High-Achieving, Non-First-Generation, Female, Undergraduate Student Views of Family Influence on Career Decisions

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HIGH-ACHIEVING, NON-FIRST-GENERATION, FEMALE, UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENT VIEWS OF FAMILY INFLUENCE ON CAREER DECISIONS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
Katryna Bower Maxwell
December 2018

Accepted by:
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Dr. Tony Cawthon
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Dr. William Havice
This qualitative study sought to understand how high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students viewed the influence parents and families had on their career decisions. This study’s six participants were students in the same honors college at a large, four-year, public university in the Southeast United States. Data from a pre-interview survey, initial interview, in-depth interview, and interview observation protocols were used to understand participants’ career decision-making processes and the influence their parents and families had on those processes. Thematic coding was used to identify three common themes found among participants: (a) parent and family support; (b) family influence on career decision-making process; and (c) career experiences of women. Within each theme, several sub-themes also emerged.

This study served as a way to gain information about and understand career decision-making of high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students, an understudied population of students, and to contribute new information to the body of knowledge. The findings of this study provided insight into the influence families have on the career decisions of this particular population. Additionally, the findings offered a greater understanding of how gender identity impacts career experiences of high-achieving, female undergraduate students.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Mom, who I miss beyond measure but I know has been with me in spirit over the past six years as I completed my Master’s degree and pursued my Ph.D.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to my family, who has supported me throughout this entire process and made achieving this goal possible. Especially to my wonderful husband, Rich, who has been the greatest and most dedicated supporter during this journey. Thank you for the sacrifices you have made and the extra weight you have carried for our family to ensure that I was able to continue and finish this program. I could not have accomplished this without your constant encouragement and belief in me. To my amazing kids, Lilla and Tanner, who are my biggest sources of inspiration and motivation for setting and achieving my goals. To my Dad and Mom, who provided a limitless amount of love and unwavering support throughout my life and always pushed me to be the best version of myself. To my siblings, Lisa and Bryan, who have been two of the most important and influential role models in my life.

To Dr. Pam Havice, my chair and wonderful advisor/mentor for more than seven years. I am forever grateful for the professional, academic, and personal support you have provided me over the years. You always challenge and inspire me to grow and develop as a scholar and practitioner. I truly could not have done this without you. To the rest of my dissertation committee, Dr. Tony Cawthon, Dr. Cynthia Deaton, and Dr. Bill Havice, I cannot thank you enough for your time, energy, wisdom, and guidance throughout this process.

To my peers who have been on this journey with me. I have learned so much from each of you and cherish the friendships we have made. Thank you for the community of scholars, practitioners, and friends you have given me over the past four and a half years.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate college students who are in early adulthood experienced many stages of identity exploration in concert with making commitments to career decisions (Arnett, 2000; Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010). While there are many factors influencing college students’ choice of career, results of a study by Stringer and Kerpelman (2010) suggested there is a positive correlation between parental support and career decision self-efficacy of college students (Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010). Furthermore, in a study examining how college students discussed their approach to making career decisions, Bubany, Krieshok, Black, and McKay (2008) found 85% of respondents perceived others played a critical role in their decision making. Immediate family members were found to be among the top influences on participants’ career planning.

In addition to parents and families playing a role in career decisions of undergraduate students, gender is also a factor that has significant impact on students’ career decisions. Studies have identified how societal norms and beliefs about gender influence early career decisions of both men and women (Correll, 2001). Studies have shown women’s career development has a level of complexity not experienced by men and there are many internal and external barriers influencing and limiting women’s career choices (Betz, 1994; Sullivan & Mahalik, 2000; Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, & Wentworth, 2007).

A number of research studies have been conducted on career decision-making of undergraduate students and women (Gregor & O’Brien, 2016; Harren, 1979; Landivar,
There are certain subpopulations of students that have yet to be adequately studied in regards to their career decisions. One subpopulation is high-achieving undergraduate students, and more specifically, high-achieving, female undergraduate students. Kem and Navan (2006) reported that needs of high-achieving students have received less attention in higher education when compared to initiatives occurring in the K-12 education setting. The importance of career counseling and advising at the high school level has received much attention over the past couple of decades. There are numerous studies and reports addressing the need to reexamine current practices and increase resources in high schools in order to provide adequate academic and career counseling to all students (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006; Lynch, 2000; McDonough, 2005; Rosenbaum & Person, 2003). Educators need to recognize both high-achieving high school and college students need adequate career education as much as other students (Gassin, Kelly, & Feldhusen, 1993). As a higher education administrator serving high-achieving undergraduate students, my purpose for this study was to gain a better understanding of how high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents and families have on their career decisions.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of my study including the background of the study and why I chose this particular topic, a statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study. I continue with my conceptual framework including Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory (1977), Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), Downing and Roush’s Feminist Identity Development Model (1985), and Social-
Cognitive Theory of Gender Identity Development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). I give a brief overview of each theory or model and how it aligns with my study. Next, I present the research question, provide an overview of the methodological approach, explain the significance of the study, share my assumptions as the researcher, and present my positionality statement. I end with definitions of key terms used throughout the study and provide a summary of the chapter and a brief overview of Chapter Two is presented.

**Background of the Study**

As a higher education administrator working closely with high-achieving undergraduate students in an advising capacity, I find many of my advising meetings with students include conversations surrounding career interests and family. In some of these formal and informal advising meetings, there is a strong connection between a student’s family, especially parents, and their major and career interests and choices. Bright, Pryor, Wilkenfeld, and Earl (2005) found knowledge gained from parents and the university was often noted as having the most influence on college students’ career decision-making. Other studies have been conducted on the influence of family intrusiveness on career decision-making. Berrios-Allison (2005) found college students who perceived more intrusiveness from parents tended to take longer to make career-related decisions. These students also seemed to be less involved in the career decision-making process. Conversely, some college students who were struggling with career choices benefitted from family interventions during this process. These contradictory findings indicated the issues surrounding the influences of family on career decision-making need to be investigated further (Fan, Cheung, Leong, & Cheung, 2012).
In addition to experiencing conversations surrounding career interests and family, I have found in my professional role female students seem more inclined to major in and pursue career fields commonly dominated by females. In an article by Coogan and Chen (2007), they discussed the socially constructed internal and external influences including early gender-role orientation, employment inequities, and family responsibilities. Due to these internal and external influences, Landivar (2013) reported women tend to be concentrated in career fields having lower status and prestige than career fields many men seek. Gregor and O’Brien (2016) cited several studies related to women’s career choices and stated, “numerous studies, including those focused on gifted women, indicate that women have lower career aspirations when compared to men and often select more traditional, less lucrative careers that underutilize their abilities” (p. 559).

Research studies on career decision-making of undergraduate students and women is readily available, but there is little literature on career decisions of high-achieving students, and even less on high-achieving, female, undergraduate students. There is the assumption high-achieving students have a clear understanding of their academic and professional goals due to their ability to excel academically. This assumption results in the misconception that high-achieving students may not need as much support when it comes to choosing a major or career, but Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries (2007) found high-achieving students were confused about how their abilities and interests were connected to potential career paths. In another study examining career decision-making of exploratory honors students at a public university, results indicated participants were able to articulate their interests and abilities and could easily identify
disciplines that did not interest them but were less knowledgeable about potential career fields and majors (Carduner, Padak, & Reynolds, 2011). The results of this study help inform the work of educators who advise and mentor high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students by providing a greater understanding of how these students view the influence parents and families have on their career decisions.

**Statement of the Problem**

Certain sub-populations of undergraduate students are faced with unique challenges that influence major and career choices. Two of these sub-populations include female students and high-achieving students (Carduner, et al., 2011; Coogan & Chen, 2007; Gregor & O’Brien, 2016; Landivar, 2013; Webb et al., 2007). There is little literature on high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students and their career decision-making process. To effectively support these students, it is critical educators working with this student population understand the factors influencing their career decision-making process.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand the influence parents and families have on the career decision-making processes of high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students. To examine this purpose, one must consider the many factors playing a role in the career decision-making process. Factors such as social support, gender role socialization, personality dispositions and environmental resources were critical in influencing college students’ career decisions (Wright, Perrone-McGovern, Boo, & White, 2014).
Conceptual Framework

To explore career decision-making experiences of high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduates and frame this study, I used four theories:

- Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory (1977);
- Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994);
- Social-Cognitive Theory of Gender Identity Development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999); and
- Downing and Roush’s Feminist Identity Development Model (1985)

The first two theories provided the framework for career decision-making aspect of the study. The other two theories provided the framework for experiences and identity development of women.

Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura (2006) defined self-efficacy as “people’s beliefs in their capabilities to produce given attainments” (p. 307). Research studies have found that as adolescents’ self-efficacy develops, they not only begin making choices related to academic and career goals but they also display more persistence in accomplishing those goals (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Vittorio Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001). Researchers have argued parents are the most significant providers of knowledge related to self-efficacy (Turner & Lapan, 2002). Career decision self-efficacy was defined as an individual’s belief “he or she can successfully complete tasks necessary to making career decisions” (Betz & Luzzo, 1996, p. 415).
Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994) considers contextual variables as having an influence on a person’s academic and career development outcomes. These contextual variables are part of an individual’s background or environment and can either positively or negatively impact academic and career development outcomes. This theory aligns with the intent of this research study to examine parent and family influence, which can act positively and/or negatively, on students’ career decisions.

Social-Cognitive Theory of Gender Identity Development

Social-cognitive theory of gender identity development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999) considers three interrelated components: (1) personal, (2) behavioral, and (3) environmental when examining gender identity development. These components interact when “students present themselves in gendered ways” (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quay, 2016). According to Bussey (2011), “Gender identity is conceptualized as an ongoing process that may change across the life span and as societal views about gender change” (p. 608). This theory helps us understand the development of gender identity among college students because of the focus on incorporating personal learning and environmental interactions. The model aligns with my study due to the focus on aspects impacting gender identity development, especially the environmental component which accounts for the influence of family and peers. Furthermore, this theory considers the impact societal views have on gender, which is an important aspect of my study since I focused on experiences of female, undergraduate students.
**Downing and Roush’s Feminist Identity Development Model**

Downing and Roush’s model examines the experiences of women and the challenges and oppression they encounter in society (Patton et al., 2016). Downing and Roush (1985) defined five stages of this model: (1) passive acceptance, (2) revelation, (3) embeddedness-emanation, (4) synthesis, and (5) active commitment. This model aligns with the study because of its focus on women’s experiences and how their development is influenced by surroundings and interactions with others (e.g. family background and parental influence). The theory also addresses the unique challenges women face due to existing gender norms and social constructs that have a significant impact on their career decisions.

**Research Question**

To examine how high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decisions, the following research question guided this study:

How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process?

The Institutional Research Board (IRB) at the research university where the research was conducted approved this study (Appendix A).

**Methodological Approach Overview**

This is a general qualitative research study. Merriam (2002) stated “the key to understanding qualitative research lies within the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3). Due to this study’s
focus on a single phenomenon (the influence of parents and family on the career decision-making processes of a specific population of undergraduate students) across participants, elements of case study research were used to inform data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014 & Stake, 2006). Because the goal was to look across the participants’ stories to examine their common experiences more effectively, this methodological approach focused on what Yin (2014, p. 55) calls the “global nature” of the shared experiences of this sub-population of students.

Participants were selected from a university honors college in the Southeastern United States. A combination of convenience and purposive sampling was used to recruit high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students. A recruitment email was sent out to potential participants (Appendix B) and students interested in participating in the study were asked to complete a participant selection survey (Appendix C). Participants were required to have at least one parent or guardian with a bachelor’s degree.

Four pieces of data were collected for each participant. The first data collection point was a pre-interview survey each selected participant completed (Appendix D). The second data collection point was an initial interview lasting approximately 30 minutes long and focused primarily on rapport building and collecting basic information about major/career interests and family (Appendix E). The surveys and initial interviews informed the creation of the second, more extensive interview protocol where the majority of data was collected. This second interview was more in-depth, focusing on the participant’s career decision-making processes and how the participant viewed the
influence of parents and/or family on their career decisions (Appendix F). Informal observations were conducted during each participant interview, focusing on participants’ dispositions and non-verbal communication (Appendix G).

All interviews (both initial and in-depth) were audio recorded and transcribed. Throughout the data analysis process, I continuously reviewed data under various possible interpretations and analyzed the data by using thematic coding methods, searching for patterns and themes (Stake, 1995). Following transcription of all interviews, a coding framework (Appendix H) was used to guide the thematic coding process. Following the initial coding of each initial and in-depth interview using the coding framework, I identified themes across interviews in order to develop a codebook (Appendix I) and continued to revise the codebook as I completed more in-depth analysis of the interview data. I also identified passages from interviews that correlated with each code. The final iteration of the codebook (Appendix I) was used to identify the results and findings of the study.

**Significance of the Study**

This research study was important because there is little literature on career decision-making of high-achieving students. These students often found it challenging to determine how their strengths and abilities were connected to future career paths (Webb et al., 2007). Additionally, I found little to no literature on the relationship between parental influence and high-achieving students’ career decision-making. There was also limited literature on the intersectionality of undergraduate students who identify as female and high-achieving and how they make career decisions. Therefore, any
information and understanding gained about the career decision-making of high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students contributes new information to the body of knowledge.

Assumptions and Limitations

Through this study, I sought to better understand how external influences, specifically parents and families, impact the career decisions of high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, my assumption was participants would be fully engaged in the process and willing to share their experiences with me during interviews. I also assumed participants would be truthful in their responses. Since I intentionally selected participants whose parent(s) had a certain level of post-secondary educational attainment, I assumed students completing the participant selection survey would be honest in their responses so that all participants shared some common ground related to their family background.

In terms of my data collection instruments, I assumed the interview protocols created and utilized would enable me to gather robust data from each participant which could be used to find common themes among all participants. Given the limited literature on this particular topic, especially research studies related to high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students, I assumed any findings would contribute new information to the body of knowledge about this particular student population and how they viewed the influence parents and family have on their career decisions. I also assumed the findings would add to other research areas that have been studied more widely, including career decision-making of college students, women’s career
development, and influence of parents and families on college students’ academic and career goals.

There were a few limitations of my study including the use of only one institution and one honors program. Since I needed to ensure I was able to easily access participants, I was only able to select one honors program as my site to effectively recruit and interview participants. Due to this limitation, there was a lack of diversity within my sample pool because the institution and honors program I recruited my participants from has a small percentage of underrepresented students. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all undergraduate students in honors programs or to students of all ethnic and racial identities.

**Overview of Positionality Statement**

My professional experience in higher education has been focused on working with high-achieving, undergraduate students within a university honors college. The participants I recruited are students who are in the honors college I currently work for, therefore, I have previous knowledge of and experience with both the institution and the honors college within the institution. For these reasons, I would consider myself to have an insider position when examining this topic and the students at this particular university. Chavez (2008) described an insider researcher as someone who shares aspects of their self or identity with participants of their study. I am an insider researcher in several ways. I identify as female, I work directly with this specific student population, and I currently work at the institution where my participants attend or attended at the time of data collection. I have my own assumptions about high-achieving students and the
unique challenges and issues they face, especially as it relates to major and career decisions. As a result, I needed to consider how my perspective and experiences working as an advisor with this student population may impact how I collected and analyzed data as a researcher. I have also worked with undergraduate students in other career development-related capacities which has allowed me to compare and contrast my experiences with the general undergraduate population to that of high-achieving undergraduates. Overall, I find parents and families of high-achieving undergraduates are more involved in their student’s education and career decisions.

I had to be aware of how my perspective as a woman could influence my role as a researcher. I have my own career decision-making experiences that have been influenced by gender and societal norms. For this reason, I wanted to ensure I did not allow my personal experiences to influence how I interpreted participants’ career-decision making experiences. Additionally, I have preconceived ideas of positive and negative influences parents and families have on undergraduate students and needed to be mindful of viewing participants’ experiences from their points-of-view and not my own. More information related to my positionality is shared in Chapter 3. Overall, it was critical that I was cognizant of my biases, experiences, and perspectives to ensure I did not allow them to negatively impact the collection, interpretation, and information sharing of this study.

**Definition of Terms**

The following definition of terms were used for this study.

**High-achieving undergraduate students** – Undergraduate college students who are enrolled in a university honors college. I chose to use university honors college students
as my participants because honors colleges typically have competitive admissions
criteria, including a record of high academic achievement which is often evaluated using
standardized test scores and grade point averages (Stoller, 2004). Furthermore, the
majority of honors programs require students to maintain a minimum grade point average
in order to graduate with Honors distinction. Many honors programs also require students
to participate in other aspects of the honors experience including specific honors courses,
an honors thesis or project, and/or independent study (Owens and Travis, 2013).

**Non-first-generation students** – Undergraduate students who have at least one parent
who has obtained at least a bachelor’s degree (Murphy & Hicks, 2006).

**Female** – A gender description or identity which is “constructed through psychological,

**Parental/family influence** – This study focused broadly on parent/family influence and
examined various types of support including, but not limited to, emotional, informational,
appraisal, and instrumental support of a student’s academic and career goals (Malecki &
Demarary, 2003).

**Career decision-making process** – I defined the career decision-making process in
terms of Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994) which includes three aspects:
(a) formation and elaboration of career-relevant interests; (b) selection of academic and
career choice options; (c) performance and persistence in educational and occupational
pursuits.
Chapter Summary

This study focused on how high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents and families have on their career-decision making processes. By exploring the experiences of this unique and understudied population of students, the study provided insight on what influences high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students’ career decisions and offered ways in which educators can support these students in career development.

