withhold information and involvement in these conversations because they disagree with their parents but wish to
avoid conflicts. Although their opinions diverge, these youths still want to maintain a positive relationship with their parents out of respect and love. Chinese Canadian youths strive to establish themselves as separate from their parents, but simultaneously wish to maintain a positive relationship with them. The findings of this study demonstrate that indirect verbal expressiveness is common in parent-child communication; however, Chinese parents are direct and explicit when it comes to stating their expectations.

**Familial Relationships of Second-Generation Chinese Americans**

**Parent-child acculturative dissonance.** Acculturative dissonance develops as second-generation Chinese Americans acculturate at a faster rate than their immigrant parents (Song & Glick, 2004). Immigrant parents tend to retain their ethnic cultural values (e.g., filial piety, family cohesion and interdependence) and traditions (Okubo et al., 2007), whereas second-generation youths tend to acquire the Western norms and values and advocate independence and autonomy (Kwak, 2000; Leong & Tata, 1990; Ma & Yeh, 2005). The cultural norms on social cohesion and interdependence could be difficult to achieve for some Asian American children.

**Value discrepancy.** There is usually substantial gap between adolescents and parents in terms of their endorsement of traditional culture and values (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008; Uba, 1994). The preference of values is dependent on one’s cultural schema, which is founded on his or her family’s values (Qin et al., 2008). When children come into contact with the dominant culture (through school, peers and the media), their experience with the host culture begins to influence their perception and interpretation of the family’s culture, and consequently shapes their cultural schema (Qin et al., 2008). Acculturated Chinese American adolescents tend to prefer the norms in the
mainstream culture, whereas their less acculturated immigrant parents maintain values and beliefs in their culture of origin (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Uba, 1994). In addition, highly acculturated Chinese American children are more likely to endorse values that lead to self-actualization than those who are less acculturated, demonstrating that acculturation level affects one’s values endorsement and formation (Leong & Tata, 1990). Tsai-Chae and Nagata (2008) found that values acculturation gap is more strongly associated with family conflicts than behavioural acculturation gap. In addition, values regarding conforming to family norms and making education- or career-related decisions tend to evoke the most frequent conflicts in Asian American families (Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008).

*Language barrier.* In addition to value discrepancy, language barrier exists within Chinese American families since second-generation children are less fluent in their native language, whereas their parents tend to struggle with English (Chung, 2001; Qin et al., 2008). As such, children may not communicate well with their parents regarding their needs and feelings (Qin et al., 2008). Additionally, acculturated youths who experience acculturative dissonance with their parents tend to be more involved in the environment outside of home (Reuschenberg & Buriel, 1989), further amplifying the influence of the mainstream culture and widening the acculturative dissonance with their parents.

*Emotional distance.* Chinese adolescents who live in the United States and Canada often reported feelings of frustration and alienation from their parents due to the lack of communication and emotional expression (Qin et al., 2008; Louie, 2001; Wu & Chao, 2005). They tend to prefer the Western values of emotional and physical expressiveness and open communication (Hyman, Vu & Beiser, 2001).
Lack of emotional and physical expression. Chinese American youths, especially those belonging to the second generation, often describe their parents as emotionally distant and deficient and that they prefer more warmth, openness and affection in their relationship (Pyke, 2000; Qin et al., 2008; Wu & Chao, 2005). Chinese parents are strict and expect one-way obedience; whereas American parents are more flexible and relaxed (Qin et al., 2008). Having had extensive contact with the Western culture, second-generation Chinese Americans might use typical American parents as references and compare them to their own parents (Wu & Chao, 2005; Wu & Chao, 2011). Second-generation youths’ dissatisfaction with the relationship with their parents could be pronounced because they did not have the opportunity to understand their culture of origin and therefore misunderstood the different emphasis on parenting goals in the two cultures (Wu & Chao, 2011).

Lack of open communication. Generational and cultural differences between parents and children pose a negative effect on parent-child relationship. For instance, Chinese American parents use family rules to reason with their children and expect them to listen without talking back (Qin et al., 2008). This is in conflict with the standard image of American parenting, which allows room for self-expression and autonomy. Chinese American adolescents often choose not to disclose their personal lives and emotions to avoid getting lectured (Qin et al., 2008). Chinese American adolescents also complain of their parents’ lack of praises and complements. They reported that when they perform well at school, they are not positively reinforced; when they fail to meet their expectations, however, they are reprimanded (Qin et al., 2008). As a result, some Chinese American adolescents choose not to talk to their parents about their academics (Qin et al.,
Language barriers between children and parents might also prevent them from communicating efficiently with each other, resulting in alienation and emotional distance.

**Withdrawal and alienation.** Chinese American adolescents might withdraw from their parents and avoid communicating to them about their feelings, thoughts and personal lives due to their dissatisfaction with parenting style and potential language barriers (Qin et al., 2008). Parental pressure further enhances the emotional distance between immigrant parents and second-generation children. Chinese parents hold high expectations for their children, and convey these expectations to their children both directly and implicitly (Leong & Serafica, 2001). For instance, Chinese parents expect their children to choose a career that is respectable in the Chinese community to enhance the family’s reputation, cohesion and financial security (Okubo et al., 2007). Chinese American youths therefore have to consider many factors when making career-related decisions, including personal interests, familial expectations and cultural values (Okubo et al., 2007). Chinese American youths experience parental pressure and familial conflicts, especially if they are born in North America and are accustomed to the culture where personal fulfillment and independence are advocated in career development (Ma & Yeh, 2005). Parental pressure might cause adolescents to avoid discussing career-related issues with their parents, further widening the acculturative gap between them. In addition, Chinese immigrant parents usually work multiple jobs to provide a better education for their children (Louie, 2001; Qin et al., 2008). As a result, Chinese parents and children did not spend much time together when these children were growing up, making it even more difficult to connect and bond. Withdrawal lowers the level of parental support, and affects Chinese American families in many ways (Qin, 2005).
Intergeneration conflicts. Although low level of expressiveness is characteristic in Chinese American families, family cohesion is not necessarily high. The majority of Chinese American adolescents reported a negative and challenging relationship with their parents because of familial conflicts and cultural differences (Qin, 2006; Qing et al., 2008). Chinese Americans experience lower level of familial cohesion and more frequent family conflicts than European Americans (Greenberger & Chen, 1996; Kwak, 2003; Leong et al., 2004). Lee, Choe, Kim and Ngo (2000) reasoned that children avoid discussing issues with their parents due to acculturation gap, which leads to more misunderstandings and conflicts.

Parent-child conflicts are typical in all families due to generation gap (Wu & Chao, 2005). In Chinese American families, however, cultural conflicts also exist when there are divergent views and endorsements of cultural values (Le & Stockdale, 2008; Wu & Chao, 2005). Acculturation dissonance is the primary drive of conflicts in Chinese American families. Gradual divergence of perspectives and discrepancies in acculturation levels results in intergeneration conflicts (Chung, 2001; Uba, 1994). For instance, second-generation children could evaluate their Chinese parents negatively because of their lack of expression of affection (Wu & Chao, 2005). In addition, while second-generation children insist on being individualistic, their immigrant parents stress the importance of being family-oriented and culture-sensitive (Cheung et al., 2005). When making important life decisions (e.g., career), the contrast between individualism and collectivism is fully manifested, especially over the degree of autonomy and freedom (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). These discrepancies could result in familial conflicts (Chung, 2001).
Intergeneration conflict is an important topic of study because family relationship is one of the most significant predictors of adolescents’ mental health wellbeing (Cook, 2001). Positive relationships with parents and family have been found to be negatively associated with externalizing and internalizing behaviours in adolescents (Barber & Buehler, 1996). In addition, perceived quality of relationship with family members plays a significant role in determining the career attitude held by young adolescents (Hargrove, Inman & Crane, 2005).

**Immigration status and intergeneration conflicts.** Immigration status affects the relationship between Chinese American youths and their family. Second-generation Chinese Americans reported experiencing the highest level of intergenerational conflicts, when compared to first-generation Chinese American and European American counterparts (Ma & Yeh, 2005). In addition, the longer immigrant parents stay in North America, the more accustomed they are to the host culture (Chung, 2001). As such, length of stay and immigration status affect the likelihood of intergenerational conflicts.

### 2.4 Academic Achievement and Career Development of Chinese Americans

In the Chinese culture, career is an expression of the interdependent self that is associated with the needs and expectations of significant others (Hardin, et al., 2001; Tang, 2002). “Career choice and career advancement may be seen more as a means of providing for one’s family, helping one’s siblings, and fulfilling one’s responsibility to care for parents in their old age than as ways of implementing self attributes (Leong & Serafica, 1993, p.47).” Career decision is a family matter (Ma & Yeh, 2005). It is deemed to be wrong and selfish to prioritize one’s personal interests and needs over familial needs, therefore Asian and Chinese American students tend to choose careers that not
only benefit themselves, but also their family (Song & Glick, 2004; Tang, 2002). The role of family is particularly salient in Chinese Americans’ academic achievement and career aspirations, and is predictive of youths’ career choice (Hou & Leung, 2011; Leong et al., 2004; Tang et al., 1999). This section describes how culture and family influence the career development of Chinese individuals living in North America.

**Parental Expectations and Academic Achievement**

The emphasis on academic and career success is rooted in the Chinese culture, where qualities such as diligence and perseverance are valued (Pearce & Lin, 2007). Additionally, many Chinese immigrant parents encountered racism and discrimination in North America (Shea, Ma & Yeh, 2007) and viewed education as the only means to upward socioeconomic mobility and success (Liu, 1998; Louie, 2001; Pearce & Lin, 2007; Sue & Okazaki, 2009). Thus, immigrant parents tend to view North America as an unjust society (Louie, 2001) and encourage their children to do well at school to avoid similar experiences (Ma & Yeh, 2010). Chinese American parents reiterate the importance of working harder than their European American counterparts, because of their minority status in North America. As illustrated by a Chinese American student, “The way my father felt was that you need to be smart, because you’ll never be accepted or given the chance because you’re Chinese (Louie, 2001, p. 454).” Chinese immigrant parents invest a substantial amount of time and effort in their children’s education to provide them with a head start in North America (Sue & Okazaki, 2009).

Due to the cultural emphasis on success and immigrant parents’ personal experiences in North American, Chinese parents tend to hold high education and career aspirations for their children (Liu, 1998; Louie, 2002; Qin et al., 2008). Chinese parents
believe that hard work, not ability, leads to academic success (Liu, 1998). Chinese parents are often strict when it comes to schoolwork supervision (Louie, 2001) and are more likely than European parents to play an active role in fostering their children’s academic success. For example, Chinese parents often give additional homework assignments, seek private lessons and tutoring services, control their children’s activities outside of school (Kao, 1995), and limit the time their children spend on watching television (Pearce & Lin, 2007). Academic success is often measured by the prestige of schools. For instance, Chinese immigrant parents stress the importance of going into Ivy League schools (Louie, 2001). Sometimes, high parental expectations generate tension and pressure in these children (Qin et al., 2008).

The Model Minority Stereotype

Chinese Americans are seen as model minority because of their academic achievements (Louie, 2001). For instance, Chinese Americans have a greater likelihood of entering and staying in school (Okubo et al., 2007; Tang et al., 1999). Furthermore, Chinese American students are perceived by other university students as more likely to succeed in fields such as engineering, computer science or mathematics (Leong & Hayes, 1990). Louie (2001) described that Chinese Americans study hard because they witnessed their parents’ sacrifice and therefore felt obligated to excel in their academics and career. Academic and career success allows them to bring honour to their family (Leong, 1986). Some Chinese American students feel that they owe their parents a doctorate degree because their parents sacrificed their careers when the students were born (Liu, 1998). These students feel obligated to commit to their parents’ happiness and welfare.
Academic achievement comes with a cost. First-generation Chinese American students study more hours per week and have limited career choices. Due to their long hours of studying, they report feelings of anxiety, loneliness and isolation compared to other college students (Sue & Zane, 1985). In addition, parental pressure is immense. Parents expect children to get A’s, and not meeting these expectations indicates neglecting the needs of one’s family (Sue, 1997). Chinese children tend to internalize their parents’ expectations and hold high expectations for themselves, which leads to stress (Liu, 1998). Internalized expectations motivate the majority of Chinese American students to aspire to go into graduate or professional schools (Liu, 1998).

**College Majors and Career Fields**

Chinese parents tend to exert control over their children’s career development because they believe that their level of experience can benefit their children (Young et al., 2003). Chinese parents help their children set up goals and plan their future paths (Leong & Serafica, 1995). For example, parents help their children choose colleges majors because they believe that college majors directly influence one’s career path and consequently, their future earning power (Song & Glick, 2004).

Parental pressure to choose an “ideal” career is great in Chinese American families (Sue, 1997). External and one-way expectations from parents exist, where parents steer their children towards a specific career that is traditionally acceptable and prestigious in the Chinese culture, such as engineering, computer science and medicine (Liu, 1998; Okubo et al., 2007; Tang et al., 1999; Young et al., 2003). Careers as such are associated with prestige, income and security and are believed to help one survive in North America (Leong, 1991), as well as to bring fame and reputation to the family.
Immigrant parents persuade their children to pursue these fields because they think these fields are more likely to offer secure employment opportunities when compared to other fields such as the social sciences and humanities (Tang & Fouad, 1997).

Asian American college students are likely to choose career paths that are of interest to them and simultaneously approved by their parents (Leong & Serafica, 1995). Kuo and Spees (1983) found that Taiwanese college students are more susceptible to parental influence when choosing college majors, whereas European American students were more likely to be influenced by their peers and friends. Family affects the career development of Chinese American students (Leong et al., 2004). For instance, Chinese American students tend to internalize their parents’ expectations and choose careers that align with their parents’ expectations without much discussion (Leong et al., 2004; Liu, 1998). They might alter their personal interests and career path in order to meet parental expectations out of respect and loyalty, or to achieve family cohesion (Leong et al., 2004). As such, Chinese American students are restricted to a limited range of major degrees. They tend to enter fields in medicine, science, engineering, computer science and technology (Leong, 1991; Song & Glick, 2004). As a result, they are overrepresented in the science and technology fields, but underrepresented in the humanities and social fields (Leong & Serafica, 1995; Tang et al., 1999).

2.5 Career Theories and Chinese Americans

The Chinese and Western perspectives of career are discrepant. In the Western culture, career and vocational development is seen as a lifelong and independent process, as well as a means of self-expression (Ma & Yeh, 2005; Super, 1990). Career reflects one’s motivation, knowledge, ability and self-understanding (Holland, 1997). As such,
the Western culture advocates paying attention to one’s inner thoughts and emotions when choosing a career, because a career that offers happiness is one with deep meanings and purposes, as well as the ability to fulfill one’s potential (Henderson & Chan, 2005). Career theories were developed based on the Western perspective and many of the theories were normed across European American populations (Cook, Heppner & O’Brien, 2002). The first part of this section outlines three career theories: Gottfredson’s Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, Social Cognitive Career Theory and Contextual Action Theory of Career. The researcher then explores the applicability of these theories to Chinese individuals who are living in North America. Since second-generation Chinese Canadians are exposed to both Chinese and Western cultures, their career development is influenced by both perspectives (Ma & Yeh, 2005; Wu & Chao, 2011). As such, the existing career theories could be less applicable to this population.

**Theories on Career Development**

**Gottfredson’s theory of circumscription and compromise.** Circumscription and compromise are two career development and selection processes that individuals undergo (Gottfredson, 2002; 2005). According to Gottfredson’s theory, there are four stages of cognitive development that affect an individual’s self-concept and perception of occupations (Gottfredson, 2005; Sharf, 2010): a) Orientation to size and power is a stage when children (age 3-5) understand the concept of being an adult and are aware of the tools associated with different occupations; b) Orientation to sex roles is characterized by the consolidation of gender self-concept, where children (age 6-8) are aware of their gender roles, as well as occupations that are appropriate to their gender; c) Orientation to social valuation is characterized by the realization of differences in social class and
abilities. Youngsters (age 9-13) become aware of the level of prestige associated with different occupations; and d) Orientation to the internal, unique self is characterized by the assessment of job-self compatibility, where adolescents (14 years or above) eliminate occupational alternatives as their self-concept develops.

Theory of circumscription. Gottfredson (2005) proposes that the process of circumscription begins by children eliminating jobs that are perceived to be inappropriate for their gender, followed by the elimination of jobs that are perceived to be of low prestige. Finally, they eliminate jobs that require excessive effort to pursue based on their views of own ability. In adolescence, youngsters turn to their internal attributes, such as interests, values and capabilities, to further reduce their number of choices. In high school, adolescents begin to actively seek trainings and jobs, thereby becoming more sensitive to the availability and accessibility of different jobs. They finalize their choices by balancing their preferences and accessibility of different occupations (Gottfredson, 2005).

Theory of compromise. Compromise is necessary when vocational interests are in conflict with the accessibility of a job (Gottfredson, 2005; Sharf, 2010). For instance, compromise occurs when individuals come across problems as they try to obtain and complete trainings or education for a required occupation. Gottfredson (2002) proposes a pattern of compromise, where vocational interests are usually sacrificed first, then prestige level, and finally sex type. Compromise continues until one is in a job type that one is satisfied with.

Gottfredson’s theory and Chinese Americans. Several researchers have investigated the applicability of Gottfredson’s theory to Chinese Americans. In terms of the compromise process, Leung (1993) found that Asian American undergraduate
students are more likely to compromise sex type of an occupation for prestige, which is contradictory to Gottfredson’s theory. In another study, Hou and Leung (2011) assessed the prestige of different occupation types, and found that prestige is deemed to be a more salient factor than sex type in the selection process for Chinese students. The emphasis on prestige is also evident in another study, where it was found that Asian American students most frequently select occupations that are higher in prestige (Tang et al., 1999). This is consistent with the emphasis on familial reputation, honor and prestige of a career in the Chinese culture (Hou & Leung, 2011).

On the other hand, it was found that the ability level of students influences parents’ and students’ career aspirations (Hou & Leung, 2011). This is consistent with Gottfredson’s theory of compromise, where students take their ability level into account when making career-related decisions.

Gottfredson’s theory of compromise and circumscription is partially applicable to Chinese Americans because elements such as sex type, prestige, personal attributes and vocational interests are factors that Chinese Americans consider when choosing a career. However, in the compromise process, Chinese American students tend to prioritize an occupation’s prestige over sex type. Chinese Americans’ perception of the desirability of an occupation is also heavily affected by their parents’ aspirations (Hou & Leung, 2011), which was neglected in Gottfredson’s theory.

**Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT).** SCCT is a model of career choice and performance (Tang et al., 1999). It posits that the person, environment and behaviours affect the development of career choice (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994). SCCT hypothesizes that our behaviours are the product of the interaction between person and
environment. This theory focuses on the interaction between interest development, career choice and performance. Most importantly, SCCT proposes that people are proactive, that they are the active creators of their environment, instead of mere responders to external circumstances (Lent et al., 1994).

SCCT employs three social cognitive variables from Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1986): self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals (Lent et al., 1994). Self-efficacy is “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Self-efficacy is found to be predictive of one’s academic and career choice and performance (Hackett & Lent, 1992). It is viewed as a dynamic set of subjective self-related beliefs that interact with other contextual factors such as people and situations (Lent et al., 1994). Outcome expectations are the personal beliefs about the consequences of one’s behaviour. Finally, goals guide and help organize behaviours to increase the likelihood of expected outcomes. In career development, career goals help one plan a course of action to achieve the desired career.

Self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals contribute to one’s career development (Lent et al., 1994). For instance, the goals that one sets reflect and affect self-efficacy, outcome expectations and interests. Goals also regulate one’s motivation (Lent et al., 1994). The easier it is to achieve a goal, the more motivated one would be in pursuing it. SCCT proposes three distinct but interlocking models that relate specifically to career development: interest development, choice and performance (Lent et al., 1994).

**Model of interest development.** Children engage in and are exposed to different occupational tasks. They receive feedback and thereby develop a sense of efficacy in
various tasks, as well as expectations regarding their performance outcomes. Self-efficacy and outcome expectations influence the development and formation of occupational interests. For instance, people are more likely to develop interests in tasks that they perceive themselves to be good at. Outcome expectation is posited to directly influence activity goals and choices; whereas self-efficacy influences performance, activity goals and choices (Lent et al., 1994). Interests plays a role in determining one’s outcome expectation, by helping one decide the importance of a particular outcome.

**Model of career choice.** According to this model, self-efficacy and outcome expectation give rise to interest development (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002). Individuals refine their interests and develop career choice goals (e.g., plans and aspirations), which indicate one’s intention to engage in a particular action (e.g., declaring a major). These actions then lead to performances or achievements. Performances may cycle back to strengthen or weaken one’s efficacy and outcome expectation. Eventually as self-efficacy and outcome expectations strengthen, one’s choice crystallizes and persists. The model of career choice is a feedback loop, where one’s career choice is constantly refined until the ultimate choice is determined. This model is constructed under the assumption that individuals have voluntary control over their career choice selection process. The authors express their understanding that contextual variables (e.g., cultural and economic variables) might weaken or strengthen the relations between interests, goals and actions.

**Model of performance.** This model proposes that self-efficacy affects performance by helping individuals organize and implement their behavioural skills, thereby influencing their goals and actions. In addition, the relationship between outcome expectation and performance is mediated by one’s goals and actions. For instance, in
successful performances, one’s self-efficacy and outcome expectation strengthen their interests and goals. Self-efficacy affects performance through the development of personal goals, but such effect is also complemented by one’s outcome expectation. Therefore, performance attainment is affected by the interaction between self-efficacy and outcome expectation.

**SCCT and Asian Americans.** Tang and colleagues (1999) conducted a study that examines the interactions between level of acculturation, family socioeconomic status, family involvement, occupational interests and career self-efficacy. The study attests the applicability of SCCT to Asian American students. In this study, self-efficacy is found to mediate the relationship between career choice and interest. High self-efficacy in an occupation is associated with high career interest and career choice. The authors explained that Asian American participants choose a career in science and technology-related areas because they are encouraged by their family to do so (Leong & Serfrica, 1995), and also because they witnessed successful role models in those fields. Asian American students might be motivated to pursue a career in stereotypical fields because of their exposure to role models, and their confidence is enhanced accordingly. Contrary to what SCCT proposes, interest is not related to Asian Americans’ career choice.