In this chapter, I provided an introduction of my research study. I briefly highlighted the current literature surrounding my research topic and what motivated me to focus my study on this topic. I explained the purpose of the study, which was to understand the career decision-making processes of high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students. I stated the problem: high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students are an understudied population of students and, therefore, to effectively support these students, it is critical educators working with this student population understand the factors that influence their career decision-making process. I provided an overview of my conceptual framework which included four main theories or models: Bandura’s self-efficacy theory (1977); social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994); Downing and Roush’s feminist identity development theory (1985); and Social-Cognitive Theory of Gender Identity Development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

I presented the research question used to examine how high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decisions. I gave an overview of my methodological approach- a general
qualitative study using elements from case study research to inform the data collection and analysis. Finally, I discussed the significance of the study, assumptions going into the research, my positionality statement which focused on my role as an insider researcher, and ended with definitions of key terms.

In the following chapter, I reviewed the literature that framed the study. This literature review focused on four main topics including career decision-making of undergraduate students, career decision-making of high-achieving students, family influence on undergraduate students’ career decisions, and women and careers as well as literature related to my conceptual framework.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In reviewing the literature related to my research topic, I began by looking at undergraduate students and their career decision-making processes including factors influencing their major and career choices. Next, I examined the current literature on high-achieving undergraduate students and the ways in which they are different and unique, searching specifically for studies related to the career decision-making processes of high-achieving students. More specifically, I searched for studies on parental and family influence on undergraduate students’ major and career decisions. Also, I reviewed research studies related to women’s career development experiences, including undergraduate women. The current literature reviewed in this chapter is related to the following research question:

How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process?

I primarily used Google Scholar when searching for literature but also used Academic Search Complete through my university’s library. The keywords I used included career decision-making of college/undergraduate students, career decision self-efficacy college/undergraduate students, high-achieving college/undergraduate students, gifted college/undergraduate students, parental influence and support of college students, family influence on careers, women and careers, gender and careers, and a combination of the keywords mentioned.
Through conducting a review of the literature related to my research topic, I identified the conceptual and theoretical framework for the study. My research study is grounded in the following theories: Bandura’s self-efficacy theory (1977); social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994); Downing and Roush’s feminist identity development theory (1985); and Social-Cognitive Theory of Gender Identity Development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Each is discussed further in this chapter.

**Career Decision-Making of Undergraduate Students**

Researchers have shown significant identity exploration and commitments related to career decisions take place during the early stages of adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Harren, 1979; Kerpelman & Stringer, 2010; Sandler, 2000; Scott & Ciani, 2008; Turner & Lapan, 2002). This time of exploration and career decision-making was especially salient for undergraduate college students (Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010).

Harren (1979) was among the first theorists to develop a model of career decision-making specific to undergraduate college students. The creation of this model was informed by the work of several theorists including David Tiedeman, who laid the foundations of career construction theory (Tiedeman, 1961), Janis and Mann (1977) who developed decision-making theory, Wicklund and Brehm (1976) whose research and theory focused on cognitive dissonance, and Chickering’s student development theory (1969). Harren’s (1979) intent was to create a comprehensive model specific to this specific stage in life in order “to provide a conceptual framework for assessment of student needs, designing counseling and educational interventions, and for generating
empirically testable hypotheses” (p. 119). The model consisted of four stages: (a) awareness; (b) planning; (c) commitment; and (d) implementation.

Harren’s model suggested students are faced with issues and concerns unique to each stage of development and that, by resolving these issues, the individual can then move into the next stage. Harren stated, “progress is ordinarily forward”, but that “blocking in a given stage or recycling through the stages is possible, depending on a number of factors” (Harren, 1979, p. 122). Harren’s model has been used widely to explain how college students make career decisions and set career goals (Mau, Perkins, & Mau, 2016; Robitschek & Cook, 1999; Wang, Jome, Haase, & Bruch, 2006).

Since Harren’s model was developed, career decision-making of undergraduate students has evolved. I found numerous articles when searching for more recent studies related to career decision-making of college students. Recent studies have focused on areas such as career development among first-year college students (Wright, Jenkins-Guarnieri, & Murdock, 2013; Jones, Paretti, Hein, & Knott, 2010), career as a calling for undergraduate students (Duffy, Allan, & Bott, 2012; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010; Hunter, Dik, & Banning, 2010), career indecision of college students (Bullock-Yowell, McConnell, & Schedin, 2014; Fabio, Palazzeschi, Asulin-Peretz, & Gati, 2013; Fillman, 2015), career adaptability of undergraduate students (Duffy, 2010; Duffy, Douglass, & Autin, 2015; Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012), and career development of underrepresented and first-generation college students (Chemers, Zurbriggen, Syed, Goza, & Bearman, 2011; Owens, Lacey, Rawls, & Holbert-Quince, 2010; Tate, Caperton, Kaiser, Pruitt, White, & Hall, 2015).
Career Decision-Making of High-Achieving Students

Since the purpose of my study was to examine career decision-making of high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students, I also considered the current literature surrounding this student population and their career choices. Furthermore, these students’ parental supports or influences may differ from the general undergraduate student population. Clearly, there is a wide range of research studies and literature related to career decision-making of undergraduate students, but, it was difficult to find research related to the career decision-making of high-achieving undergraduate students. One piece of literature emphasized that the needs of high-achieving students in higher education setting have received less attention when compared to initiatives occurring in the K-12 setting (Kem & Navan, 2006). As a result, much literature found on high-achieving students focused on high-achieving high school students.

Educators need to recognize that both high-achieving high school and college students, who are likely to make significant future contributions to society, needed adequate career education similar to other students (Gassin et al., 1993). Furthermore, there are many assumptions made about high-achieving students that contribute to the idea high-achieving students may not need as much support when it comes to choosing a major or career, but, high-achieving students reported being confused about how their abilities and interests are connected to potential career paths (Webb et al., 2007).

In a qualitative study that examined career decision-making of exploratory honors students, researchers interviewed 17 participants at a large, public university in the Midwest United States to understand how this student population makes career
decisions (Carduner et al., 2011). In the interviews, researchers focused on: (a) how students’ abilities, interests, and work environment preferences contributed to their decision-making process, (b) the roles that factors such as chance, emotions, and support from others played in their decision-making, (c) how multipotentiality and honors status affected their decisions, and (d) what information sources they used to make major and career decisions. Results of the study indicated participants were able to articulate their interests and abilities and could easily identify disciplines that did not interest them, but they were less knowledgeable about potential career fields and majors. Most participants expressed frustration due to the lack of career guidance received from high school counselors and university advisors. Researchers found participants used several strategies to explore majors and careers including drawing on their own and others’ experiences, seeking advice from parents, relatives, friends, friend, alumni, and faculty members, taking a variety of classes, and engaging in experiential opportunities like internships.

The study I have shared in this section is one of the few I was able to find focused on career-decision making of high-achieving undergraduate students. Other studies I cited were focused on high-achieving high school students. The lack of literature on high-achieving undergraduate students continues to demonstrate the need for more research focused on this sub-population of undergraduate students.

**Parent/Family Influence on Undergraduate Students’ Major and Career Choices**

Theorists have studied the influence of family on career development since the 1950s (Bratcher 1982; Carr, 2000; Lopez & Andrews, 1987; Roe, 1956; Zingaro, 1983). In 2004, Whiston and Keller reviewed the literature on family influence on career
development. Their review summarized findings from 77 studies spanning 29 journals from varying disciplines since 1980. Whiston and Keller found the literature on family influences on college students’ career development to be significant. Out of 77 studies, 29 studies focused on college students. One area in which they found substantial research was how family influenced the career decision-making process of college students and their career decision self-efficacy (Whiston & Keller, 2004).

**Types of Parental/Family Support in Career Decision-Making**

Bubany et al. (2008) conducted a study examining how college students discussed their approach to making career decisions. They found 85% of their respondents perceived others played a critical role in their decision making. Immediate family were among the top influences on participants’ career planning. Bright et al. (2005) also found knowledge gained from parents and the university was often noted as having the most influence on college students’ career decision-making. Berrios-Allison (2005) found that college students who perceived more intrusiveness from parents took longer to make career-related decisions and were less involved in the career decision-making process. In contrast, some college students who were struggling with career choices benefitted from family interventions during this process (Fan et al., 2012). These contradictory findings indicated issues surrounding the influences of family intrusiveness on career decision-making need investigation.

**Differing Roles for Mothers and Fathers in Career Decision-Making**

A 2001 qualitative study investigated 14 students (six men, eight women) from a large, public, urban university in the Midwest U.S. and the role of relationships with
parents, siblings, and significant others in their career development process (Schultheiss, Kress, Manzi, & Glassock, 2001). Researchers used a demographic questionnaire and an interview focused on relationships and career as their measures. Interviews focused on the role of close relationships in participants’ career exploration and decision-making processes. Results determined students received various types of support and influence from parents, siblings, and significant others. The types of support and influence included, but was not limited to, emotional support, social integration, esteem support, information support, tangible assistance, support in difficult career decisions, and role model influences. When examining the table in the research article providing a cross-analysis of relationships and career exploration and career decision-making, mothers were more likely to provide support related to emotional support, social integration, esteem support, tangible assistance, and played a role in difficult career decisions. The only categories where fathers had a larger role or impact across participants was information support, role model influences, and disruptions in the relationship. Disruptions in the relationships included disruptions in the relationship with father due to conflict, separation, divorce or death. Four of the fourteen participants fell into this category.

Furthermore, five participants considered their mother as most influential in career exploration while three participants considered their father as most influential. Five participants considered their mother to be most influential in career decision-making and no participants considered their father to be most influential in this area. Interestingly, “others”, which included counselors, teachers/advisors, friends, relatives,
coworkers, partners, and neighbors, were noted as more influential in career exploration and decision-making than parents and siblings (Schultheiss et al., 2001).

Parent/Family Dynamics, Expectations, and Level of Involvement

In one study, researchers investigated the influences of family of origin on the career decisions of young adults (Larson & Wilson, 1998). This study aimed to determine if the Bowenian family systems theory could be used to help explain career decision-making issues faced by young adults (Bowen, 1978). The Bowenian theory is focused on family dynamics and suggests anxiety exists within both individuals and families. Bowen’s theory goes on to suggest anxiety is a way to manage emotional distance in the family. Larson and Wilson (1998) hypothesized that intimidation, fusion, and triangulation within the family would indirectly result in issues related to career decision due to the anxiety created by these three factors. This quantitative study employed a variety of questionnaires, inventories, and subscales to create a survey which was completed by 1,006 college students from four universities in the Midwest. The researchers used path analysis to analyze the data. Findings supported the Bowenian theory by showing career decision-making processes of students were impacted negatively by their parents due to feelings of obligation to meet their parents’ expectations. Due to these feelings of obligation to their parents, students displayed negative feelings toward the career decision-making process, struggled to make career decisions, and lacked self-awareness (Larson & Wilson, 1998).

Another study looked specifically at family interactions and how they predicted vocational identity and career decision-making self-efficacy (Hargrove, Creagh, &
A total of 210 undergraduate students completed a questionnaire combining the Family Environment Scale-Form R (Moos, 1989), Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (Taylor & Betz, 1983), Vocational Identity Scale (Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980), and a demographic information sheet. Researchers used standard multiple regressions to analyze the data. Findings suggested career decision self-efficacy was negatively impacted when family conflict was present and was positively impacted when the family had an achievement orientation and encouraged freedom of expression (Hargrove et al., 2002).

**Family Influence on Career Decision Self-Efficacy**

More recently, Stringer and Kerpelman (2010) examined factors that influenced career identity commitment in undergraduate college students from a four-year university. Factors investigated were career decision self-efficacy, parental support for career, and work experience. Researchers recruited participants from sections of particular courses at the university. Participants were given the option to complete a survey outside of class for extra credit. Researchers distributed 375 surveys, 349 were returned, and 345 were analyzed (four surveys were completed by students who were over the age of 25 and the researchers wanted participants between the ages of 18 and 25). Researchers used three scales and a questionnaire in the survey including Utrecht-Management of Identity Scales (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008), the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Short Form (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996), the Career-Related Parent Support Scale (Turner, Alliman-Brissett, Lapan, Udipi, & Erugun, 2003), and the Work Status Questionnaire (Nurmi & Salmela-Aro, 1995). Researchers used structural equation
modeling to analyze the data. One of the main findings was the positive correlation between parental support and career decision self-efficacy of college students (Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010).

**Experiences of Non-First-Generation Undergraduate Students**

There are many studies focused on differences and similarities between non-first-generation and first-generation undergraduate students. I found two studies related to my research, one on self-efficacy of first-generation and non-first-generation college students and another on parental involvement among the two populations. Ramos-Sánchez and Nichols (2007) study focused on self-efficacy of first-generation and non-first-generation college students and its relationship with academic performance and college adjustment. There were 64 first-generation students and 127 non-first-generation students in the sample. Non-first-generation students were found to have significantly higher levels of self-efficacy at the beginning and end of the year when compared with first-generation students. These higher levels of self-efficacy suggest non-first-generation students felt more capable and confident in being able to achieve academically in college. The study also found non-first-generation college students typically perform better academically than first-generation college students.

McCarron and Inkelas (2006) investigated parental involvement influence on the educational aspirations and attainment for first-generation students compared to those of non-first-generation students. The study found, for non-first-generation students, parental involvement was the best predictor of students reaching postsecondary aspirations. While
parental involvement was a predictor for first-generation students, it was not as strong of a predictor when compared to non-first-generation students.

**Women and Careers**

Since my study focused on female students, it was critical to investigate the current literature surrounding the career decision self-efficacy of this sub-population. Studies have examined how societal norms and beliefs about gender influence the early career decisions of men and women (Correll, 2001; Eccles, 1987; Whitmarsh et al., 2007). Furthermore, a review of literature reflected that women were concentrated in career fields with lower status and prestige than men (Landivar, 2013). In an article on understanding career aspirations among young women, Gregor and O’Brien (2016) cited several studies related to women’s career choices. They stated that “numerous studies, including those focused on gifted women, indicate that women have lower career aspirations when compared to men and often select more traditional, less lucrative careers that underutilize their abilities” (p. 559).

Many studies have shown women’s career development has a level of complexity that was not experienced by men (Betz, 1994; Deemer, Thoman, Chase, & Smith, 2014; Sullivan & Mahalik, 2000; Watts, Frame, Moffett, Van Hein, & Hein, 2015). There were many perceived internal and external barriers that complicate and limit women’s career choices. Coogan and Chen (2007) discussed socially constructed internal and external influences including early gender-role orientation, employment inequities, and family responsibilities of women. With the many levels of added pressure and influence
undergraduate women experience when making career decisions, it is important educators take a multifaceted approach in addressing this challenge with students.

When it comes to major and career decisions, undergraduate women face unique aspects and challenges. Patton et. al (2016) discussed factors influencing gender identity development in college including academic contexts, career planning, and student life. They pointed out women made up the majority of college students since 1979 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014), but remain the minority in many majors and careers. Gender and gender identity development theory suggests students come to college with predetermined ideas about what majors and careers are appropriate for people of different genders (Patton, et. al, 2016). Evidence also suggests that persistence of female students in certain majors is lower than persistence of male students in those same majors (Gayles & Ampaw, 2014).

From reviewing current literature related to my research topic, I was able to identify the theories and models that would frame my research: social cognitive career theory (Lent et al.,1994); Bandura’s self-efficacy theory (1977); Social-Cognitive Theory of Gender Identity Development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999); and Downing and Roush’s feminist identity development theory (1985). Each of these is discussed in the following sections.

**Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)**

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) was derived from Bandura’s (1986) general social cognitive theory. His theory was based on the idea humans have the capacity to exercise control over their own lives. While SCCT was informed by
Bandura’s social cognitive theory, it was actually developed by Lent et al. (1994). SCCT connects three aspects of career development: (a) the formation and elaboration of career-relevant interests; (b) selection of academic and career choice options; and (c) performance and persistence in educational and occupational pursuits.

Social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994) explores how contextual variables, including person, environment, and behavior, influence a person’s academic and career development outcomes. These contextual variables can either positively or negatively impact academic and career development outcomes. Social cognitive career theory aligns with my research topic due to its focus on the impacts of contextual variables (e.g. person) on academic and career decisions. SCCT has served as a framework for examining the career decision-making processes of adolescents and college students in a number of previous studies (Flores & O’Brien, 2002; Gushue & Whitson, 2006; Lindley, 2005; Rogers & Creed, 2011).

Rogers and Creed (2011) used SCCT as a framework to explore predictors of career planning and career exploration of high school students, grades 10-12, in Australia. This study was longitudinal and cross-sectional, involving two different surveys. The second survey was administered six months after the first survey. The surveys used measures of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, goals, supports, and personality. A total of 819 students completed the first survey, and from that 819 students, 631 completed the second survey. The researchers used hierarchical regression analyses to analyze the data as well as differences-in-scores to measure changes from the first survey to the second survey. Findings suggested that self-efficacy and career goals
were associated with career planning and that self-efficacy was associated with career exploration. The study indicated self-efficacy as having a significant influence on career choice behavior (Rogers & Creed, 2011).

In my study, SCCT and its three aspects of career development: (a) the formation and elaboration of career-relevant interests, (b) selection of academic and career choice options, and (c) performance and persistence in educational and occupational pursuits informed the creation of the open-ended questions on the pre-interview survey as well as the interview protocols. I ensured I addressed all three aspects throughout the data collection process to clearly understand career decision-making processes of the participants.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura (2006) defined self-efficacy as, “people’s beliefs in their capabilities to produce given attainments” (p. 307). One study found that as adolescents’ self-efficacy developed, they not only began making choices related to their academic and career goals, but they also displayed more persistence in accomplishing those goals (Bandura et al., 2001). Furthermore, researchers have argued parents are one of the most significant providers of knowledge related to self-efficacy (Alliman-Brissett, Turner, & Skovholt, 2004; Fan & Williams, 2010; Turner & Lapan, 2002).

Career self-efficacy was first examined by Betz and Hackett (1981). Their work stemmed from Bandura’s self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977). Betz and Hackett investigated self-efficacy and its potential impact on women’s continued
underrepresentation in certain career fields. They examined men and women’s confidence in completing educational requirements and job responsibilities of both traditionally female-dominated and traditionally male-dominated occupations. Results showed males had the same level of self-efficacy for both classes of occupations while females reported significantly higher levels of self-efficacy when considering traditionally female-dominated occupations and lower levels of self-efficacy when considering traditionally male-dominated occupations.

Betz and Luzzo (1996) further developed the concept of career self-efficacy by defining career decision self-efficacy. They defined career decision self-efficacy as an individual’s belief that “he or she can successfully complete tasks necessary to making career decisions” (Betz & Luzzo, 1996, p. 415). The dimensions of career decision self-efficacy included: “(a) accurate self-appraisal, (b) gathering occupational information, (c) goal selection, (d) making plans for the future, and (e) problem solving” (Betz & Luzzo, 1996, p. 415).

**Feminist Identity and Gender Identity Models**

**Social-Cognitive Theory of Gender Identity Development**

The social-cognitive theory of gender identity development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999) directly correlates with social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994) since they both account for contextual variables, including person, environment, and behavior. Social-cognitive theory of gender identity development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999) has also been applied to research surrounding undergraduate students and campus life since gender interacts in “academic, career planning, and student life contexts, among others”
In relation to career decision-making, the social-cognitive theory of gender identity development suggests students come to college with ideas about gender-appropriate majors and careers. Furthermore, gender expectations have an influence on major choices as well as the career decision-making for women and men (Patton et al., 2016).

**Downing and Roush’s Feminist Identity Development Model**

Downing and Roush’s feminist identity development model examines the lived experiences of women and societal challenges and oppression they face (Downing & Roush, 1985). Downing and Roush’s model (1985) was defined by five stages: (a) passive acceptance; (b) revelation; (c) embeddedness-emanation; (d) synthesis; and (e) active commitment. In this model, Downing and Roush proposed that women “move from a denial of sexism and an unexamined acceptance of traditional gender stereotypes to an awareness of a commitment to ending oppressions” (Moradi, Subich, and Philips, 2002, p. 7). Downing and Roush’s model frame the experiences of women as related to socially constructed internal and external influences that impact their career opportunities and choices. As discussed earlier, a few of these influences include early gender-role orientation, employment inequities, and family responsibilities (Coogan & Chen, 2007).

Social-cognitive theory of gender identity development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999) and Downing and Roush’s (1985) and informed the development of my interview protocols for the second, in-depth interviews with each participant and the analysis process. As discussed earlier, Patton et. al (2016) stated career planning was a factor that impacts gender identity development in college students. Early adulthood is a time when
both identity development and career exploration occurred (Arnett, 2000; Harren, 1979; Kerpelman & Stringer, 2010; Sandler, 2000; Scott & Ciani, 2008; Turner & Lapan, 2002). Furthermore, since my study aimed to emphasize the experiences of undergraduate women, it was critical I considered the gender identity development of participants and its influence on their career decision-making processes and career decision self-efficacy. I also anticipated participants’ gender playing a role in how their parents and families influenced their career decisions. I wanted to ensure I had a gender identity development framework in my study to help me incorporate interview questions and coding guidelines that would capture the holistic experiences of the participants.

**Chapter Summary**

In reviewing the literature related to the topics of career decision-making of undergraduate students, career decision-making of high-achieving students, parental and family influence on undergraduate students’ career decision-making, and women’s career development experiences, including undergraduate women, I found there was limited research on the career decision-making processes of high-achieving undergraduate students. More specifically, there is a gap in the literature on the influence families have on the career decisions of high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students. The goal of my study was to address this shortcoming in the research by answering the following research question:

How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process?
In Chapter 3, I provide an overview and justification for the methodological approach I used in order to address the research question. The chapter begins with a brief rationale for the approach and a more in-depth positionality statement. Then I discuss my site selection and participant selection process. I provide a detailed explanation of my data collection and data analysis processes and end with a discussion on strategies I used to attend to the trustworthiness of my study.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary goal of this study was to understand the career decision-making processes of high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students by examining how they viewed the influence their parents and families had on their career decisions. In order to study this, the following research question guided this research:

How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process?

The chapter is organized into five sections: (a) rationale for methodological approach; (b) positionality statement; (c) site selection; (d) participant selection; (e) data collection; (f) data analysis; and (g) trustworthiness.

Rationale for Methodological Approach

I chose a general qualitative study as my methodological approach because I wanted to “understand and make sense of phenomena from the participant’s perspective” (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). Merriam (2002) discussed how qualitative research is grounded in the “idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3). Due to the study’s focus on examining a single phenomenon (the influence of parents and family on the career decision-making processes) across participants, elements of case study research were used to inform the data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014 & Stake, 2006). Because the goal was to look across participants’ stories to examine their common experiences more effectively, this methodological approach focused on
what Yin (2014, p. 55) calls the “global nature” of the shared experiences of this sub-
population of students.

**Positionality Statement**

My role as a researcher was two-fold. I was both the researcher as well as an
academic advisor who works with high-achieving students. When investigating how
high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students viewed the
influence their parents and families have on their career decisions, it was critical that I
had an awareness of my biases since this research focused on the type of students I work
with on a daily basis. My current experience working in an advising capacity within a
university honors college allowed me to see first-hand, some of the issues and concerns
within higher education and, more specifically, issues that high-achieving undergraduate
students face. I have gained certain assumptions and insights through my academic and
professional experiences within the field of higher education in addition to my current
work with high-achieving undergraduate students. Therefore, I had to be diligent in
recognizing how my position as an insider could influence the way in which I collected
and analyzed data as the researcher.

I have also found parents and families of high-achieving undergraduates are
highly involved in their student’s education and career decisions. I have experienced this
level of involvement from parents before students even begin college. I frequently have
parents of high school students who are interested in applying to an honors college
contacting me to ensure the coursework their student is taking in high school makes them
competitive in the honors admissions process. Once students are at the university, I have
found parents of high-achieving students eager to ensure their student is excelling in and outside of the classroom to reach their goals after college. I have received frequent calls throughout the academic year from parents of current honors students. They typically call to express concerns about their student’s academics, mental health and well-being, or to gain information about certain resources on campus (e.g. pre-professional advising, study abroad, undergraduate research).

Additionally, I have worked in various career development-related capacities with undergraduate college students and have personally witnessed differences in family and parental involvement in the major and career choice process of students. I have found the level of family and parental involvement to be more intense in my work with high-achieving students. I have noticed parents and families of high-achieving students are highly involved in their children’s education and career choices. Furthermore, I have seen stark differences in the career decision-making processes in female students versus male students. These experiences have sparked my interest to examine career decision self-efficacy and career decision-making with this particular student population.

Finally, I identify as a woman and have had my own experiences related to gender norms and social constructs and their influence on my personal career decisions. My mother’s career had a significant influence on my career decisions. She was a working mother who built a successful career in the non-profit sector and, while her career was important to her, her role as a mother always came first. She chose positions within organizations that provided her with the flexibility needed to raise a family. My father was typically in management roles that required him to work longer hours, which also
impacted my mother’s ability to pursue certain opportunities. Like my mother, I always wanted a successful career that would also give me the ability to have a family.

I have had work experiences that influenced my career choices. After college I began a career in the business arena, much of which was influenced by many family members who had pursued business-related careers. After working in that industry for a few years, I realized I was not fulfilled in my career and wanted to be in a helping profession, much like my mother. Furthermore, due to the demanding nature of the position I was in and the career path I would have pursued in that field, it seemed as though it would be very difficult for me to succeed in that career while also starting and raising a family. These factors influenced me to go to graduate school and begin a career in a different field, higher education administration. When considering my personal experiences related to career decision-making, I needed to be cognizant of how my experiences could impact the way in which I understood or drew conclusions about my participants’ experiences and career decision-making processes. I needed to be mindful that the challenges and obstacles I have faced are not necessarily characteristic of all women.

In terms of my theoretical perspective, I would consider myself taking constructionist approach to studying the world. Patton (2015) summarized the constructionist approach by stating “a constructionist would seek to capture diverse understandings and multiple realities about people’s definitions and experiences of the situation. A singular or universal explanation would not be sought… constructionist qualitative inquiry honors the idea of multiple realities” (p. 122). I approached this
research topic keeping in mind that every individual’s reality, experience, and perspective is different. The uniqueness of each participant was an important piece to remember as I collected and analyzed interview data. I wanted to ensure I was not allowing my experiences working with this population of students to lead me in making generalizations about them or their lived experiences. I valued the uniqueness of every person’s story and strived to collect and analyze the stories they shared as objectively as possible. I also shared results and findings from this research that provided accurate accounts of the experiences of the study participants. Overall, I had to be mindful of how my biases and perspective could influence the collection, interpretation, and sharing of information. A strategy I used to ensure I did not allow my biases to influence the research process was reflective memoing which Charmaz (2006) described as a way to record thoughts and connections as well form questions and directions to pursue. I also enlisted a colleague to serve as a peer reviewer. Creswell and Miller (2000) identified a peer reviewer as someone who can provide feedback and challenge the researcher throughout the process. My peer reviewer assisted in auditing my data collection and analysis processes and challenged me to view my data in different ways.

**Site Selection**

Participants were selected from one university honors college in the Southeastern United States. The institution is a Research 1 university with a large undergraduate enrollment, between 18,000 and 26,000 undergraduate students. For the academic year in which I collected my data for this study, the total enrollment was 24,387 which included 19,042 undergraduate students and 4,985 graduate students (Clemson University
Institutional Research, 2017). I chose this particular university based on my access and proximity to the site. To be able to complete in-person interviews, I needed to be within driving distance of the site. To gain access, I contacted the Director of the honors college to explain the purpose and importance of the study. The discussions with the Director occurred two weeks prior to the initial email call for participants sent to all female students in the honors college.

I chose to recruit participants from an honors college since they are typically high-achieving students. Students in honors colleges must meet competitive admissions criteria, including a record of high academic achievement (Stoller, 2004). For the particular honors college I recruited from, the minimum requirement for admission includes a 1380 SAT score or 30 ACT score and record of high academic achievement in terms of high school grade, but, the average SAT score has historically been 1480 and the average ACT score has been 33 with applicants typically ranking in the top three percent of their high school class (Calhoun Honors College Admissions, 2018).

The majority of honors colleges required students to maintain a minimum college grade point average, which is typically above the grade point average of the institution’s general student population, to stay in good standing with the program (Owens & Travis, 2013). For the honors college my participants were selected from, students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.40 to maintain their membership (Calhoun Honors College Student Handbook, 2018, p. 3). Many honors programs also require students to participate in other aspects of the honors experience including specific honors courses, an honors thesis or project, and/or independent study (Owens & Travis, 2013). Overall,
undergraduate students within university honors colleges are known to be academically high-achieving, which is the student population I am investigated in this study.

**Participant Selection**

As stated previously, the participants for this study were selected from one honors college at a large, four-year public university in the Southeastern United States. A combination of convenience and purposive sampling, specifically criterion sampling, was used (Patton, 2015). Convenience sampling is when research participants were selected based on the researcher’s ability to easily access them (Patton, 2015). Criterion sampling was defined by Patton (2015) as a purposeful sampling strategy in which all participants must meet specific criterion to participate in the study. Convenience sampling was used since I have a connection and access to the honors college at this university. Criterion sampling was used because I selected students who met certain criteria: high-achieving, female, undergraduate students who had at least one parent/guardian with a four-year bachelor’s degree and were either in junior or senior class standing.

In order to gain an in-depth, rich understanding of participants’ experiences, I chose a sampling approach used by case study researchers to determine participant sample size. Stake (2006) recommended no fewer than four cases and no more than 10 cases. Stake stated that “two or three cases do not show enough of the interactivity between programs and their situations, whereas 15 or 30 cases provide more uniqueness of interactivity than the research team and readers can come to understand” (Stake, 2006, p. 22). Based on Stake’s suggestions, I recruited six participants. I provided an incentive
(e.g. gift card) for those who participated throughout the study in order to encourage participation and meet the sample size goal of six participants.

An initial recruitment email (Appendix B) was sent to all currently enrolled female students in the selected honors college during the spring semester of 2018. The total number of enrolled female honors students at the time was 884 (Clemson University Business Data Warehouse, 2018). Out of 884 students who received the recruitment email, 103 students identified as non-White or identified as bi-racial or multi-racial. See Appendix J for a more detailed breakdown of the race/ethnicity of the sample pool. Students were instructed to complete an online participant selection survey by a specified date if they were interested in participating in the full study. Students had one week to complete the participant selection survey. The survey gathered the following information about each student: (a) name, (b) email address, (c) cumulative grade point average, (d) major(s) and minors, if applicable, (e) academic classification, (f) gender identity, (g) parent or guardian educational attainment, and (h) career goals/interests (Appendix C). These were the criteria used to select participants from similar backgrounds. This survey provided the necessary information to select the type of participants I was looking for: high-achieving, female undergraduate students who were either a junior or senior class standing and had at least one parent or guardian with a four-year bachelor’s degree.

I received a total of 111 participant selection survey responses. Of the 111 responses, 36 students matched the criteria I was looking for. Of the 36 students whose criteria matched, 32 identified as White and the other four identified as either Asian, Asian and White, or Asian, White, and Hispanic. Three of these four students were
individuals I either directly supervised or I had an existing advising relationship with. Therefore, I felt it would be a conflict of interest to have them participate in the study because my existing relationship with them may alter the data collection and analysis process. For these reasons, I decided not to invite these students to participate in the study. In the implications section of Chapter 5, I address the lack of underrepresented students in my study in more detail. From the 36 potential participants, I narrowed it down to six participants to invite to participate in the full study. I chose the participants by selecting a diverse range of majors and career interests as well a combination of third and fourth year students.

Once I determined the six participants to invite, I sent each participant an email and asked confirmation of their willingness and ability to participate in the full study. Each participant confirmed they would participate. For these participants, I sent an email with details on completing the pre-interview survey by a specific date (Appendix B). The pre-interview survey included basic Likert scale and open-ended questions related to their major and career interests as well as the involvement of family and/or parents in their college education (Appendix D). Participants had one week to complete the pre-interview survey. In this survey, I asked participants to indicate dates and times they would be available for their first interview so I could begin building an interview schedule.

Qualtrics, a software program that allows users to collect and analyze data online, was used to create, distribute, collect, and store the data from both the participant selection survey and pre-interview survey (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). Qualtrics is password
protected and ensured that the data collected was confidential and not accessible by outside parties.

Data Collection

There were four data collection points for each participant: (a) pre-interview survey (Appendix D), (b) initial interview (Appendix E), (c) in-depth interview (Appendix F), and (d) informal observations (Appendix G). The survey results and initial interviews informed the creation of the in-depth interview protocol where the majority of data was collected. The in-depth interviews focused on the participant’s career decision-making processes and career decision self-efficacy and how they viewed the influence their parents/families have on their career decision-making process.

The semi-structured nature of the interview protocol allowed me to have the flexibility necessary to do some tailoring to each participant during the interview without veering significantly from the protocol. Esterberg (2002) stated semi-structured interviews are designed to be “less rigid” and allow the researcher “to explore a topic more openly and to allow interviewees to express their opinions and ideas in their own words” (p. 87). To assist with the creation of questions for the in-depth interview protocol, I used an article from the Journal of Career Assessment that provided various qualitative assessment methods for evaluating family influence in career decision making (Chope, 2005). After reviewing the article, I pulled questions aligning with my research question and conceptual framework and included them in my in-depth interview protocol. Appendix K provides a table mapping each question in the in-depth interview protocol to the study’s research question and/or conceptual framework.
In addition to the pre-interview survey and interviews, I conducted informal observations during the participant interviews. Yin (2014) discussed the importance of “listening” when conducting research. He referred to “listening” as “receiving information through multiple modalities… not just using the aural modality” (p. 74). The informal observations during the interviews was a way I received information beyond the words spoken by the participants. I focused on observing body language and voice inflections to see if it might provide insight on how participants felt about their parents’ and families’ influences on their major and/or career choices. Participants’ body language had the potential to show contradictions between what they were saying in their interviews or stated in their survey and their true feelings regarding their parents’ and families’ influence in their decision-making. Listening for voice inflections and observing non-verbal communication and body language allowed me to notice topics of conversation that seemed to make them feel uncomfortable. As a result, I was able to be more mindful of how I approached those topics throughout the remainder of the initial interview as well as how I would approach or follow-up during the in-depth interview.

In terms of the timeline for collecting data, I scheduled the first in-person interviews with each participant during a two-week period of time. As soon as I received participant availability via the pre-interview survey, I began scheduling interviews. Using a two-week period of time allowed me to work around participants’ schedules and provided me with the necessary time to review the interviews as they were completed and developed the interview protocol for the second in-depth interview. I scheduled the in-depth interviews in two ways. I gave participants the option of setting a date and time for
their in-depth interview during the initial interview or emailing me following the initial interview to set up a date and time. I allowed two weeks in between participants’ initial interview and in-depth interview to give me time to review and analyze the initial interviews and develop the in-depth interview protocol.

As stated previously, observations occurred throughout the interview process with each participant. An observation protocol (Appendix G) was created and used during each interview and notes were taken on the observation protocol while the interview was occurring and following the interview. Creswell (2009) suggested using a protocol for recording observational data to allow the researcher to note important information while observing participants. I found the observations helped me recall the disposition of the participants during interviews as well as my interactions with the participants. Using the protocol allowed me to make notes of when a participant seemed to be affected by certain parts of the conversation or specific topic areas. I was able to note changes in voice inflections or disposition when this happened. Having these notes was helpful during the data analysis process (Appendix L).