Family involvement is not a significant predictor of Asian Americans’ self-efficacy and interests; however, its impact on their career choice is significant (Tang et al., 1999). Specifically, there is high parental influence when selecting an appropriate career in Asian American families. Parents usually prefer occupations that are practical and financially secure; and it was found that the degree of parental influence is associated with traditional occupational choices. Finally, acculturation level is found to play an
important role in career choice, self-efficacy and interest. Asian Americans who are highly acculturated tend to choose less typical occupations, whereas those that are less acculturated tend to choose more typical occupations. The authors conclude that self-efficacy, acculturation and family background play an important role in Asian Americans’ career aspirations. The findings of this study show that SCCT can partially explain Asian Americans’ career development. It fails to incorporate other variables such as family involvement and acculturation level, which are found to play significant roles in Asian Americans’ career development.

**Contextual Action Theory of Career.** Contextual Action Theory of Career posits that career is constructed through a series of goal-directed actions. These goal-directed actions form different “projects”, or short-term goals, which allow individuals to explore possibilities, rather than following set guidelines when pursuing their ultimate career goals (Young & Valach, 2004). According to this theory, career, projects and actions are not only interrelated, but are also contextual and temporal-dependent. As such, this theory is free of cultural biases (Sharf, 2010). Young and Valach (2004) interviewed families and discovered that many other themes arise when parents and children discuss career development, such as identity development and relationships. Finally, this theory posits that cultural, social and psychological elements are created as individuals develop their career through joint action and projects. Valach and Young (2004) proposed three constructs in this theory.

**Action.** Action is cognitively and socially regulated. It is manifested in behaviour, internal processes and social meaning (Valach & Young, 2004). By observing one’s actions, we can infer their intentions and goals.
Joint action. Joint action is the action that people (two or more individuals) take together. Like action, it is manifested in behavior, internal processes and social meanings. The theory focuses on the action of the dyad, instead of their interactions. Together, individuals (e.g., family members) construct career identity, values and behaviours.

Project. Project is the main issue that a group discusses. As the project develops, other themes or projects might arise.

Career. A career is composed of the execution of different goal-directed actions and the exploration of plans, goals and consequences. Career development can extend over a long period of time and include a wide range of intentional actions. It also entails complex interaction of internal processes (e.g., emotions and social meanings). Career is seen as a relationship between youths and their parents, or counselors (Valach & Young, 2004). In combination with actions, parents and youths come up with short-term goals, which in turn lead to long-term career (Sharf, 2010).

Contextual Action Theory of Career and Chinese Canadian families. Young and colleagues (2003) conducted interviews with Chinese Canadian families based on the Contextual Action Theory of Career to explore the family career development project in Chinese Canadian families. They found that parental agenda is strong in Chinese Canadian families. These agendas are dependent on images that parents have about the appropriate education and occupation for their children. Youths employ low level of involvement in these interactions, allowing their parents to maintain complete control over the direction of the conversation (Young et al., 2003). Chinese parents think that it is important for youths to have career goals, which should be set by the parents. Although parents have their own agenda in mind, they still regard parent-child communication as
important. In terms of emotion expression, Chinese Canadian parents indirectly express love and care for their children, and vice versa. Parents in this study show love by ensuring that sufficient guidance is provided for the children’s career and educational development, whereas children willingly agree with their parents’ agenda even when their personal goals are not recognized by their parents. Finally, Chinese cultural values, such as interdependence and filial piety often surface in their conversations.

Contextual action theory works well with the Chinese Canadian population because it accommodates cultural norms, and allows the idiosyncratic contribution of both parents and youths in the project. Families are able to construct their own values and norms when selecting careers for youths. Finally, contextual action theory fits well with the Chinese interdependent culture since it posits that vocation is a relational construct (Valach & Young, 2004) and family involvement is significant in Chinese Canadians’ career development.

The career theories described above are not completely applicable to Chinese individuals living in North America. For example, Gottfredson’s theory of compromise (Hou & Leung, 2011) does not fit well with Chinese Americans because they tend to prioritize career prestige over sex type, which is discrepant from her theory. In addition, some career theories, such as the SCCT and Gottfredson’s theory of compromise and circumscription, fail to take culture into account (Hou & Leung, 2011; Tang et al., 1999). The scarcity of research on the career development of Chinese Canadians calls for more research in this area. The focus on second-generation Chinese Canadians in the current study will therefore contribute to the literature in this aspect.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This study employed a qualitative design to explore the ethnic and family influence on the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians. Specifically, the researcher adopted a phenomenological framework to explore how these individuals negotiate with two potentially conflicting cultures and how their career development evolves under the influence of their family. This chapter consists of five sections. The first section describes the assumptions and rationale of using a qualitative design. The second section delineates the phenomenological approach. The third section describes the procedure of recruitment and characteristics of participants. The fourth section discusses the researcher’s personal biases and assumptions. Finally, this chapter describes the procedures of data collection and analysis.

3.1 Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

A qualitative design assumes a world of lived experience where individual beliefs and actions interact with culture; it focuses on narratives and textual descriptions, as well as observation of natural settings and participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative research is defined as a “situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). Qualitative researchers collect materials such as field notes and interviews to obtain in-depth understanding of the world that they are interested in. This is a naturalistic approach that allows researchers to interpret a world of interest and the meaning that individuals create. A qualitative design is an exploratory approach that aims to provide insight and knowledge regarding a specific phenomenon. Generalizability of findings to the population is not its goal (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).
As mentioned in previous sections, there has been limited research on the career development of Chinese Canadians. The goal of the current study is to gain in-depth understanding of the roles that ethnicity and family play in the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians, and to describe and explore their experiences and meanings created. A qualitative approach is deemed appropriate because it emphasizes processes and meanings that are not measurable in quantity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As well, its focus on rich and in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon (Creswell, 1994) is essential to achieve the current research goal.

There are many criticisms that state that a qualitative method is not scientific, and therefore should not be a means to knowledge. Many scientists tend to equate science with quantification and verification (Giorgi, 1985; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003), which are powerful tools in certain research fields. However, they are not the sole method to gain knowledge. Qualitative methods allow researchers to make new discoveries, which is the goal of the current study. Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) argued that a research method is scientific as long as it meets four criteria: a) to be systematic, that is, a connection exists between different subfields within a given discipline; b) to be methodical, where there are certain basic steps that other researchers could concretely follow to test the knowledge that the scientist claims; c) to be critical, that is, that the knowledge gained can be challenged or replicated by other researchers; and d) generality, the knowledge gained is applicable to other situations that share some commonality with the specific situation investigated. The current research is scientific because it fulfills all of these criteria.

There are five qualitative research approaches (Creswell, 1998): narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. The researcher chose the
phenomenological method because it aims to discover shared meanings between individuals who have common experiences (Creswell, 1998). This is fitting with the current research goal of exploring the influence of ethnicity and family on the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians. Participants in this study had the shared experience of being in the Chinese ethnic group and growing up in Canada. The researcher was interested in their experience of making career decisions under these circumstances.

3.2 The Phenomenology Approach

The phenomenology approach is rooted from philosophical phenomenology proposed by Edmund Husserl (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). To allow this philosophical method to be applied to psychological research, Amedeo Giorgi created an explicit and replicable method in the field of phenomenological psychology, which focuses on the psychological subjectivity of participants (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

**Philosophical phenomenology.** The goal of phenomenology is to “go back to the things themselves (Husserl, 1900, cited in Giorgi, 1985, p.8)” and to experience a phenomenon freshly without any preconceptions or biases (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Our brains are wired to perceive familiar situations under the influence of biases and stereotypes that were previously developed (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). As a result, we tend to neglect minute novelty in these instances. As a phenomenological researcher, it is necessary that we understand the importance of experiencing things with a fresh mind and withdrawing from previous prejudice in order to allow new dimensions of a certain experience to surface (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). In the philosophical method of phenomenology, one assumes the attitude of phenomenological reduction – withdrawing
from the natural attitude and biases towards the object. Secondly, one turns to the object of interest and analyses it through free imaginative variation, where one distinguishes key dimensions of an object (e.g., colour, texture of a cup) and removes each key dimension (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). If the object loses its essence or function as a result of the removal or variation of a key dimension, then that particular dimension is essential to the existence of the object. For instance, a cup will remain a cup with a different colour. It will, however, no longer be a cup if it has holes and can no longer contain liquid (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Finally, one describes the essence of the object. This method is appropriate for philosophical analyses. When used in a psychological context, however, this method has to be tailored so that it is appropriate for scientific analyses (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

**Psychological phenomenology.** There are several characteristics in the psychological phenomenological method (Giorgi, 1985). First of all, psychological phenomenology is descriptive. The raw data of phenomenological research is the descriptions of participants who are oblivious to the biases and theories of the researcher. In addition, the data is obtained from semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions, thus eliminating the subjectivity of the researcher. Findings are also presented descriptively. Finally, since descriptions provide us with insight to the meanings that participants create, they reveal significant information that is difficult to derive through statistics or quantification alone.

Secondly, reduction is a necessary attitude throughout phenomenological research (Giorgi, 1985; Giorgi & Giorgi 2003). It means that phenomenological researchers bracket their theoretical prejudice and previous experiences to ensure that they do not
prejudge the nature of the experiences described by the participants. Researchers should accept what the participants report without judging its objective truth. The researcher should understand that the descriptions are valid, in that the descriptions reveal how the phenomenon was presented to the participant. This is not the objective reality, but a psychological reality to a particular individual (Giorgi, 1985; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Researchers should also keep in mind that the same experience or stimulus presents different meanings to different individuals (Giorgi, 1985; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). In psychological phenomenology, researchers are interested in what a stimulus means to a participant, but not what a stimulus is in reality (Giorgi, 1985). Subjectivity of the research participants is essential in phenomenological research, because as Giorgi (1985) stated, “For the subject to enter as a person is not a threat to psychological science, but the very basis upon which an authentic psychological science can be built (p. 75).”

Thirdly, the goal of a phenomenological method is to derive the psychological essence that makes up the specific phenomenon. This could be done through the process of free imaginative variation to uncover the essence associated with a phenomenon (Giorgi, 1985; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). The ultimate findings are the descriptions of the invariant meaning, or the essence, of the phenomenon. It should be noted that the essence sought in this method is psychological. As such, it is context-related rather than universal (Giorgi, 1985; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

Unlike philosophical phenomenology, psychological researchers do not analyze their own experiences, but the experiences of other individuals. It is important that the participants have no previous knowledge of the theories that are related to the research.
This ensures that they do not purposefully construe answers to prove these theoretical beliefs (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

3.3 Recruitment and Participants Characteristics

Sampling Strategy

Issues of sampling strategies have been understudied in qualitative psychology (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). To date, there is no clear guideline as to how to select participants and what the appropriate sample size should be in qualitative research. The goal of the current study is to gain insightful understanding of the influence of family and ethnicity on the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians. Prolonged engagement (building trust and spending extensive time with research participants) and persistent observation (identifying and focusing on the characteristics of participants’ experiences) are helpful in forming a representative picture of this process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

The researcher adopted purposive sampling in the current study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Baker, Wuest & Stern, 1992). In purposive sampling, researchers purposefully choose their participants based on certain criteria to access the information that they need. The current study included participants who were second-generation Chinese Canadians and were willing to discuss their career development. By employing purposive sampling, the researcher was able to choose participants that provided rich information on the current research area. Specifically, this study adopted homogeneous sampling, where participants were sampled based on certain characteristics or lived experience that they all shared (Baker et al., 1992; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Sandelowski, 1995). This allowed the researcher to derive common meanings in their
experiences (Creswell, 1998). Participants were selected based on their membership in a subgroup with certain characteristics (Onwuegbuzie, Jiao & Bostick, 2004). In this study, all participants belonged to the second-generation, where their birthplace was Canada, but their parents were immigrants from China, Taiwan or Hong Kong who held traditional Chinese values.

**Sample Size**

The selection of a sample size in qualitative research has not been given much attention in the literature (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). An ideal sample size is one that allows the researcher to interview to saturation, where the researcher is able to thoroughly explore every question in detail with participants until no new themes or information emerges (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002; Schensul & LeCompte, 2010). Essentially, reemergence and replication of the same themes indicates data saturation (Morse, 1991). Creswell (1998) suggested a sample size of up to ten participants as appropriate in phenomenological research. Morse (1994) recommended a sample size of six participants if the goal of the study is to distinguish the essence of an experience. Some researchers provide guidelines that do not include exact numbers. McCracken (1988) suggested the principle of less is more when choosing a sample size. He stated that eight participants is sufficient for many research studies, because it is more important to spend substantial amount of time and effort on fewer people, than to work superficially with greater number of people. Finally, Sandelowski (1995) suggested, “A good principle to follow is: an adequate sample size in qualitative research is one that permits – by virtue of not being too large – the deep, case-oriented analysis that is a hallmark of all qualitative inquiry, and that results in – by virtue of not
being too small – a new and richly textured understanding of experience (p. 183).” After considering the suggestions of several researchers, the current study aimed for a sample size of ten, which was large enough to delineate the analytic significance of different characteristics (e.g., generation status and race) and to reach data saturation, but small enough for detailed and in-depth analysis (Sandelowski, 1995).

Selection Criteria

The target participants of the current study were second-generation Chinese Canadians. Specifically, all participants: (1) self-identified as Chinese, (2) were born in Canada, (3) grew up and socialized in Canada, (4) had parents who immigrated to Canada from China, Hong Kong or Taiwan in their young adult years or later, (5) had at least one year of work experience in their current field at the time of the interview. The first two criteria ensure that the participants were second-generation Chinese Canadians. The third criterion guarantees that participants were mostly socialized in the Western culture outside of home (e.g., via education, media and peers). The fourth criterion ensures that the parents of the participants were immigrants who were heavily influenced by the Chinese culture. These criteria guarantee that the participants were exposed to both Chinese and Canadian cultures growing up. The fifth criterion warrants that the participants were working for at least a year to ensure stability in their current field.

Recruitment

Recruitment began with contacts from personal networks, such as acquaintances from social circles. These individuals were asked via email (Appendix A) to participate and/or help out with recruitment by asking their friends or co-workers who met the criteria to participate in the study. Respondents who showed interest in participating in
the study were contacted via email (Appendix B) to confirm their eligibility to participate and to set up an interview. The researcher also responded to the questions that participants had regarding the study.

**Characteristics of Participants**

Ten individuals agreed to participate in the study and they were recruited in Toronto, Ontario. Their ages ranged from 24 to 36 years. Six participants were female. They were all born in Canada. The participants’ parents immigrated from China or Hong Kong between the 1960s and 1980s. All participants grew up in Canada and lived most of their lives in Canada. In terms of their educational and career background, eight of them completed at least a Bachelor’s degree. One participant studied in an undergraduate program for two years before deciding to quit school. One participant obtained a college diploma. One participant competed a master’s degree and two participants were in the progress of achieving a master’s degree. In terms of their respective career fields, three worked in the engineering field, two worked in the finance field, one worked in each of the following fields: administration and coordination, teaching, hospitality, speech and language pathology and counselling psychology. Table 1 provides a summary of the personal and professional backgrounds of the participants.

**3.4 The Role of the Researcher**

**Personal Assumptions and Biases**

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as an instrument in that the research is dependent on the researcher’s own experience and intellect (McCracken, 1988). To ensure that researchers are not biased by their own experiences during the data collection process, bracketing out one’s experience and views is highly emphasized in
phenomenological research to ensure a fresh perception of others’ experiences (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark & Morales, 2007; Creswell, 1998). The researcher therefore recorded and delineated her personal experiences and biases that could potentially influence the data collection or analysis processes in this research study (Creswell, 1998).

I, the researcher of this study, was born in Toronto after my parents immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong. At age two, I went to Hong Kong with my parents and grew up in the Chinese culture. I moved back to Toronto on my own when I was sixteen and completed my secondary and post-secondary education here. Although I belong to the second-generation category, I spent my childhood and adolescent years in Hong Kong, and was not exposed to the Canadian culture until I was older. Having experienced both the Chinese and Western cultures, I had the opportunity to understand and observe different parenting styles and parental expectations. I experienced the discrepancies that exist in the Chinese and Western cultures and the difficulty of negotiating between the two. I became interested in the career development of Chinese Canadians who, like me, constantly battle between two cultures with different expectations to meet.

In Hong Kong, I learned to respect and obey my parents and teachers, as well as to prioritize others’ needs before my own. After moving to Toronto, I was exposed to the Western culture, and learned the importance of independence and individuality. Being away from my family, the circumstances pushed me to be independent and to be attuned to my personal needs. I grew fond of the new culture and values. I reflected on the values that I was taught, and felt that individuals should stand up for their own wishes and opinions, particularly when making important decisions. I have the tendency to advocate independence in the career development process, and should be mindful to not display
my bias in this study. I was lucky to have parents who permitted autonomy when I made academic and career choices. However, I have heard of many stories where Chinese parents forced their children into careers that the children had no interest in. Occasionally I perceive Chinese parental influence in a less positive light. I should be cautious to not let these biases affect my interactions with my participants.

3.5 Procedures of Data Collection and Analysis

Interview

In-depth, one-on-one interview, which is typically used in phenomenological research, was used in the current study to collect information from participants (Moustakas, 1994). Broad and open-ended questions allowed participants to express their perspectives extensively and to provide rich and meaningful descriptions of their experiences (Baker et al., 1992; Moustakas, 1994; Giorgi, 1997; Creswell, 1998).

These interviews were informal and interactive (Moustakas, 1994), which enhanced the comfort level of the participants during the interview, and allowed them to openly share their experiences with the researcher. The interviews provided concrete and detailed descriptions of the participants’ experiences and actions (Giorgi, 1997; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Creswell, 1998). Such information provided insight into the social and cultural contexts in which participants’ experiences are embedded (McCracken, 1988). Ultimately, the data was not used to generalize the discovered themes or characteristics to the rest of the Chinese Canadian population, but to explore the different meanings that these individuals created (McCracken, 1988; Baker et al., 1992). These features of the in-depth interview met the objectives of the current study.
Interviews took place at a quiet location that was mutually agreed on. The interviews lasted for about one to two hours to ensure that the interviews reached data saturation (Morse, 1991; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). At the beginning of the interview session, participants were given a letter (Appendix C) that described the research area, the rational and objective of the study, the interview format and questions that would be discussed. The letter also addressed issues related to confidentiality, informed consent, audio tape recording of the interview, and the use of data. The researcher ensured that participants understood their rights in the study and answered questions that they had. In order to build rapport and to create a relaxed and trusting atmosphere, the researcher engaged in casual conversations with the participants (Moustakas, 1994). The interview began with demographic questions (Appendix D), which included participants’ ethnicity, age, gender, country of birth, education background, the number of years residing in Canada, current occupation and the number of years that they were working in the field. The goal of placing demographic questions at the beginning of the interview was to allow the participants to be relaxed (McCracken, 1988). The participants were also reminded to take their time to reflect on the questions and their experience, and then to describe it fully (Moustakas, 1994).

The interviews were semi-structured (Baker et al., 1992), because an interview protocol (which includes prompting questions) was created to help participants with describing their experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Appendix D). These questions were sometimes altered or neglected depending on each participant (Moustakas, 1994). The interview questions were divided into three main categories: career development, and the roles that ethnicity and family played in their career development.
Data Analysis

Transcription of the interviews was the raw data in this research.

Individual psychological structure. Interview transcripts were analyzed following the steps of phenomenological analysis outlined by Giorgi (Giorgi, 1985; Wertz, 1985; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). The researcher began by reading the entire transcript with no previous biases or preconception to attain an overall sense of the description, and to fully experience the meanings that the participant created (Wertz, 1985). Once the general sense of the transcript was grasped, the text was broken into smaller units. The researcher then returned to the start and began reading the text with an attitude of phenomenological reduction as described previously. Each time there was a shift in psychological meaning of the situation for the participant, the researcher made a mark to indicate the end of a meaning unit (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). The participant’s language was not changed at this stage.

After the meaning units were distinguished, they were revisited and the researcher delineated the psychological insight that they indicated. Limits were set and only meaning units that were psychological and relevant to career development, ethnicity or familial relationships were thematized (Giorgi, 1985; Wertz, 1985). Relevant meaning units were grouped together and put in temporal order (Wertz, 1985). Redundant statements were discarded, and the participant’s experience was re-described from first person perspective in his or her own language. The researcher then reflected on the individual descriptions through a psychological perspective in order to exhibit the psychological significance of the description.
The researcher employed free imaginative variation throughout the analysis process and extracted the essence in the psychological meaning expressed by each participant. This was done by considering all constituents, distinctions and themes to see if they could be different or absent without altering the psychological reality of the particular participant (Wertz, 1985). The researcher was able to understand the essential elements that constituted the participant’s psychological reality (as influenced by their ethnicity and family) by varying these themes or constituents. Finally, the reflections were put together and redundant constituents were eliminated (Wertz, 1985). The researcher delineated the psychological essence of each individual case by including facts and themes that were psychologically significant (Wertz, 1985). The resulted data was the individual phenomenal descriptions (Wertz, 1985), which articulated the psychological meanings that participants yielded in their career development under the influence of their ethnicity and family.

**General psychological structure.** For each individual structure, the researcher determined which constituents of these structures indicated the general psychological truth that was applicable to more than one participant. The researcher reread individual structures and assessed their applicability to other participants. Individual structures were compared, where the researcher went back and forth between different individual psychological structures. Imaginative variation was employed to gain insight into the psychological essence that was applicable to other participants (Wertz, 1985). Different conditions or structural relationships were altered or eliminated to determine what constituted the psychological essence (e.g., “Can we have this phenomenon without this condition or structural relation?”). Ultimately, the general psychological structure was
derived. With the general psychological structure at hand, the researcher understood the raw data in a methodical and systematic way (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

**Confidentiality of Data**

Every participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of their information. These pseudonyms were used in the interview transcriptions and write-up of the study; they would also be used in future potential publications or presentations. Only the researcher and her supervisor had access to the consent forms, audio recording of the interviews, transcripts and the master list that consists of the names of the participants and their corresponding pseudonyms. Electronic files of the tape recordings of the interviews were encrypted and stored in the researcher’s password-protected computer. The audio files were transcribed by the researcher and were only shared with her supervisor. Participants’ transcripts were coded with their pseudonyms, and kept in a locked cabinet separately from the consent forms and the master list.