**Data Analysis**

The open-ended responses from the pre-interview survey were analyzed using thematic coding. Thematic coding is a type of qualitative analysis in which the researcher identifies patterns or themes in the data (Stake, 1995). All interviews (both initial and in-depth) were audio recorded and transcribed. All interview transcripts were reviewed line by line using thematic coding to identify linkages between the participants’ experiences (Stake, 1995). Following interview transcription, which I had completed by Rev.com, an
online transcription service, I created a coding framework (Appendix H). The coding framework was derived from my interview questions and conceptual framework, prior to coding the survey and interview data. The coding framework included four areas: (1) Career Decision-Making Coding Framework, (2) Career Decision Self-Efficacy Framework, (3) Types of Parent/Family Support, and (4) Career Experiences of Women.

After completing the initial coding of each initial and in-depth interview using the coding framework, I identified themes across interviews to develop a codebook. I continued to revise the codebook as I completed more in-depth analysis of the interview data. A codebook is utilized in the analysis of interview data. The codebook is defined by DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch (2011) as “a set of codes, definitions, and examples used as a guide to help analyze interview data” (p. 138). The creation of a codebook is an iterative process which can result in having to edit codes and definitions as the researcher better understands the data (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). The codebook was used to guide the second round of coding which focused heavily on looking for themes and connections across participants. I also identified passages from interviews that correlated with each code. The final iteration of the codebook (Appendix I) was used to identify the results and findings of the study. The final codebook included four themes: (1) Parent and Family Support, (2) Family Influence on Career Decision-Making Process, (3) Family Influence on Career Decision Self-Efficacy, and (4) Career Experiences of Women. Within each theme, there were three or four sub-themes identified.

I completed a few additional steps throughout the data analysis process to ensure I was identifying common themes and patterns. After completing the initial coding process
for each initial interview, I created a document to record themes identified across participants and unique findings of certain participants (Appendix M). This process helped me determine themes to explore and look for in the in-depth interviews. The document also contributed to the creation of my codebook. After the initial coding of the in-depth interviews, I created a detailed document, which I called an in-depth interview summary, for each participant. The summaries included topics, themes, and excerpts/quotes from the in-depth interviews I felt were important to note and/or were relevant to my research question. Appendix N provides a one-page excerpt from one of these summaries. Each participant’s summary ranged from six to eleven pages in length.

I then used the summaries, along with the document listing the common themes from the initial interviews, to develop the first draft of my codebook. I coded all interviews manually, using different colored highlighters for each theme and handwriting notes into the margins as needed. I also coded each in-depth interview summary using this method. I added and edited content to the summaries as I progressed through the second round of coding. Finally, I was able to compare the coded interview transcripts along with the coded summaries to identify results and findings, which is discussed in Chapter Four. Integrating the participant survey data and observations into the analysis of the interview data provided me the ability to triangulate the data and view the experiences of participants in a holistic way. Triangulation of data “helps to strengthen the construct validity” of your study (Yin, 2014, p. 121).
**Trustworthiness**

In terms of attending to the trustworthiness of my study, I employed Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) four constructivist criteria: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. To attend to credibility, I used member checking and peer debriefing. Member checking involves having each participant review their own data and interpretations to confirm for accuracy and credibility of the information (Creswell & Miller, 2000). After completing all data collection, I emailed each participant the transcriptions of their initial interview and in-depth interview. I asked them to review the transcripts to ensure what they shared in the interviews reflected what they were hoping to convey. I explained this was an opportunity for them to expand on anything from their interviews or clarify any statements made or information shared. Only one participant responded with clarifications related to text being incorrect such as misspelled names of faculty mentors. The others who responded felt the transcriptions provided accurate information, and they did not have anything to add or clarify. Peer debriefing consists of having a researcher outside of the study provide support to the researcher by reviewing data and the research process. A peer reviewer was defined as someone who can provide feedback and challenge the researcher throughout the process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I enlisted a PhD-prepared colleague who was not directly connected to the high-achieving student population to help in auditing and monitoring my data collection and analysis processes. The colleague helped to identify ways in which I may be allowing my insider perspective to influence my research.
Transferability was concerned with the researcher providing sufficient findings that are transferable to other cases (Patton, 2015). To attend to transferability, I selected multiple participants to make the findings of the study more transferable. In addition, I continued to check my own biases and subjectivity throughout the process. Peshkin (1998) stated, “researchers should systematically identify their subjectivity throughout the course of their research” (p. 17). To achieve this, I continuously checked my biases and evaluated if those biases were affecting my research throughout all stages of the research process. I used reflective memoing throughout the data collection process to make sure I incorporated intentional reflection time. Reflective memoing was defined as the act of writing memos throughout the research process to share thoughts and ideas. Charmaz (2006) described reflective memoing as a way to record thoughts and connections as well form questions and directions to pursue.

To ensure dependability and confirmability, I used a form of auditing by having someone who is not involved in my study review my research process. This person reviewed the analysis of the data and provided me with unbiased, honest feedback. Finally, by using survey data, two interviews and observations, I used multiple data methods to attend to the confirmability of the study and give me the ability to triangulate the data which also contributed to the trustworthiness of the research. Triangulation of data uses multiple sources of data to determine if a finding is consistent (Yin, 2014).

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I provided my methodological approach for data collection and data analysis that enabled me to address how high-achieving, non-first-generation,
female, undergraduate students view the influence their parents/families have on their career decision-making process. I discussed in-depth my positionality as an insider researcher who works directly with high-achieving undergraduate students. I also shared my personal experiences related to career decision-making and how my gender identity has impacted my career decisions. I provided my rationale for employing a general qualitative study using elements of case study research to inform the data collection and analysis process. I discussed the reason I chose my research site and my use of purposive, convenience, and criterion sampling during the participant selection process. Finally, I described how I used thematic coding during the analysis process and explained the ways I addressed trustworthiness throughout the study.

In the next chapter, I explain how I analyzed and made meaning of the data collected and report the results of the study. I begin by providing background on the six participants including a biography for each participant. I discuss each identified theme and sub-theme and provide participant quotes for each, and, I provide a summary of themes to give a more succinct overview of the findings and results.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine how high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students viewed the influence parents/families have on their career decisions. The following research question guided this study:

How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process?

To address these questions, I employed a qualitative study informed by holistic case study research. I selected six participants who met specific criteria. Four pieces of data were collected for each participant: (a) pre-interview survey (Appendix D), (b), initial interview (Appendix E), (c) in-depth interview (Appendix F), and (d) informal observations (Appendix G). Following the data collection, I began the coding and analysis process. The open-ended responses from the pre-interview survey and all interviews (both initial and in-depth), were analyzed using open and thematic coding methods. I created a coding framework (Appendix H), derived from my interview questions and conceptual framework, prior to coding the survey and interview data. After completing the initial coding of each initial and in-depth interview, I identified themes across interviews in order to develop a codebook and continued to revise the codebook as I completed more in-depth analysis of the interview data. The final iteration of the codebook (Appendix I) was used to identify the results and findings of the study which are outlined in this chapter. A section has been created for each identified theme.
This chapter is organized into eight sections: (a) the participants; (b) theme: parent and family support; (c) theme: family influence on career decision-making process; (d) theme: career experiences of women; (e) summary of themes; and (f) chapter summary.

**The Participants**

Participants were selected from one honors college at a large, four-year public university in the Southeastern United States. A combination of convenience and purposive sampling, specifically criterion sampling, was used (Patton, 2015). All participants met the following criteria: high-achieving, female, undergraduate student who had at least one parent/guardian with a four-year bachelor’s degree and were either junior or senior class standing. From the participant selection survey responses, I had 36 potential participants who matched all criteria. In selecting six participants from the pool of 36, I was intentional in ensuring a diverse representation of majors and career interests were among participants as well a combination of third and fourth year students. As outlined in chapter 3, due to the lack of racial and ethnic diversity within the honors college that I recruited my participants from, there was a small percentage of underrepresented students who received the call for participants and an even smaller percentage who met the criteria (Appendix J).

Table 4.1 provides a profile of each participant. Following the table, a brief description of each participant is provided. The descriptions were created from data collected in the pre-interview survey and initial interview. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of participants. Esterberg (2002) suggested using a code number or
pseudonym instead of the participant’s actual name in order to protect their privacy (p. 53). Participants were given the option of either choosing their own pseudonym at the end of their in-depth interview or opting to have me choose a pseudonym for them. Since participants shared personal information, including information specific to family members and relationships, I felt it was necessary to provide anonymity of all participants. Since the institution where I conducted my study was not anonymous, I felt it was even more important to protect the identities of the participants.
Table 4.1

Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Academic Major(s)/Minor(s)</th>
<th>Academic Classification</th>
<th>Parent Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Career Interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bey</td>
<td>Psychology with a minor in Biological Sciences</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Father: bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Physician- possibly OB/GYN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother: did not attend college</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clara</td>
<td>Bioelectrical Engineering</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Father: bachelor’s and master’s</td>
<td>Intellectual property lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother: two-year nursing degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Recreational Therapy</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Father: bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Recreational therapy (RT) work-developing RT in other countries;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother: two-year degree</td>
<td>disability advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Elementary Education with minors in Music and</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Father: bachelors and master’s</td>
<td>Elementary school teacher and eventually a principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother: bachelor’s degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly</td>
<td>Political Science with a minor in History</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Father: bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Work for the State or Defense Department; interested in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother: bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>international affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stepfather: bachelor’s degree and law degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sal</td>
<td>Chemical Engineering with a minor in Food Science</td>
<td>Senior*</td>
<td>Father: bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Process engineer at a large chemical company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother: bachelor’s and master’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*4th year in college but will be graduating in five years due to participating in a cooperative education program
Bey.

Bey is a senior psychology major with a biological sciences minor. She grew up in the Northeast U.S., outside of a large city and went to a rigorous all girls Catholic school. Bey decided to attend her current institution because one her close friends went there and when she toured, she stated that “it just felt like home”. Bey applied as a business major but switched her major to psychology at orientation. Her dad did not want her to major in psychology, which is what influenced her to initially choose business. Bey’s interest in psychology started when she took Advanced Placement (AP) Psychology in high school. During high school, she was considering medical school or law school and knew she would not need a specific major for a professional school. She decided that since she enjoyed psychology and it is applicable to many fields, that it would be a good fit.

Bey has not always known that she wanted to pursue medical school. In her sophomore year, she was considering dental school so she shadowed several dentists. She applied for a clinical applications course that she thought was for dentistry but it ended up being clinical applications in medical practices. Through the course, she had the opportunity to shadow doctors in several specialties and loved her experience shadowing an OB/GYN. Bey then conducted research involving pediatrics and obstetrics and enjoyed that experience. Through those experiences, she decided to pursue medical school.

Bey is the oldest of four children. Her sister and brother both attend schools near her hometown and her youngest sister is in middle school. Bey’s mom has always stayed
at home and recently picked up a part-time job in retail because she was bored. Her dad has always worked in the computer software industry. He has a bachelor’s degree and started his own business in computer software. Bey considers herself very independent and her parents have had minimal involvement in her college experience and education. At her university, she is a resident assistant, is involved in a wide range of clubs, and is a group fitness instructor at the campus recreation center. She has also served as a teaching assistant for several courses. Following graduation, she is moving back home and taking a gap year to apply to medical school.

**Clara.** Clara is a junior, bioengineering major with a bioelectrical concentration from the Southeast U.S. She chose the university she is attending due to the reputation of the engineering program in addition to the in-state tuition and scholarships she received. She also felt that the university would be a good foundation school for graduate or law school. Clara was originally considering pursuing medical or veterinary school but decided, since she was “not very good with blood”, she should consider another career path. She talked with her mom to brainstorm other options and decided if she did bioengineering, she could do the research behind the medicine. She has decided she does not want to pursue a career in research because, in her own words, the “idea of doing research forever and ever and possibly never getting results” is something she doesn’t think she can handle.

Currently, Clara is thinking of pursuing law school to become an intellectual property lawyer. She said she came across intellectual property law somehow, possibly when doing research about bioengineering career options on the Internet. She then found
out about an intellectual property law cooperative education opportunity through a friend of a friend. This experience has helped her in determining her current long-term goals.

Clara has one younger brother who will be going into middle school this year. Clara is half Japanese; her mom is Japanese and was born and raised in Japan. She considers her home life to be strongly influenced by Japanese culture. Clara is also bilingual, having spent a lot of time in Japan visiting family and attending a Saturday Japanese school growing up. Her dad is a mechanical engineer and works primarily with wind turbines. He has both a bachelor’s and master’s degree. Her mom does not work outside of the home anymore but was a nurse specializing in diabetes when she lived in Japan. Her mom completed a two-year nursing program at a technical school in Japan. Clara does not consider her parents to be very involved in her college education or experience.

In addition to her cooperative education experience, Clara also participated in a study abroad program in Japan where she conducted research in a university’s bioengineering department. Clara’s non-academic interests include playing the cello, fencing, and reading. She currently participates on the fencing team at her university, a hobby that she did not start until attending college.

**Hope.** Hope is a junior, recreational therapy major from the Southeast U.S. She chose the university she attends because she felt at home when she toured and thought there would be more opportunities for her. She also needed to attend an in-state institution for financial reasons. Hope came to college as a psychology major, but, she knew that was not the path she wanted to take. She had a difficult time finding something
that made her excited to learn. Since she was in first or second grade, she wanted to work with people with disabilities and thought about being a special needs teacher but, ultimately, decided against that goal. Hope admits that she does not really know why working with people with disabilities has always been a passion, but, in the second grade, she was partnered with someone in her physical education class who had a disability. At that time, she realized she loved working with people with disabilities.

She first heard about recreational therapy from her advisor so she took the introduction to parks, recreation, and tourism class. The professor of the class talked about how the whole profession was centered on people and helping them achieve their best quality of life. She “fell in love” with the major from there. Hope is very interested in looking at what she can do internationally related to recreational therapy because right now, recreational therapy is mostly based in the United States. She is also interested in disability advocacy and is considering becoming a professor one day. Currently, she is keeping her options open. Hope is pursuing the four plus one master’s program so is taking graduate classes and has thought about pursuing a Fulbright or the Peace Corps in the future.

Hope is the middle child of three children. Both her of parents’ careers are in computer science. Her father is in computer security for a bank and her mother works in a job role related to the software industry. Her parents are not very involved in her college education or experience. Her dad went to a four-year university and her mom attended to a two-year school in England. Both of her parents are originally from England.
Hope has made connections with the professors in her department and enjoys the extracurricular and out-of-class opportunities available in her major. She is highly involved in the Recreational Therapy club, allowing her to gain relevant experiences through adaptive sports intramurals as well as camps for kids with disabilities. Hope enjoys being outside, Netflix, food, spending time with people, and traveling.

Lisa. Lisa is a senior, elementary education major from the Northeast U.S. She has a math and science focus within her major and minors in both psychology and music. Lisa was selected to participate in a scholarship program for Education majors at her university, which was a major factor in her decision to attend college in the Southeast. She also wanted to leave the city she grew up in for college and in her words “wanted more of a college experience”. Lisa has known she wanted to be a teacher since she was in second grade when she had what she thought was the “world’s best teacher”. Lisa described her decision to teach stating, “I decided I wanted to be just like her because I just loved what she did and how she made learning fun and interesting and everything. Since then, I really have never changed my mind. I’ve just wanted to teach forever”. Lisa plans to teach first but also has an interest in administration. She wants to go to graduate school at some point and is interested in educational neuroscience, which would combine her interests in education and psychology.

Both of her parents received a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering. Her father has worked for the same engineering firm since he graduated from college and is now the vice president for the company. Her mother worked as a civil engineering for ten years and then began staying at home once they had children. Lisa has two younger sisters, one
is a freshman, mechanical engineering major at a university in the Northeast, and the other is in 8th grade. She has a close relationship with her family, keeping them informed on everything going on her life. Lisa’s hobbies including playing the violin, which she has been doing since the age of three, and reading anything she can get her hands on.

Molly. Molly is a junior political science major with a history minor from the Midwest U.S. Her parents and grandparents were highly involved in her college search, helping come up with various metrics to judge the schools she was considering. The university she attends was on the list since her family was from the area and her grandfather was a professor at a different university nearby. When she toured the university during her college search, she “just fell in love with it” and stopped looking at other schools.

Molly grappled with who she was and what she wanted to be when she first entered college. By the end of high school, she was considering going to law school and received advice that being a business major was a good path to get to law school. Her stepdad and aunt are attorneys so it was a career path with which she was familiar, but, Molly had been interested in government since high school. She decided to take the introduction to international relations course her first semester and loved it. The professor encouraged her to take more political science classes to make it her minor. She took a course on interest groups and social movements with a professor who became highly influential in her decision to major in political science. This professor continues to be one of her close mentors.
Molly is an only child. Her parents divorced when she was in the fifth grade and her mom remarried when she was a freshman in high school. Her relationship with her step-dad has grown over the years and they are now very close. Her step-dad is a lawyer and her mom owned a small printing business that she recently sold. Molly’s dad used to flip houses prior to the 2008 recession and now works for a contractor that repairs cell towers. Her mother and father both have bachelor’s degrees. Molly’s step-dad and mom are what she considers “super involved”. She talks to them nearly every day and likes to keep them informed.

Molly has a range of career interests including wanting to work for the federal government in something related to international relations, foreign policy, or national security and plans to pursue graduate school or law school after taking a gap year or two. In addition to participating in undergraduate research in political science, Molly is learning Chinese on her own. She is particularly proud of this accomplishment. She also co-founded a new club at her university that is focused on promoting respectful political conversations on campus. Molly is currently preparing for her upcoming internships with the U.S. State Departments in China and Vienna.