**Methods of Verification**

Verification is “the process of checking, confirming, making sure and being certain (p. 17)” that the data collected is valid and reliable (Morse et al., 2012). Verification is an ongoing process that allows the researcher to know when to continue, stop or modify the research process (Morse et al., 2002). In qualitative research, there lacks a consensus as to how methods of verification should be addressed (Creswell, 1994). In phenomenological research, some methods of verification should be employed to ensure that the data represents the essence of a phenomenon (Baker et al., 1992). The
following are some of the strategies that the researcher used during her data collection and analysis processes.

To ensure that the data accurately reflected the experience of the participants, prolonged engagement and persistent observation were used in the extended interviews with participants (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The technique of member check was employed where participants served as a check during the analysis process (Creswell, 1994). The participants were involved in many phases of the study, from data collection to interpretation and conclusions (Creswell, 1994). The researcher constantly communicated her interpretations of their reality and meanings to the participants during and after the interviews, ensuring that the data accurately reflected the true essence of their experience (Creswell, 1994). After the main themes and categories were extracted from the raw data, the researcher sent the corresponding individual psychological structure to each participant to ensure that they accurately reflected their perception of their experiences (Creswell, 1994; Colaizzi, 1978). In peer examination (Creswell, 1994), the researcher’s supervisor examined and verified the accuracy of the data. In addition, the researcher clarified her bias at the onset of the research (Creswell, 1994). This was stated earlier under the heading “The Role of the Researcher”. Finally, the researcher’s ethnical background allowed her to develop rapport with her participants. Having been influenced by both the Chinese and Western cultures, the researcher was better able to understand and share the participants’ experiences and perceptions. Trust and rapport between the researcher and participants allowed an honest and comprehensive discussion of their career development and familial relationships, further fostering the accuracy of the data (Moustakas, 1994).
Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the findings of the current study regarding the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians, specifically the roles that their ethnicity and family played throughout the process. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section summarizes the individual results of the phenomenological analysis. The second section presents the key themes reflected in the collective results and describes the derived general psychological essence that applies to participants.

4.1 Career Development and Individual Psychological Structures

Ten second-generation Chinese Canadians participated in this study. This section describes the career development of each participant, and the influence of their ethnicity and family. Table 1 provides a summary of the participants’ background information.

Participant 1

Participant 1 (P1) is a 32-year-old female who was born in Canada. Her parents immigrated from Hong Kong in the 1970s. P1 obtained her master’s degree in education and was a kindergarten teacher at the time of the interview. P1’s interest in teaching started early on in her life. She discovered her strengths and enjoyment in helping classmates with homework when she was at school. Verbal compliments from others also increased her confidence and reinforced her goal of becoming a teacher. P1 described knowing throughout her life that teaching was the field she wanted to enter, and she was passionate about it because of her patience and love for children. P1 described not having other strong interests and skills, and therefore did not consider alternative careers. At the time of the interview, P1 successfully achieved her ideal career in teaching. She loved the population that she was working with, which brought her happiness and kept her
“energized”. Moving forward, P1 wanted to further develop her professional skills as a teacher by teaching different grades.

**Meaning of career.** P1 saw career as an ongoing and long-term personal development, and the outcome of an elaborate selection process. P1 thought that career fulfilled higher intrinsic needs by providing meaning and personal fulfillment in life, which were more important than financial compensation. P1 emphasized that a career should always bring joy. P1 described other qualities in an ideal career, such as challenges; constant adaptation and learning; ongoing professional development; variety in the job and people one worked with; financial compensation that supported one’s lifestyle; and sufficient personal time to spend with family. P1 emphasized the importance of early awareness of one’s career goals and the knowledge of how to get into the desired field. Having these conditions met made P1’s decision-making process straightforward and easy. Career development also entailed anxious feelings related to getting into a desired post-graduate program.

**Ethnicity and career development.** P1 identified herself as bicultural but she felt a stronger sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture. P1 noticed that her ethnic identity changed as she matured. She remembered not being proud of her ethnicity due to her desire to blend in with other Caucasian children. As she matured, however, she became more aware and proud of her heritage.

P1 described that teaching was deemed “desirable and respectable” in the Chinese culture; thus approval and encouragement within the community made her decision-making process more straightforward. P1 acknowledged that judgment about different careers within the Chinese culture affected her decision-making (e.g., “they would be
happy for me to be a teacher, because that’s seen as a good career”). Although P1 considered her interests as her priority, others’ opinions mattered as well. Additionally, as a second-generation Chinese Canadian, P1 witnessed her parents’ lack of freedom in choosing a career because of language barrier. Having such experience allowed P1 to see herself as “lucky” and be grateful for her ability to pursue a career that she had passion for. In addition, the emphasis on public education in the Canadian society reduced the competitiveness between schools, and made the field more desirable for her because she preferred teaching in a less stressful environment.

**Family relationship and career development.** P1 thought that her parents retained a stronger sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture due to their language barrier. P1 described sharing similar views on career as her parents: to be able to make good money; not working long hours to allow more time spent with family; and constant advancement. P1 stated that her parents’ personal experience helped them realize the importance of having a career for personal fulfillment purposes. P1 described having a close and intimate relationship with her mother, because she spent more time with her growing up. P1 felt that she had a two-way communication style with her mother where they were able to have discussions and in-depth conversations. P1 felt less close to her dad because he was busy when she was little.

In terms of the influence of family on career, P1 stated that her parents were supportive of education, and the requirement of a post-graduate degree in her field satisfied their “the more education the better” mentality. P1 had always admired her parents’ work ethic: they worked hard despite the fact that they were not passionate about what they were doing. Additionally, P1 described her sister’s guidance in steering her
towards an undergraduate program that eased her way into a desired teaching program later on. P1 stated that without such guidance she could have chosen a different career.

Growing up, P1’s parents were not heavily involved in her career development. Academics were a common conversation topic and P1 remembered her parents stressing the importance of excelling academically, which they believed would allow her to choose a career she wanted. P1 described a harmonious relationship with her parents and that the topic of career never created conflicts between them. P1 felt that her parents were proud of her career achievements because it was a “step up” compared to their own education and career. Her career in teaching also allowed her to provide financial assistance to her parents and to spend sufficient time with them.

**Participant 2**

Participant 2 (P2) is a 36-year-old male who was born in Canada. His parents immigrated from Hong Kong in the 1960s. At the time of the interview, P2 was working in the hospitality field at the management level; prior to that he was in the theatre industry. P2 decided to work in the entertainment industry after he discovered that he excelled at it and enjoyed it. Strengths, interests and monetary compensation were the three factors that led P2 to the theatre industry. Reality set in as P2 decided to get married and settle down. He gave up his theatre career because he thought it was “no way to make a living, no way to raise a family”. During his career shift, he considered his strengths, which led him to the hospitality field. The longer he worked in the field, his interest in the corporate world was uncovered. Since he wanted to work in a hotel environment, he returned to school to get a formal education in the hospitality field to legitimize his
experience and build connections. P2 had a clear goal in mind, and planned his steps to achieve what he wanted.

P2 stated that he enjoyed working in the hospitality field, and that he liked overcoming bureaucratic challenges at work. P2 wished to achieve the position of a general manager in the future, and he knew that it would require many years of hard work. Although he had the option of working abroad for quicker advancement, he knew that was not an option since his family could not move with him. P2 was realistic about his goals and was satisfied with his current state. He believed that “luck doesn’t happen, you make it happen”. By setting small goals, P2 believed that one step at a time he would eventually get to where he wished to be.

**Meaning of career.** P2 saw career as something that associated with enjoyment and excitement. Important qualities in a career included making a difference in someone’s life; to be able to mentor and guide others in their career; to make positive changes in a corporate organization; and reasonable pay. These criteria were present in P2’s current career. P2 saw his career decision-making process as simple and straightforward, mainly because he knew his strengths and what he wanted, which allowed him to set realistic goals and achieve them.

**Ethnicity and career development.** P2 identified with the Canadian culture only and did not consider himself bicultural. Having born and grew up in Canada, P2 adopted the western culture and felt that he was not influenced by the Chinese culture at all. When asked about the influence of his ethnicity on his career development, P2 denied that his Chinese background played a role. He emphasized that people choose their career based on their personality, and it was irrelevant to their cultural background. P2 mentioned
some stereotypical fields within the Asian culture, such as doctors, lawyers, and accountants. He stated that he “went against every single grain of that stereotype” by going into fields that were non-stereotypical in the Chinese culture. The Chinese culture held minimal influence over P2’s career development and he chose careers that brought him happiness, reflecting Western influence.

**Family relationship and career development.** P2 thought that his parents did not identify with the Canadian culture at all. In terms of his career, P2 felt that his parents were “fairly westernized” because they let him decide what would bring him happiness. P2 described having the freedom to do whatever he wanted and his parents were supportive of his decisions. P2 believed that his parents saw financial compensation, job security and professional advancement as something important in a career.

P2 described having a good relationship with his father even though he was always working when P2 was young. P2 looked up to his dad’s work ethic. His relationship with his mother was volatile however because of personality clash. Still, P2 described having a good relationship with his mother. P2 recalled that his communication style with his parents was one-way when he was young, and he was expected to comply. Looking back, he understood that they wanted what was best for him. As he matured, P2 said his parents “gave up on” such communication style, mainly because they realized that he had his own values and mindset and they could never change him. As seen, P2 was independent in that he rejected the “parents are always right” mentality in the Chinese culture. It was important to him that his opinions were heard and he ensured his parents understood that.
P2 did not think that his family influenced his career development. He made decisions independently and his parents were supportive. They were glad that he found something he enjoyed doing – even though his career was not considered stereotypical in the Chinese culture. P2 thought that his mother subconsciously wanted him to be a white-collar worker, whereas his dad was more “laid back” and truly wanted him to do things that made him happy. His parents’ open-mindedness allowed him to pursue his passion. They would ask him realistic questions to ensure that he was able to support himself when he chose acting as a career. P2 understood their concerns; thus he held part-time jobs to help him sustain a living. P2 was aware of his parents’ flexibility, and understood that they were more westernized and different from other Chinese parents, who tended to exert control over their children’s career. P2’s view was that parents educated in Canada should let their children choose their careers independently: “It’s not just about the parents, it’s about the happiness of the individual.”

P2 never encountered conflicts with his parents regarding his career choice. However, he described a disagreement with his father regarding the rights of unionized workers. Since P2’s father was a unionized employee while P2 represented the management body, they had different perspectives. Yet he was able to express and rationalize his views, and ultimately resolved the disagreement. P2 shared an egalitarian relationship with his parents, where he was able to stand up for his opinions and discuss their differences. His parents’ only career expectation was that he could financially support his lifestyle. P2 did not think that his career affected the relationship with his parents. From a financial standpoint, they never expected P2 to provide for them, which was different from typical Chinese parents who expected their children to give back. P2
thought a mentality as such was obsolete, which could explain why he did not identify with the Chinese culture. P2’s parents were not involved in his career development. Their relationship was westernized in the sense that his parents gave him freedom and flexibility in his choices and values.

**Participant 3.**

Participant 3 (P3) is a 24-year-old female who was born in Canada. Her parents immigrated from China in the 1980s. P3 obtained her undergraduate degree in Systems Design Engineering. At the time of the interview, she was working at a technology/software company. Starting in grade seven, P3 was interested in science and teaching. She realized shortly after that her strengths were incompatible with the teaching profession. When P3 entered grade eleven, she was more involved in learning about prospective university programs and the job prospect of each field. She learned that life sciences had no job prospects, so she chose engineering, which was broad and “opened the most doors” for her. Strengths and job prospects were two factors that P3 considered. P3 did not have a clear career goal or direction, so she explored the field through eliminating branches within the field based on her preferences of work environment and the nature of tasks. P3 discovered that she was interested in the technology industry, and that her strengths allowed her to enter the field. She was also satisfied with the compensation aspect of the field. Interests, strengths and financial compensation were the three factors that P3 considered when choosing her career.

P3 enjoyed her current work because the people that she was working with were intelligent and passionate about their job. It was important for P3 to work with like-minded and motivated people. She enjoyed the diversity in her work environment, the
opportunities to interact with different people and to gain new perspectives. She considered challenges in her work as more important than job security, because challenges provided meaning in her work and allowed room for self-growth. P3 was satisfied with her current job. Her career goal was to financially sustain her lifestyle and family; as well as personal growth, which included finding a specialization in her field. P3 stated that she was still at the career exploration stage and there was uncertainty.

**Meaning of career.** P3 saw career as a means to financially support oneself. She thought qualities, such as interests, were criteria that helped narrow down how people could make money. Qualities that P3 deemed as important included: to financially support oneself; interests; prospect for industrial growth; and personal growth. In terms of her decision making process, P3 saw it as a “step by step” process, where she evaluated whether she liked what she was doing (e.g., internships). The evaluation guided her future decision-making. P3 stated that she never thought of career development from a long-term perspective: “I knew that my goals were to learn all the skills from this profession and all that can transfer to something else. Whatever is coming I knew that there are loses, there would be wins, I just have to learn how to deal with it and know what I want to do afterwards”. When exploring the feelings associated with career development, she said it was mostly neutral feelings because of the uncertainty, “Whether it’s school or work, my views change a little bit. You go with the flow and navigate it as it comes”.

**Ethnicity and career development.** P3 identified herself as bicultural and felt a strong sense of belonging towards Chinese Canadians. P3 described an increased concentration of Chinese individuals in her neighborhood as she grew up, which
introduced more Chinese culture into her life. Without such influence, P3 expected herself to be more Canadian.

The Chinese cultural influence of P3’s career was manifested through her parents, who helped her eliminate career choices when she was in high school. Her parents were direct about the need to choose fields that were considered prestigious in the Chinese culture, such as doctors, lawyers, accountants. P3 acknowledged that due to their upbringing, her parents looked down on certain fields, such as visual arts and anything that require manual labor. Thus, P3 considered teaching and science at the beginning of her career development. P3 stated that the Chinese culture influenced her to choose careers based on her strengths and financial compensation. P3 explained that depending on her needs, she would be willing to compromise her interests for financial compensation. On the other hand, Canadian beliefs allowed P3 to consider her interests, and not what her parents wanted although they preferred her to be a doctor or accountant.

P3 believed that the values she had were independent of her ethnic identity. She thought her family laid the foundation of values she had when she was young, “You start off with someone else’s, then eventually you discover that this is what I like and this is what I don’t like, and you formulate your opinion by that point.”

**Family relationship and career development.** P3 thought that her parents identified with the Chinese culture, although they subconsciously adopted much of the Canadian culture. P3’s parents tried to instill Chinese values in her and were strict when she was young, particularly with regards to academics. Coming from a less privileged socioeconomic status, the survival mentality was ingrained in her parents. P3 described that her parents wanted her to have a better life, and they believed that wealth and
security were essential and career interests were of less importance. They saw career as synonymous with a job – a way to make money, and P3’s view of a career partly reflected that as well. P3 believed her parents started to accept that enjoyment and decent financial compensation could co-exist, which she attributed to Canadian influence.

P3 thought that she had a decent relationship with her parents although they were not extremely close. She thought her communication style with her parents was unlike “stereotypical white relationships” in that there were no heart to heart talks. It was difficult to develop such relationship because her parents were often at work. When asked whether her opinions were heard when she was young, P3 said it depended on the issue and they trusted her older brother’s opinions more. P3 thought safety was often the main concern for her parents, “It’s like underestimating my abilities and needing someone else to second it”. P3 felt that their relationship improved as her parents trusted her more. P3 remembered her parents often reiterating the importance of excelling academically in order to get a good career. P3 saw her parents working very hard and realized that she would not want to live a life like theirs, which motivated her to work hard at school. P3 was rather independent on her schoolwork, but her parents regularly checked in to make sure she was on track. Ultimately, they were satisfied as long as she got into university.

P3 described her parents’ role in the initial phase of her career development, in that they set up criteria and gave her a pool of “okay” careers and a pool of “nos”. Still, she felt that she had sufficient flexibility in choosing a career. There were some conflicts because they wanted her to be a doctor or accountant, but P3 was not interested in them. P3 thought they were comfortable with engineering because her brother was in the field. She thought her parents were open and reasonable as long as she provided them with a
plan of action. P3 did not feel that her parents’ views on professions affected her ultimate choice because she chose engineering and they approved it. Discussions regarding to P3’s career plans were brief. Although her parents exerted influence at the early stages of her career development, it was indirect and subtle. Her parents were not involved after she went to university and allowed her to make decisions herself. Currently, P3 thought her parents were indifferent about what she chose as her career, and that they were glad that she found something that allowed her to sustain a living even though it was not their first two choices of medicine or accounting.

**Participant 4.**

Participant 4 (P4) is a 24-year-old male who was born in Canada. His parents immigrated from Hong Kong in the 1970s. P4 obtained his undergraduate degree in Systems Design Engineering. At the time of the interview, he was working at a language school as a software team leader. P4’s career exploration started in grade 10, when his parents were involved in his course selection. They told him to take courses in science, mathematics and business, fields where Asian students were stereotypically good at. P4 followed his parents’ expectations and conformed to the Asian stereotype. With these courses on his transcript, P4 chose Systems Design Engineering, because he thought it would be enjoyable and useful later on in life. The program also offered internship opportunities, which allowed him to explore the field because he was uncertain of the specific kind of jobs he wanted. He considered other alternatives such as finance, but it was difficult for him to find a job in the field because his prior experiences were in the technology field. P4 was realistic about his strengths and decided that the extra work required getting into finance was not worth it. The longer he worked in software
development, the stronger his interests grew. P4 did not have a clear direction in mind as his career development progressed. Through trial and error, he discovered that software development was the field that he liked and his experiences complemented his interests. P4 continuously evaluated his strengths and interests by trying out different roles within the field. However, as he described, “I think my interest and enjoyment in solving problems just always lead me back to solving problems using software”.

P4 liked his current job because he was interested in it. He enjoyed solving business and technical problems. He liked the fact that “one person can make a big difference” and there was no bureaucracy. P4’s career goals were to achieve financial independence by financially supporting himself. He also hoped that his career would be rewarding in terms of what he could learn and accomplish.

**Meaning of career.** P4 saw career as something that one spent many years doing in order to make money. He thought factors such as enjoyment, monetary compensation and happiness were important in a career. Looking back, P4 thought that his career development was a difficult process. It brought anxiety and stress because there was “quite a bit of pressure to get a job” during his internships. Another incident that brought him anxiety was when he gave up an overseas opportunity because his parents forbade him to accept the job. To P4, having to make that decision was stressful, because he had to sacrifice a job that he liked and suffer negative academic consequences. He saw the internship as an opportunity for career growth. Still, P4 followed his parents’ wishes and gave up going abroad.

**Ethnicity and career development.** P4 felt a sense of belonging towards Chinese Canadians. He also noticed an increased sense of identity towards the Chinese culture
throughout his career development because the Chinese concentration was “abnormally high” in his undergraduate program. P4’s parents influenced him to take certain courses in high school because of their beliefs that were rooted in the Chinese culture, but he felt that it did not affect his career at all and believed that he would have chosen a similar career path without such influence. P4 was affected by his parents’ opinions, but he did not think that it was due to his culture. In terms of Western influence, P4 thought that it was the norm in his generation to be entrepreneurial, which justified his decision of not working for big, prestigious companies.

**Family relationship and career development.** P4 thought that his parents identified with both Chinese and Canadian cultures, but felt a stronger sense of belonging towards Chinese. Affected by their Chinese background, P4’s parents thought that it was important to enter science, engineering or business fields. His parents saw a secure, good paying job as ideal. They also thought a job had to be “politically correct”. P4 described a “neutral” relationship with his parents. He described frequent conversations with his parents, and that they provided financial assistance when needed. On the contrary, “some of the academic assistance would turn into harsher disciplinary action”, which P4 did not appreciate (e.g., piano, extra homework). P4’s parents were strict when he was young and he was expected to comply. P4 was glad that he gained autonomy gradually and was able to negotiate with them: “In the end, they know it’s my life, so I am technically free to do what I want.”

The major “cascading impact” was his parents’ involvement in his course selection, which inadvertently influenced his options for undergraduate programs. P4 did not frequently discuss his career with his parents, but they checked in to ensure that he
was on the right track. When he applied to universities, they had a general idea of what he applied to but they were less involved. In university, he had autonomy in most of his decision-making, except when he had to give up a job overseas. P4 described being upset and angry with his parents: “It was a great addition to my resume and personal experience, but having a failed work term has quite the opposite effect.” He found it frustrating and their concerns unnecessary but he chose to comply, which was common in Chinese parent-child relationships. Safety was a significant concern to P4’s parents, and they would rather P4 suffer negative academic consequences than to risk being unsafe.