**Sal.** Sal is a senior, chemical engineering major with a food science minor from the Southeast U.S. Sal’s decision to choose the university she now attends was primarily due to the in-state tuition as well as being what she considered the “best engineering school” in the area. Coming out of high school, Sal enjoyed chemistry and math and was good at both subjects. Her AP chemistry teacher was influential during her time in high school so she originally considered majoring in chemistry, but, she decided she did not
want to go on to complete higher degrees past her undergraduate degree. That is when she looked into chemical engineering because it only required a bachelor’s degree in order to secure what she considers a “good job”. Sal is interested specifically in process engineering because she likes the idea of having her own process and being an expert in that process. Her dream career has more to do with the company and the work environment rather than the specific job she is doing. Her current experience in a cooperative education program has helped shape her view of a career. Overall, Sal values the opportunity to learn because it keeps her interested in what she is doing.

Sal is oldest of the three children and has two younger brothers. One of her brothers is a freshman in college, majoring in engineering, and the other is a sophomore in high school. Both of Sal’s parents work in the computer industry. Her dad is a computer architect, and her mom is a computer teacher at a school that serves both elementary and middle school students. Sal considers herself to be independent and, therefore, her parents have a low level of involvement in her college education and experience. Outside of classes, Sal is involved in an engineering fraternity and engineering honor society. Her hobbies include anything musical including playing instruments, singing, and dancing.

Next, I discuss the three main themes and sub-themes identified through the data analysis process. The three main themes included: (a) theme: parent and family support; (b) theme: family influence on career decision-making process; and (c) theme: career experiences of women. For the parent and family support theme, sub-themes included: (a) emotional support; (b) information support; (c) appraisal support; and (d) instrumental
support. For the family influence on career decision-making process theme, sub-themes included: (a) differing roles for mothers versus fathers; (b) parent/family expectations; (c) level of parent/family involvement; and (d) family values and dynamics. For the career experiences of women theme, sub-themes included: (a) gender roles in society; (b) gender roles/impression of gender roles in family; and (c) saliency of gender in making career decisions.

**Theme: Parent and Family Support**

In the in-depth interview for each participant, I asked questions surrounding the different types of support their parents and family provided both specific to careers as well as more general support. I focused on four different types of support including emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental (Malecki & Demarary, 2003). I found several common themes among participants in these areas. I discuss each area of support and the commonalities and some differences among the participants.

**Emotional Support**

In each in-depth interview, participants were asked about the type of emotional support participants’ families provided and who provided that support. Lisa shared:

I talk to my mom basically every day about literally everything. My mom and I are very, very close. So I think they have been really good at kind of helping me through the hard times, helping me through things that have happened, or come up. Or even just hard decisions as I’ve tried to figure out where I’m going next (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

Clara also relied more heavily on her mom for this type of support. She shared:
More to my mom. I think it's just ... it's a little bit easier. I feel more, like ... I think that we're pretty similar people so I definitely feel like I can call her up and chat like she's my friend. I definitely really enjoy talking to my dad as well. I talk to different things with my dad than I do with my mom (Clara, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Each participant identified when they do seek out emotional support from their family, that there is a particular parent(s) they go to. Five out of the six participants (Bey, Clara, Hope, Lisa, and Molly) expressed they would typically go to their mom for emotional support while Sal would go to her dad. Molly mentioned that she would go to both her mom and stepdad, she shared:

I call my mom crying all the time. I'll call my stepdad crying. I always ask him for advice. I talk to them multiple times a day. I already talked to my mom I think twice. So I've always felt like I could reach out for them. Especially too, since my freshman year, this relationship with my stepdad has grown a lot (Molly, personal communication, April 25, 2018).

Hope and Sal stated they typically do not rely on their parents for emotional support and are more likely to seek out that support from friends and peers. The varying levels of emotional support that each participant received from their family was interesting to see. Some participants relied heavily on their families or parents for emotional support while others seemed to prefer being more independent and wanting their parents to have more of a “hands-off” approach.

**Informational Support**
In terms of informational support, I focused on career-related information parents and families provided each participant. Several questions were asked related to informational support including: (1) What kind of career-related information their family provided?, (2) Did your family help you generate different possibilities and new experiences?, (3) What alternatives did your family suggest regarding schools, majors, or careers?, and (4) Which family member has been most influential in the creation of your own career decision-making?. Once again, an overarching theme was one parent or family member seemed to provide the vast majority of career-related information and the participants typically went to or relied on that parent providing them that information.

Hope shared:

Definitely growing up, my mom was trying to push me towards computers. For jobs, whenever we had job shadowing days, she always helped me find people to shadow, I guess. That's information that she helped me with. But other than that, the only real career information is always just the reality of picking a job that will support you (Hope, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Sal also described her mom’s role in the career decision-making process as being more active than her dad’s. She shared:

I wouldn't say that she was pushing me in any way because when I told her I didn't like something then that was pretty much that, but she was always pretty good at brainstorming. My dad, I just never really talked to about anything because yeah, my dad was not as creative as my mom, so he wasn't good at coming up with ideas. He was just good at being like, "Well, you have this much
money, and you need to get a job," and that kind of thing (Sal, personal communication, April 30, 2018).

Clara, Hope, and Sal received career-related informational support primarily from their moms. Bey and Lisa had more career-related conversations with their dads and Molly with her stepdad and maternal grandfather. Most career-related information provided included information about particular career paths the parent(s) wanted and suggested the participant to consider and brainstorming and researching majors and careers that would fit the participant’s interests. I found it particularly interesting that four of six participants mentioned their dads’ career advice focused heavily on choosing a career that was financially stable and would allow them to make a good living and be independent. Lisa shared her experience related to this, sharing:

Especially when I was kind of choosing what to go into, I really didn't hear a whole lot of different things. I think my parents knew very much what I was interested in, so my dad's big thing was salary honestly all along. Which makes sense, he's just very conscious of things like that whereas my mom's more like go follow your dream (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

Some participants also talked about the informational support provided during the college search process. For instance, Bey and Molly shared how their moms were not as involved in career conversations but were more involved in the college search process and conversations surrounding the importance of attending college. I also found some participants’ parents tended to push them towards their own careers. As the quote used above from Hope’s interview revealed, both parents worked in the computer industry
and, growing up, she felt they tried to push her towards working with computers. Bey’s dad also pushed her towards a career in business since he had started his own business and was very successful throughout his career. Molly’s stepdad has also played a role in influencing her to consider law school since he is a lawyer.

**Appraisal Support**

For this type of support, I asked specifically about the support and encouragement for careers participants received from their family and parents. Hope and Lisa, who are pursuing career paths that are typically less lucrative in terms of salary, seemed to have received the most discouragement out of all participants. Lisa considered her parents to be a balance of both encouraging and discouraging of her plan to become a teacher. When talking about the encouragement and discouragement from her parents, Lisa shared:

I think my parents have been kind of a balance of both. I think they definitely ...

My dad is very worried about the financial aspect of it, especially living down here. But I think once he realized that this is what I was set on, he's been more encouraging and trying to figure out ways to kind of help me and all that. My mom is the same way (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

Hope shared how her mom has subtly tried to get her to change from recreational therapy to another career path. She stated:

My mom has definitely been very excited whenever I’ve mentioned, when I was considering lawyer or OT. And she definitely pushed me towards those things.
When I was considering those, she would call me all the time and ask me about it (Hope, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Some participants felt as though their parents were supportive of the particular career path they were pursuing because it was either a “practical” or “acceptable” path, but, they felt they would not be as supportive if they had chosen a different career path. For instance, when Bey, who plans on becoming a physician, was asked how her parents would respond if she decided to pursue a lower paying, less prestigious career, she stated:

I think they'd be both really really mad. Just because they've spent so much money on my education in different aspects, not so much college, college I pay for myself… I just think that the way they've seen me perform, they expect a lot of me… They'd be like, "We've worked so hard, we've invested so much in you, why aren't you living up to that?" I think that would be their perception on that (Bey, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

Clara talked about how her parents also pushed her towards practical career paths. She stated, “I think they always pushed me towards practical things. Definitely probably not like the far-fetched dreams kind of thing” (Clara, personal communication, April 26, 2018). Clara also talked about her love for playing the cello. When asked if she had pursued a career in music, what would her parents have thought, she shared, “If I did music, I think it would've just been a lot of … I would've had to be really outspoken about that I was certain that that was the path” (Clara, personal communication, April 26, 2018).
Similarly, when I asked Sal what would have happened if she had decided to pursue her love for playing violin as a career, her response was, “Oh, they would have talked so much shit, for sure.” She goes on to say, “It’s not to say they haven’t been supportive of music, because I obviously do so many musical things… But yeah, for a career, no” (Sal, personal communication, April 30, 2018).

Participants were also asked how confident they felt in making their career decision and how confident they felt in reaching their career goals. Overall, all participants felt confident in both. Some participants were more confident than others. In general, each participant expressed a high level of confidence in the career they were pursuing and their ability to reach that career goal. I followed up each of those questions with, “In what ways has your family positively and negatively contributed to your confidence in making your career decision?” and “In what ways has your family positively and negatively contributed to your confidence in being able to reach your career goals?” Each participant felt their parents/families contributed more positively than negatively, but, some participants seemed more certain about their parents’/families’ positive influence.

Hope shared, even though her parents had been more hands off in her career decision-making, their confidence in her had made a positive impact. She stated:

But I think family wise, I think that they have a lot of faith in me. So I think they have definitely made me feel like I can achieve what I want to achieve. So I think that that ... It's not the main factor, but I definitely think that even though they're not super hands on, they do believe in me, and they do have that confidence in
me. So I think that just knowing that support is behind me has been helpful (Hope, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Clara shared similar thoughts about her family’s positive influence on her confidence in reaching her career goals stating, “I think they've positively contributed because ... they, I definitely feel like they believe that I can reach it. That also makes me feel validated, like okay I can do it” (Clara, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Lisa explained how her parents’ support and encouragement of her pursuing teaching has been more evident as they have been able to see her work towards that goal. She shared:

I think throughout kind of this whole process, I think they've gotten to see more of the reasoning of why I wanted to become a teacher come out. In high school I got to work, I taught little violin lessons, and they got to see that. So I think they got to see that side of me come out, which was really I think my mom really enjoyed that, kind of getting to see me in line a new role. And I think they've been very kind of ... Their support I think has aided my confidence, even in just being able to do what I want to do (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

Sal described her parents as being supportive and encouraging but in a more passive way. When asked in what ways her family positively or negatively contributed to her confidence in pursuing and reaching her career goals, she stated, “Positively by just being like, "Oh Sal, you got good grades. Good job." I remember in high school whenever I used to get As I would get doughnuts.” She went on to say, “They don’t actually say
encouraging things to me, I’m pretty sure they talk about me and I’m pretty sure they’re proud of me” (Sal, personal communication, April 30, 2018).

All participants referred to the support and/or encouragement they received from their parents and families when discussing career decision self-efficacy. Participants felt parental and family support/encouragement positively contributed to confidence in career decisions and/or reaching career goals.

While all participants viewed their parents’ and families’ as having a positive influence on their career decision self-efficacy, some participants did feel a certain level of discouragement that negatively influenced their career decision self-efficacy. For instance, Bey seemed to feel some discouragement from her dad in terms of her career decisions. After explaining how her mom mostly reinforced her career decisions and expressed how proud she was of her, she referred to her dad by stating:

“…but there's still a little bit sometimes where he'll just complain about me to my mom like, "Oh Bey’s not doing this, she's not doing this, she's not doing this." She's like, "It's hard to balance a lot of things, [father’s name]." But for the most part, I feel their support and that is reassuring” (Bey, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

Lisa also expressed how her dad’s concerns regarding a teacher’s salary has wavered her confidence. She stated:

I think my dad with his many budgets and his ... I don't know. My dad likes to scare me about being a teacher a lot. And I don't think he means it in a very bad way. I think he always comes at it as look you can make this work and it's going
to be okay, but he can kind of sound very scary. I think a lot of it is trying to convince me to move back to New York, honestly. I think that's his biggest thing right now. And I know he means it from a good heart, but I think that can kind of waver my confidence a little bit, just that there is the potential (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

Any other references to lacking confidence in career decisions were related more to their own feelings about the career path they have chosen and having some uncertainty about it. None of those feelings seemed to be influenced by their parents or families.

Overall, parents and families of these participants provided mostly positive support and encouragement of their career interests and goals. Hope and Lisa seemed to have received more discouragement due to pursuing career paths with less lucrative salary opportunities. Other participants (Bey, Clara, and Sal) received more encouragement and support of their career paths since they were viewed as “practical” and “acceptable” choices. I found parents and families were more likely to be supportive and encouraging of career paths they were more familiar with and when there was a shared understanding of the career.

**Instrumental Support**

Level of instrumental support, which includes financial support in terms of tuition, books, meal plan, living expenses, appending money, healthcare, etc., varied among the participants. Parents and families of three participants are covering the vast majority of costs for college tuition, books, supplies, spending money, and healthcare.
Lisa was one participant who received substantial instrumental support from her parents and grandparents. She shared:

My tuition actually has been covered by my grandparents, which was extremely generous. And my parents have paid for housing, and books, and I get a little allowance. So for the most part my food is covered, my housing is covered, and then the fun things are on me. They give me a little bit of money per semester, but ... So my needs are taken care of and then the extra is mine (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

The other three participants are either paying for some or all of their own college expenses. Hope shared that she used student loans to pay for the college expenses her scholarships did not cover, but, during her freshman year, her parents helped her with the loan and additional expenses. She went on to share:

But then sophomore year, I paid. So they assisted me with that. And they paid for most of my books, I think, freshman year. But then sophomore year on, I've paid for everything, except my mom pays half of my rent (Hope, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Those participants who were receiving significant financial assistance all felt as though the assistance was provided with “no strings attached”, meaning that they did not feel pressure in terms of decision-making because of the financial help they were receiving. A couple of the participants who were paying for most of college themselves did mention feeling a greater level of independence since they were supporting themselves financially.
Theme: Family Influence on Career Decision-Making Process

In examining the interview data for the influence parents and families had in the career decision-making process, I identified four prevalent themes across the participants: (a) differing roles for mothers versus fathers; (b) parent/family expectations; (c) level of parent/family involvement; and (d) family values and dynamics.

Differing Roles for Mothers versus Fathers

As discussed in the previous section, each participant indicated their moms and dads played different roles in their lives in terms of emotional, informational, and appraisal support. These differing roles also existed when participants shared experiences and stories related to their parents’ influence throughout the career decision-making process. In this section, quotes are provided from the participants to demonstrate the differing roles their moms, dads, and other influential family members played in their career-decision making process. Following the quotes, a summary is provided discussing the commons themes and unique differences among participants. In terms of mothers’ influences on career decision-making, Bey shared:

Yeah, no she wants me to have a career, absolutely. And it doesn't really matter to her what it is. She knows that I'll be successful in whatever I want to do. She just wants me to do something so that I have something else that I can fall back on… Just something that I can be successful at and make a living at (Bey, personal communication, April, 16, 2018).

Most participants were more likely to have conversations with their moms about career options and decisions than their dads. Sal shared in her initial interview:
My mom was really helping me whenever, like trying to come up with majors for me. She suggested, actually the first engineering she suggested was biomedical engineering. Because, actually I was thinking about pharmacy for a while (Sal, personal communication, April 9, 2018).

Sal referred to this more in-depth in the second interview stating, “My mom is a lot more creative, so she was good at coming up with professions and coming up with what I could do with different majors and things” (Sal, personal communication, April 30, 2018).

In terms of dads’ influences on the career decision-making process, their involvement and influence was more varied than for the moms. Hope shared that her dad was “hands off” in her career decision-making stating, “He’s pretty hands off… And career wise, I don’t think my dad has really suggested anything different” (Hope, personal communication, April 26, 2018). Lisa’s dad was also less involved in suggesting career options and was more focused on the salary of her chosen career and the lifestyle it would allow her to live. Lisa shared her dad’s influence stating:

...so my dad's big thing was salary honestly all along. Which makes sense, he's just very conscious of things like that…I have had so many budgets made for me in the past couple of years depending on what state I live in, and what house I get, and what cellphone plan. He has my life planned out for me financially, which is awesome because I'm not good at that (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

Molly shared how her dad was less involved in her career decision-making but that her step-dad and mom were both very involved. She considers her step-dad her
“biggest cheerleader” and shared that her dad is “definitely supportive” but she “usually tells him about things after the fact” (Molly, personal communication, April 25, 2018).

In examining the different roles parents played in the career decision-making process, it was clear the majority of participants received more positive career-related advice and encouragement from their moms, with the exception of Molly. Molly seemed to feel both her mom and stepdad equally provided advice and encouragement of her career interests. Moms were more likely to recommend or suggest certain majors and career paths. Four of the participants received messages from their moms surrounding the importance of finding something they would enjoy and be successful.

While the roles of moms seemed to be fairly consistent across participants, the roles of dads/stepdad were more varied from highly involved in the career decision-making process to not involved at all. For example, Bey’s dad put significant amount of pressure on her to pursue a career in business. Conversely, Hope’s dad was more “hands off” and had not provided any career-related suggestions or advice. For four participants, the dad was concerned with their daughter’s career choice affording them a salary that would allow them to be financially independent and self-sufficient. Dads were also less likely to brainstorm and research potential major and career options than the moms.

**Parent and Family Expectations**

Parent and family expectations seemed to play a strong role in the career decision-making process for some participants. The expectation of attending college was consistent across participants. Some participants were not explicit in saying this was an expectation, but it was apparent that not pursuing higher education was never really an
option or consideration for any participant. Two participants (Bey and Molly), shared how going beyond an undergraduate degree was an expectation. For instance, Molly stated:

When I chose business it was still using business as a stepping stone to further education so at least too since I come from such a highly educated family, undergraduate is great but then what? They're all PhD's or Master's or lawyers or something like that, so it's very much like undergraduate is a stepping stone to something more (Molly, personal communication, April 25, 2018).