P4 described discrepant views from his parents regarding career. He felt that he had a more egocentric view of himself. P4 valued what he enjoyed and did not aspire to find a secure, prestigious, good paying job if he was not interested in it. His parents, in contrast, believed that prestige and security were important. They wanted him to be a doctor or a pharmacist initially but he refused. P4 attributed that to generation difference: “We are a very entitled generation where we have a ton of first world problems, whereas in my parents’ generation sometimes putting food on the table is a difficult task”. He understood why they valued security over interests. P4 described that his parents wanted him to look for a more secure and prestigious job due to some Chinese values that they retained. When conflicts arose, they resolved them by compromising. P4 did not think that his career choice affected his parents, “They aren’t ideally happy with the field I’ve chosen, but they’re not distraught or sad about it.” He thought they were satisfied that he was able to financially support himself, although they wanted him to have a secure, good paying job. It was evident that there was family influence in P4’s career decision making, but it was subtle, and in the end P4 retained the power of making significant decisions.
Participant 5

Participant 5 (P5) is a 24-year-old male who was born in Canada. His parents immigrated from Hong Kong in the 1980s. P5 was in the middle of pursuing an undergraduate in Engineering, but decided to quit school and started working at his father’s company. At the time of the interview, he was helping his dad with a variety of administration tasks and exploring different career options. P5 said he had always known that he was interested in engineering because he liked cars and designing things. When considering his career choices, P5 only thought about becoming a doctor, lawyer or engineer. He did not explore other fields (e.g., arts or social sciences) because he never saw himself in them. He was drawn towards engineering because his father was in the field and he wanted to follow his career path. P5 recalled not thinking much about his career when applying to university, and that he chose management engineering because he was interested in learning how organizations worked. Two years of undergraduate programs helped him realize that the field was too technical, and he became unmotivated at school because he lost interest. At the time of the interview, P5 was unsure about what he wanted in his career and was considering alternatives suggested by his father, such as real estate and business. Since P5 was still in the process of career exploration, his career goal was to look for something that he enjoyed and would be good at.

Meaning of career. P5 saw career as a job pathway that was related to certain field of work, and a means for financial support. Factors he deemed as important in a career included: well paid enough to support one entirely; enjoyment; not detrimental to society; societal advancement; sufficient time to spend with family; and prestige. Part of P5’s career exploration process was associated with guilt, because “everyone else was
getting their degree”, but not him. He felt guilty because he was unable to follow the norm. He was glad that his parents were flexible and easy-going, which helped with his decision to quit school. He acknowledged that he would have complied if they had pressured him to stay in school. P5 thought it was not a difficult choice when he had to choose which university program to apply for. It was more challenging when he had to quit school because he constantly evaluated if that was the “right thing to do”. He knew that he hated the program and was not motivated, and he felt that he would not be able to graduate if he kept going. His dad was supportive of his decision and offered him work at his company, which helped finalize his decision. Interest played an important role in P5’s career choice.

**Ethnicity and career development.** P5 saw himself as bicultural and identified with both the Chinese and Canadian cultural groups. In terms of career decision-making, he saw himself as egocentric because he had the freedom to choose what he was interested in and was not pressured to comply with his parents’ expectations. P5 did not think that his ethnicity affected his career decision-making at all. He pointed out that because he lived in a Chinese populated community, his ethnicity did not stand out; thus he was unaware of any cultural influence in his decision-making.

**Family relationship and career development.** P5 thought that his mother identified more so with the Chinese culture, whereas his father identified with the Canadian culture. P5 thought his parents saw career as a means for financial support. In addition, his father valued enjoyment in one’s career, whereas his mom emphasized the financial aspect. P5 thought such discrepancy was due to their personalities, not culture.
P5 felt that there was an egalitarian relationship between him and his parents, as opposed to “them being my parents and I need to listen to them”. His parents provided guidance but they never forced him to do anything: “Everything I do is my own choice, they are somehow able to word their opinions so that I wouldn’t feel that I have no control over what I choose”. When he was young however, he felt that they had more control over him. Still, it was rare that P5 was forced to do things he did not like. He felt that they had a two-way communication and he was autonomous at a young age. P5 was willing to ask for their advice, which he carefully evaluated. However, he always followed their advice, especially his father’s: “His suggestions played a big role in my career decision-making process. I value what he tells me.”

P5 chose engineering mainly because he was interested in it, but his dad played a role by being in the field himself. When P5 was contemplating to quit school, his dad was supportive and offered him the alternative of working at his company. Family influence was manifested at every turning point in P5’s career. Still, P5 did not think that he blindly followed his parents’ advice. He was grateful that his dad was flexible and offered him an alternative path after he discovered that school was not the right thing for him. P5 did not discuss his career plans with his parents until he had to prepare for university applications. Since they knew he was doing well, they never asked him to work hard; thus academics seldom came up in conversations.

In terms of his parents’ aspirations, they wanted P5 to be able to support himself and his family. His mom valued financial support more so than his dad, whereas his dad wanted him to find something he enjoyed doing and be able to help the society advance. There were some discrepancies in terms of how P5 and his parents viewed career. P5’s
father believed that everyone needed a career that benefited the society and for self-fulfillment purposes, but P5 disagreed. He thought there would be situations where monetary compensation outweighed interests, and that he was fine with compromising interests for compensation. P5 and his parents never encountered conflicts, but they had disagreements. For instance, he felt that his mom wanted him to return to school for a university degree, and that she did not consider working for his father a “real job”.

**Participant 6**

Participant 6 (P6) is 25 years old and was born in Canada. His parents immigrated to Canada from China in the 1980s. P6 graduated from an engineering program and had been working in the field since then. P6 described that his father instilled an interest in mathematics in him when he was young; he had always found computer and engineering fun and therefore decided to pursue engineering. P6 thought it was a broad field and since he was not exactly sure what he wanted to do in his career, he wanted to explore the field while in university. P6 was working in the field at the time of the interview and was enjoying his work. He liked the learning opportunities and prestige of his field. However, he felt that he had reached the end of what he expected in his career. He noticed himself getting bored at work and that personal growth was slowing down. He wanted to further explore and search for his passion. P6 thought he was short sighted when he was in university: “That’s not all there is, you’re only looking two or three years down the line. Now it’s like what do I want to do from now till when I’m 50 or 60.” P6 felt a sense of urgency and he wanted to find his passion before settling down and starting a family. P6 considered alternative career choices, such as assuming a position of leadership that would allow him to inspire and motivate others because he enjoyed working with people.
**Meaning of career.** P6 viewed career as associated with a goal where one would grow by pursuing it. He thought career defined a person and should be fulfilling to the person. Factors that P6 deemed as important in a career included fulfillment, happiness and financial compensation. In addition, he saw career as a “forum to know new people”, and being able to work with people who shared his passion. P6 noticed that factors he considered in a career had changed. He used to see monetary compensation and practicality as the most important, which were values instilled by his parents. Currently, he thought fulfillment surpassed practicality.

P6 thought that his career decision-making process was straightforward. He described not thinking much about his career, and chose engineering because it was a broad field. Presently, he felt he was at a difficult stage of his career development. He was searching for his passion, and he wanted to take risks to achieve that: “You won’t find the answer until you try something and you take risks”. P6 admitted the fear of stepping out of his comfort zone. He tried to overcome this fear to avoid later regrets: “The only worry was to not pursue, at the end of your life to say I didn’t want to change when I was 25, and look at where I am now and it’s not where I want to be.”

**Ethnicity and career development.** P6 felt a stronger sense of belonging towards the Canadian culture; however, he retained values that his parents instilled in him. P6 therefore considered himself bicultural. When discussing identities, P6 raised the issue of the lack of identity. His parents immigrated from China, thus he felt that he knew little about his heritage: “All I know was basically the now and last 25 years, but there’s probably so much more to it because who you are is the history before you.” He felt that part of his identity was missing because of that.
P6 realized the conflicting career values in Chinese and Canadian cultures – pursuing something one had passion for versus security. P6 felt that he had been dependent on his parents’ values, which was why he chose engineering. Being in the second generation, P6 thought that the Chinese culture not only affected his career development, but also the kind of person he was. He described an internal desire to please others because he did not want to disappoint: “You have this reactionary way of yourself that you just want to please people”. He described not being able to do anything with confidence because of the constant fear of disappointing others. P6 wanted to be able to do things for his own sake; to adopt an egocentric attitude in life. His narrative demonstrated the struggle he had as a second-generation Chinese Canadian – dealing with conflicting values and a desire to change. P6 did not feel that the Canadian culture affected much of his career development, but he hoped from now onwards it would.

**Family relationship and career development.** P6 thought his parents identified with the Chinese culture, and that they found the Canadian culture unimpressive, in that they felt that Canadians only wanted to enjoy life. P6 believed that his parents saw career as a means to making a living and supporting one’s family. P6’s parents believed money could solve all problems, and P6 attributed that to their upbringing: “It’s all about surviving in China.” P6 believed his parents valued security, financial compensation, and prestige. P6 knew that his parents had different views of career, but he understood that it was due to their cultural background.

P6 knew that his parents wanted to be a coach to him, and they believed they knew what was best for him: “They’re right because they’re my parents and I’m usually the one who’s wrong because I’m just a kid”. P6 described a very common Chinese
mentality, rooted from the notion that parents are to be respected and obeyed. As he matured, P6 wanted them to transform to a consultant rule, where he could openly talk to them. P6 expressed the frustration and annoyance when interacting with his parents. He thought it had always been difficult for him to get his opinions across: “They expected me to be completely obedient”. P6 felt that he did not have to express his opinions because it was never about his opinions. Presently, P6 thought their relationship improved because they started to try to understand his perspectives.

Parental influence was evident in P6’s career. His parents wanted him to be a doctor or engineer and that was what he and his sisters became. “That’s like the Chinese dream”, as P6 described. Practicality and money-making were values that P6’s parents instilled in their children. P6 believed that his parents wanted him to do something that others considered successful: “No matter what I do, if it’s something that people can look up to and are not shameful of, I think that’s definitely one of the most important things to them.” P6’s parents believed success led to happiness, and that enjoyment of one’s work was less important. P6 never discussed his career plans with his parents, because it was quite straightforward: he liked math, so they encouraged him to become an engineer. He also described feeling nervous about expressing what he wanted to do due to his fear of disappointing others. P6 concluded that without his parents’ influence, he would have chosen a different field, such as one that was more people-oriented.

P6 and his parents experienced conflicts because of their contrasting views: his basic needs were met so he strived for what was meaningful to him, not just for security and survival; whereas his parents had the “you have to take what you can get” mentality because of their upbringing. P6 encountered a recent conflict with his parents in which he
expressed his desire to re-explore his career interests and switch fields. They were against it and were upset, “They don’t want to live with anybody who is a leech, like sucking on their financial.” He understood their perspectives, that at his age he was expected to support himself. P6 did not think that his current career affected his relationship with his parents because it aligned with their expectations. P6 also mentioned that since his dad was in the same field, he was always willing to help and support him in his career development. However, he thought it limited his independence from his parents.

Participant 7

Participant 7 (P7) is a 25-year-old female who was born in Canada. Her parents immigrated to Canada from China in the 1980s. At the time of the interview, P7 was pursuing a master’s degree in Speech and Language Pathology and hoped to be a speech-language pathologist. P7 described that when she was in high school, going to university was the “normal” thing to do, and she did not think much about her career when she applied. She focused on the short-term: “I’ll take courses that align with my interests and I’ll go from there”. Interest was the first factor she took into consideration. P7 knew that she was not interested in numbers, even though she was good at math. When she was in university, she considered going into medicine and other health professions, but from a practicality point of view, medicine was a long and expensive program, which was not worth the effort. P7 realized that speech-language pathology was a good combination of what she studied. She was also exposed to the field while working with an individual with speech disorders, which solidified the fact that she enjoyed working with individuals with speech difficulties and seeing them progress. Interests played a big role in her career development. Other factors such as compensation, family’s opinions, settings of her work
also influenced her decision-making, but to a smaller extent. P7 enjoyed working with people, and she saw variety and flexibility in her work in speech-language pathology. Moving forward, P7 aimed to become a researcher in her field, as well as to look for a specialization.

**Meaning of career.** P7 looked for advancement and learning opportunities in her career. She thought a career was a significant part of her life, and therefore should be something enjoyable. Factors that P7 considered as important in a career included: enjoyment; finding meaning in one’s job; opportunity to travel; financial compensation; meeting new people; variability in the job; being an expanding field; and allowing personal time outside of work. P7 thought her career decision-making process was not particularly difficult. She explained that she was easy going and tended to go with the flow. Thus she was never overly stressed or anxious about her career. She knew that as long as her career accommodated her interests, she would be satisfied and happy. Recently, she was having general anxiety about her ability to find a job after graduation. She learned that the opportunities in Toronto were scarce, thus competition would be high. She stated that she would be happy as long as she got a job.

**Ethnicity and career development.** P7 identified with both the Canadian and Chinese cultures. She thought she was bicultural without leaning towards one specific culture. In her career development, P7 considered her own opinions first, which reflected Western influence. Since she also considered her parents’ opinions, she saw that as Chinese influence but to a minimal extent. P7 admitted that she would not go so far as to choose a career that was prestigious within the community in order to please her parents.
**Family relationship and career development.** P7 thought her parents adopted Chinese values mostly. In terms of Western influence, P7’s parents preferred living in Canada because they thought Canadians were nicer, and they were uncomfortable with the political situation and corruption in China. P7 thought that her parents saw career as a means to money-making. P7 stated that they valued family over career, and the purpose of having a career was to support one’s family. They would consider qualities such as stability and financial compensation as important. They valued interests but it was not a priority. Her parents thought career was less important for girls because they should focus on getting married and raising children. P7’s parents were influenced by traditional values and were highly family-oriented.

P7 had a decent relationship with her parents even though they did not have intimate conversations. P7 thought that was typical of Chinese parent-child relationship. P7 saw language barrier as one of the reasons why they did not talk about everything. Career would be one of the topics that they would not discuss in detail because P7 thought they would not understand her work in her field. Still, P7 had a decent relationship with her parents despite this limitation. P7 felt that their communication was two-way. For certain topics, however, her parents expected compliance: “They feel like their word has more value than mine”.

P7 felt that her career development was independent and her family exerted no influence. Growing up, she never discussed her career plans with her parents. She made her own decisions before informing her parents, and they would always support her decisions. P7 thought that because she had always done well at school, they trusted her decision-making skills. She described that her parents were happy and supportive of her
career decisions. P7 thought her parents emphasized financial independence and they focused less on her interests. P7 felt that she shared very different views with her parents in terms of career, mostly because they saw career as a job whereas to P7 it was more than that. However, they never encountered conflicts in this regard. Although P7’s parents played minimal role in her career development, they were supportive of her choices and decision-making.

**Participant 8**

Participant 8 (P8) is a 29-year-old female who was born in Canada. Her parents immigrated from China to Canada in the 1980s. P8 obtained her undergraduate degree in Finance, and worked in the field for four years before moving to Hong Kong for a year and a half. At the time of the interview she recently returned to Canada and was looking for jobs. In terms of her career development, P8 said she chose science and business courses in high school in order to get a taste of both fields. When asked why she did not consider other fields such as the arts or social sciences, she said she was not interested in them and did not know what the job prospects would be. In addition, P8 thought talent and passion were essential in art fields, which she lacked. P8 also examined her abilities, and found that she was not good at math, physics or science. So she chose business, which she thought was a broad field with great job prospects. Through eliminating fields based on her interests and strengths, P8 went into business in university. P8 adopted a long-term perspective when she chose university programs. She studied business management and chose finance because of the abundance of opportunities afterwards. She was also attracted to it because of the nature of the job – she enjoyed working with numbers and small groups of people. P8 liked the independence and the ability to set her
own work pace; she also preferred fewer interactions with co-workers. The work environment played a role in helping P8 decide what she wanted to do. After graduating university, she was prepared to take any opportunities that came and found a job in fund accounting. Initially P8 wanted to be a financial analyst, however she learned about fund accountant positions through a recruiting agency, and realized she was interested in it and there was high demand for the role. She found a job in finance immediately after university because she was open-minded. After working for a while in the company, she quit her job and went to Hong Kong for her partner. She valued her relationship and she was fine with pausing her career development. After she returned to Toronto, she felt that she was starting from square one in her career. P8 did not think that her current field was her passion, but she was fine with it because she was able to financially support herself, and she thought that was more important than passion. P8’s current goal was to get back into the financial services industry as a fund accountant. Afterwards, she would slowly work her way up the corporate ladder, and eventually achieve a higher position.

**Meaning of career.** P8 saw career as a stable and long-term job that one liked and enjoyed. Factors that she considered as important in a career included: financial compensation; doing something that required an education; strengths; and interests.

P8 thought that her career decision-making process was straightforward because “it was really between finance and accounting”. P8 considered her interests, but only to a certain extent. She liked her field when she was studying it, but she thought the monetary reward was more important and supporting herself was her priority in her career. P8 did not recall feeling stressed during her career development, because she knew what she wanted and she had a goal in mind. As well, she found a job soon after graduation. When
she quit her job and tried to look for jobs in Hong Kong, she was somehow frustrated because it was very difficult to find jobs with her citizenship status. She found it difficult living in Hong Kong, which was why she returned to Canada. Presently she was somehow anxious because she felt that she was starting from scratch.

**Ethnicity and career development.** P8 identified with the Canadian culture more so but she considered herself bicultural since she felt a sense of belonging towards Chinese Canadians. P8 did not think that being a second-generation Chinese Canadian affected her career development, because she did not consider her ethnicity when choosing a career. She stated that she only considered her interests and strengths. P8 related back to how Chinese parents imposed expectations on their children, but her parents never did that: “They never really pushed us. They’re cool about everything. As long as you’re happy with what you’re doing, they won’t push you to become something that you are not.” On the other hand, P8 felt that she was affected by the Canadian influence because she considered her opinions first.

**Family relationship and career development.** P8 thought that her parents identified with both the Chinese and Canadian cultures. In terms of their views of career, stability and the ability to provide for one’s family were priorities. She was never told to make a lot of money; it would be sufficient as long as she could afford a comfortable lifestyle. Although her parents were immigrants, P8 felt that they were accustomed to the Canadian lifestyle, and gave her the freedom to choose what she wanted in her career.

P8 thought she had a good relationship with her parents in that they got along and her parents were loving and supportive. P8 felt that her needs were her parents’ priority. In terms of their communication style, P8 thought it depended on their conversation
topics. For instance, when P8’s mother gave life lessons or lectures, she did not like being talked back to. This is similar to the mentality that youngsters have to respect their parents’ opinions and never talk back. She found her mother’s lectures repetitive, but she appreciated her advice because she knew her mom did it with good intentions. Otherwise she thought their communication was two-way, because her parents never forced her to do things that she did not like, and complete obedience was never expected.

P8 felt that her parents did not have much influence on her career development, because they never had expectations for her. They often supported her ultimate decision. P8’s parents were supportive of her quitting her job for her partner because they thought she should not be apart from him. Strong family values were evident and it was important for P8 to maintain her relationship.

Although P8’s parents had minimal influence over her career choice, she was enrolled into piano classes when she was young. The rationale was that she could teach piano as a back up in the future. However, P8 did not become a music teacher because she did not enjoy it. Career plans were not discussed frequently because P8 said her parents did not know what she wanted to do. P8 would however talk to her mother about personal issues. When P8 was in Hong Kong, she told her mom about her confusions. Her mom offered encouragement and advice, which P8 ended up taking.

P8 did not think that she shared much similarity with her parents regarding career. She described that when her parents came to Canada, they did not have the privilege to get an education and choose a career they liked. They chose whatever job they could find; thus, survival and meeting basic needs were their priorities and it was less about their interests. To P8, career entailed liking her work and work environment. P8 never
encountered conflicts with her parents because she thought they were less knowledgeable about different fields.

**Participant 9**

Participant 9 (P9) is a 24-year-old female who was born in Canada. Her parents immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong in the 1980s. At the time of the interview, P9 was completing her master’s degree in Counselling Psychology. P9 knew that she always wanted to work with people and their problems, and she discovered her interest in psychology in her high school years. When she started university, she was not sure which branch of psychology she was interested in. Through taking courses, she realized she was not interested in research and she wanted to work with people. Her volunteer experiences further confirmed her interests, which finalized her decision to go into counselling. P9’s part time job as a waitress during university also solidified the fact that she liked working and dealing with people. Although P9 did not consider waitressing her career, it financially supported P9’s education. P9 was currently doing her placement and working closely with clients. She was getting first-hand experience of what she would be doing in her career and she enjoyed it a lot.

P9 stated that if counselling did not work out, her alterative career choice was to work in the restaurant industry. However, due to the privileges that she received (e.g., years of education), she felt that she had the moral obligation to pursue psychology. P9’s interest was her priority in her career development, as well as the privileges that she was granted with. P9 liked the challenges in counselling, as well as the privilege of listening to others’ concerns. She liked the genuineness in the interactions with her clients. Her career goal was to register as a psychotherapist and to establish a stable client base.
Meaning of career. P9 saw career as a job that one ended up with at the end of an education. She thought that career was a lifestyle, and it should be associated with passion, fulfillment and happiness. A career would bring stable income, but psychological fulfillment was important as well. Criteria that P9 deemed as important in a career included: challenges; a sense of satisfaction; safe and supportive working environment; enjoyment and excitement; minimal stress and simplicity; and allowing sufficient personal and family time. If P9 were to ignore her privileges, she would have wanted to open a coffee shop or a restaurant, because she thought it would allow an easy and simple career when compared to counselling. However, because of the privileges and opportunities that she was entitled with, she did not want to pursue her ideal career.

P9 did not think that her career decision-making was difficult because she was never torn between career options. She knew which general direction to go and narrowed down her interests through going to classes and volunteering. She did well in her psychology classes and enjoyed them, which further confirmed that she wanted to pursue counselling psychology. P9 admitted feeling anxious sometimes about counselling when self-doubt occurred. There was also excitement about working with people and she loved the challenges.

Ethnicity and career development. P9 considered herself bicultural, although she mostly identified with the Canadian culture and felt a strong sense of belonging towards it. P9 thought that the work ethic from the Chinese culture affected her career. As a young child, she worked hard and excelled at school, which led her into her current program. She also suggested the possibility that she chose the psychology program at her
current university because of its prestige within the Chinese community. She said perhaps unconsciously she chose it over other careers because it was stable and prestigious.

P9 described pursuing psychology because of her genuine interest in the field. She described never being interested in the Chinese stereotypical fields (e.g., accounting, mathematics, science, businesses and engineering), and that she preferred the more people-oriented fields to a “purely money-making stable job”. When she looked at her friends, she noticed that the majority of them were in business. As such, P9 felt that her career further pulled her away from her Chinese identity.