There also seemed to be parent/family expectations as a result of participants being academically high-achieving. For some, this expectation was they pursue career paths known to be more prestigious, rigorous, and lucrative. Hope, who was pursuing a career in recreational therapy, felt the expectation of choosing certain paths. Hope shared:

Like so I know that I'm smart, and people know that and stuff, so that when they see I'm doing recreational therapy, I think a lot of people, especially my family have been thinking that I'm settling or not really pushing myself to do that (Hope, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Similar to Hope, when I asked Lisa if her ability to achieve academically influenced the way in which parents or others pushed or guided her to certain careers, she responded:

Sure. Definitely the you're too smart to be a teacher and you should think about doing… like you could do more than that. Which I think a lot of the times came from teachers who were dissatisfied with their careers, who felt like they could necessarily be doing a little bit more. Yeah, I don't necessarily understand that
mindset yet, but we'll see. I think my parents ... I mean I feel like my dad probably had similar thoughts, but I don't think they expressed it as much (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

**Level of Parent/Family Involvement**

The level of parental/family involvement in the participants’ educational experience and career decision-making process varied. For Bey and Lisa, their distance from home seemed to be a factor in why their parents and families were less involved.

Lisa shared:

Yeah, I mean essentially being really far away it's very much like they let me kind of make my own decisions and figure things out. And I think they trust that I will go back to them and ask for that help, because a lot of these things I know I can't necessarily do on my own. But they definitely give me the freedom to fall on my face should I want to (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

Bey also shared a similar experience stating:

Because they know I'm very independent. I think that's just what works well for me, and I think they recognize that, which is good. They're not constantly calling me. They know at this point that I'm very busy and I get back to them when I can and when I need them I call. And they always answer (Bey, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

Hope also did not typically involve her parents in her educational experience or career-related decisions. She explicitly stated:
I don’t think they’ve had a super huge impact, just because my mom… I mean I’m pretty independent with that kind of stuff. So I don’t really call them for career advice, I guess. It’s just kind of like whatever (Hope, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Molly, however, was on the opposite end of the spectrum and involved her mom and stepdad in most of her educational and career decisions. She discussed the high level of involvement her mom, stepdad, and grandfather had in her college search and career exploration process, to assisting her with internship logistics and helping her make connections. Molly talked about her family’s involvement stating:

I think for every step of the way my family has been very involved. They spend countless hours in the SAT, ACT tutoring. Arranging school visits. And also too, arranging meetings with students and then taking them out to dinner. And part of it too is since they aren't involved in politics, even though my stepdad does law it's not necessarily politics, I know that they've felt bad that they couldn't help me in some ways because all that they know about politics is it's very much connection based. So when I was applying for these positions, they also had a little bit of the negativity of, "We don't have any connections," or, "I'm sure someone else will be better connected." I feel like they feel a little bit inadequate that they can't help me because they just expect that they should be able to (Molly, personal communication, April 25, 2018).

The level of parent/family involvement seemed to be mostly facilitated or controlled by the participant and less by the parents or family. For those participants, like
Molly, whose parents were highly involved, their level of involvement was something the participant welcomed.

Five out of six participants referred to their independence and freedom in making their own decisions and how that has made them feel more powerful and confident in those decisions. Lisa talked about how she felt “fairly powerful” in making her own career decisions because she felt like she “had most of the say in it” (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018). Similar to Lisa, Molly shared:

I feel very powerful. Because I think too, I take a lot of initiative in it. I've met with every career counselor here. I've met with Dr. _______ about doing the scholarships and all that. And I think my parents definitely played more of an active role when I was applying for an undergraduate but from now on it really has been me… A lot of things I’ve kind of taken the impetus on (Molly, personal communication, April 25, 2018).

Sal also felt “very powerful” in the career decision-making process. She stated, “Yeah, I mean I got to do whatever I wanted. I had the means to do it. I didn’t really have any obstacles” (Sal, personal communication, April 30, 2018).

Similar to Sal, Clara felt as though her career decisions were hers and stated:

I consider myself pretty powerful in my career decision making. I feel like at the end of the day it was my say, I guess. I mean, I feel like I've taken kind of the hard way to get there, but I think that ... like I still firmly believe that hard work will pay off and that eventually this will also pay off even if it feels a little bit like
I'm running on low right now. Eventually I'll get to my destination and it'll be good (Clara, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Hope shared an interesting perspective in saying:

If I had my parents there being like this is the career for you, I think I would have been a lot more doubtful that it was right for me because I would have been like is it what I want or is it what my parents want? The fact that it's me making the decision on my own and figuring it out has definitely made me feel like this is what I actually want to do (Hope, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Bey was the only participant who did not feel very powerful in making her career decisions. She did not feel as though she had the power or freedom to change her career path if she wanted. She stated:

“I don't feel super powerful in the making the decision. I think it's been something that is suitable to my parent's expectations, it's something I have worked really hard at, so I should do it at this point. It's something I really enjoy, but I don't know if I really have the power to be like, "Oh no I want to do something else at this point." I don't feel like I have the power to decide, "Oh no, never mind. I want to be an engineer… I don’t have that mobility” (Bey, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

Bey made it clear she was confident in her goal to become a physician, but had she wanted to change paths at that point, it would not be an option.
Family Values and Dynamics

I asked participants about the dominant values in their family. All participants considered education to be a dominant value or talked about learning and school coming first. Molly discussed the importance of education in her family many times throughout her interviews. When asked about her family’s dominant values, she shared:

Definitely education. I think what I really appreciate about my family is when we get together after we do the catch up stuff, we always talk about the news and politics… I think growing up, in my nuclear family, it was definitely very much an emphasis on learning as fun. I’ve always gone to museums, always appreciated that side as well (Molly, personal communication, April 25, 2018).

Four of six participants went to either private school and/or a rigorous, selective high school. Sal referred to this during her in-depth interview stating:

Going to private school and paying money out of pocket instead of going to the free public school definitely shows that they value education. Especially choosing a religious school, which is why I said that because we always went to religious schools (Sal, personal communication, April 30, 2018).

All participants considered hard work or a strong work ethic as a family value. These values are something that have continued to impact the participants’ lives and their ability to succeed. Bey talked explicitly about the value her dad placed on strong work ethic. She shared:

I think my dad has put a lot of his life into working, so that is obviously a value that he has and that he has tried to just enforce a good work ethic amongst all of
us. But I think that work ethic has been through my academics, so channeling that driven-ness of it all through my academic studies and doing really well in that, that's where that work aspect comes in, and just being successful in general (Bey, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

Lisa shared similar thoughts on her parents’ focus on hard work and stated:

I think my parents have taught us to value respect and to work hard, that's been instilled within us from a very young age that you don't just get things handed to you, that you have to work for what you have (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

Unique family dynamics also seemed to make an impact on the lives of some participants. For instance, Clara is half-Japanese and the Japanese culture has influenced her upbringing and focus on academics. Growing up, she was raised bilingual and attended Japanese school every Saturday. Molly’s family structure is unique from other participants in that her stepdad is more involved in her academic and career decisions than her dad. Her maternal grandfather has also played a critical role in both academic career decisions. Grandparents of other participants were not involved at the same level as Molly’s grandfather. Similar to Molly, Hope does not have a very close relationship with her dad and her dad is not as involved in her educational or career-related pursuits.

Bey considered herself the most independent child, being the oldest of four children, which has certainly influenced the ways in which she involved her parents. Lisa referred to the competitiveness between her and her two sisters and the pressure she felt. Sal shared the unique family dynamic with her mom’s side of the family who is
“prejudice towards anybody that goes to school because none of them ever went to school” (Sal, personal communication, April 30, 2018). She talked about their negative comments and discouragement towards anything academic and career-related. Because of this prejudice, Sal and her family avoid conversations surrounding college or careers.

**Theme: Career Experiences of Women**

When creating the in-depth interview protocol, I included some specific questions related to gender roles and careers to better understand how their gender identity had influenced the way they viewed careers, but, the theme of gender roles of women and career decisions came out in the study outside of those specific questions. While some of this data is not directly relevant to my research question, I thought it was important to share due to its implications for further research and practice. These implications are discussed in Chapter Five. In examining the interview data for career experiences of women, I identified three prevalent themes across participants: (a) gender roles in society; (b) gender roles/impression of gender roles in family; and (c) saliency of gender in making career decisions.

**Gender Roles in Society**

Overall, participants did not receive direct discouragement in pursuing certain careers due to their gender identity, but, some felt as though societal gender roles and norms were something they thought about when considering careers. Bey shared, “No one ever told me I couldn't be a doctor because, "Oh, that's what men do," or a CEO, "That's a man's job," nothing like that. I've always been told whatever I want to do I can do” (Bey, personal communication, April 16, 2018). At the same time, she also felt
societal pressure to choose a career that would allow her to have a family. She shared this by saying:

I feel like there's a little bit of responsibility to do something that allows you to have a family while being a successful working person or having a job that you can fall back on if you decide, "I want to go be a stay-at-home-mom," and then if something doesn't work out, you have that job to go back to (Bey, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

Lisa also considered family and marriage in the back of her mind when thinking about her career. She shared:

But I mean I think there's definitely that, like in the back of my mind that oh, well if I get married and have kids maybe I won't have to work. Which, I mean, I feel like I probably will still want to. I say that now with no thought of kids in my immediate future. I'm somebody who's very driven by work and who gets bored very easily. So the idea of just being at home while kids are at school, it kind of terrifies me cause I feel like I'll be bored to death. But it's there, it's definitely a thought that this is kind of what's expected at some point. Like whether or not it happens is my choice, but it should be an option. So who knows, honestly (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

For Clara, she viewed being the only girl in certain settings, like classes and her major, as more of a motivator than a deterrent. She explained this by stating:

I guess I've always been pretty motivated to prove that I can do whatever they can do and do it better kind of situation. That's never been a deterrent for me. In fact,
it's been more of an encourager. I was like alright, I'll just go and do it better than all the guys. So I don't know. I don't know if I've ever really like ... I might've just filtered out anything anyone may have said, just because I don't ... anything they say about that about that, it's like oh great it's more for me to show them (Clara, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Molly, who is pursuing a male-dominated career, didn’t recall being discouraged to pursue certain careers but her stepdad “makes it known how politics is still dominated by men” (Molly, personal communication, April 25, 2018).

**Gender Roles/Impression of Gender Roles in Family**

A commonality among the majority of participants (five out of six) was their moms had always stayed at home or at least did for most of their childhood. Participants shared how this had influenced the messages they received from their moms as well as their own views about women and careers. For some participants, there seemed to be pressure to be a stay at home mom.

Sal was one participant who experienced subtle messages from her parents about staying at home once she had children. She shared:

> Obviously with both my mom and my dad being in STEM, they never had any sort of problem with me being in STEM, but subtly they would be for sure like, if I were to have kids I would have to quit my job (Sal, personal communication, April 30, 2018).

At a later point in Sal’s interview, she eluded to this again stating:
I don't know, like I actually broke up with one of my boyfriends in college because that's what he said. He was like, "Oh, well of course you're going to quit your job if we have kids." I was like, "Oh, no." When I told my mom about that, it was very just kind of like, "Oh, well you'll just have to wait and see." They didn’t necessarily take my side on that one (Sal, personal communication, April 30, 2018).

Other participants expressed their moms strongly advised them to pursue their careers and not let having a family inhibit them from reaching their goals. Two participants (Bey and Hope) shared their moms’ experiences with feeling “trapped” or “stuck” in their situations because they stayed at home and did not have a career to fall back on. Bey, with a little of hesitance in her voice, shared:

This might be a little too much, but she [Bey’s mom] sort of feels trapped, just because she didn't really go to college, so she can't go get another job. She's always like, "Bey, go to school, finish school so you have something so if whatever relationship you're in doesn't work out, you don't rely on them so heavily for your livelihood” (Bey, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

Even though Bey received this guidance from her mom, she admitted she still felt pressure to stay at home. When asked if she felt pressure to stay at home because her mom did she stated:

I think so. Yeah. Just because I think my childhood was so wonderful and so great because my mom was there all the time… And I think that bond that you have with your mom is something … I don't know, can I give my kids that if I'm
not home all the time? I don't know… Because you have so much influence then over your kid. If there's someone else, are they influencing them in a different way than if you were with them all the time?... Because you have so much influence then over your kid. If there's someone else, are they influencing them in a different way than if you were with them all the time? (Bey, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

Hope shared a similar experience to Bey’s in regards to the advice and guidance her mom shared with her. In Hope’s initial interview we discussed her decision to pursue a career in recreational therapy and how her parents felt she was “settling” by choosing that path. I asked if she felt this was their view due to being a high-achieving student. She responded immediately and without apprehension:

Well I know for my mom it's because, like my parents are separated and ... 'Cause she took ... She was a stay at home mom for most of it and she wanted to leave him earlier in life but couldn't because she didn't have a job. And so she wants me to be able to ... 'Cause now she's paid well and has a great job and everything but she wants me to constantly be able to support myself no matter what (Hope, personal communication, April 10, 2018).

While only two participants used the word “feminist” when describing their moms, all participants seemed to receive messaging from their moms focusing on being a strong and independent woman. This finding was particularly interesting since five out of six participants had moms who stayed at home for some or most of the participants’ childhoods. Clara addressed the fact, while her mom has always stayed at home, she
would consider her family to be progressive. She explained by saying, “I definitely feel like my family's pretty progressive, despite the fact that my mom's a stay at home mom, which is the most conventional of all” (Clara, personal communication, April 26, 2018). She went on to talk about how her mom wanted her to get married later in life so she could pursue her career and had already told her that having kids was not an expectation.

Lisa’s mom shared her personal experience of pursuing a career she “hated” and urged her own children not to make the same mistake. Lisa shared her mom’s career experience stating:

But when my mom graduated from high school and was thinking about college she wanted to go into medicine and my grandmother said you can't do that and have a family. So encouraged her with the math and science ... My mom always loved math and science, which is why she wanted to do medicine, but they kind of pushed her towards engineering. So it was never really her choice and I feel like she always kind of felt the what if path there, so yeah (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

Lisa went on to explain, “my mom really hated her job and I'm not going to do that. So I think for me that's been big, cause that's something my mom has always driven home that she wants us to do something we like” (Lisa, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

**Gender Salience when Making Career Decisions**

Gender saliency varied among participants from not salient at all to very salient. Some participants felt gender was salient when they were considering how they would balance work and family while others felt it was more salient in the workplace. Bey
expressed how her gender was something she thought about often as she considered her future career as a doctor and how that might work if she decided to have a family. She even talked about choosing a specialty that would allow more flexibility so she could raise a family.

Hope has also thought about her priorities in terms of her career and having a family. She stated:

I've definitely thought about family when I was thinking ... I don't want to be stuck somewhere. Like I just want to go wherever with my career. I want to move around, and I just want to live my life. And so if I have a family ... I'll find a guy who fits into what I'm doing. I've always thought this. I'm not going to be tied down by a guy and have to fit my life to that. I'm going to fit him to my life. It's going to be like I'm going to find what I want to do first, and then I guess my thoughts of family have gone into that, because if I do have kids, it's not going to be for a long time, and it's going to be after I've experienced life (Hope, personal communication, April 26, 2018).

Sal and Molly felt their gender was more salient in the workforce and not when they were considering career options. Sal expressed frustration throughout her cooperative education program stating:

Oh my gosh, my co-op is horrible…Oh yeah. Absolutely. It was such a shock, because it was ... Yeah, getting out into the workforce, oh man, I am so aware. I am so aware at all times. I mean, I just sit in meetings all day with 20 men and I'm the only girl there ever and oh my gosh, and I've gotten mad so many times (Sal, personal communication, April 30, 2018).
Sal went on to talk about how she hoped to work for a company that had more women. She stated, “I mean, I don't know how many offers I'm going to get, but if I do get multiple offers I'm going to try to go to the place that has the most women” (Sal, personal communication, April 30, 2018). Molly’s gender had been more salient during her internships. She felt as though she had to be more aware of her appearance and dress in the workplace because she was a woman. Molly also stated her gender was more salient in terms of “the more practical aspects of seeing how to act on the ground. I feel like that has had a bigger impact on me” (Molly, personal communication, April 25, 2018).

Clara and Lisa are the two participants who did not experience much gender saliency when making career decisions. Clara responds with a “Maybe” when asked if her gender identity was something she thought about when considering careers. She went on to say:

I kind of always liked doing things where there weren’t as many women there. I kind liked being able to break in.” Lisa’s response to that question was, “I don't know. I guess not as much as I would think it would for others. I mean I feel like teaching is a very female dominated role, like it's just a very female dominated career. So I think when I think about good teachers or teachers that I have I think of women, I don't often ... I mean I've had wonderful male teachers, but that's not necessarily where my mind jumps to (Clara, personal communication, April 26, 2018).
Summary of Themes

Participants in this study shared their experiences related to the career decision-making process. They provided their views on the various factors that have influenced their career decisions, focusing primarily on parent and family influences. Four types of parent/family support were discussed throughout the interviews including emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental support. For parent/family informational, appraisal, and instrumental support, participants shared the ways in which each type influenced their educational and career-related decisions.

Common themes also emerged when examining the career decision-making process of each participant and how they viewed their parents/family influenced that process. For family influence on the career decision-making process, I found mothers and fathers played different roles in the process and parent and family expectations, in terms of educational attainment and career paths, were salient for many participants. For some, these expectations were due to their ability to achieve academically.

The level of parent/family involvement was also a factor in the career decision-making process, but, the level of involvement varied among participants and was controlled or facilitated by the participant and not the parents or families. Related to parent/family involvement, independence in making career decisions contributed to participants’ career decision self-efficacy. Five out of six participants suggested their personal independence and freedom in making career decisions made them feel more powerful and confident in those decisions. Family values and unique family dynamics
impacted participants’ educational and career-related decisions. Family values common among participants included emphasis on education and importance of strong work ethic.

The last overarching theme discussed was the career experiences of women. Gender identity influenced how all participants viewed careers and three sub-themes emerged in this area including gender roles in society, gender roles and impression of gender roles in family, and gender saliency when making career decisions.

**Chapter Summary**

I began this chapter by revisiting my research question as well as my methodological approach. In addition, I introduced my study participants and provided specific data points and short biographies for each one. Then I delved into the four themes identified in my study: (a) parent and family support (b) family influence on career decision-making process; (c) career experiences of women; and shared results and quotes for each theme. Finally, I provided a summary of themes.

In Chapter Five, I summarize the study and the findings, making connections to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Then, I discuss implications for future practice and research.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study investigated the career decision-making processes of high-achieving, female, undergraduate students and, specifically, how these students viewed the influence parents and family had on their career decisions. Six participants were selected for this general qualitative study. Data was collected through a pre-interview survey, initial interview, and in-depth interview for each participant. A coding framework (Appendix H) was developed and used during the analysis of open-ended survey responses, initial interview, and in-depth interview for each participant. A codebook (Appendix I) was created and revised throughout the analysis process and a final iteration of the codebook was used to identify themes and determine results and findings of the study. This chapter summarizes and discusses: (a) study’s findings, (b) implications for practice, and (c) implications for future research.

Summary of the Study and Findings

Findings Summary

Through the pre-interview survey and interviews, each participant had the opportunity to share experiences related to their personal career decision-making process. While each participant had their own unique experiences and stories to tell, there were several themes that transcended all or most participants. After analyzing the data through several rounds of coding and multiple codebook iterations, I identified three themes: (a)
parent and family support (b) family influence on career decision-making process; and (c) career experiences of women. Within each theme, several sub-themes also emerged.

The parent and family support theme focused on four types of support including emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental (Malecki & Demaray, 2003) and their influence on participants’ career decision-making. When considering family influence on the career decision-making process theme, four sub-themes emerged including the differing roles for mothers versus fathers, parent and family expectations, level of parent and family involvement, and family values and dynamics. Finally, for the career experiences of women theme, three sub-themes emerged including the impact of gender roles in society, gender roles and impressions of gender roles within participants’ families, and participants’ gender salience when making career decisions. In this section, I discuss each theme and sub-theme and how they support or refute existing literature.

**Parent and Family Support**

Social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994) suggests contextual variables, including person, environment, and behavior, influence a person’s academic and career development outcomes. These contextual variables can either positively or negatively impact academic and career development outcomes. This study focused on the contextual variable, person, specifically parents and family, and their influence on career decisions. Participants were asked about four different types of support their parents and family provided including emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental. In terms of emotional support, five out of six participants expressed they would rely on their mom for emotional support while one participant would go to her dad, but, there were varying
levels of emotional support each participant received. Some relied heavily on their families, and specifically parents, for that type of support while others were more independent and preferred a “hands-off approach” from their parents and families.

Bright et al. (2005) found knowledge gained from parents and the university often had the most influence on college students’ career decision-making. The results of my study supports this finding in that most participants received the majority of career-related information from their parents and relied on parents/family to provide information. Most career-related information provided by parents and families included information about career paths parent(s) wanted or suggested the participant to consider as well as brainstorming and researching majors and careers that fit the participant’s interests.

In terms of appraisal support, parents and families tended to provide mostly positive support and encouragement of career interests and decisions. Bubany et al. (2008) found participants most often identified immediate family members as the individuals providing a supportive role in the career decision-making process. In the results of my study, it was interesting to find two participants who were pursuing less lucrative careers mentioned receiving the most discouragement from parents and families out of all participants. Some participants shared they felt their parents were supportive of their career path because it was either “practical” or “acceptable” in their parents’ eyes. However, participants admitted, had they chosen other less prestigious or lucrative career paths, their parents would not have been as supportive.
For instrumental support, half of participants noted receiving significant financial support from their parents while the other half were either paying for some or all of their own college expenses. For participants receiving more support in this area, they felt this assistance was provided with “no strings attached” and receiving help did not result in feeling pressured to make certain decisions. A couple of participants who were not receiving that level of instrumental support did mention feeling a great sense of independence because they were supporting themselves.

**Family Influence on Career Decision-Making Process**

In a study examining how college students discussed their approach to making career decisions, Bubany et al. (2008) found 85% of respondents perceived others played a critical role in their decision making. Immediate family members were found to be among the top influences on participants’ career planning. The results of this study also found immediate family members, especially parents, to be a main influence on participants’ career decision-making process. Furthermore, the results of my study supported the literature on parental involvement being a significant predictor of non-first-generation college students reaching educational aspirations when compared to first-generation college students (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). In my study results, it was interesting to find how moms and dads played different roles in the career decision-making process.

The majority of participants shared they received more positive career-related advice and encouragement from their moms than dads. However, one participant felt equally supported in her career interests by both her mom and stepdad. Moms were also
more likely to provide recommendations or suggestions for majors and/or career paths. The roles moms played in career decision-making were more consistent across participants. The roles of dads/stepdads were more varied from dads who were very hands-on and vocal about majors and career paths to dads who were completely hands-off and uninvolved in the career decision-making process. Another interesting finding was, for many participants, dads were most concerned about the earning potential of the participant’s career choice. Results from the study by Schultheiss, et al. (2001), supports the finding of my study that moms and dads play different roles in students’ career decision-making process. Schultheiss et al.’s study also found, overall, moms played a more significant role than dads in career decision-making. However, in my study, moms typically provided more informational support related to careers than dads. In contrast, Schultheiss et al.’s study found dads provided more informational support.

Stringer and Kerpelman (2010) suggested there is a positive correlation between parental support and career decision self-efficacy of college students (Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010). Furthermore, in a 2002 study, findings suggested career decision self-efficacy was negatively impacted when family conflict was present (Hargrove, et al., 2002). Instead, when the family had an achievement orientation and encouraged freedom of expression, there was a positive impact on career decision self-efficacy. The results of my study support these findings in that all participants felt confident in making their career decisions and reaching their career goals. Furthermore, each participant felt their parents/families contributed more positively than negatively to their level of confidence.
Berrios-Allison (2005) found college students who perceived more intrusiveness from parents tended to take longer to make career-related decisions. These students also seemed to be less involved in the career decision-making process. Conversely, some college students who were struggling with career choices benefitted from family interventions during this process. These contradictory findings also emerged in my study. While some participants benefited greatly from their parents/family being highly involved in their career decisions, other participants found it more difficult to make career decisions because of their parents’/family’s involvement. Parent and family expectations was one sub-theme where this finding emerged. As discussed earlier, some participants felt the expectation to pursue career paths known to be more prestigious, rigorous, lucrative, and practical. They stated certain paths would not have been supported.

Larson and Wilson’s (1998) study investigated the influence of family of origin on the career decisions of young adults. Researchers found students displayed negative feelings toward the career decision-making process, struggled to make career decisions, and lacked self-awareness due to feelings of obligation to meet their parents’ expectations. While the participants in my study shared more positive experiences related to support and encouragement of career decisions by their parents and family, some participants did feel a level of discouragement that negatively influenced their career decision self-efficacy. Two participants shared feelings of discouragement from their dads; one even stated her dad’s concern of her career choice did “waiver” her confidence.
Level of parental and family involvement was another sub-theme identified through this study and varied across participants. A constant among all participants was that level of involvement seemed to be primarily facilitated or controlled by participants and less by the parents or family. In a 2002 study, findings suggested career decision self-efficacy was negatively impacted when family conflict was present. Instead, when the family had an achievement orientation and encouraged freedom of expression, there was a positive impact on career decision self-efficacy (Hargrove, et al., 2002). Similar to the Hargrove et al. (2002) findings, five out of six participants in my study referred to their independence and freedom in making their own decisions and how that made them feel more powerful and confident in their career decisions.

Family values and unique family dynamics played a role in participants’ career decisions. All participants noted education as one of their family’s values. They shared learning and school always came first, and talked about hard work and a strong work ethic as part of their family’s values. Throughout interviews, it was apparent these values had a significant impact on participants’ lives and their ability to succeed. There were also some interesting findings related to unique family dynamics that impacted some participants’ upbringing and decision-making. These unique family dynamics included ethnicity and culture, family structure, birth order, situations related to divorce or separation, and sibling competition.

One participant shared she was half-Japanese and discussed how Japanese culture played an important role in her upbringing. Education and academic achievement seemed to be a large focus in her family; she even attended Japanese school on Saturdays for
most of her childhood. Two participants had parents who were either divorced or separated. For both participants, the divorce or separation seemed to have an impact on their fathers’ involvement in their lives, especially in career decision-making processes. Both participants shared their fathers were not involved in their career decision-making processes.

**Career Experiences of Women**

Undergraduate women face unique aspects and challenges when it comes to major and career decisions. Patton et. al (2016) discussed factors influencing gender identity development in college including academic contexts, career planning, and student life. Gender and gender identity development theory suggests students come to college with predetermined ideas about what majors and careers are appropriate for people of different genders (Patton, et. al, 2016). Studies have also examined how societal norms and beliefs about gender influence the early career decisions of men and women (Correll, 2001; Eccles, 1987; Whitmarsh et al., 2007). Additionally, research studies have shown women’s career development has a level of complexity not experienced by men and that there are many internal and external barriers influencing and limiting their career choices (Betz, 1994; Sullivan & Mahalik, 2000; Whitmarsh et al., 2007). Coogan and Chen (2007) discussed the socially constructed internal and external influences including early gender-role orientation, employment inequities, and family responsibilities. Later on, Landivar (2013) discussed how these internal and external influences tend to results in women being concentrated in career fields that have lower status and prestige than career fields many men seek.
The results of this study support all of the research studies cited above. Career experiences of women was a prominent theme throughout the study. Sub-themes emerged around gender roles in society, gender roles and impressions of gender roles in family, and gender salience when making career decisions. While most participants did not feel direct discouragement in pursuing certain career paths due to their gender identity, there was certainly some pressure and expectations felt due to societal norms and values related to gender roles. For instance, some participants noted feeling as though societal gender roles and norms were something they considered when making career decisions, especially as it related to goals of marriage and having a family. One participant shared the feeling of “responsibility” to pursue a career that would allow her to have a family while also being successful in her work. Another participant expressed how family and marriage were “in the back of her mind” when thinking about her future career. On the other hand, one participant felt pursuing a field dominated by men was more of a motivator and not a deterrent. She discussed how, even as a child, she was motivated to pursue things that most girls did not because she wanted to “do it better than all the guys”.

Among one of the most interesting findings in this study was the gender roles within participants’ families and their impact on participants’ career decisions and how they thought about careers. The impressions of gender roles their families had also had an impact on participants’ career views and decisions. Five out of six participants had moms who had either always stayed at home or did for most of their childhood. These five participants shared how their moms’ experiences influenced the messages their moms
shared with them about careers and also impacted their own views about women and careers. For some participants, there seemed to be pressure to be a stay-at-home mom while others received messages from their moms that they needed to pursue their careers and not allow having a family hold them back from reaching their career goals. Gender saliency varied among participants from not salient at all to very salient. Some participants felt gender was salient when they were considering how they would balance work and family while others felt gender was more salient in the workplace. Either way, all participants experienced some form of gender saliency in terms of career decisions.

**Implications for Practice and Future Research**

**Implications for Practice**

The results of this study highlighted the fact that high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students face unique pressures due to a higher level of expectations they have of themselves and they receive from their families. Most participants in this study felt their ability to achieve academically did come with a certain level of pressure to succeed both academically and professionally. In addition to the unique pressures of being high-achieving, participants faced challenges in career decision-making due to their gender identity. Not only is this population of students having to meet high expectations set by themselves and family, they are also having to negotiate challenges women face when making career decisions. With many levels of added pressure and influence these students face when making career decisions, educators must implement multifaceted approaches in addressing this challenge with female students.
This student population needs support and resources tailored to their unique challenges. I believe there are a number of ways educators can address this issue. In addition to individual advising and counseling students, I would look to develop specific initiatives to help address the challenges women face in their career decision-making processes. These initiatives include implementation of mentoring and shadowing programs in which undergraduate women could be matched with a female mentor in their interested career areas. Mentor matching would be especially important for those pursuing male-dominated careers. The opportunity to shadow women working in careers of interest would be another initiative to help undergraduate women make an informed decision about their career goals. I am also a strong believer in providing students with the opportunity to explore majors and career areas in their first year of college. Therefore, first-year students need to have an opportunity to take a major and career exploration course. Institutions could also offer sections of this course that would be tailored to female undergraduates. I would advocate for honors colleges and programs to offer a first-year seminar or course focused on major and career exploration. Sections of the course could focus on female honors students and their major and career decision-making processes.

Overall, I believe the solution to this issue is using a multi-faceted approach that is individualized and tailored to the student’s needs. This approach includes educating undergraduate women on career options, providing ample time and adequate support for them to explore these options, and giving them the opportunity to meet and develop relationships with women in their career fields of interest who can become mentors and
provide additional guidance and support. Finally, the K-12 system needs to incorporate more career advising and exploration opportunities for students from an early age. I would recommend increased funding and resources for career advising at both the middle and high school level. Specifically, girls should be introduced to different types of career paths early on, especially those paths that are typically male-dominated. There is also the need for high school and college personnel to collaborate more to bridge the gap in career advising. If high school students were more knowledgeable about their career interests, the majors that would help them pursue those interests, and the universities that offer those majors, they could make a more well-informed college choice and begin college with a better understanding of their career interests and goals.

This study also noted the importance of advisors, career counselors, and mentors of high-achieving, female, undergraduate students. These individuals need to be aware of the impact parents and families can have on a student’s career decision-making process. I think it is easy to underestimate how integral parents and families can be in a students’ college education and career decisions and how this can be both positive and negative. Due to the critical role parents and families play in many college students’ lives, it is important not to dismiss their involvement. At the same time, it is critical educators remember we are here to support, encourage, and empower students to make the decisions that are best for them and their futures. In some situations, this may mean empowering students to look beyond their parents’ or families’ desires, guidance, or pressures to determine the right path for them.
Implications for Future Research

Little research has been conducted on high-achieving undergraduate students in general. As a result, the findings of this study highlight the need for more research to be conducted on this population and their unique characteristics, needs, and challenges. Specifically, I believe there needs to be comparative studies conducted to examine the differences between experiences of high-achieving undergraduate students and the typical undergraduate student population, especially as it relates to career decision-making. I would also be interested to see how parent/family influence on career decisions looks for high-achieving undergraduate students versus typical undergraduate students. While this study focused on female students, it would be equally important to focus a study on high-achieving, male undergraduates.

A limitation of my study was the lack of diversity and underrepresented students within my sample pool. Therefore, it would be important for future studies to focus on high-achieving, undergraduate students from underrepresented minority groups to examine their career decision-making processes. Studies could focus on the intersectionality of being high-achieving and part of an underrepresented population and how that impacts students’ career decisions. Since my study purposely focused on non-first-generation students, research could be conducted on first generation, high-achieving students and parent/family involvement in their career decisions. I imagine parent/family influence would be significantly different for first generation students when compared to non-first-generation students. Studies on family capital or socioeconomic status to determine if that has an impact on the ways in which parents and families influence
career decision of high-achieving undergraduate students would be interesting area for future research.

Some findings I found to be most interesting could be researched more in-depth. These findings include the differing roles of mothers and fathers in the major and career decision-making process of undergraduates. Further research needs to investigate how these parental roles may change for male students. Focusing a study on the influence of mothers’ career experiences on their daughters’ career decisions would also be an area of future research since this topic was beyond the scope of this study. Studies on gender roles within a family and how they influence the career decisions of undergraduate students would help fill a gap in the literature. I am intrigued by the varying levels of parent and family involvement and how levels of independence given to undergraduate students impacts how they make career decisions and how confident they are in those career decisions. Studying the levels of parental and family involvement would also be interesting to investigate within a high school student population.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter contained the purpose and a brief overview of the study. I provided a summary of the results focusing on the four identified themes: (a) parent and family support (b) family influence on career decision-making process; (c) family influence on career decision self-efficacy; and (d) career experiences of women. Additionally, I discussed how the findings related to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and the conceptual framework of the study. Finally, I offered implications for practice within higher education and K-12 settings and outlined areas for further research.
APPENDICES
Appendix A
IRB Approval Letter

Dear Dr. Havice,

The Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the protocol “Understanding High-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate Student Views of Family Influence on Career Decisions” using exempt review procedures and a determination was made on March 05, 2018 that the proposed activities involving human participants qualify as Exempt under category B2 in accordance with federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101.

No further action or IRB oversight of the protocol is required except in the following situations:

1. Substantial changes made to the protocol that could potentially change the review level. Researchers who modify the study purpose, study sample, or research methods and instruments in ways not covered by the exempt categories will need to submit an expedited or full board review application.
2. Occurrence of unanticipated problem or adverse event; any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, complications, and/or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance immediately.
3. Change in Principal Investigator (PI)

All research involving human participants must maintain an ethically appropriate standard, which serves to protect the rights and welfare of the participants. This involves obtaining informed consent and maintaining confidentiality of data. Research related records should be retained for a minimum of three (3) years after completion of the study.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact us if you have any questions and use the IRB number and title when referencing the study in future correspondence.

Good luck with your study.

Best,

Amy Smitherman
IRB Coordinator
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Appendix B

Email Templates: Recruitment Email and Initial Participant Survey

Initial Recruitment Email

Good afternoon-

My name is Katie Maxwell and I am doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership program. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation focusing on high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students and their career decisions. I am currently recruiting participants for my study. The time commitment for participants includes completion of a participant selection survey which will take approximately 10 minutes, a pre-interview survey which will take approximately 20 minutes, an initial interview which will take approximately 30 minutes, and a second, in-depth interview which will take approximately one hour. **If you are interested in being considered for participation, please complete the participant selection survey at the following link-[insert link here] by [insert date here].**

At the beginning of the participant selection survey, you will see an informational letter about the study which also includes an informed consent. You will be notified by [insert date here] as to whether or not you have been selected as a participant. Those selected as a participant will receive a $15 Starbucks gift card upon completion of all parts of the study listed above: the participant selection survey, pre-interview survey, initial interview, and in-depth interview.
If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Best,

Katie Maxwell

Clemson University

Ph.D. Candidate- Educational Leadership

bower2@clemson.edu
Pre-Interview Survey Email

Good afternoon-

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my dissertation research study this semester. I look forward to meeting you and getting to know you throughout this process. Before meeting you in-person for your initial interview, I would like to collect some information to get to know you better. Please complete the survey at the following link by [insert date here]. At the end of the survey, please indicate the dates/times you would be available for the initial interview. This interview will take approximately 30 minutes. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me any questions or concerns.

Best,

Katie Maxwell
Clemson University
Ph.D. Candidate- Educational Leadership
Appendix C

Participant Selection Survey

First and Last Name: ___________________

Email Address: ________________________

Cumulative GPA: ______________________

Academic Major(s)/Minor(s)
List your academic major(s) and minor(s), if applicable.

__________________________________________________________________________

Academic Classification
What is your academic classification? For example, freshman, sophomore, junior or senior?

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Gender Identity
Please identify your gender.

Female

Male

Non-binary

Parent/Guardian Educational Attainment
List your parent(s) or guardian(s) who have completed a four-year bachelor’s degree.

Mother

Father

Other guardian

**Career Interests and Goals**

What are your career interests and/or goals?
Appendix D

Pre-Interview Survey

First and Last Name: ___________________

Academic Classification

What is your academic classification? For example, freshman, sophomore, junior or senior?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

Gender Identity

Please identify your gender.

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary

Academic Major(s)/Minor(s)

List your academic major(s) and minor(s), if applicable.

________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Educational Attainment

List your parent(s) or guardian(s) who have completed a four-year bachelor’s degree.

Mother
Father

Other guardian

**Likert Scale Questions**

I feel confident in my choice of academic major.
1- Strongly disagree  2- Disagree  3-Neutral  4- Agree  5- Strongly agree

I feel confident in my future career goals.
1- Strongly disagree  2- Disagree  3-Neutral  4- Agree  5- Strongly agree

My academic major aligns with my future career goals.
1- Strongly disagree  2- Disagree  3-Neutral  4- Agree  5- Strongly agree

My parents and family have always supported my major and career decisions.
1- Strongly disagree  2- Disagree  3-Neutral  4- Agree  5- Strongly agree

**Open-ended Questions**

How and why did you choose your current major(s)?

Do you feel as though your current major(s) is the right fit and why?

What are your career interests and goals?

Tell me about who and/or what has had the most influence on your major and career decisions.
Initial Interview Availability

Please list dates and times during the weeks of [insert dates] that you would be available to participate in a 30-minute in-person interview. I will follow-up with a separate email to confirm a specific date, time, and campus location once you submit this survey. Feel free to list times during the day and also after normal business hours.
Appendix E

Interview Protocol for Initial Interview

Participant’s Pseudonym:

Date: Location:

Start Time: End Time:

I. Tell me about yourself (major, interests, hobbies, hometown).

II. Why did you choose the institution you are attending?

III. What are you enjoying most about college?

IV. What has been the biggest adjustment or challenge for you in college?

V. What have been your favorite classes and why?

VI. What have been your least favorite classes and why?

VII. Tell me more about your major.
   
   a. What influenced you to choose your major?
   
   b. If you had to choose another major, what would it be and why?

VIII. What are some of your career interests?
   
   a. Have you always known you wanted to pursue that/those career(s) and why or why not?
   
   b. If you could choose any career, what would it be and why?

IX. Tell me about your family.
   
   a. Where do they live?
   
   b. Tell me about your siblings and/or other family members (i.e.- relatives)?
   
   c. What do your parents do for a living?
d. How involved are your parents or family in your college education/experience?
Appendix F

Interview Protocol for In-Depth Interview

Participant’s Pseudonym:

Date: Location:
Start Time: End Time:

I. Education and careers of parents and grandparents.
   a. Specific follow-up on parents’ career-related information provided in
      initial interview.
   b. Tell me about your grandparents and their careers.

II. Tell me more about your siblings.
    a. Specific follow-up on information shared in initial interview.

III. What are the dominant values in your family?
    a. How does your family balance learning, working, and playing, and how
       were these valued?

IV. What is the meaning of success in your family?

V. Recall your earliest career ambition.

VI. How old were you when you developed this goal?

VII. What important people in your life encouraged or discouraged you in this pursuit?

VIII. What aspects of this career most appealed to you?

IX. What messages did you receive as a female about the career choice?

X. What kind of career-related information did your family provide?
a. Did your family help you generate different possibilities and new experiences?

b. What alternatives did your family suggest regarding schools, majors, or careers? How did these affect you?

c. What was your family’s impression of gender roles? How did these affect you?
   i. Gender-role orientation
   ii. Employment iniquities
   iii. Family responsibilities
   iv. How salient has your gender identity been when making career decisions?

d. Was there any “forced guidance”, a tendency to push you in a direction more reflective of your family’s interests than yours?
   i. In what ways do you feel your ability to achieve academically (being high-achieving) influenced the ways in which your parents pushed or guided you when it came to careers?

XI. What tangible assistance was provided, and were there any strings attached?

   a. Were tuition, books, and supplies provided?
   b. Additional funds/monetary assistance?
   c. Health insurance?

XII. What type of emotional support did your family provide?
a. How certain were you that emotional support would be available, no matter what?

b. Did your family take a hands-off but supportive approach?

c. Was there subtle emotional pressure to pursue a particular path?

d. Who was supportive and who wasn’t?

XIII. Were you concerned about the impact of the career choice on your family?

XIV. Within your family, whose career aspirations are most similar to your own?

XV. Which family member has been most influential in the creation of your own career decision-making?

XVI. What pressures do you feel when you compare yourself with your family?

XVII. How powerful did you consider yourself in making career decision?

XVIII. How confident were you in making this career decision?

a. In what ways has your family positively and negatively contributed to your confidence in making your career decision?

XIX. How confident are you in reaching your career goals?

a. In what ways has your family positively and negatively contributed to your confidence in being able to reach your career goals?
Appendix G
Observation Protocol for Interviews

Participant Pseudonym:

Date:

Location:

I. How did the participant appear/how was her disposition at the beginning of the interview, as the interview progressed, and at the end of the interview?

II. Atmosphere/location.

III. Gestures, eye contact, non-verbal signals.

IV. Interaction between interviewer and participant during the interview.

V. Were there any notable changes in demeanor or non-verbal signals when answering certain questions or talking about certain experiences?
## Appendix H

### Coding Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Formation and elaboration of career-relevant interests</td>
<td>Career Decision Self-Efficacy (Betz &amp; Hackett, 1981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Selection of academic and career choice options</td>
<td>1- Accurate self-appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Performance and persistence in educational and occupational pursuits</td>
<td>2- Gathering occupational information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3- Goal selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4- Making plans for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5- Problem solving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Parent/Family Support (Malecki &amp; Demarary, 2003)</th>
<th>Career Experiences of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Emotional</td>
<td>Downing and Roush’s Feminist Identity Development Model (1985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Informational</td>
<td>Social-Cognitive Theory of Gender Identity Development (Bussey &amp; Bandura, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Appraisal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I

Codebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent and Family Support</th>
<th>Family Influence on Career Decision-Making (CDM) Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Emotional</td>
<td>• Differing roles for mothers versus fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Informational</td>
<td>• Parent/family expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appraisal</td>
<td>• Level of parent/family involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instrumental</td>
<td>• Family values and dynamics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Influence on Career Decision Self-Efficacy (CDSE)</th>
<th>Career Experiences of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Support and encouragement</td>
<td>• Gender roles in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discouragement</td>
<td>• Gender roles/impression of gender roles in family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Independence in making career decisions</td>
<td>• Gender salience when making career decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J

Race and Ethnicity Breakdowns for Population Studied

Below is race/ethnicity breakdown for enrolled female honors students who received the recruitment email. This information was pulled from an institutional report and not collected during this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American and White</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American, Hispanic, and White</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and White</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian and White</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, Hispanic, and White</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian and Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian and Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic and White</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix K

Mapping of In-Depth Interview Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-Depth Interview Questions</th>
<th>Connection to Research Question, Conceptual Framework, and Other Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I.</strong> Education and careers of parents and grandparents.</td>
<td>Type of Parent/Family Support (Malecki &amp; Demaray, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II.</strong> Tell me more about your siblings.</td>
<td>Type of Parent/Family Support (Malecki &amp; Demaray, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III.</strong> What are the dominant values in your family?</td>
<td>Type of Parent/Family Support (Malecki &amp; Demaray, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. How does your family balance learning, working, and playing, and how were these valued?</td>
<td>RQ: How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV.</strong> What is the meaning of success in your family?</td>
<td>Type of Parent/Family Support (Malecki &amp; Demaray, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V.</strong> Recall your earliest career ambition.</td>
<td>Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, &amp; Hackett, 1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VI.</strong> How old were you when you developed this goal?</td>
<td>Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, &amp; Hackett, 1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VII.</strong> What important people in your life encouraged or discouraged you in this pursuit?</td>
<td>Type of Parent/Family Support (Malecki &amp; Demaray, 2003); Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, &amp; Hackett, 1994); Career Decision Self-Efficacy (Betz &amp; Hackett, 1981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ: How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VIII.</strong> What aspects of this career most appealed to you?</td>
<td>Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, &amp; Hackett, 1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IX.</strong> What messages did you receive as a female about the career choice?</td>
<td>Downing and Roush’s Feminist Identity Development Model (1985); Social-Cognitive Theory of Gender Identity Development (Bussey &amp; Bandura, 1999)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
X. What kind of career-related information did your family provide?
   a. Did your family help you generate different possibilities and new experiences?
   b. What alternatives did your family suggest regarding schools, majors, or careers? How did these affect you?
   c. What was your family’s impression of gender roles? How did these affect you?
      i. Gender-role orientation
      ii. Employment iniquities
      iii. Family responsibilities
      iv. How salient has your gender identity been when making career decisions?
   d. Was there any “forced guidance”, a tendency to push you in a direction more reflective of your family’s interests than yours?
      i. In what ways do you feel your ability to achieve academically (being high-achieving) influenced the ways in which your parents pushed or guided you when it came to careers?

XI. What tangible assistance was provided, and were there any strings attached?
   a. Were tuition, books, and supplies provided?
   b. Additional funds/monetary assistance?
   c. Health insurance?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>XII.</th>
<th>What type of emotional support did your family provide?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>How certain were you that emotional support would be available, no matter what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Did your family take a hands-off but supportive approach?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Was there subtle emotional pressure to pursue a particular path?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Who was supportive and who wasn’t?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type of Parent/Family Support (Malecki & Demaray, 2003); Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994)

RQ: How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process?

| XIII. | Were you concerned about the impact of the career choice on your family? |

Type of Parent/Family Support (Malecki & Demaray, 2003); Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994)

RQ: How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process?

| XIV. | Within your family, whose career aspirations are most similar to your own? |

Type of Parent/Family Support (Malecki & Demaray, 2003); Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994)

RQ: How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process?

| XV. | Which family member has been most influential in the creation of your own career decision-making? |

Type of Parent/Family Support (Malecki & Demaray, 2003); Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994)

RQ: How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>What pressures do you feel when you compare yourself with your family?</th>
<th>Type of Parent/Family Support (Malecki &amp; Demaray, 2003)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XVII.</td>
<td>How powerful did you consider yourself in making career decision?</td>
<td>Career Decision Self-Efficacy (Betz &amp; Hackett, 1981)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| VIII. | How confident were you in making this career decision?  
a. In what ways has your family positively and negatively contributed to your confidence in making your career decision? | Career Decision Self-Efficacy (Betz & Hackett, 1981); Type of Parent/Family Support (Malecki & Demaray, 2003)  
RQ: How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process? |
| XIX. | How confident are you in reaching your career goals?  
a. In what ways has your family positively and negatively contributed to your confidence in being able to reach your career goals? | Career Decision Self-Efficacy (Betz & Hackett, 1981); Types of Parent/Family Support (Malecki & Demaray, 2003)  
RQ: How do high-achieving, non-first-generation, female, undergraduate students view the influence parents/families have on their career decision-making process? |
Appendix L

Sample of Observation Protocol

Participant Pseudonym: Molly

Date: Monday, April 9, 2018

Location: Researcher’s office

I. How did the participant appear/how was her disposition at the beginning of the interview, as the interview progressed, and at the end of the interview?

Molly came into the interview with good, positive energy and that energy continued throughout the interview. She was very comfortable throughout the entire interview and was not hesitant to open up or share personal information. At the end of the interview, she

II. Atmosphere/location.

The location was in my office since it provided a private and comfortable place to talk. I would consider my office to be warm and welcoming with a lot of natural light due to the back wall being a floor to ceiling window.

III. Gestures, eye contact, non-verbal signals.

Molly had a comfortable and natural posture and was expressive during the interview, using her hands often when talking.

IV. Interaction between interviewer and participant during the interview.

I felt that we built rapport quickly in the interview. Molly mentioned that we had met briefly once before, this may have contributed to her level of
comfort with me. The interview was very natural and felt more like a conversation.

V. Were there any notable changes in demeanor or non-verbal signals when answering certain questions or talking about certain experiences?

The only change of demeanor noticed throughout the interview happened when she shared her family situation with me. She talked briefly about her parents being divorced since she was in the 5th grade and her mom remarrying when she was a freshman in high school. She mentioned having a closer relationship with her mom and step-dad and her dad playing a more hands-off role.
Appendix M

Common Themes from Initial Interviews

• Accurate self-appraisal (CDSE): Lisa, Sal (prior to college); Molly (while in college); Hope (knew passion at young age but confirmed in college); Bey (while in college); Clara (ongoing throughout college)
• Experiential learning (CDSE: GI; GS) largely influential in CDM and CDSE: Lisa, Sal, Molly, Hope, Bey, Clara

• High level of independence: Lisa, Sal, Hope, Bey, Clara
• Lower level of independence: Molly

• Low level of parental involvement in college experience: Lisa, Sal, Hope, Bey (but took her pushing back to get this), Clara
• High level of parental involvement in college experience: Molly

• Mother more involved in career/major conversations: Lisa, Sal, Hope, Clara
• Father or step-father more involved in career/major conversations: Molly, Bey (father wanted her to pursue his career path; mom stayed at home)
• Teacher or professor influence on career decisions: Lisa, Sal, Molly, Hope, Bey
• Other family members having influence: Molly (maternal grandfather and aunt); Lisa (aunts who were teachers)

• Father or mother concerned about status, pay, etc. of career: Lisa (dad has concerns); Hope

• Mother’s career experiences mentioned more than father’s: Lisa, Sal, Hope
• Step-dad’s career mentioned more/having more impact: Molly
• Dad’s career mentioned more: Bey (initial interview)
• Mother stayed at home: Clara, Hope, Bey, Lisa (Sal’s mom – more flexible career while raising kids; Molly’s mom – owned small printing company)

• Interesting family dynamics: Molly, Hope, Clara (Japanese influence)

• Pursuing a passion vs. obtaining certain lifestyle
  o Passion: Lisa, Molly, Hope, Bey (maybe; could be both)
  o Lifestyle: Sal
  o Both: Clara??

• Knowing major/career goals before entering college vs. CDM occurring more in college
  o Before: Lisa, Sal, Hope
In College: Molly, Bey, Clara

- Participants pursuing STEM-related fields (Clara- patent law; Sal- chemical engineering) seemed to have less “passion” for their chosen career fields and were more “practical” in their career choices.
- Hope, Lisa, and Molly seemed to have found their “calling in life”
- For Bey, her pre-med track doesn’t seem to be as much as a passion but as a good fit for her in terms of her interests
Appendix N

Excerpt from In-Depth Interview Summary

Parent’s support of sister’s career choice  
-Parents did not want sister to go into education because they didn’t feel she could support herself; same message that Hope received from parents  
-Sister was pushed to her college because she had a free scholarship

Others’ perceptions of RT  
-Some in PRTM think it’s a joke; those minoring in it are negative about it  
-Reputation of RT… “Oh you just play with kids”.  
-Gets the “why are you doing that” vibe from some of her friends

How academic achievement affects others’ thoughts on career choice  
-Quote: “Like so I know that I'm smart, and people know that and stuff, so that when they see I'm doing recreational therapy, I think a lot of people, especially my family have been thinking that I'm settling or not really pushing myself to do that”.

Parents influence on CDM/CDSE  
-Quote: “If I had my parents there being like this is the career for you, I think I would have been a lot more doubtful that it was right for me because I would have been like is it what I want or is it what my parents want? The fact that it's me making the decision on my own and figuring it out has definitely made me feel like this is what I actually want to do”.

Overall confidence family has in her is helpful…

-Quote: “But I think family wise, I think that they have a lot of faith in me. So I think they have definitely made me feel like I can achieve what I want to achieve. So I think that that ... It's not the main factor, but I definitely think that even though they're not super hands on, they do believe in me, and they do have that confidence in me. So I think that just knowing that support is behind me has been helpful”.

Independent when it comes to career-related stuff (CDSE)  
Doesn’t call for career advice  
Quote: “I don’t think they’ve had a super huge impact, just because my mom… I mean I’m pretty independent with that kind of stuff. So I don’t really call them for career advice, I guess. It’s just kind of like whatever.”  
*Can make more decision on own due to financial independence

Earliest career ambitions (CDM-Formation)  
-Most prominent career ambition when little → special needs teacher  
-Other career ambitions → actress, lawyer; Earliest serious career ambition → lawyer  
-PE experience in 2nd grade: partnered with a student with disabilities
REFERENCES


Clemson University Business Data Warehouse (March 13, 2018). *Registered Honors Students Summary*.