**Family relationship and career development.** P9 thought her mom identified more so with the Chinese culture than her dad because she stayed at home. Her dad was more westernized because he interacted with employees at work. Her parents emphasized the importance of doing what she enjoyed, having a stable income for “bearable living standards” and minimal stress. P9 was never told by her parents to be rich, so she did not think they would expect her to make a lot of money. Her parents’ career aspirations for her were to make enough money to support herself and not be overly stressed. She felt that both of her parents wanted her to be happy, but her mom wanted to push her towards more prestigious fields. In general, P9 did not think that her parents’ Chinese background influenced their views on career. She thought they were different from the typical Chinese parents. P9 referred to her dad as a layman, therefore he never forced her into the “prestigious” fields. P9 described having a good relationship with her dad – she admired and respected him. However, they were not close in the sense that they did not talk about personal issues. P9 thought that was typical in Chinese families. She knew her dad supported her, understood her and was financially available for her. She also described
him as being liberal, which was why he had the most influence on her career decision-making. P9 felt that she was less close to her mother and that they had a conflictual relationship. She described having an egalitarian relationship with her parents.

P9 thought that her family was generally supportive of what she wanted to pursue and she enjoyed autonomy. She never felt that she was pressured to excel in school or in her career. P9’s parents enrolled her in private school when she was young, which fostered her work ethic because of the academic-oriented environment. P9 described that because of this privilege, she felt obligated to pursue counselling over being a waitress.

P9’s parents pushed her to do a variety of extracurricular activities. When she got older, however, she started complaining about having to go to classes that she disliked, and her parents permitted her to quit because they knew she was not enjoying herself: “They listened to what I wanted”. It was evident that her opinions were heard as a child. P9 mentioned that one of her family members struggled with psychological illness, which instilled an interest in psychology in her. P9 did not recall having frequent career discussions with her parents. They would check in to ensure that she was on the right track, but they never involved themselves to the extent that created constant pressure. P9 thought that similar to her parents, having a career one loved was important.

Participant 10

Participant 10 (P10) is a 28-year-old female who was born in Canada. Her parents immigrated from Hong Kong and China in the 1980s. P10 obtained an undergraduate degree in finance and had been working in the field for seven years. When discussing her career development, P10 stated, “For a Chinese family, it’s really science or business.” P10’s culture and family influenced her career development at the beginning stages,
where she had to choose between science and business. P10 was not strong in science and
did not like it, but she was good at math. She did well in her accounting and business
courses in high school and enjoyed them, and therefore chose business in university. P10
discovered her interest in finance in university. Under the influence of some friends who
were in the same field, she took courses with them that allowed her to work towards
writing a designation. P10 liked finance because of its challenges and variety. She
enjoyed communicating with external sources and seeing her work utilized by others. P10
thought she had found her ideal field. In terms of her career goals, P10 wished to achieve
a certified management accountant designation and move up the corporate ladder.

**Meaning of career.** P10 saw career as something that provided a steady income.
She did not think it was necessary to enjoy or be passionate about one’s job, but it should
not make one miserable going to work. Factors that P10 took into consideration first was
her parents’ opinions, “Asian parents want you to be a doctor or accountant. When we
were really young, those were the main occupations that our parents taught us.” P10 was
only exposed to these fields and she was unfamiliar with other fields. Parental influence
had a tremendous effect on her career. Subsequently, she made decisions based on her
interests. Challenges, novelty in her work, job prospects and stability were other factors
that she considered. P10 recalled choosing finance because there were plenty of entry-
level positions available when she graduated. P10 thought stability was of utmost
importance presently because she wanted to settle down.

P10 did not think that her career development was particularly difficult because
she only had two fields to choose from and she knew what she liked in the beginning. In
university, P10 did not have to consult with anyone when making decisions because her
parents gave her freedom and independence as long as she was in a business program. P10 described feeling satisfied throughout her career development, particularly when taking courses, because she knew that upon completion she would be qualified to get a designation. She knew after that she would be “set for life”.

To P10, career success was the ability to find a job to support oneself soon after university. When comparing herself to other individuals who did not go into science or business, she felt they were not as successful. She also thought business was a better field than science because of her sister, who was in the sciences and had to commit to many years of education. P10 described her sister’s regret, “She looked at me and wished she had gone into business, because right out of university you already can get a job.” Witnessing her sister’s struggle refueled her idea that business was the best field that would lead to success.

**Ethnicity and career development.** P10 considered herself bicultural and identified with the Chinese Canadian culture. She saw herself as having “a good mix” of both cultures. P10 thought she had a stronger sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture because she was brought up by her grandparents and was exposed to it (e.g., speaking the language). P10 described respecting her grandparents for what they went through, which made her more susceptible to their influence.

P10 thought that her parents adopted many of the Western values, in that they gave her autonomy when choosing a career and she attributed that to her generation status. P10 contrasted her parents to her friends’ parents, who “laid out their entire life for them”. P10 saw her parents’ criteria in a positive light: “They made everything a lot easier for me, because they gave me freedom to do whatever I wanted, as long as I met
that one criteria of theirs, got somewhere in life and didn’t choose something like art, which they believed would lead you no where.” P10 felt that Chinese parents, including hers, made forthright effort to push their children into professional fields. Evidently, P10 chose business and her sister chose science. P10 described that it was common that Chinese parents bragged about their children’s career: “Chinese parents with kids who are artists, they wouldn’t mention it as often as other parents with children who are doctors or scientists.” P10’s views were influenced by these behaviours, “I don’t think the art field is not good. I think that’s not a good choice because of the economy. It’s more challenging and it presents more obstacles in life.”

**Family relationship and career development.** P10 felt that her parents retained much of the Chinese tradition because they lived with her grandparents. P10 thought her parents saw career as making substantial amount of money, stability and prestige. P10 used to be less close to her parents. Currently, P10 felt that her relationship with her family improved. P10 described her communication style with her parents, “You have the freedom of speech as long as you’re in line. There will be bad consequences if you talk back to them in a rude way.” Compromises existed in their relationship. For instance, P10 was enrolled into many extracurricular classes, but she was allowed to quit when she wanted to.

In terms of family influence, P10’s parents reiterated the importance of choosing professional fields since she was young. She knew that she had to choose either science or business, and she did not feel negatively towards their restriction. Her parents were heavily involved in her course selection in high school, because they believed that the courses she chose determined her career path, “If I was interested in arts, they would
probably try to steer me away from it.” P10 was glad that she complied with her parents, “Looking back, they wouldn’t make bad decisions for you.” Additionally, she felt that she was less rebellious because she enjoyed autonomy most of the time. P10’s parents were less involved in her later career development, because once she got into business they were no longer concerned. P10 thought her parents wanted her to get a designation. P10 believed that they would be satisfied once she wrote hers because to them, she would then have reached the highest point of her career development.

P10 described sharing similarities with her parents in their career views and beliefs about success. They were exposed to the same examples in their families, which confirmed that science and business were likely to lead to success. P10 did not recall encountering any conflicts with her parents, because she followed their expectations. P10 thought that her parents were proud that she was somewhat successful, “They can brag to their friends – my daughter is an accountant.” She felt that it made their relationship better, because it changed how they thought about her.

### 4.2 Career Development and General Psychological Structures

This section presents the results generated from phenomenological analysis, specially the general psychological essence of participants’ subjective experiences. The descriptions of the essence is drawn from the following research questions:

1. What was the meaning of career?
2. What was the career exploration and development process like?
3. How did ethnicity influence the career choice and development of participants?
4. How did family influence the career choice and development of participants?
4.2.1 Meaning of Career and Career Development

Regardless of the stage of career development that participants were in, they attached personal meanings to their career. Based on participants’ responses towards the question “What does career mean to you?”, the following themes were derived.

**Meaning of Career**

**Ongoing commitment and continuous development.** The majority of the participants indicated that career was an effortful process that required long-term and ongoing commitment. P4 described a career as something that “someone spends many years of their life doing.” Eight participants saw career as something that facilitated continuous development and growth, where training and education were required. For instance, although P1 had already achieved her career goal of becoming a teacher, she was looking for other ways to improve her professional skills. Other participants also constantly sought professional advancement and personal growth in their careers:

   It’s something that you have a goal in mind right of where you want to be. I think the nature of it is that you try to move forward in it, so you enjoy the benefits of improving at it and growing at it. (P6)

   P3 was in the process of searching for a field that she was passionate about; therefore she saw career exploration as part of personal growth and development. She described knowing what she had no interest in, but not so much about what she wanted to do. Thus, she saw the process of self-discovery as personal growth.

   Some participants sought continuous learning opportunities and variety in their career. P1 described the importance of ongoing professional development, where she would be constantly changing and learning, adapting to different situations and people. Similarly, P7 valued continuous advancement and learning opportunities in her career.
**Fulfillment and meaning.** The majority of the participants described career as something that surpassed meeting basic needs and provided a sense of personal fulfillment. For instance, P2 saw meaning in his career because he was able to guide others in their career development. He felt that he made a difference in someone’s life. Other participants found meaning in their careers by helping people because it gave them personal fulfillment. P6 recently discovered the importance of finding fulfillment in one’s career, which fostered his desire to switch career. He described that although his current field provided him with financial security and prestige, he realized presently that fulfillment was more important.

**Brings joy.** All participants mentioned that career must bring joy or other positive feelings. Some participants described the necessity to find enjoyment in one’s career. For instance, P2 stated that he wanted to do something that would make him happy. He described finding enjoyment in both theatre and hospitality fields. P7 delineated the significance of a career and therefore it had to be enjoyable. Other participants also agreed with P7 by stating that one should be interested in and passionate about one’s career. Participants described that career should bring excitement, where one would look forward to going to work everyday. In contrast, P10 expressed a different view where she stated that enjoyment was unnecessary; however, one should not dislike it to the extent that it created misery at work.

**Financial compensation.** All participants associated career with financial compensation. P3 saw career as a way to make money:

> In terms of what career is, I always think of it as what are you going to do to financially support yourself. To me, all the other qualities, like are you interested in it, just narrow down what you can do to earn money. (P3)
P4 stated that it is important for him to achieve financial independence in his career. Some participants described the importance of supporting one’s lifestyle, not only their basic needs, and that the amount of compensation should be proportional to one’s level of accomplishment and effort. P3 and P8 mentioned that career should allow one to support not only oneself, but also one’s family. Other participants reiterated the importance of having a stable income. For instance, P10 stated that the current economy helped her realize the importance of career stability.

Other meanings attributed. Some participants stated that career intertwined with one’s life and could become part of one’s identity. As P6 stated, “A career is engrained and the kind of person you are. It’s part of you.”

Some participants mentioned that career was important in terms of the relationships they built in their career. For instance, P7 wanted her career to provide her with opportunities to meet different kinds of people; thus she wanted her work environment to be not isolating. As described by P6:

I’m looking for a place to get to know new people, because I view the joys of life as being the relationships you make. And a career a lot of the time would let you get to know people that you can relate to, at least in terms of work. And I think a career in that sense is very important. (P6)

P1 and P8 associated career with their strengths and professionalism. In addition, some participants mentioned the importance of work-life balance in a career to allow time spent with families. P5 emphasized that he would not want to have to travel for his career because he did not want to be separated from his family. Finally, P5 indicated that a career would be something that helped the society advance.

Factors Considered

Interests. All participants considered their interests at some point in their career
development. As illustrated by P4, “I realize at some point that doing a business undergrad wasn’t the right thing for me. I think I just tried to pick something that I would enjoy learning about, and what that job actually entails.”

Some participants described being interested in their fields since a young age. For instance, P9 stated that her interest in psychology fueled her career development, and she knew all along that she wanted to work with people. Other participants gradually discovered their interests after taking academic courses. For example, P7 described not thinking much about her career in high school. She focused on the short-term, and took courses that aligned with her interests. P7 trusted that this would eventually lead her to a career that she enjoyed.

Strengths. Nine participants mentioned their strengths as they described their career development. As P2 stated, “As a mature student and being newly married, the only thing I could think was what I was good at doing.” Some participants described the relationship between strengths and interests. P3 found that her strength and interests were correlated; things that she was interested in were things that she was good at. P9 described being interested in psychology and getting good grades in her psychology classes, which made the field even more enjoyable for her. P1 described a similar phenomenon. At a young age, P1 enjoyed explaining things to her classmates and found herself getting compliments for it:

Everyone would be like, you should be a teacher. And people keep telling you “you’re good at this; you should do that”. So that plants a seed in your mind as something that you want to do. (P1)

Work environment. Some participants described the importance of liking one’s work environment, and that it was one of the factors that affected their career choice. P3
wanted to go into medicine when she was young, but after going to interviews and visiting different hospitals, she realized that she hated the work environment there. She found the atmosphere “depressing” and she did not like the secluded environment. P8 described enjoying her field because she liked working in small teams. Finally, P9 depicted the importance of working in a safe and supportive environment.

**Practicality.** Participants mentioned that financial compensation and job prospect were some of the qualities they took into consideration while choosing a career. Some participants paid attention to the job prospect of the fields that they were interested in, and chose fields that were broad and presented most opportunities. Ultimately, these participants thought that the ability to financially support oneself was important.

Some participants talked about considering the ease of getting into certain fields. These participants chose careers that required relatively less effort and time to get in. For instance, P4 decided not to pursue finance even though he was interested in it, “It was hard to get a job in finance. The additional work in the financial industry probably didn’t justify whatever benefits that I would get doing it.” P8 never considered the arts field because of similar reasons. She felt that one required a substantial amount of talent, time and effort to get into art, and she did not have that kind of motivation.

**Others’ opinions.** Some participants described that others’ opinions affected their career decision-making to some extent. P6 mentioned that the prestige within his field was one of the factors that steered him towards engineering, which he thought was a field that others would look up to. P1 indicated that encouragement within the community made her decision-making process easier. Education was highly regarded in the Chinese culture, and she knew that her parents would be happy if she became a teacher. The
agreement and support drew her towards choosing the occupation. Although P5 eventually decided to quit school, he was concerned about others’ opinions when he considered quitting:

Because everyone else was getting their degree and I wasn’t able to do that. It’s standard in today’s society for everyone to go to university but I wasn’t able to do that. I wasn’t able to follow the norm. (P5)

**Process of Career Development**

**Easy and straightforward process.** The majority of the participants indicated that their career development was generally an easy process. P1 knew her entire life that she wanted to be a teacher and all she needed to do was to work towards it. Four participants focused on what they needed at the moment. As P2 described, “I know what I wanted to do, I know this is what I did well and I knew what I need to formalize it, that was it.” Although P3 did not know what she wanted in the long-term during her career development, she focused on what she needed in the short term, which was to learn all the transferable skills she could. P7 described herself as the kind of person who went with the flow, and that she was never stressed about what she should do. She acknowledged that as long as she was interested in her career, she would be happy.

For some participants, the realization of their career interest was a gradual, step-by-step process:

I knew along the way what I wanted through going to classes, volunteer. And then little steps along the way just further confirmed that. I was never really torn. (P9)

P10 thought her decision-making process was straightforward because her parents set up criteria for her career:

Asian parents want you to be a doctor or accountant. I tried science and I wasn’t good at it, so that’s what got me into business. (P10)
**Difficult process.** Some participants described encountering obstacles in their career development. P6 stated that his early career development was straightforward, but it started to be difficult because he realized he was not passionate about his current field and was in the process of searching for something that he was passionate about:

> I discovered that yes, being an engineer is cool, but it’s really not just about financial security and prestige. It’s more about finding something that is fulfilling for you. I feel like I have to do something different and risky. It’s hard, it’s not easy. (P6)

P5 thought his career development was particularly challenging when he lost interest in his undergraduate years. He described it as an easy process choosing his previous program; however it became difficult when he had to make the decision of whether to quit school or not. P5 remembered struggling with the notion of whether quitting school was the right thing to do, and feeling guilty about his inability to follow the norm. Other participants, such as P4, saw their career development as a difficult process because it was unclear what their career goal was. P4 felt that there were plenty of opportunities where he could have gone into a different field, however he stayed within the same field. His current field became a career that he enjoyed.

**Uncertainty.** Uncertainty was a prominent phenomenon described in the participants’ career development, and they had different strategies to deal with their uncertainty. For participants who were uncertain about their career goal, they chose a broad field that opened the most doors for them. For instance, as P3 was exploring different career options, she found that engineering presented the most future opportunities for her and thus she chose it. Both P3 and P4 lacked a clear goal early on in their career development. Through trial and error, they continuously evaluated what they liked and eventually arrived at their current field. P4 described choosing internships that
he found interesting, which led him to other related opportunities within his field. P3 described focusing on the short-term and constantly evaluating her experiences, which helped her in making future career decisions.

Uncertainty was ongoing for some participants. P9 described an ongoing uncertainty where self-doubt made her wonder if her field was the right choice for her and whether she had sufficient skills to excel. Although P3 enjoyed her current field, she felt that she was still at the exploration stage and she was not sure if she had found her passion. P5 and P6 were in a similar situation where they were searching for a field of interest.

Prominent Emotions Throughout Career Development

Participants were asked to discuss some of the prominent emotions that stood out during their career development.

Neutral feelings. Some participants described neutral feelings, because they had the go-with-the-flow attitude. Without focusing on the long-term, they did not experience any stress because they were open-minded about upcoming obstacles. For instance, P3 stated that she knew whatever decisions she made, there would be pros and cons, and she thought it was important for her to learn to deal with these situations and not think too far ahead. She described that without long-term goals, she did not have stressful thoughts such as needing to get a designation.

Nervousness and anxiety. Four participants described feeling anxious and nervous at some point in their career development. Some of them stated that the anxiety was related to getting accepted into certain programs, or finding internships as required by their programs. Other participants described an ongoing anxiety. For instance,
knowing that the opportunities in Toronto were not great, P7 was worried about finding a job after she graduated from her program. Additionally, P9’s anxiety stemmed from the self-doubt regarding her ability to excel in the field.

**Frustration.** Some participants described feelings of frustration during their career development. For instance, P4’s frustration originated from an aforementioned event regarding going abroad for a job opportunity, but due to his parents’ objection he was unable to go. P4 found his parents’ concerns about safety unnecessary, and to him missing the opportunity was detrimental to his career development.

**Guilt.** P5 described feeling guilty when he was deciding whether to quit school or not, mainly because he knew it was the standard in today’s society for everyone to go to university. By comparing himself to others, his inability to follow the norm brought guilt. Fortunately, the support he received from his parents helped him with his decision-making and he eventually decided to quit school despite the guilt he felt.

### 4.2.2 Ethnicity and Career Development

Generation status affected the participants’ career decision-making to different extents, mainly because they were exposed to two cultures throughout their upbringing. This section presents the cultural identification of these participants and how Chinese and Western/Canadian cultures influenced their career development.

**Cultural Identification**

**Bicultural.** Nine participants reported identifying with both the Chinese and Western cultures. Some, however, identified stronger with the Western culture. As P6 described, he felt a strong sense of belonging towards the Canadian culture, however he still retained some of the Chinese values that his parents bestowed onto him. P9 described
a similar phenomenon, where she identified with both cultures, but she felt a stronger sense of belonging towards the Canadian culture. Other participants, on the other hand, described a stronger sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture. P1 described that as she matured, she valued her heritage more. In addition, her experience of teaching in a community with a high concentration of Chinese children fostered her sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture. P10 described that she identified strongly with the Chinese culture because she grew up with her grandparents, thus she was constantly exposed to Chinese values and customs. P10 gave the example of having to speak Chinese to her grandparents because they were unable to speak English, which helped her improve her Chinese skills.

**Canadian.** One participant indicated that he only identified with the Canadian culture. He described growing up in Canada and was never influenced by the Chinese culture. P2 gave the example of having a multicultural group of friends, which he felt fostered his Canadian identity to a great extent.

**Change in Cultural identity.** Five participants pointed out that the surrounding environment fostered closer contact with other Chinese individuals in Canada, which enhanced their sense of belonging towards Chinese Canadians. P1 stated that she identified more so with the Chinese culture because of high Chinese concentration at the school she was teaching at. Similarly, P4 described that his undergraduate program fostered his sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture, because his school had an “abnormally high” Chinese population, “The entire university had more Chinese people than statistically even.” Other participants described growing up in communities with high Chinese concentration. P3’s narrative indicated how the Chinese culture was
introduced into her life:

My neighborhood and friends I grew up with tended to be quite multicultural. But more Chinese immigrants started coming in, that’s when more of my friends were Chinese, and it brought more Chinese culture into my life. Without that I think I’d be more Canadian. (P3)

Other participants described that their cultural identity changed with age and maturity. P1 described not feeling proud of her heritage when she was young, because of her desire to blend in with the majority. As she matured, however, she felt that she strongly identified with the Chinese culture. Similarly, P10 described that she had stronger family values after she got married and moved out.

Values in the Chinese culture

All participants were asked to discuss values that they thought were prominent in the Chinese culture and there was some overlap in the values that they discussed.

Family-oriented. Participants discussed the emphasis on family in the Chinese culture, such as the importance of respecting parents and the elders. Participants described the expectation to listen to their parents and not talk back. P10 gave a personal example of following her parents’ expectations when choosing high school courses – she chose business and science courses because these were the two options provided by her parents. P10 complied with them due to her trust in her parents:

Sometimes you hear Chinese parents say, you have to be a doctor or accountant, you think, what strict values they have. Now I see they’re right because that really does get you somewhere. Whatever they tell you they’d put you at a good spot in the future, because all parents care for their kids. (P10)

P8 also described that her mother expected her to listen and not talk back when she lectured about certain topics, such as marriage. Her parents, however, never expected her to comply with their views on career development and career choice. P6 described the
emphasis on honoring one’s family by entering prestigious professions so that the parents could “hold their heads up high” in the community. P9 described that Chinese children were expected by their parents to provide for their family with their income. These Chinese values explain why prestige and stability are highly emphasized in one’s career.

**Community feeling.** Some participants discussed the collectivist mentality that many Chinese individuals had. P1 described the importance of prioritizing others’ needs. She gave the example of serving tea to everyone before oneself, and giving the best to everyone else, “It’s not just you, you’re part of a community.”

Other participants described the importance of considering how one’s action would affect others and the importance of seeing things from others’ perspectives. P6 connected this value with his career development, where he considered what others thought of his chosen occupation. He acknowledged that he chose engineering because of its prestige. P6 described his tendency to consider others’ thoughts and feelings towards himself, which fostered an intrinsic need to please others. P6 described the problem of always having the fear of disappointing others:

> I’m doing what I’m doing because there’s an ulterior motive behind it, like working because I don’t want to disappoint. I don’t think you can fully execute with 100% confidence with what you do when these things are on your mind. You have this reactionary way of yourself that you just want to please people. (P6)

**Academic and career success.** Eight participants mentioned the importance of excelling in one’s education and career. P4 felt that the Chinese culture placed high value on success. P2 described some stereotypes within the Asian culture, which was that most Asians were doctors, lawyers, accountants or business people. Many participants described that the expectation to excel was usually manifested through Chinese parents:
I think that older generation Chinese, they just put a lot of value into professional careers. (P6)
Chinese parents want you to be good at math, to be a doctor or accountant. (P10)

P10 added that Chinese parents liked to brag about their children’s success because they took pride in their children’s career if they entered prestigious fields. P10 felt that if parents specifically mentioned their children’s career, it meant that they cared about what their children did. The bragging behaviour in Chinese parents further reinforced the importance of success in the Chinese culture.

Money-driven. Some participants mentioned that money was highly valued in the Chinese culture, and there was the idea that money would solve all problems and make life easier. Participants associated the emphasis on money-making with the value that Chinese individuals placed on prestige, security and stability in one’s career. Some participants connected it to the survival mentality that they thought their parents had:

In their era, it wasn’t much of do you like doing it, but more like does it pay well. That was their view of sacrificing what you want to do, because you just don’t have that opportunity. You’re just thinking, how would I survive? (P3)

Career Development Not Affected by Ethnicity

Participants were asked to discuss how culture and ethnicity affected their career decision-making. While most participants described some cultural influence, some stated that culture did not play a role in their career development. P2 thought that career choice was irrelevant to one’s cultural background. As such, he did not think that his Chinese background played a role in his career development and aspirations. Similarly, although P4 complied with his parents’ expectations when choosing high school courses, he did not attribute it to his Chinese culture. In other words, P4 thought that he would have listened to his parents regardless of what his ethnicity was. Some participants stated that
they had liberal, non-stereotypical parents who gave them sufficient autonomy when choosing a career, and therefore they did not think that their ethnicity affected their career choice because their parents did not force them to pursue certain fields. Finally, P5 pointed out that his ethnicity never stood out because he lived in a Chinese populated community, therefore he did not think that his cultural background caused him to make certain decisions.

**Career Development Affected by the Chinese Culture**

**Judgment of different careers.** Participants noticed that certain professions were deemed more prestigious and there was judgment within the culture of what a “good” and “bad” career is. Professions that were deemed prestigious included doctors, lawyers, accountants and businessmen. Five participants indicated that such judgment within the culture influenced their career development to different extents. P1 described that encouragement within the Chinese community and respect for education drew her towards the teaching profession. Some participants described that their parents overtly expressed their views on different careers. For instance, P3 stated that her parents looked down on certain careers, such as visual arts and professions that required manual labor. On the other hand, P3’s parents highly regarded other professions and explicitly stated that they wanted her to enter those fields. Similarly, P10’s parents wanted her to enter professional fields, and that she was expected to choose between science and business. Evidently, while she went into business, her sister went into science. P6 described the same phenomenon in his family, where he became an engineer and his sisters became doctors. P6 described that as “the Chinese dream”.
P9 described subtle influence that the Chinese culture might have had on her career decision-making. When reflecting on why she chose her program at her university, P9 stated that perhaps it was because of the prestige of her school. P10 discussed how such judgment in the culture changed her perspectives about certain careers. For instance, she found herself agreeing with her parents on some aspects of career. For instance, P10 agreed that the arts field would not be a good career choice because of the economy, and that it would present more obstacles in life. She also agreed with her parents that business would be a great field to go into because of its job prospect. Some participants described that the judgment in the Chinese culture eliminated some career choices at the beginning of their career development. As described by P6, “In the end it seems like where I am now has been hugely dependent on what my parents saw in my future, just the fact that I’m an engineer, so definitely being a second-gen has impacted my career choice.”

Three participants described that their parents set criteria in their high school course selection, which affected the field they entered. P4 wanted to take history in high school, but his parents forbade it because they thought history would not be a good field to get into. P4 acknowledged that their views inadvertently influenced his career choice.

Stereotypes within the culture also influenced the fields that Chinese Canadians were exposed to at a young age. Some participants only considered the prestigious fields and stated that they were unfamiliar with other non-stereotypical occupations:

Asian parents want you to be a doctor or accountant. When we were really young, those two were the main occupations that our parents would teach us. So the only thing they told me was you either become a doctor or an accountant. (P10)

**Parents’ experiences.** Some participants described witnessing their parents’ difficult experiences as immigrants, and contrasted their parents’ experiences with their
own. P3 recalled seeing her parents work extremely hard, and expressed that she did not want to follow their path. P1 described seeing her parents struggle with English, and that they were unable to choose a career that made them happy because of language barrier. P1’s parents did not have the opportunity to further their education to get into careers that they were interested in because they had to support their family when they immigrated. P1 thought her parents worked for different reasons, and that she was grateful that she had the privilege to choose her career without any language barriers.

Similarly, some participants talked about the survival mentality that their parents had because of their background, which affected their perspectives on career:

Where they’re from, communist China, it’s all about surviving. They struggled so hard. Their view of career is about making a living at the end of the day, providing financially for your family by whatever means necessary. (P6)

We are a very entitled generation, whereas in my parents’ generation sometimes putting food on the table is a difficult task. So having a secure job is much more valuable, than accommodating your interests. (P4)

Parents’ opinions. From the Western perspective, career is an autonomous decision. Participants in the current study acknowledged that their parents’ opinions mattered to different extents throughout their career development. Some participants (e.g., P3, P6 and P10) noticed their parents’ expectations and complied with what they wanted. Others (e.g., P5 and P7) indicated that although their parents did not explicitly state their expectations, their opinions mattered to them.

Career Development Affected by the Canadian Culture

In addition to the influence from the Chinese culture and values, participants also discussed how their career development was affected by the Canadian culture. All participants saw some Western influence in their career decision-making.
**Canadian societal values.** Some participants described the influence that the Canadian society had on them. For instance, P1 was attracted to the teaching profession because of the universal school system in Canada. It made her more comfortable with the profession because schools were less competitive. P4 described that the entrepreneurial trend in his generation justified his decision of not working for prestigious companies, which made him more comfortable with prioritizing his interests.

**Personal opinions.** Nine participants stated that they had the autonomy to make their own decisions, and that they chose careers that made them happy and were interested in. Although P4’s parents helped him choose what courses to take in high school, he felt he enjoyed autonomy eventually where he was able to independently make decisions throughout his career development. Other participants also described their ability to choose careers that were of interest to them. They took their parents’ advice, but ultimately they considered their opinions first and foremost:

Without the Canadian beliefs, I wouldn’t even consider what I wanted to, and what I was interested in. My career would have been purely dictated by what my parents wanted. If I went their way, I would have been studying to be a doctor right now. If not I’ll be in an accountant. (P3)

Some participants described that because they were attuned to their interests, their career choice deviated from the Chinese stereotypes:

I probably went against every single grain of that stereotype. I didn’t fit into the typical mold of becoming a doctor or lawyer. That definitely wasn’t my cup of tea. (P2)
Being in psychology puts me separate from the Chinese part of it. Chinese people generally go into business, they don’t like working face to face with people. (P9)

### 4.2.3 Family Influence on Career Development

This section addresses the influence that family exerted on Chinese Canadians’ career development. Firstly, participants discussed their parents’ cultural identification,
their views on career, as well as similarities and differences that they had with their parents in terms of their views on career. Secondly, participants’ relationship with their parents is described. Finally, this section provides a detailed exploration of family influence on Chinese Canadians’ career development.

**Parental Identification with the Chinese Culture**

Nine participants indicated that their parents retained their sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture and strongly identified with traditional values, despite having lived in Canada for many years. P1 described that her parents’ language barrier made it difficult for them to adapt to the Canadian culture. P1 also described that multiculturalism in Toronto prevented them from completely immersing in the Western culture. She illustrated with the fact that a Chinese individual in Toronto would not be a minority numerically because of the abundance of Chinese individuals. In addition, P2 described that his parents developed close relationships with other Chinese individuals, which allowed them to maintain their Chinese sense of identity.

Participants described their parents’ opinions on the Canadian culture. For instance, P6 thought his parents found the Canadian culture unimpressive and that they had the bias that Canadians were lazy. P3 also described that her parents thought the schooling system in Canada was overly lenient. As seen, some participants had parents who retained their sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture, and at the same time had negative views about the Canadian culture.

**Subtle Canadian influence.** The majority of the participants indicated that their parents were influenced by the Canadian culture, although they themselves might not be aware of it. P1 stated that her parents adopted a more laid back lifestyle, when compared
to other individuals living in China. P7 described some Canadian values that her parents appreciated. For instance, P7’s parents liked living in Canada because they thought Canadians were nicer than individuals in China.

Some participants indicated that the Canadian influence allowed their immigrant parents to gradually become more open-minded in terms of their views on career. For instance, P3 described that her parents knew they were not familiar with many career options, thus they were more open to understanding what different careers entailed. P8’s parents explicitly stated that they were different from “old-fashion Chinese parents”.

Parents’ Views of Career

The previous section (4.2.2 Ethnicity) presents some views that the parents of these participants had regarding career. The following is a summary of these views.

**Prestigious career.** Participants indicated that their parents deemed certain careers as more prestigious than others and those were the careers that they wanted their children to get into.

**Parents’ upbringing.** Participants discussed that their parents’ upbringing and cultural background affected their parents’ views of career. While some of the immigrant parents had a survival mentality and valued stability and financial compensation, other parents realized the importance of enjoying one’s career. For instance, P1 described that not being able to have a career made her parents realize the importance of a career:

> Culturally, them being from where they are and not having a career themselves, they see it as a step up, and that’s generally what parents want to see in their kids, to do better than what they were able to do. (P1)

Some participants thought their parents believed that wealth and success would bring happiness because of their upbringing and challenging experiences. P6 thought his
parents wanted him to be an engineer because others would then look up to him, which was part of their definition of success and happiness. P3 described that her parents valued security and wealth, because it meant one did not have to work as hard.

**Similarities in Perspectives**

Participants described some similarities that they shared with their parents.

**Emphasis on continuous advancement and development.** P1 and P2 stated that similar to them, their parents saw continuous career development as important. For example, although P1 already met her career goal of becoming a teacher, her parents encouraged her to further her training and education to better her professional skills.

**Career serves to support oneself.** The majority of the participants agreed with their parents that one needed money to meet basic needs and career served that purpose. When exploring qualities of a good career, most participants indicated that financial compensation was important.

**Self-fulfillment and doing something one loves.** Some participants indicated that their parents thought it was important to like one’s career. P9 described that her father did not honour professional careers, thus he never forced her into prestigious fields and he valued finding enjoyment in one’s career. Similarly, P5’s father thought that everyone needed to have a career for self-fulfillment. As such, P5 was able to have sufficient autonomy throughout his career development and was encouraged to choose a career that he was interested in.

**Differences in Perspectives**

Some participants described discrepancies that they and their parents had regarding their views of career.
Career, money-making and security. Four participants indicated that their parents saw career solely as a means to make money. As such, qualities such as security and stability were deemed important. For instance, P7 saw enjoyment and continuous advancement as essential in one’s career, but her parents viewed career as a tool for money-making. P8 expressed similar views:

To them, an ideal career would be having a stable job, being able to provide for your family, have a decent income. For me, you care about what you do, you like your job, people you work with. (P8)

P6 explained that differences in experiences led to different values:

They were from china, and when you’re in that kind of suffering environment, you’ve got to take what you can get at all points. But we look at our generation and we’re so lucky to have everything. So it’s always been much more about what fulfills you. Those are the two contrasting points of view that I see. (P6)

Good Parent-Child Relationship

When discussing their relationships with their parents, the majority of the participants described some elements that contributed to a good relationship with one or both parents.

Love, support and respect. Some participants spoke about the loving and supportive relationship they had with their parents. P8 knew that her parents loved her because she felt that her needs were their priority. P9 described her dad as being supportive and understanding, which made her respect and admire him. P2 expressed his respect for his dad because of his work ethic, where he worked two jobs to provide for the household. P5 described an egalitarian relationship with his parents, which contributed to their good relationship:

We are more like friends, as opposed to them being my parents and I need to listen to them. They were there for guidance, but they didn’t really force me to do anything. Everything I do is my own choice. (P5)
Frequent communication and contact. Frequent interactions and doing activities together contributed to a good relationship. P1 indicated that she had a close relationship with her mom because they talked everyday and shared everything about themselves with each other. P1 described spending much of her time with her mom growing up, and through which they developed their bond. Although P2 recalled his dad being busy most of the time when he was growing up, he cherished the active role that his dad played when he was in boy scouts.

Trust. Trust was another quality that some participants saw as important in a good parent-child relationship. As indicated by P3, she felt that her relationship with her parents improved as she got older and her parents were more trusting of her decision-making skills and ability to do things independently. Other participants described the trust that their parents had in their academic work:

We get along. They didn’t worry too much about me because I did generally well in school. So they trust that whatever I pick I’d be fine. (P7)

Two-way communication. Some participants described having two-way communications with their parents growing up, where they were willing to listen to their children’s opinions and there was room for compromises and negotiation. Participants considered this communication style as positive. P5’s egalitarian relationship with his parents allowed him autonomy growing up, which fostered a positive relationship. P5 described that his parents never forced him to do things he did not like. Similarly, P10 felt that she enjoyed freedom despite the fact that her parents limited her career choice:

They allowed a lot of decision-making on our own, so there was a lot of freedom growing up, which I liked. I got to voice my opinions because their style of teaching was, you have the freedom of speech as long as you’re not out of line with what you say. (P10)
Less Ideal Relationships

Some participants brought up elements of less ideal relationships.

Lack of intimacy. Some participants indicated that they did not have a close or intimate relationship with their parents. Language barrier was partly why they did not talk about everything. For example, P7 stated that there were things that she did not discuss with her parents because of language barrier. She gave the example of her career, where she was unable to describe what she was working on because of the language barrier.

Some participants described not being able to attain a close and intimate relationship with one or both of their parents because they were busy. For instance, P1 recalled only seeing her dad at night, and the fact that he was not home impeded the development of a close relationship. Similarly, P3 described that it was stereotypical for Chinese parents to be always working. Although they would talk, there were never conversations on personal issues and P3 attributed that to their hectic life:

It’s not a stereotypical white relationship, where you would see in movies. There were never heart to heart talks. We never had that relationship, and I don’t think it was applicable to any of my siblings either. (P3)

Some participants thought that it was stereotypical in Chinese families that parents and children did not have a close and intimate relationship:

We’re not close, we don’t talk about personal stuff, and I think that’s very Chinese I suppose. (P9)

One-way communication. One-way communication, where children were expected to comply with parental expectations, was common in the childhood of the majority of the participants. P4 described that his parents were strict in terms of his academics. He gave the example of being forced to learn piano and to do extra academic work. P3 attributed their one-way communication to her parents’ lack of trust in her
opinions. She described using her older brother to second her opinions, which helped because they were more trusting of her brother’s opinions since he was older.

P6 wanted a more egalitarian relationship with his parents. Although P6’s relationship with his parents had been improving, he felt that his opinions were not always heard. P6 found that it was difficult for him to get his opinions across as an adult:

I think they want to be a coach to me, so I guess that’s why they’re very insistent about the nagging. No matter what, they look at me as kind of a little boy that needs help. That’s the kind of relationship we’ve always had. I wanted to transition into something more of a consultant. The older I get, the more resistant I become towards that. (P6)

P6 explored the reason behind these persistent one-way communications, and realized that he was never action-oriented and so he was unable to support his opinions. He described that it was difficult for him to formulate his own opinions, because he never had to have any opinions:

The discussions we had were never really about my opinions. It was more like them telling me what to do. I think it took me a while to formulate my own opinions because I didn’t really have any before, because you don’t have to. You just kind of say okay, and that’s how life goes. (P6)

**Family Influence on Career Development**

**No influence from family.** Four participants indicated that they were completely independent throughout their career development; and that they made most of their decisions on their own. P7 described making her own decisions first before informing her parents, and her parents always supported her decisions. P2 indicated that his parents did not understand his field, therefore they were unable to give him advice. Finally, P9 stated that because she was already doing well at school, her parents never impose too many expectations or involved themselves in her academics.
**Prestige of the field.** Six participants indicated that their parents wanted them to be in prestigious fields. Some participants described their parents wanting them to be accountants, doctors or pharmacists, however because they were not interested in those fields they refused. P6 described similar expectations from his parents, where they asked him to be a doctor or engineer and eventually him and his siblings entered these fields:

I remember very clearly a couple times, my parents asked me to be a doctor or an engineer. It was obvious what they want from me. Where I am now, and where my sisters are at now, it obviously impacted our career choice. (P6)

Although P2 described his parents as being fairly westernized, he knew that subconsciously his mom wanted him to be a white-collar worker. It was common for Chinese immigrant parents to want their children to get into prestigious fields, but they expressed their wants at different levels of subtlety.

**Active roles.** Some participants indicated that their parents actively steered them towards professions that they thought were prestigious. P6 knew that his parents wanted him to be an engineer, and coincidentally he thought he was interested in it, which was why he chose a career that aligned with his parents’ expectations. P6 brought up his fear of disobeying his parents, and went with their suggestions. Presently, he realized he was not passionate about it. P6 described being afraid to express what he wanted to do, and therefore he made decisions that he was expected to make. He referred to his internal desire to please others and the tremendous effect it had on his career and life:

How you are as a person is obviously shaped hugely by your parents. How much of your career choice is really defined by what your parents wanted from you. So, do you even know what you really want at the end of the day? (P6)
Some participants (e.g., P4 and P10) had parents who involved themselves early on in their career development during their high school course selection. Their assistance played a significant role in determining the programs that these participants entered:

I chose what programs to apply to in university. But they helped me choose what courses to take in high school, which does have a major cascading impact. (P4)

P10 chose finance because her parents approved it and she was interested in it. She described feeling relieved because she knew that if she were interested in something that conflicted with her parents’ expectations, they would intervene. Evidently, parental influence was present in these participants’ career development.

**Freedom, autonomy and support.** Nine participants indicated that their parents allowed freedom, autonomy and were supportive throughout their career development. For participants whose parents actively steered them towards their desired professions, some of them felt that they maintained autonomy because their parents were less involved in the later stages and they were able to make most decisions themselves:

At least my parents gave me enough flexibility to choose. Like here’s a pool of okay ones, but bigger pool of no’s. (P3)

P10 explained that once she entered the business program, her parents were less involved because they were happy that she was in the field. They did not care which branch within business she chose. P10 also described that her parents put much more emphasis on her decision-making in high school because they saw high school as the beginning of her career development.

Some participants felt that their parents were completely supportive of their career choice, and that they had the autonomy to choose any fields they wanted. For instance, P2 felt that his parents were happy that he chose a field he enjoyed. P9 explained that she
never got pressured by her parents to enter prestigious professions. Some parents were supportive in other situations. For instance, P5 described his parents as supportive when he wanted to quit school, and the fact that they were easy-going gave him the courage to quit after knowing that his chosen program was not right for him.

**Parental advice.** Some participants indicated that their parents gave them advice throughout their career development:

> My dad’s suggestions play a big role in my career decision-making process. I wouldn’t just blindly follow his suggestions, but I value what he tells me. (P5)

P2 and P8 stated that their parents did not influence their career decision-making, but they gave them advice throughout the process. For instance, when P2 chose theatre as his career, his parents asked him poignant questions to ensure that he realized that the theatre industry was less stable and might affect the type of lifestyle that he would be living. When P8 moved to Hong Kong, she felt frustrated because she was unable to find a job. Her mom offered encouragement, and suggested that she could consider other career options. P8 took her mom’s advice and started tutoring English in Hong Kong.

**Career-Related Conflicts and Disagreements**

Four participants reported encountering conflicts or disagreements with their parents regarding careers. P3 experienced some disagreements with her parents because they wanted her to go into prestigious fields. P3 remembered having arguments with them and explaining to them that she was not interested in becoming a doctor or accountant. P4 experienced some conflicts with his parents regarding going abroad for an internship, where his parents forbade him from going because working abroad was outside of their comfort zone and they worried about his safety. P4 complied with them
and gave up the opportunity, which left him feeling disappointed and upset. P4 described another conflict related to his current job:

The upcoming disagreement is that I should stop working at my current company and look for a job where there is more security and prestige. They believe I should work for someone, and I believe I can work with someone. (P4)

P5 also described sensing some disagreement with his mother, where she wanted him to return to school for a university degree. In addition, he felt that his mother did not consider his current job at his dad’s company a “real job” and wanted him to look for another job. Additionally, P6 described a recent conflict with his parents regarding his wish to further explore other career fields:

What they said to me was if you want to quit your job, we will not support you. You would have to get out of the house. They’re okay with me changing jobs. It’s just changing fields, or taking the time off to explore and try to find what I really want to do that they don’t like. (P6)
Chapter 5: Discussion

The first section of this chapter presents the summary of the findings. The second section discusses the implications of the current findings in relation to existing literature. The third section of this chapter explores the implications of the findings in light of major career theories. Lastly, this chapter discusses practical implications, strengths and limitations, and future directions of the current study.

5.1 Summary of Results

This study explored the career development of ten second-generation Chinese Canadians who were born and grew up in Toronto, Ontario. The researcher was interested in the following: (1) the meaning of career to Chinese Canadian adults, (2) career development of Chinese Canadian adults, (3) cultural identification and the role of ethnicity in their career decision-making, and (4) the role that their family played in their career decision-making. The major findings of the study are listed as follows:

1. Chinese Canadians saw career development as something that required ongoing commitment and continuous development. It should offer fulfillment and meaning, joy and financial compensation. Other meanings that Chinese Canadians attached to career included: an identity and lifestyle; new relationships; strengths and professionalism; and society advancement.

2. Throughout the career development of Chinese Canadians, factors that they considered in their career decision-making process included: interests; strengths; work environment; practicality such as financial compensation and job prospect; and others’ opinions. While some individuals indicated that their career development was easy and straightforward, others thought it was a
somewhat difficult process. Uncertainty was also explored. Prominent emotions that Chinese Canadians described included: neutral feelings; nervousness and anxiety; frustration; and guilt.

3. While the majority of Chinese Canadians identified with both Chinese and Canadian cultures, some stated that they only identified with the Canadian culture. A number of Chinese Canadians did not feel that their ethnicity influenced their career decision-making. Others described that the judgment of different fields within the Chinese culture helped them eliminate career choice at the beginning stages. Additionally, parents’ experiences and opinions also affected their decision-making. In terms of Western cultural influence, Chinese Canadians described that Canadian societal values and their personal opinions played a role throughout their career development.

4. Chinese Canadians listed some similarities and differences that they and their parents had in their perspectives of career. Qualities that contributed to good parent-child relationships included: love, support and respect; frequent communication and contact; trust; and two-way communication. Factors that made parent-child relationships less ideal included: one-way communication and lack of intimacy. In terms of familial influence, some indicated that they were independent throughout the process and family did not influence their decision-making. Others described some degree of parental influence, such as the emphasis on career prestige, parents’ active role and parental advice.
5.2 Current Findings and the Existing Literature

This section discusses the findings of the current study in light of the existing literature. There are three parts to this section: the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians, the role of ethnicity and career development, as well as the role of family and career development.

5.2.1 Career Development of Second-Generation Chinese Canadians

Career Brings Joy and Financial Compensation

Findings of the current study indicated that all participants associated career with joy and financial compensation. Joy was described in the form of enjoyment, excitement and happiness. Some participants also stressed the importance of doing something one liked. This is consistent with the Western view of career. Chinese Canadians were attuned to their inner thoughts and emotions when choosing a career, and they expected their career to offer happiness (Henderson & Chan, 2005). In addition, all participants associated career with financial compensation, where one had to make sufficient money to support oneself. Consistent with the current literature, second-generation Chinese Canadians viewed joy and financial compensation as co-existent in a career, which demonstrated both Chinese and Western influence (Le & Stockdale, 2008; Chung, 2001).

Ongoing Commitment, Development and Fulfillment

Participants described career as something that requires ongoing commitment and development, such as education. In addition, participants saw career as something that facilitated personal and professional growth, and provided personal fulfillment and meaning. Some participants viewed career as enmeshed and inseparable from their lifestyle and identity. These descriptions align with the Western view of career, where
career is seen as a lifelong process (Ma & Yeh, 2005; Super, 1990). The fulfillment that participants described echoed the self-expression notion where career should have deep personal meanings and fulfill one’s potential (Henderson & Chan, 2005; Holland, 1997).

**Time For Family**

Three participants described that a career should not deter one from spending time with one’s family, indicating that they strived for work-life balance. In this sense second-generation Chinese Canadians were more similar to European Canadians, who were found to value work-life balance (Bu & McKeen, 2000).

**Factors Considered**

When considering different careers, all participants took their interests into account. Some participants described being interested in their fields at a young age, while others discovered their interests throughout high school and university. This is somewhat discrepant from the current literature on Chinese Americans, which describes that Chinese Americans tend to prioritize parents’ opinions and familial expectations rather than following their personal interests (Leong, Kao & Lee, 2004; Leong & Serafica, 1995; Song & Glick, 2004; Tang, 2002). The reason behind such discrepancy could be that these studies examined a different population from the current study. For instance, Leong and colleagues’ study (2004) employed Asian American participants from the first to fifth generation; whereas Song and Glick (2004) studied mainly second-generation Asian Americans. Generation status could affect an individuals’ acculturation level. As well, discrepancy could be attributed to the differences between Chinese individuals living in Canada and the States. Chinese Canadians could be more receptive to Western influence, which explained why they were more westernized when choosing a career.
Other factors that Chinese Canadians considered included: work environment, financial compensation, job prospect, the ease of getting into the field and others’ opinions. Specifically, all participants considered financial compensation throughout their career development, which indicated Chinese influence (Tang, Fouad & Smith, 1999). As seen, influential factors in Chinese Canadians’ career decision-making indicated a mix of Chinese and Western influence. For instance, Chinese Canadians considered both their personal interests and family’s opinions while making career decisions, which was described in the literature (Okubo, Yeh, Lin, Fujita & Shea, 2007). Chinese Canadians were influenced by the Western culture to be attuned to personal fulfillment when choosing a career, but they were also affected by the family values in the Chinese culture where they were expected to take their parents’ opinions into account (Ma & Yeh, 2005). The findings of the current study indicated that similar to Chinese Americans, Chinese Canadians made their career choices under Chinese and Western influence.

**Process of Career Development**

Nine participants described that their career development was an easy and straightforward process. While some participants knew from the start what they wanted to get into, others focused on what they needed at the moment. For instance, although P3 was uncertain about what field to get into, she focused on what she needed in the short term and navigated her decision-making based on that. One participant described that her parents’ criteria (science or business fields) simplified her decision-making process. She explained that she only had to see which field she was better at. For instance, she tried science and realized she was not good at it, so automatically she chose the business field. This finding was somewhat consistent with the current literature, where Chinese
individuals living in North America had to consider parental expectations when choosing a career, and they considered career in the context of family obligation and respect (Leong & Tata, 1990; Leong et al., 2004; Okubo et al., 2007). Inconsistent with the literature, however, was that this particular participant did not react negatively towards her parents’ criteria, whereas Chinese Americans in previous research tend to encounter conflicts with their parents because of the lack of autonomy (Ma & Yeh, 2005). One explanation could be that this participant adopted strong Chinese values, and felt that it was reasonable for her parents to be involved in her career development. This participant also indicated that she trusted her parents and that the suggestions they gave must be good. This participant was very different from other participants who did not identify with the Chinese culture at all and advocated autonomy. This demonstrated that second-generation Chinese Canadians is a diverse population.

While the majority of the participants felt that their career development was straightforward in that they knew what they were interested in, some participants indicated that their career development was difficult. P6 described that as he matured, practical factors, such as prestige, financial compensation played a less important role, and he was searching for a field that would give him fulfillment. P6 demonstrated Chinese influence at the beginning of his career development because he considered the more practical factors (Henderson & Chan, 2005; Holroyd, 2003). At the time of the interview, he started paying more attention to his interests and personal fulfillment, which demonstrated Western influence (Ma & Yeh, 2005; Super, 1990). Another participant discovered that he had lost interest in his chosen major, and he found it particularly difficult when he was making the decision to quit school. He was concerned about what
others would think of his choice, which demonstrated Chinese influence and its emphasis on conforming to the norm (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). A mix of Chinese and Western influence in these Chinese Canadians’ career development is evident, and it showed that conflicting values might create some challenges in these individuals’ life.

**Uncertainty and Other Prominent Emotions**

Uncertainty was a common theme described by Chinese Canadians. One participant indicated that his uncertainty was partly caused by parental influence. He doubted that his current field was his true passion and he thought he chose the field due to parental influence. This is consistent with the current literature, which describes that Chinese Americans internalize parental expectation and sometimes alter personal interests and career path to meet parental expectations (Leong et al., 2004). Similar to first-generation Chinese Americans, second-generation Chinese Canadians might internalize their parents’ expectations and unconsciously choose careers that aligned with parental expectations.

When asked to describe some prominent emotions that Chinese Canadians experienced in their career development, some participants recalled feeling neutral because they were not particularly stressed. Other participants reported feeling anxious, rooted from self-doubt and the worries revolving around getting into programs and finding jobs. Although anxiety is known to be a common feeling experienced by Chinese Americans, the current literature linked anxiety to parental pressure and their expectations to excel (Okubo et al., 2007). This is different from what participants described because their anxiety came from themselves and not their parents. Although second-generation Chinese Canadians reported experiencing some negative emotions
throughout their career development, their immigrant parents did not always induce these feelings. This is inconsistent with the literature (Liu, 1998; Louie, 2001; Okubo et al., 2007), perhaps because the parents of second-generation Chinese Canadians generally allowed autonomy, and were less likely to exert constant pressure and expectations on their children. In contrast, P4 described some frustration directed towards his parents, because they forbade him to pursue an oversea internship due to safety reasons. He explained that value discrepancy led to intergeneration conflicts as such, which is consistent with the current literature (Chung, 2001; Wu & Chao, 2005; Qin, 2006). In summary, Chinese Canadians experienced mixed emotions in their career development; some of the emotions discussed are consistent with the current literature.

5.2.2 The Role of Ethnicity and Career Development

Cultural Identification

Nine participants identified with both Chinese and Canadian cultures, and one participant identified with only the Western culture. For Chinese Canadians who identified with both cultures, some of them felt a stronger sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture, whereas others felt more connected to the Canadian culture. Participants described a change in their ethnic identity as they matured. As adults, they became more appreciative of their Chinese heritage. Some participants described that their surrounding environment fostered a sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture due to close contact with other Chinese individuals. This phenomenon is discrepant from Berry’s theory of acculturation (1980) where one is expected to lose their loyalty and sense of belonging towards their culture of origin. One explanation could be that multiculturalism and high Chinese concentration in Toronto allowed Chinese Canadians to retain their
sense of belonging towards their country of origin. As seen, there is diversity within the second-generation Chinese Canadian population and many variables come into play that contribute to such diversity (Lai, 2007).

**Chinese Culture and Career Development**

Participants were asked to discuss how their ethnicity influenced their career development. Four participants stated that the Chinese culture and their ethnicity did not play a role at all, which was inconsistent with the current literature where Chinese individuals living in North America reported experiencing clashing values from two cultures (Hon, Sun, Suto & Forwell, 2011; Lai, 2007). Perhaps some Chinese Canadians did not feel that their ethnicity affected their decision-making because the Chinese population is quite high in Toronto. As indicated by P5, his ethnicity did not stand out and he was less aware of cultural influence. In addition, these Chinese Canadians reported that their immigrant parents were somewhat less traditional than typical Chinese parents, which could have reduced the degree of pressure and expectations that these parents placed on them. As such, these participants felt that their ethnicity did not influence their career development.

**Judgment of different careers.** The majority of the participants noticed that certain careers were deemed more prestigious and respectable than others, and judgment regarding different fields was present within the Chinese community. Such judgment was manifested through some participants’ parents, who openly expressed their views and influenced participants’ career decision-making. Three participants expressed that such judgment eliminated their career choices while in high school. One participant had parents who set rigid criteria because of their belief that one would only succeed in
business or science. Similar to Chinese Americans, second-generation Chinese Canadians were somewhat restricted in terms of the fields they could choose (Leong, 1991; Tang et al., 1999). Consistent with the current literature, the majority of the participants were in science, engineering or technology fields (Okubo et al., 2007; Song & Glick, 2004; Tang et al., 1999; Young et al., 2003). The phenomenon that Chinese are overrepresented in science and technology, but underrepresented in the humanities and social fields is reflected in the current study (Leong & Serifica, 1995; Tang et al., 1999).

Subtle Chinese influence was evident in the values that participants endorsed regarding career and success. P10 discussed how judgment in the culture changed her perspective about career success. P8 reflected that she was not passionate about her career, but it was more important for her to be financially independent. Their views were consistent with the Chinese mentality that success is measured by financial compensation and interest was secondary (Bu & McKeen, 2000; Leong, 1993; Leong & Gim-Chung, 1995; Okubo et al., 2007). Although second-generation individuals are fluent in English and encounter fewer obstacles entering non-stereotypical fields (Leong & Gim-Chung, 1995), Chinese values pushed them to make similar decisions as immigrants.

**Witnessing parents’ experiences.** Chinese Canadians witnessed their parents’ struggles and contrasted their experiences with their own. Some participants described the survival mentality in their parents, which explained why they viewed financial compensation and prestige as essential. Participants in the current study acknowledged the differences they had with their parents, which was consistent with the current literature (Qin, 2006; Qin et al., 2008).
Parents’ opinions. Although all participants stated that they had the autonomy to make major career-related decisions, some indicated that their parents’ opinions mattered. Some participants noticed their parents’ expectations and complied with their demands (e.g., P3, P4, P6 and P10), whereas others described that they voluntarily took their advice after careful evaluation. P6 indicated that the Chinese culture fostered an internal desire to please others, which was partly why he chose his current field. He expressed a reactionary desire to please other people. Still, these participants described enjoying autonomy throughout most of their career development. Consistent with the current literature, Chinese Canadians were likely to take their parents’ opinions and their parents played a rather significant role in their career decision-making (Young et al., 2003), but the rigid expectation that children must obey their parents (Lin & Fu, 1990) and that parents make significant life decisions for their children (Chao, 1994; Kuo & Spees, 1983) was absent in some cases. As mentioned above, the level of acculturation of the parents in the current study could be high because of the longer length of residence in Canada. Under Western influence, these parents were less likely to expect complete obedience from their children.

Western Culture and Career Development

Personal opinions. Nine participants described their autonomy while choosing a career. Second-generation Chinese Canadians had the freedom to pick careers that they were interested in and were happy with, which reflected the Western notion that career should provide happiness, meaning and fulfillment (Henderson & Chan, 2005). As P3 stated, she would not have considered her interests without the Western belief that career served the purpose of self-fulfillment. In addition, some participants described that their
careers deviated from the Chinese stereotypes, which drew them further away from their Chinese identity. Chinese individuals living in North America are exposed to the mainstream culture through peers and friends, which fostered their level of acculturation (Berry, 1980). These two participants, having chose fields that were less common to Chinese individuals, could be more accustomed to the Canadian culture because they were exposed to more Caucasian individuals in their career and work environments. Their sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture might therefore be further reduced because of such exposure (Berry, 1980).

To conclude, although participants did not describe experiencing constant cultural struggle as described in previous research (Cheung, Nelson, Advincula & Canham, 2005; Okubo et al., 2007), the influence of the Chinese culture was evident in Chinese Canadians’ career development.

5.2.3 The Role of Family and Career Development

Parents’ Views on Career As Affected by Their Cultural Identification

Nine Chinese Canadians indicated that their parents retained a strong sense of belonging towards the Chinese culture. As such, the values that these parents endorsed remained traditional. Participants described that language barrier and close contact with other Chinese individuals slowed down their parents’ rate of acculturation. The described phenomenon was consistent with the current literature. Chinese Canadian immigrant parents and second-generation youths learn the Western values at different rates (Portes, 1997), with immigrant parents remaining traditionally Chinese because they spent years in their country of origin before immigrating (Okubo et al., 2007).
Traditional thinking persisted in some participants’ parents in terms of their views of career. For instance, P10’s parents took pride of her being in finance and liked to brag to others about her career success, which is a common phenomenon described in the literature where parents compliment their children by telling others about their achievements (Sue, 1997). As mentioned in the previous section, some Chinese Canadian immigrant parents believed that upward socioeconomic mobility and success were crucial to one’s happiness, and that it was important that their children entered fields that others looked up to. This is consistent with the current literature (Louie, 2001; Pearce & Lin, 2007), indicating that Chinese immigrant parents living in Canada had similar values regarding career as the Chinese immigrant parents living in the States.

Nine Chinese Canadians described some extent of Canadian influence in their parents in terms of their open-minded views of career. Participants (e.g., P3 and P6) indicated that their parents started to understand that “it is a different time, different culture (P6)”, and that they were more accepting of other non-traditional careers. As Lai (2007) stated, the level of acculturation of Chinese Canadians were affected by one’s immigration status, length of residence in Canada and language fluency. Parents of second-generation adult Chinese Canadians had resided in Canada for at least thirty years, which explained the gradual change in their values and perspectives of career.

Similarities and Differences in Career Views

Seven participants described some similarities that they shared with their parents in their views of career. Two participants described that similar to them, their parents viewed continuous career development as important and there was the need to continuously develop their professional skills. This somewhat reflects the Chinese
emphasizes on work ethics and self-discipline (Louie, 2001). In addition, some participants agreed with their parents that career provided financial support and career success was the ability to financially support oneself. Their views demonstrated Chinese influence (Bu & McKeen, 2000; Ma & Yeh, 2010; Okubo et al., 2007). Some participants described that their parents were westernized and agreed that it was important to enjoy one’s career (Henderson & Chan, 2005). These parents were different from and more acculturated than traditional Chinese parents who think that financial security and prestige are the most important (Okubo et al., 2007; Song & Glick, 2004; Tang et al., 1999; Young et al., 2003).

Other participants described some discrepancies that they had with their parents. While some of the parents viewed career as merely a means for financial support, their second-generation children valued enjoyment, interests and continuous development. These discrepancies are consistent with the current literature. While acculturated Chinese Americans preferred the values of the Western culture, their less acculturated immigrant parents maintained traditional values and beliefs (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Uba, 1994). Four participants reported some degree of conflicts regarding their career decision-making with their parents. Topics of argument included the importance of entering prestigious fields, job security and stability; safety; and autonomy. This aligns with the existing literature, where the contrasts between the Western (individualism) and Chinese (collectivism) cultures are fully manifested when immigrant parents and second-generation children make important life decisions together (Zhou & Bankston, 1998).

When choosing a career, parents and children are likely to encounter conflicts regarding the degree of autonomy one is allowed (Chung, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 1998).
Additionally, values regarding conforming to parental expectations and respect are likely to evoke conflicts in Chinese American families (Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008).

Conflicts were mostly resolved through compromises and negotiations. For instance, the participant who did not want to enter either medicine or accounting chose engineering instead based on her interest, which was still a prestigious field in their parents’ opinions. Even though Chinese Canadians realized their parents’ expectations, they still had the final decision-making power. Chinese Canadian parents and children tended to encounter conflicts, but second-generation Chinese Canadians were able to stand up for their own opinions and navigated between parents’ expectations and their own interests. This is consistent with the current literature in that Chinese in North America consider both their personal opinions and parents’ expectations when making important decisions (Okubo et al., 2007; Young et al., 2003)

**Parent-Child Relationship**

When discussing Chinese Canadians’ relationship with their parents, some factors that contributed to what they deemed a good parent-child relationship were discussed: love, support and respect; frequent communication and contact; trust; and two-way communication. These characteristics are elements of an egalitarian relationship where a close, warm and intimate relationship is established (Chao, 2001; Wu & Chao, 2005; Wu & Chao, 2011). Second-generation Chinese Canadians’ preference for an affectionate relationship is consistent with the current literature (Qin et al., 2008; Wu & Chao, 2011).

As reflected in the literature, the lack of open communication is more prominent when second-generation Chinese Canadians were young, and they were expected to listen to parents without talking back (Qin et al., 2008). As they matured, however, participants
felt that their parents were more trusting of them. Participants described being better able to express themselves and have a more egalitarian relationship with their parents, which is not reflected in the current literature (Qin et al., 2008). Such discrepancy could be due to the fact that most immigrant parents with second-generation children had lived in the Western society for a longer period of time, thus these parents were more accustomed to the Western culture (Chung, 2001).

Some Chinese Canadians described negative aspects of their relationship with their parents, which was the lack of intimacy and one-way communication. As described in the current literature, Chinese immigrant parents tended to be busy when their children were young in order to afford a better education for their children (Louie, 2001; Qin et al., 2008). The same applies to some Chinese Canadians, and as a result they had a less intimate relationship with their parents. In contrast, some participants were able to establish a close and supportive relationship with their parents even though they were busy. As such, busy parents did not necessarily cause alienation and withdrawal from their children as indicated in the literature.

Participants who described that they did not have an intimate relationship with their parents indicated that language barrier impeded them from sharing personal events with them. This is consistent with the literature, which states that language barriers reduce efficient communication between parents and children, thus leading to alienation and emotional distance (Chung, 2001; Qin et al., 2008). The emotion control aspect in the Chinese culture was also demonstrated in some Chinese Canadian parent-child relationships, where parents seldom show their love and affection openly (Wu & Chao, 2005). As described by P3, she never had a stereotypical “white” relationship where
parents and children had heart to heart talks. Although Chinese Canadians did not have intimate relationships with their parents, they were able to rationalize it and understand that it was a cultural difference. They knew that it was stereotypical in Chinese families that parents and children did not share a close and intimate relationship. This is in contrast with what was shown in the literature, where second-generation Chinese Americans reported encountering conflicts with their parents because of the lack of self-expression and autonomy in parenting (Ma & Yeh, 2005; Qin, 2006; Qin et al., 2008).

Some Chinese Canadians described one-way communications with their parents, where their parents expected them listen, comply and not talk back. This phenomenon is consistent with the current literature (Chiu & Ring, 1998; Qin et al., 2008; Wu & Chao, 2011). Looking back, most participants understood that their parents wanted what was best for them. In addition, most participants were able to have a more egalitarian relationship with their parents as they matured.

**Family Influence on Career Development**

Some Chinese Canadians indicated that they were able to make their own decisions independently and their family did not influence their career decisions-making. This phenomenon is different from what was described in the literature, where career decision is seen as a family matter in the Chinese culture (Ma & Yeh, 2005). The immigrant parents in this study seemed to be more westernized and allowed more autonomy in their children’s career decision-making when compared to what is described in the literature. Since most of these immigrant parents had stayed in Canada for at least twenty years, they could be more acculturated and therefore allowed more autonomy and independence in their children’s career development.
Other Chinese Canadians described heavy family involvement throughout their career development, which was highlighted in the literature where Chinese parents tended to provide more guidance and exert control in their children’s career development (Leong & Serafica, 1995; Young et al., 2003). Chinese immigrant parents wanted their children to enter prestigious fields. Some parents were rather passive about their preference. For instance, P2 described that although his mother subconsciously wanted him to be a white-collar worker, she never took action to steer him towards those fields. Other parents took active roles in ensuring that their children got into fields that they approved by exerting influence early on in their children’s career development. P4 explained that his parents’ involvement in his high school course selection had a cascading impact on his university application later on, where he was restricted to business and science. This phenomenon is common in Chinese families (Pearce & Lin, 2007; Qin et al., 2008). Consistent with the current literature, Chinese Canadians were likely to follow their parents’ wishes and ended up in fields that their parents preferred (Young et al., 2003).

Chinese Canadians reacted differently to parents who actively steered them towards specific fields. Some participants were grateful for their parents’ influence and were glad that they followed their parents’ wishes. This aligned with the Chinese idea that parental love is manifested through the educational and career decisions that parents help children make (Young et al., 2003). Some participants realized that they chose their current field mostly because of parental influence, and started to wonder if their chosen field was right for them. As described in the literature, parental expectations could be internalized, where individuals thought they were interested in a field but in reality, they would have made a different decision without parental influence (Leong et al., 2004; Liu,
It is therefore sometimes difficult to tease apart what came from the self, and what came from the parents.

On the other hand, the general impression that Chinese Canadians had was that their parents allowed autonomy in their career decision-making, even for those whose parents actively steered them towards a certain direction. P3 explained that despite setting some criteria as to what fields were good and what were not, her parents gave her enough flexibility that they did not tell her to go into one specific field. She felt that she still had the freedom to choose a career among a pool of professions that were approved by her parents. Some Chinese Canadians stated that their parents provided them with career advice, but ultimately they had the freedom to decide whether to take their advice or not. This is in contrast with the literature, which states that Chinese parents tend to pressure their children to comply with their opinions, and believe that they have the right to control their children’s education and career (Chao, 1994; Ma & Yeh, 2005; Wu & Chao, 2011). Some participants in the current study indicated that they were likely to consider and follow their parents’ advice, which is consistent with the current literature – Asian American students are more likely to compromise with their parents when making career-related decisions (Tang, 2002). Other participants indicated that they made all their decisions independently, which is similar to the European Americans described in the literature (Tang, 2002). As demonstrated, second-generation Chinese Canadians presented characteristics that are present in Chinese Americans and European Americans. In addition, some parents of second-generation Chinese Canadians adopted the Western parenting style, where their children had autonomy in important decision-making. Other parents were more traditional and played active roles in their children’s career...
development. In conclusion, diversity is evident in the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians and their level of acculturation mediated such diversity.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

This section will explore the applicability of three career theories to the findings of the current study. The three career theories include Gottfredson’s Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, Social Cognitive Career Theory and Contextual Action Theory of Career.

Gottfredson’s Theory of Circumscription and Compromise

Gottfredson’s theory of circumscription and compromise (2005) proposed that individuals eliminate career choice based on gender type, prestige and interests. Throughout one’s career development, individuals better understand the availability and accessibility of different jobs, and they balance their preferences and the likelihood of getting into the fields through the process of compromise (Gottfredson, 2005). In terms of the order of compromise, Gottfredson (2002) theorizes that interest is sacrificed first, then the prestige of the career, and finally the gender type of the job. Gottfredson’s theory is partially applicable to second-generation Chinese Canadians. When choosing a career, participants considered their interests and strengths. Prestige, on the other hand, was of less importance even though the majority of the Chinese parents wanted their children to enter prestigious fields. Additionally, participants never mentioned considering the gender type of their fields. Findings are consistent with Gottfredson’s theory in that second-generation Chinese Canadians considered their strengths, the ease of entering the field and the availability of jobs when making decisions. However, the proposed order of compromise is not applicable to the current findings since all participants prioritized their
interests. Prestige was mentioned but it mattered to a smaller extent. In addition, gender type was never mentioned as one of the factors that participants considered. Perhaps Chinese Canadians were less exposed to the gender types of different professions as they grew up because of the emphasis on gender equality in today’s society. On the other hand, the gender type of careers could be something that participants considered subconsciously and automatically. However, they did not bring it up because the researcher did not discuss the role of career gender type in the interviews.

Gottfredson’s theory was criticized for not taking cultural and contextual influences (e.g., others’ opinions) into consideration (Hou & Leung, 2011). The current findings reflected this criticism since the majority of the Chinese Canadians valued their parents’ opinions to some extent, which was not mentioned in her theory.

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

SCCT predicts that interest development, career choice and performance contributed to one’s career development (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994; 2002). Additionally, it proposes that one’s self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals also influence career decision-making. The current findings reflected the relationship between self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals as proposed by SCCT. Nine out of ten participants indicated that strengths came into play as they explored different career options, and that doing things they were good at increased their confidence in their fields. The connection between strengths, confidence and interests was depicted by P1. She described that others kept telling her that she was good at teaching, which reinforced the idea that she should pursue teaching because she liked it and was good at it. On the other hand, decrease in interest also reduced one’s performance in the field. As illustrated by
P5, he decided to quit university because he was no longer interested in the chosen program of study. Without interests, P5 lacked the motivation to keep up with his academic work. The current findings support the model of interest development, where participants described developing interests in things that they were good at and strengths fostered interests in their current fields.

The Model of Career Choice depicts that one actively chooses careers based on their interests, which were influenced by self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent et al., 2002). In other words, individuals tend to choose careers that they are interested in and good at, and they take active actions to pursue the goal. This theory applies to second-generation Chinese Canadians, where strengths and interests were the two factors that they prioritized. For instance, P2 chose the hospitality field because he discovered his strengths in the field; P9 furthered her interest in psychology and pursued the field because she performed well in psychology classes.

The Model of Performance in SCCT predicts that self-efficacy influences performance because self-efficacy helps individuals manage their behavioural skills (Lent et al., 2004). This is consistent with some Chinese Canadians’ career development where they performed better in areas that they were confident in (e.g., P1, P9, P10). One participant, however, demonstrated a different pattern. P6 was interested in and good at his chosen field. However, he slowly discovered that his interest was fading and realized that he was in his current field because of his parents. Although P6’s self-efficacy was high in terms of performing well at work, he was actively considering alternative careers at the time of the interview. As criticized by some researchers (Tang et al., 1999), SCCT fails to incorporate family involvement in one’s career development, which is
problematic because in some cultures families tend to play a significant role in children’s career development. For instance, second-generation Chinese Canadians are likely to internalize their parents’ expectations (Leong et al., 2004) and misinterpret their strengths as interests. In conclusion, SCCT was able to explain most participants’ career interests and choice in the current study, but it is not applicable to some individuals because it did not take family involvement into consideration.

**Contextual Action Theory of Career**

Young and Valach (2004) believed that career is developed through a series of goal-directed actions and there were no set rules or guidelines as to how individuals reach their ultimate goals. Their theory proposes that cultural, social and psychological elements are created and affect the decisions that individuals make (Young & Valach, 2004). Career is also seen as an interactional event, where two or more individuals take actions together and develop career identity, values and behaviours (Valach & Young, 2004). For instance, career development is partly the relationship that individuals develop with their family or counsellors (Valach & Young, 2004). This theory is applicable to the findings of the current study, where participants set up goals and work towards them. The establishment of career goals was done either independently, or through collaboration with parents. While some participants (e.g., P2, P7 and P8) described setting goals independently, others (e.g., P3, P4, and P6) depicted greater parental involvement in the process. The Contextual Action Theory of Career applied to the Chinese Canadians in the current study because of its emphasis on short-term and long-term career goals, and its incorporation of cultural norms and relational constructs such as family involvement.
5.4 Practical Implications

In terms of practical implications, counsellors working with second-generation Chinese Canadians should help them explore and identify an area of interest since interest is a major determining factor that Chinese Canadians considered in their career development. In addition, other practical factors should be taken into consideration as well, such as strengths, financial compensation, job prospects, and the ease of getting into the field. Counsellors should help second-generation Chinese Canadians investigate the practicality aspect and the likelihood of working in their fields of interest. Furthermore, since the majority of the Chinese Canadians also identified with the Chinese culture, they tend to be influenced by Chinese values and their family’s opinions as they make career-related decisions. It is therefore important that counsellors take that into account when working with this population, for example, to be mindful that Chinese Canadians might be concerned about their parents’ opinions and expectations when making career decisions. Due to acculturation differences, some Chinese Canadians will encounter conflicts with their family. Part of the counsellors’ role might therefore be helping Chinese Canadians resolve these conflicts with their parents through negotiation and compromise. As demonstrated in the current study, there is diversity within the second-generation Chinese Canadian population. While some individuals identify more so with the Chinese culture, others only identify with the Western culture. In addition, immigrant parents retained Chinese values to different extents as well. Some parents are more traditional while others are more westernized. As such, when working with Chinese Canadians, it is important that counsellors be open-minded and willing to consider
various factors, such as the clients’ level of acculturation, ethnic identity, and their parents’ views on careers.

5.5 Strengths and Limitations

As described by one participant, Chinese Canadians are no longer a minority numerically. However, research on their career development is scarce. Findings of this study can contribute to the current literature and lay the foundation for future research in this area.

This study makes a distinction between second-generation and first-generation Chinese Canadians. Specifically, the current study explored the career development of Chinese Canadians belonging to the second-generation, and how their ethnicity and family influenced their career development. Since this study employed a qualitative approach, it provided rich information on the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians, and how this population balanced their personal needs with parental expectations when making career decisions. Specifically, the current study provided detailed descriptions of Chinese Canadians’ career development, their ethnic identity and how the Chinese and Western cultures affected their career development. Finally, this study outlined the relationship that second-generation Chinese Canadians had with their parents, some of the conflicts they encountered and immigrant parents’ influence on their children’s career development. Findings of the current study are somewhat consistent with the existing literature, in that most second-generation Chinese Canadians were influenced by both cultures (Chinese and Western) as they made career decisions: they considered their own interests, but they also conformed to parents’ expectations to different extents. In contrast, there were some inconsistencies with the existing literature.
Although Chinese immigrant parents were portrayed as strict and authoritarian in the literature, this study demonstrated that some Chinese immigrant parents were westernized enough to allow autonomy and freedom when their second-generation children made decisions. This could be due to the fact that some parents were more acculturated after residing in Canada for a long period of time. In addition, contrary to the current literature, most second-generation Chinese Canadians described their career development as easy and straightforward, despite some disagreements that they had with their parents.

Another discovery was that Chinese Canadians did not feel that their career development was much different from other Canadians, in that not all Chinese Canadians thought their ethnicity or family affected their career development. Although they were able to describe some subtle influence of the Chinese culture, the majority of Chinese Canadians felt that they would have made the same decisions regardless of their ethnicity. This phenomenon was somewhat different from previous research on Chinese Americans, which emphasized the constant cultural struggle and familial conflicts that these individuals faced when making career-related decisions. Such inconsistency could be explained by the fact that Toronto is a diverse city with high Chinese concentration. As such, the ethnicity of Chinese Canadians could be less salient throughout their career development. This validates the importance of further research on the career development of Chinese Canadians, since they could be very different from Chinese individuals living in other parts of North America. The discrepancy warrants future research in this area to further examine the roles of ethnicity and family in the career development of this population.
Like other studies, there are some limitations in the current study that should be mentioned. First of all, the use of qualitative method implied that the researcher was the only person who interviewed, transcribed, analyzed and interpreted the findings. Being a second-generation Chinese Canadian herself, her personal biases and beliefs about the Western and Chinese cultures and their influence on career development could have affected her understanding and interpretation of the participants’ words. In order to counteract this limitation, the researcher attempted to get an accurate understanding of the participants’ experiences by constantly reflecting on and clarifying their answers during the interviews. Additionally, quotes were used as the researcher reported the findings to ensure that her interpretations were translucent to readers. Participants were sent the summary of their individual findings, and were offered the opportunity to provide feedback in the case of misunderstanding or misrepresentations. These processes ensured that the researcher’s interpretation of the participants’ experience was accurate and bias-free. The researcher also acknowledged her personal biases and assumptions in Chapter Three, and was mindful of them throughout the research process. These methods should counteract some of the limitations of using a qualitative approach.

The second limitation of the current study is its sampling method. Since participants voluntarily took part in the study, findings of the current study could be biased towards Chinese Canadians who felt more comfortable with their ethnicity and were more open to sharing their experiences. Additionally, due to the small sample size, the application of the current findings is limited to second-generation Chinese Canadians with parents who are fairly westernized and living in Toronto. Readers should therefore be mindful of these limitations when interpreting the findings.
5.6 Future Research Directions

The purpose of the current study is to lay the groundwork for future studies in the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians. It will be worthwhile to replicate the current study with Chinese Canadians living in different cities or provinces in Canada. For instance, Chinese Canadians living in cities where the Chinese concentration is less high might report different experiences in their career development. In addition, replicating this study with Chinese Canadians whose parents have been residing in Canada for different lengths of time might provide different information regarding parental expectations and influence on career development. Another suggestion for future research is to involve Chinese Canadian immigrant parents in the research process to acquire their perspectives of their children’s career development, as well as the role that parents play in their children’s career decision-making. This could help deepen the understanding of familial and ethnic influence on the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians, as well as the theoretical application of different career theories to this specific population.
References


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Table 1: Summary of Participants’ Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Years living in Canada</th>
<th>Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>Parents’ Birth Place/ Country of Origin</th>
<th>Parents’ Years of Residency in Canada</th>
<th>Current Field</th>
<th>Years in current Field</th>
<th>Ethnic Identity</th>
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<td>Toronto</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>China and Hong Kong</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bicultural</td>
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Appendix A: Recruitment Email script

My name is Lesley Choi and I am a Master’s student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (U of T). I am currently doing a research project to examine the roles of ethnicity and family in the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians. As a Chinese Canadian and prospective counselor, I believe that the Chinese culture and immediate family play a significant role in the career development of Chinese Canadians. It is therefore important for professionals who work closely with this population to better understand how culture and family background contribute to the career decision-making process of Chinese Canadians. I hope that this research will contribute to the development of effective counseling techniques that are tailored to Chinese Canadians in helping them choose a suitable career. If this topic is of interest to you, and if you answer “Yes” to questions A, B, and C, I sincerely invite you to participate in my study.

Please answer the following questions:

A) Are you a Chinese individual born in Canada?
B) Are you currently working full-time/part-time?
   OR
   Do you have at least 1 year of work experience in your current field?
C) Did your parents immigrate to Canada from China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong?

The interview will take about one to two hours to complete, and the information that you provide will be kept confidential. You will be asked to sign an informed consent agreement prior to the interview, and you can decline to answer questions that you prefer not to. Participation in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the interview at any point of time. Upon completion of the interview, you will receive a small token of appreciation to compensate your time and effort.

If you are interested in participating or have further questions, please contact me at Lesley.choi@mail.utoronto.ca or 647-618-0338. If you decide to participate, I will contact you to set up an interview date, time and place that is convenient for you.

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to hearing from you. If possible, please forward this to anyone who you think might be interested in participating.

Sincerely,
Lesley Choi
Appendix B: Interview Set-Up Email Script

Thank you for your interest in participating in the study. To ensure your eligibility, please answer the following questions:

1. Were you born in Canada?
2. Were your parents born and educated in China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, and immigrated to Canada?
3. Are you currently working full-time/part-time?
   OR
   Do you have at least 1 year of work experience in your current field?
4. Did you spend your childhood and adolescence in Canada?

If you answer “Yes” to all of the above questions, I would like to set up a date and time for an interview with you at a location that is convenient for you. The interview will take about one to two hours to complete. The information that you provide will be kept confidential. You will be asked to sign an informed consent agreement prior to the interview, and you can decline to answer questions that you prefer not to. Participation in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point of time. Upon completion of the interview, you will receive a small compensation as an appreciation for your time and effort.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate and contact me at Lesley.choi@mail.utoronto.ca or 647-618-0338. Thank you again for your interest in participating in the study.

Sincerely,
Lesley Choi
Appendix C: Consent Form

You have been invited to participate in a research project entitled “The Roles of Ethnicity and Family in the Career Development of Second-Generation Chinese Canadians”, conducted by Lesley Choi as part of her M. A. thesis research in the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. The purpose of this study is to explore the roles that ethnicity and family play in the career development of second-generation Chinese Canadians. Based on the preliminary ethnic and career information that you provided to the researcher, she believes that your experience will greatly contribute to this topic. The researcher anticipates ten to fifteen participants in this research study.

As a participant of the study, you will be asked to:
(a) Answer some demographic questions regarding your ethnic, educational and career background, which will take about 15 minutes to complete.
(b) Participate in an audio tape-recorded interview that will take about one to two hours.

The interview will be conducted by Lesley Choi at a mutually agreed upon location. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. You will be asked questions regarding your career development, how you decided to work in your chosen field, and how your family and cultural background influenced your career experiences. The information that you provide is important to our research, therefore please ensure that your answers are honest and genuinely reflect your experiences.

Information collected from you will be kept confidential and locked at a secured location that can only be accessed by the researcher and her supervisor. Electronic files of the audio recording of the interview will be encrypted and saved in the researcher’s password-protected personal computer. Consent forms, interview notes and transcripts of the interview will be kept in a locked cabinet. Confidentiality will be ensured by the use of pseudonym for your name on all documents where your information is recorded. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the master list of your name and your corresponding pseudonym. All documents and audio recordings will be destroyed two years after the completion of the study. Information collected from this interview will be part of a thesis and may be used for future publications or presentations. As mentioned, confidentiality will be ensured throughout the research process. However, in the event that you report a current or potential child abuse, or an intention to harm yourself or others during the interview, it is our duty as researchers to breach confidentiality and report this content to the authority.

After the completion of the interviews and data analysis, a summary of the findings will be sent to you via email or mail so that you have the opportunity to review the findings from this study. You will be invited to provide feedback via phone or email. If you provide comments regarding these findings, your comments will be carefully reviewed. If there is discrepancy between your comments and the findings, the researcher will contact you to decide how the research findings could best represent what you have stated in the interview.
You may benefit from your participation in this research study by having the chance to explore and reflect on your career development and experiences. Upon completion of the interview, you will receive compensation for your participation.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You may decline to answer questions that you are uncomfortable with during the interview. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, you may contact Lesley Choi (lesley.choi@mail.utoronto.ca, 647-618-0338) or her supervisor Dr. Charles Chen (cpchen@utoronto.ca, 416-978-0719). You may also contact the Ethics Review Office (ethics.review@utoronto.ca, 416-946-3273) if you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the purpose and requirements of the study, and that you agree to participate. A copy of this consent form will be given to you for your own reference.

Thank you very much for your valuable time and cooperation.

---------------------------------------------------------------
I have read and understood the above information and voluntarily consent to participate in the above research study. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own reference.

Participant’s printed name (First name, last name): _____________________________

Participant’s signature: __________________________ Date: ___________________
Appendix D: Interview Protocol with Demographic Questions

Date/Time of interview: ___________________ Participant number: ________________

Demographic Questions:

1. What is your ethnicity/ background?

2. How old are you?

3. Where were you born?

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed (also ask about other post-secondary degrees)?

5. Where did you complete it?

6. How many years have you been living in Canada?

7. Where were your parents born?

8. When did they immigrate to Canada?

9. What was your first paid job?

10. What other jobs have you held since then?

11. What is your current/most recent job (years in the current job, nature of job)?

12. How many years have you been in this field?
Job History/timeline:

1. **The meaning of career**
   - What does career mean to you?
   - In your opinion, what qualities must be present in an ideal career?
   - What do you hope to achieve in your career? What are your career goals?
2. Career development and career decision-making

Can you describe what led you to choosing your current career?
- How did you choose your very first job? Why did you choose it?

- How did you come to choose your current field? What was the process like? Try describing it to me.

- Why did you choose your current field?
  - What factors did you consider when choosing your career? (e.g., career interests, remuneration, market demand, Chinese cultural values and parental influence, response to Chinese values)

- How was the decision-making process like?
  - What are some of the prominent thoughts that stood out for you?
  - What feelings were generated when you were making career-related decisions?

- Did you consider other career choices? What made you decide to not pursue those alternatives?

- What made your career decision-making process easy/difficult for you?

- What do you like about your current career?

Interviewer’s comments/reflective notes/nonverbal cues:
3. **Ethnicity, culture and generation status**

   *Can you please describe how being a second-generation Chinese Canadian affected your career decision-making?*

   - Which culture do you identify with?
     - How much do you identify with the Chinese culture/ Canadian culture?
     - Which ethnic group do you feel a sense of belonging to?
     - Do you consider yourself bicultural?

   - Are you familiar with the norms and values of the Chinese culture? Examples?

   - What role did culture (*Chinese and Canadian*) play in your career development?
     - In what ways did your Chinese background affect your decision-making in career choice?
       - How did these values and beliefs affect your career development and decision-making process?
     - How did the Canadian values and beliefs affect your career development and decision-making process?

   - Did the process of career decision-making affect you as a Chinese Canadian? If it did, how so?
     - Have you noticed any changes in your perspectives and feelings towards the Chinese culture as you were making career choices?
     - Have you noticed any changes in your perspectives or feelings towards the Canadian culture as you were making career choices?

**Interviewer’s comments/ reflective notes/ nonverbal cues:**
4. **Family relationship, acculturation level of family and its role in career development**

Can you please describe how your family influenced your career development and decision-making?

- How much do your parents identify with the Chinese culture?
  - How much do your parents identify with the Canadian culture?

- In what ways, if any, did your parents’ Chinese background affect their views on career decision-making?
  - In your parents’ opinion, what qualities must be present in an ideal career?
  - What does career mean to your parents?

- Please describe your relationship with your parents?
  - Please describe your communication style with your parents (e.g., one-way communication; liberal; strict)?

- In what ways, if any, did your family influence your career choice and development?
  - What are your parents’ aspirations for you in your career?
  - What career goals do they have for you?
  - How often did your parents discuss your career plans with you?

- How much similarity do you and your parents share in your perspectives on career? In what ways are they similar/different? Please elaborate.

- Have you encountered any conflicts/disagreement with your family regarding your career decision-making? If so, how did you resolve them?

- How did your ultimate career choice affect your parents? How did it affect your relationship with your parents?

Interviewer’s comments/ reflective notes/ nonverbal cues: