

WORKING IN THE US FOR RECENT HIGHLY EDUCATED ASIAN IMMIGRANTS
AND HOW SOCIAL CLASS SHIFT IMPACTED THEIR EXPERIENCES

by
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ABSTRACT
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Under the Supervision of Nadya Fouad, Ph.D.

This dissertation utilized the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) method to understand the work experiences of recently arrived, highly educated Asian immigrants, specifically from Chinese and Taiwanese backgrounds, in the United States. Grounded in the Psychology of Working Theory, the study places a particular emphasis on the role of social class in shaping how immigrants conceptualize decent work and meaningful work as well as how they adapt in order to achieve their desired work experience after immigration. Through CQR analysis, nine distinct domains emerged, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of their professional journeys and the challenges and opportunities Asian immigrants encountered. Each domain is comprehensively explored, offering a deepened understanding of the unique interplay between cultural, educational, and professional dynamics for this specific population. Additionally, this study offers implications for both future research and practice, emphasizing the need for culturally attuned frameworks in understanding the diverse challenges and strengths of this population.

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Chapter I. Introduction

In recent years, Asia has surpassed Latin America and became the largest source of US immigrants (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Among all immigrant workers, Asian immigrants consist of a large portion of the U.S. labor force; as of 2017, among the total number of foreign-born workers, a quarter are Asian. More and more highly educated Asian immigrants come to the US to pursue a better quality of life. More than half of the Asian immigrants have at least a bachelor's degree (Pew Research Center, 2020). This may be due to the fact that a lot of the Asian immigrants came to the US as foreign students and stayed to work on OPT (Optional Practical of Training) or H-1B (Temporary Work visa) but may also be related to the general educational level that has increased in many parts of the world including Asia. Because Asian immigrants consist of a large component of the labor force, research is needed to describe and understand the work experience of this population.

Many immigrants move to another country hoping that they can build a better life. Work is a big component of their life as it provides individuals with a better quality of living and a sense of meaning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). How immigrants experience their work could also affect their overall life satisfaction as it was tested in different countries and different cultures that people will likely be satisfied with their life if they enjoy their work (Iverson, & Maguire, 2000; Lee et al., 2005; Unanue et al., 2017). Therefore, understanding how immigrants successfully or unsuccessfully adjust in their work is important for helping immigrants achieve a better life in their "new home."

Previous vocational psychology research has mostly been conducted on white and native American born populations. Only recently, the identity model has developed to discuss immigrants' career decision making by Dheer and Lenartowicz (2018). However, this model

failed to capture the experience of people who does not have a choice to their career or those who sacrificed their career for other aspects of their life (e.g., family, living quality, health). Psychology of Working theory (PWT) on the other hand is specifically devoted to understanding the work experience of marginalized population and suggested that marginalization and limitation of economic resource will limit individual's work choices by influencing work volition and work adaptability (Duffy et al., 2016). Immigrants share the same barriers with other marginalized population as they have experienced workplace discrimination, lack of social support, and language barriers (Leong & Tang, 2016) which may limit their work choice or prevent them from obtaining desired work.

Central to PWT is decent work, which was built upon the global decent work movement initiated by the International Labor Organization (ILO) which aims to promote inclusive and sustainable developments while reducing poverty and promote equal opportunities for work around the world. ILO suggests that work that may be considered decent when it involves “opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men” (International Labor Organization, 2013). Psychology of Working Theory further defined decent work to be work that provide: “(a) physical and interpersonally safe working conditions (e.g., absent of physical, mental, or emotional abuse), (b) hours that allow for free time and adequate rest, (c) organizational values that complement family and social values, (d) adequate compensation, and (e) access to adequate health care. (Duffy et. al., 2016). Asian immigrants appear to be facing multiple challenges in obtaining decent works after migration. For Asian

immigrants, the annual household income is significantly higher than general immigrant population and U.S. born population, but it is within the context of 76 percent of immigrants from Asia are at working age and more than half have at least a bachelor's degree (Hanna & Batalova, 2021). In addition, the places where Asian immigrants received their education also matters to the level of income. An early study has found that foreign educated Asian immigrants earn significantly less than U.S. born whites, U.S. born Asian Americans, and U.S. educated Asian immigrants (Zeng & Xie, 2004). Other than the inequality of income, many of Asian immigrants may be experiencing discrimination applying for jobs and at the workplace (Schwartz et. al., 2010). Many immigrants also learned English as their second language. Lack of English proficiency may obviously prevent Asian immigrants from accurately expressing needs and concerns at work. Language is also a significant barrier for Asian immigrants and may limit their opportunities to certain jobs and positions, social capitals, and acculturation (Schwartz et. al., 2010; Chen, Zhang, & Liu, 2021; Shang, O'driscoll, Roche, 2017). In addition, as immigrants settling down to the host community, they may have to adjust to new foods, transportations, health system, language, customs, values and more. This process is described as the acculturation process that could add additional stress (Berry, 2006; Berry & Ataca, 2000).

Meaningful work is another important aspect to understand within Asian immigrant's work experience. Different from the other native marginalized populations or refugees, recent Asian immigrants voluntarily migrated to another country to further increase their economic status, have better opportunities or greater freedom (Ogbu & Simons, 1990). Work meaningfulness as an important source of improving work satisfaction was found among mainstream population to be positively correlated with social class (Allan, Autin, Duffy, 2014). In addition, those with high educational levels tend to pursue meaningfulness at work even if it

means they have to give up a high salary (Hu & Hirsh, 2017). Therefore, it is assumed that meaningful work is highly important for the recent Asian immigrant. However, during the immigration process, immigrants may lose the prestige in their economic, educational, or occupational status that they held in their home countries (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Ali, Fall, & Hoffman, 2013). This might pose challenges for immigrants to pursue meaningful work which might then lead to less overall satisfaction and well-being. Immigrants who had higher social status prior to immigration will likely experience a downward social class shift, which is negatively related to well-being (Chen, Zhang, & Liu, 2021; Arpino, & de Valk, 2018).

An increasing number of Asian immigrants came to the US in recent years and are different from groups that entered in the past in that many of them have a high educational background and social economic status in their home country. Research is needed to understand how culture and social class that are involved in the immigration process impact Asian American's conceptualization of decent work and work meaningfulness and how social class/status and marginalization interact to influence Asian immigrant's work experience in the US. The hypothesis is that highly educated Asian immigrants might not be satisfied with having just decent work which can support their living, but also seek to gain a sense of meaning from their work. However, it might be hard for those immigrants to obtain a sense of meaning at work when there are barriers to even locate a decent job which can provide them with those basic human needs such as survival needs and social connection needs (Autin, et. al., 2019).

The purpose of this study is to find out how social class and acculturation are important for Asian immigrants to secure decent work and gain work meaningfulness and further impact their work and life satisfaction. The research questions that are asked in this study are:

1. How do Asian immigrants conceptualize decent work and work meaningfulness?

2. What are the challenges that Asian immigrants face after immigration to obtain desired work experience?
3. What are the strengths and supports Asian immigrants have that helped them improve their work experience?
4. Did Asian immigrant's subjective social class shift after immigration? Does social class intersect with their Asian and immigrant identity to impact on their work experience and how?

A qualitative and inductive method will be used to gain exploratory data that could enrich the understanding of this understudied population and inform future quantitative research.

Definitions of important constructs

Immigrants in this study refers to the first-generation immigrants who was born or lived most of their lives in another country and then moved to the US. Particularly, it is a social construct instead of a legal construct, meaning that it is not defined by the legal status (often include citizenship, permanent resident, student, visiting scholar, and foreign worker).

Acculturation is defined as the behavioral as well as the psychological changes that happens during the immigration process. It can happen in either individual level or group level (Berry, 2021).

Social class involves both subjective aspect and objective aspect. The objective aspect of social class often also refers to as social economic status which consist of educational attainment, occupation, and income. Subjective social class the social class group that individuals perceive themselves in. For immigrants, as discussed before, some may experience shifts in objective social class status during the immigration process. However, they may or may not experience the same degree or direction of shifts in their subjective social class.

Decent work is defined within Psychology of Working theory as “a) physical and interpersonally safe working conditions (e.g., absent of physical, mental, or emotional abuse), (b) hours that allow for free time and adequate rest, (c) organizational values that complement family and social values, (d) adequate compensation, and (e) access to adequate health care” (Duffy et. al., 2016). However, a general understanding of decent work may simply be “adequate work” that may support individual’s basic needs and promote well-being. It can also be considered as an opposite construct of precarious work. The ILO’s measurement of decent work focuses on four areas which include a) employment creation and enterprise development, b) social protection, c) standards and rights at work, d) governance and social dialogue. Although the emphasis of promoting decent work might look different in different regions of the world depending on the socio and developmental stage, the main propose of promoting more decent work is to increase social justice and promote sustainable economic growth (International Labor Organization, 2008).

Meaningful work is defined as “the subjective experience that one’s wok has significance, facilitates personal growth, and contributes to the greater good” (Steger, Dik, and Duffy, 2012). It is a construct that often being discussed with “calling” and “purpose.” However, it is relatively more general and non-directional than the other two constructs. Meaning to different individuals might look different depends on the contextual or individual factors. Individuals may also experience meaningfulness when pursuing a career/job, in work, or from work.

Chapter II. Literature Review

This chapter will introduce the background of Asian immigrants in the US. Asian immigrants are a specific and relatively under studied population. Therefore, the literatures will be expanded to both the Asian's career development and immigrant's career development. Referential theories including Psychology of Working Theory, Social Class theory, and Acculturation theory will be discussed.

Background

History of Asian Immigrants In the US

From the golden rush till now, immigrants came to America for better life. However, although a general reason that motivates immigrants to change to another living environment is the dissatisfaction of their previous living quality, the underlining needs that need to be fulfilled are different for people who migrate in different times.

The first Opium War in China (1840-1842) and the Meiji Restoration in Japan (1868) brought significant social change to both countries and created great number of poverties and unemployment. Many Asian immigrants who migrated at this time came to America for living, specifically for survival needs. Despite the uncertain, dangerous, and hostile working environment, many Asian laborers worked as gold miners (Fuchs, 2019) and farmers (The Library of Congress, n.d.). The railroad workers were specifically viewed as "coolie" similar to slaves (Moon-Ho Jung, 2005). Asian immigrants who migrated at this time were facing significant exclusion and discrimination and were viewed as "a race of people whom nature has marked as inferior, and who are incapable of progress or intellectual development beyond a certain point." (THE PEOPLE, Respondent, v. GEORGE W. HALL, 1854). Asian immigrants continued to move to the U.S. and work in agriculture, construction, and other low-wages jobs

but the number of Asian American only start to grow significantly faster until the establishment of Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which allowed Asian individuals who are family of US citizen, skilled workers, and refugees to enter the country (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021).

Asian immigrants from Vietnamese and other south Asian Pacific countries mainly came to the U.S. as refugees during and after the Second World War and the Vietnamese War. (Pew Research Center, 2017). More recently, Vietnamese immigrants arrive on family visas and other regions like Burma (Myanmar), Bhutan, and Nepal became the main origins for newly arrived refugees (Budiman, 2020). Refugee population are similar to those immigrants who came in earlier times that their immigrations are mainly motivated by the satisfaction of survival needs. In addition, they also have limited choice when it comes to their immigration decisions.

Up to 2018, among total number of foreign-born workers, 1/4 is Asian (Pew Research Center, 2020). Comparing to refugees and those Asian immigrants who came in earlier times, many recent Asian immigrants has higher social and economic status in their home countries and are generally more educated and skilled. In 2018, 61% of Asian immigrants have at least bachelor's degree (Pew Research Center, 2018). These immigrants migrate to fulfill higher level needs. The Pew Research Center reported that recent Asian immigrants came for reasons like better opportunities, political freedom, living quality, better condition for raising children, and freedom to practice religion (Pew Research Center, 2012). Despite still facing significant discrimination, only 12% immigrants reported that they regret their decisions (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Asian as a Diverse Group.

Asian represent a diverse population of different ethnic origins. If divided by ethnic origins, the Asian population in the U.S. include but not limited to the following subgroups:

Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Pakistani, Thai, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Burmese, Indonesian, Sri Lankan, Malaysian, Mongolian, and Bhutanese. Chinese-origin Asian account for 23% of the total Asian population in the U.S. and is the largest subgroup. Indian (20% of total), Filipino (18% of total), Vietnamese (9% of total), Korean (8% of total), and Japanese (6% of total) are the other large subgroups of Asian community (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021).

However, Asian population does not only diverse in their ethnic structures, but also in culture, values, language, religion, and socioeconomic status. Many people think about Buddhism when talking about religion in Asia, however, religions in Asia include not only Buddhism, but also Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism, Christianity, and animism. In addition, Buddhism also differs in different countries and regions also differ in many ways (Asia Society, n.d.). Another example of the subgroup difference is value towards work. Although most Asians are view as hard-working and task oriented, but Indonesian culture is exceptionally flexible and good at tolerating ambiguity (Pareek, 1988), which will make Indonesian individuals perform at work differently from individuals from other Asian origins. Therefore, it is a risk to conceptualize the behaviors and motivations of Asian individuals without understanding the subgroup differences.

More specifically, immigrant groups may be diverse in their immigration status, years stayed in the US, and previous education and work experiences. The differences may lead to different experience after their settlement in the new environment as Zeng and Xie (2004) revealed in their study that Asian immigrants who got educations from outside of U.S. will lead to lower salary.

Asian Americans could also divers in their place of birth and generational status. For example, second and third generation Japanese immigrants consider themselves as Nisei and Sansei. Comparing to their parents, Issei, they are more like Americans in many ways (e.g., language, food, social norms) but still carry some traditional Japanese heritage. Iwasaki and Brown (2014) in their qualitative study on the three generations Japanese Americans and found out that although all three generations showed tendencies to acculturate in practice and value levels, first generation Japanese immigrants are more likely to identify more with their Japanese identity. Although this current study will mainly explore the experience of first-generation immigrants, it is still important to understand generational differences since it normally presents within a family unit which is closely associated with family conflicts and well-being (Chuang, 2001; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

Values in Asian Cultures

Despite the subgroup differences, there are some common characteristics shared across Asian cultures. First, comparing to most of the western cultures, Asian cultures are collectivistic instead of individualistic (Sue & Sue, 2016). In Asian cultures, family goals and group goals are normally prioritized over personal goals. Asians are expected to bring honor and values to their families (filial piety). It was showed that collectivistic values impact individual on a cognitive level (Lacko et. al., 2020) and may impact career decisions via contextual factors like family (Sawitri & Creed, 2017). Asians may consider career decisions as a collective decision rather than an individual one. The process normally involves family members and especially parents' opinions will be given special value (Sawitri, 2013). Family's support may also impact how satisfy individual feel about their decisions (Haar & Brougham, 2013).

Collectivism culture also involves more responsibility towards family, group, and community. Asians tend to be more involved in child rearing, child education, and taking care of family members especially elders (Sue & Sue, 2016). As showed in the statistics, many recent Asian immigrants decided to migrate to the U.S. for better environment for their children (Pew Research Center, 2020).

The second characteristic in Asian culture is the influence of hierarchical social structure. Many Asian countries have a long history of being a patriarchy and feudal society (Fang, 1988, Pareek, 1988). In Asian cultures, fathers and elders are given significant respect and power (Sue & Sue, 2016). This may impact today's individual's attitudes towards power and impact level of need for autonomy. Also because of the structure, people tend to consider education as the only way to raise their status.

Appreciation for harmony is another characteristic that is rooted in Asian cultures. "Zhong yong" is one of the principles in Confucianism that guides individuals to be moderate and avoid any conflicts. Thai culture also value "social smoothing" behaviors that is believed to bring kind, pleasant, less conflict and more interpersonal interactions to the society (Pareek, 1988).

Finally, it is important to note that with social economic development, many Asian cultures are integrating with western cultures (Sinha, 1988; Sue & Sue, 2016). Many modern Asian societies are moving towards more egalitarian relationships between husband and wife and parents and children (E. W.-C. Chen, 2009 from Sue)

Asian/Asian American's Work Experiences

Factors That Influence Asian American's Career Decision Making

Previous research tried to explore the factors that influence Asian American's career decision making process. Some of the main areas that were explored for Asian Americans in previous research are discussed below.

Personality Traits

Some personality traits seem to be more salient for Asian individuals than for other racial groups and have significant impact in Asian Americans' career development process. Leong (1985) had summarized it into three general areas: locus of control, social anxiety, and tolerance of ambiguity.

Leong suggested that Asian Americans tend to have more external locus of control. Leong explained that it is important for Asian Americans to receive confirmation and support from their environment, including family members, peers, and their community. The fact that Asian Americans tend to gain motivations from their external environment might also relate to the collectivistic culture. More specifically, Kantamneni & Fouad (2013) found that collectivism vs. individualism culture can predict Asian American's Realistic and Social interests. A more recent study that examined Asian college students' decision-making process also found that locus of control and collectivism vs. individualism culture are important factors that impact Asian students career identity development (Polenova et al., 2017). Challenges may arise for Asian individual to have more external locus of control living in an individualism society. It may create conflict for an Asian individual when they hold true to a collectivism value while the society values personal achievement and individualistic. Asian individuals may wait for others to speak first to show their respect, where this behavior may be viewed as incompetent. Being individual oriented may not be valued in Asian communities but interestingly, Hsieh and Huang (2014)

found that Asian students who are more proactive will actually gain more self-efficacy when they are facing career decisions.

High social anxiety is another personality trait that Leong found to impact Asian Americans' career development (1985). This may contribute to the lower rate of employment for Asian Americans in social and helping professions. Leong also indicated that comparing to women from other culture groups, Asian American women might find more struggles pursuing a social or helping profession because they will experience a mismatch between their skills (relative to other culture groups) and work environment.

The last trait Leong mentioned is tolerance of ambiguity (1985). He found that previous research suggested Asian Americans orient better to immediate instructions and are better at practical applications and understanding concrete information. This personality difference might be a result of having authoritarian parents, and for some 1st generation immigrants, undergoing early education also in an authoritarian style. It is learned for Asian Americans to operate instructions and obey the authoritative figures (most times, seniors, leaders, professionals). On the contrary, being more curious is associated with higher self-efficacy, which indicates that curiosity may help Asian individuals to challenge authority and explore more possibilities (Kim & Choi, 2019).

Culture Identity

The researchers (Kim & Choi, 2019) who found the link between curiosity and self-efficacy also found that ethnic identity could mediate this relationship, which suggested that curiosity might have different level of importance for students depending on how much they identify with their culture of heritage. Leong and Chou (1994) made a hypothesis that Asian individuals' career choice will be influenced by how positive or negative they view the host

culture and their heritage culture. It further concluded that Asian students' beliefs about their ethnic identity can result in different career related behaviors and outcomes through interacting with individual and their living environment (Cheryan & Tsai, 2007). Students who have stronger beliefs towards their ethnic identities tend to have more sense of belongingness towards their social group (Lee & Yoo, 2004) and will therefore develop more self-efficacy (Lent & Brown, 2013). On the other hand, students who are culture diffusion, might become more socially isolated, fail to gain self-efficacy, and will therefore be more sensitive to social stereotypes and discriminations (Lee, 2005). It was revealed that the more acculturated Asian American individuals are, the more they are likely to choose a career that matches with their interests. In fact, study (Lee, Su, & Yoshida, 2005) have found that more acculturated individuals are less likely to have intergenerational conflicts, which means that they might have more support from their family when it comes to making decisions in their life, including choosing a career.

Not consistent with previous findings, culture values are not found to be significant in any interest-choice relationships in Hui and Lent's study (2014). Which may be the fact that newer generation are more westernized and open minded. It could also be that the sample is based on college student when they do not have to consider any responsibility for family or community.

Stereotype and Discrimination

Same as other racial minority groups, Asian and Asian Americans may experience discrimination and hostility from the mainstream group (Leong, & Schneller, 1997). And the fact that Asian American are historically been viewed as the "model minority" often make the society

minimize or disregard the negative impact of discrimination and hostility on Asian population (Sue & Sue, 2016).

Ability or competency is one of the aspects of stereotype that is associated with Asian and Asian Americans also include ability. In Leong and Hayes's study (1990), they found that white college students view Asian students as being more competent in engineers, computer science, and mathematicians and less qualified in other social science and communication related majors. These assumptions and stereotypes may limit Asian individual's career choices by decrease their self-efficacy in those career directions.

However, there was no study that fully depicts stereotypes that specifically associated with Asian and Asian Americans. Therefore, Shen, Wang, & Swanson (2011) developed the Internalization of Asian American Stereotype scale to measure how much Asian Americans identify with or confirm to the stereotypes. In a later study of the same group of researchers, they have found that the more Asian American individual internalizes stereotypes associated with Asian Americans, the more they will have self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and interest in the stereotypical occupations.

Stereotype may be transformed into discrimination when it has a more negative meaning or when it may create harm to the target group or individual. Leong and Schneller (1997) found that there were both positive and negative attitudes. The negative attitudes were found especially in dating. It seems that people will be ok to interact with Asian individuals in more professional, public settings, but will feel uncomfortable to establish a more intimate relationship with Asian individuals. This fact may prevent Asian individuals to create network. Lee (2005) found that Asian individuals who hold pride and connections to their ethnic groups may be more resilient to stereotypes and discrimination.

Family Influence

Family has been and was found to be an important factor that impact Asian and Asian American's career decisions (Tang, 1999; Fouad, 2008; Hui & Lent, 2017.) As mentioned previously, individuals will consider career decisions a collective and family decision. In addition, individuals who identify with collectivism culture would consider their career and occupation one way to bring honor to their family. A study (Shen et. al., 2014) that examined the impact of parental pressure and support on occupational outcomes (i.e., self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and interests in stereotypical occupations) among 229 Asian American students from universities nationwide found that living up to parental expectations and internalized stereotyping have mediating effect on the associations between parental pressure and these 3 occupational outcomes.

Followed the findings of the connection between family influence and career decisions for Asian participants, Fouad and colleagues established the Family Influence Scale (FIS; Fouad, et al., 2010), The scale was also tested and compared between American and Asian (Indian) sample in a following study (Fouad et. al.,2015). The results showed that family is influencing Asians' career decision not only in family expectations, but also in information support, financial support, and values and beliefs.

In the studies that were discussed above, the samples were all based on college students. Less information was gathered about how Asian and Asian American will choose their career path after graduation or having some work experience. It is possible that college students may experience more influence from their parents, but for adult immigrants, they may have more family responsibilities to take care of elders and children.

Career Development Issues for Immigrant

Developing or adjusting to a new career is important to many immigrants as work not only provides financial stability but is also associated with socio-cultural adaptation and overall life satisfaction (Bhagat & London, 1999; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008). Unfortunately, for many immigrants, moving to a new country sometimes means that they need to give up their previous identities from their home country (Liu et al., 2004). Many recent Asian immigrants reported having a professional job before migration, but some had to give up their previous career due to many challenges (e.g., language proficiency, immigration status, social capital, discriminations) in the labor market (Ali, Fall, & Hoffman, 2013).

Adjustment and Acculturation

There is an interacting effect between work and acculturation. As discussed in previous sections, acculturation is an important process which involves learning and adopting the host culture in multiple dimensions (language, behavior, custom, beliefs, religion, politics). Immigrants will face balancing adopting the host culture and maintaining the heritage (home) culture. This process came with stress (Berry & Ataca, 2000) but successfully achieving integrating both cultures (biculturalism) may lead to positive psychosocial outcomes (Schwartz & Unger, 2010; Lee et. al., 2019). Immigrants may achieve higher career adaptability and greater career satisfaction if they are able to stay consistent and confident towards their cultural orientation (Guan et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2007).

In fact, work may be an avenue for immigrants to get exposed to the host culture in a personal level and therefore help with the acculturation process. One earlier research studied north American immigrants in Israel revealed that work satisfaction is one of the factors that influence adjustment to new life (Berman, 1981). Immigrants' previous work experience may

also impact their adaptation in the new environment. Immigrants may draw their previous professional and interpersonal skills to use in the current work environment. As Gibson (2001) pointed out, acculturation can be impacted by social class, job, living environment that immigrant had in both their home country and the environment in their host country. Immigrants who experience less gap between their previous and current working experience may find acculturation easier. However, there was also study that posted different view. A study on Chinese immigrant mothers revealed that previous work experience and education attainment may not have as significant impact as other factors like interpersonal support and perceived social status (Chen et al., 2021).

On the other hand, acculturation is an important factor that impact immigrants' work decisions and experiences Dheer and Lenartowicz (2018) used an identity-centric framework to explain how immigrant's social identity influences their career decisions. He suggested that social identity involves social embeddedness and social flexibility, which is an expansion of Berry's biculturalism (1997). The hypothetical model predicts that immigrants who have low flexibility will pursue employment or entrepreneurship in mainstream or ethnic environment depending on whichever culture (mainstream vs. ethnic) they embed in. Whereas individua who has high flexibility may freely choose careers in either or both cultures. Individuals who have high social flexibility may be having higher intercultural competence, which is the "immigrants' ability to deal with the demands of adapting to a new cultural context" (Bhagat & London, 1999). Individuals who have higher intercultural competence or social flexibility will have less difficulty in picking up new cultural norms and understanding the culture from the insider viewpoint.

Social Capital and Support

Social capital is the relationships that can be considered as resources to help individual develop and accumulate human capital (Machalek & Martin, 2015). It is commonly referred to as “networks.” Social capital is another factor that impact immigrants’ career decision and work experience. For many immigrants, migrating to another country does not only means moving to a new place of living, but it also means leaving their “old lives” behind. This includes not only previous careers, properties, but also social network and social support (Ali, Fall, & Hoffman, 2013). In addition, non-white and non-western immigrants who lived in western countries may also experience discrimination and rejection from their workplace. They may not be favored or be viewed as less competent when competing for positions with same-leveled colleagues (Harrison, Harrison, & Shaffer, 2019).

Successfully securing and improving social capital has positive meaning to immigrants’ work and life. Workplace relationships may serve as an avenue for immigrants to learn about the local culture on an individual level. Research studied on professional Chinese-born immigrants in Australia found that social support at work predicted higher levels of acculturation (Lu et al., 2011). Relationships with other immigrants who have similar background and immigration experience may also help immigrants to feel more validated and supported in the adjustment process. Ward (1996) found out peer support (immigrants from the same country) has a positive influence on the adjustment to the new country. Family could also serve as important resource of support when immigrants struggle from feeling rejected and discriminated from their workplace. Shang and colleagues (2017) examined the relationship between work family conflict in Chinese immigrants and found out that family conflict may increase work related stress, while conflict at work also influence family satisfactions. This result showed the involvement of family in work

and work in family in Asian immigrants' life, which further indicated the importance of family support for work performance and satisfaction.

Language Barriers

Language is considered part of culture and is one of the measuring dimensions for acculturation (Chung, Kim, & Abreu, 2004). For immigrants, whose home language is different from the host language, language proficiency is a significant barrier in their life and work (Flores et al., 2011). Research studied on professional Chinese-born immigrants in Australia found that language proficiency predicted higher levels of acculturation (Lu et al., 2011). However, the level of barriers and challenges that immigrants face in terms of language may also depend on their living communities and work environment. One may not need to know a lot of English if living in a community resided with mostly immigrants who speak the same kind of language. Similarly, professional positions that requires communications with students or clients may require much higher English proficiency than working as an accountant or driver. Chen (2021) studied on Chinese immigrant mothers and found out that English proficiency is associated with year of stay in the US, income, subjective social class, perceived interpersonal support and depressive symptoms via income, shift in subjective social status, and interpersonal support. However, in this study, English proficiency is measured subjectively. This finding may suggest that immigrants perceived competency in language may connect with their perceived competencies in other areas. It is also possible that people could also view themselves as being more competent in English if feeling more supported and satisfied. Most of the previous findings supported that the more fluent immigrants are with host language, the more beneficial it will be. However, there was also research that suggested the opposite direction, where it showed the

more language proficiency one immigrant has, the more it could lead to more family conflicts (Shang, O'driscol & Roche, 2017).

Summary and Conclusion

The review of the literature may be summarized as: 1) previous career development theories may not fully explain the career interests, decisions, and work experience of Asian immigrants. This may be due to the fact that previous theories were mainly developed based on mainstream population and college students. 2) Culture identity, individual personality, societal stereotype and discrimination, and family have been found to be the important factors that influence Asian individual's career decisions and work experiences. 3) immigrants experience of work was not receiving many attentions in previous research. This may be due to lack of suitable theories to guide research, and the hard-to-reach nature of the population. Theory that had been developed and used to explain immigrants' work experience after the immigration process failed to consider the barriers and the limitation of opportunities that immigrants face. 4) Acculturation, social capital and social support, and language are the main factors that show direct or indirect relationship with immigrants' career choices and work experience. 5) social class has been measured in many vocational research and has shown to associate with the ability for individuals to receive meaning from work. Despite the fact that education attainment and perceived social class shift are the important aspects in recent Asian immigrants' immigration process, there has not been study that focused on understanding how social class impact Asian immigrants' work experience in their host country. 6) in terms of descriptions of Asian immigrants' work experience, decent work is one construct that is suggested by International Labor Organization to be a minimum standard of work; meaningfulness is another construct that was suggested in previous literatures that is normally more important for individuals with higher

social class backgrounds. Research is needed before quantitatively explain the mechanism of how Asian immigrants have decent work and work meaningfulness to first qualitatively understand the meaning of these two constructs to Asian immigrants' population. The results of this study can provide information to compare with the results from mainstream population.

Reflection of Asian's Career Development in Vocational Theories

Previous career development theories were mainly developed based on white and mainstream population. As it was discussed in previous sections, Asian population is different from the mainstream population as they share different culture, value, traditions, living environment, which may all impact their career decision making process. Therefore, studies had focused on providing evidence on the validity of different career development theories when applying to Asian population and explain the specific discrepancies between Asian group and other cultural groups (Leong & Hardin, 2002).

Holland's theory (1997) focuses on explaining how personal interests impact individual's career choice. The six types of career interests are Realistic (R), Investigative (I), Artistic (A), Social (S), Enterprising (E), and Conventional (C). The theory is limited as it mainly focused on the individual characteristics but did not pay enough attention to contextual influences. Although findings supported that Asian student also has the same six interest orientations, but the order of the interest types (Sue & Kirk, 1972, 1973, Kantamneni, 2014), as well as the interrelationships of each type are showed to be not the same as traditional samples (Tang, 2009). Study have found that interests do not predict career decisions for Asian students as well as self-efficacy (Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). In fact, it was found that Chinese students does not only consider their career interests when making career decisions (Tang, 2009). Therefore, Holland's theory is limited in understanding Asian population's career decision making process.

Super's (1957) career lifespan theory suggested that individual's career development is a process that continues throughout individual's lifespan. Super's theory is useful for understanding individual in all different life stages but as concluded in Leong and Hardin (2002), the two main criticisms for Super's (1975) theory are lack of consideration for oppression and that it is based on individualism culture. Leong (1991) found that Asian group rated low on career maturity than the mainstream group. One of the factors that contribute to the low career maturity level that Carter & Constantine (2000) found was that Asian individuals who are more acculturated are more likely to form a mature career identity.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent & Brown, 2013) considered multicultural variables while discussing individual differences, learning experience and contextual factors. Self-efficacy as the main construct in SCCT has proven to be a better indicator of career decisions for Asian American students (Tang, 2009; Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). Factors that impact Asian American's career self-efficacy include curiosity (Kim & Choi, 2019), proactive personality (Hsieh & Huang, 2014), family (Fouad et al., 2008), and minority identity (Kim & Choi, 2019).

Previous theories had focused on understanding how people make career decisions. The samples of the previous studies were mainly using college students or adolescents. The assumption were all people have the freedom and rights to choose careers, however, the population who does not have the flexibility to choose their preferred careers are neglected. Also, less research paid special attention on first generation Asian Americans. Therefore, Asian Americans experience within their home community, or home country has been neglected.

Earlier research that studied on immigrant population has focused on the experience of western/European immigrants who migrated to other countries (Berman, 1981; Ward &

Kennedy, 1993). With the increase of non-mainstream immigrant population in western countries and the contribution this population has made to the economy, researchers started to focus more on the non-mainstream immigrant population. However, there is lack of theory that can support the research on immigrant's career development and adjustment. In fact, a lot of the research are exploratory and qualitative. Only recently, the identity model has developed to discuss immigrants' career decision making was developed by Dheer and Lenartowicz (2018). However, this model ignored the experience of people who does not have a choice to their career or those who sacrificed their career for other aspects of their life (e.g., family, living quality, health). This is the reason why Psychology of Working theory is being used to guide the current study.

Relevant Theories for This Study

Psychology of Working Theory (PWT)

Psychology of Working theory (PWT; Duffy et. al., 2016) is a newly developed theory that tries to explain the working experience for marginalized populations who do not always have the freedom to choose their career/job. It conceptualized that individual's ability to secure a decent job will be impact by marginalization and economic constraints via work volition and work adaptability (Duffy et. al., 2016). At first, it was a framework, which was introduced in (Blustein, et al., 2008).

PWT has showed to be particularly helpful in understanding the working experience of adult subjects and marginalized groups. It has also been used to better understand more specifically the impact of systematic barriers and individual's motivation on their work experience (Autin et al., 2018). There has not been research done to testify the applicability of PWT model on Asian American or Asian Immigrants. However, PWT may be more relevant than other previous vocational theories in understanding Asian Immigrants' work experience due to its

emphasis on the impact of marginalization, social class, decent work (rather than career decisions) and work meaningfulness.

Decent Work

Decent work is one of the main outcomes that is being measured in PWT. The criterion of decent work is adapted from the ILO (International Labor Organization, 2013) definition of decent work. It includes: “(a) physical and interpersonally safe working conditions (e.g., absent of physical, mental, or emotional abuse), (b) hours that allow for free time and adequate rest, (c) organizational values that complement family and social values, (d) adequate compensation, and (e) access to adequate health care. (Duffy et. al., 2016).” According to the new editorial issue in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, the Decent Work Scale is validated across counties and cultures. It has been validated in one Asian culture -South Korea (Nam & Kim, 2019). The sample is 320 South Koreans aged from 23 to 65 who are living in their home countries. The qualitative measurement has revealed that South Koreans consider fair compensation as the most important criteria for decent work. The criteria that were reported next frequent to compensation was free time and adequate rest, and physical and interpersonal safety. It is consistent with the Asian culture that was discussed above that Koreans did not rate autonomy or self-growth as high as other criteria. There was also less considerations for health care in Korean individual’s reports which may related to the prevalence of public health care in South Korea compared to in the US. The quantitative measure generally supported the five-factor model for South Korean sample but has suggested significant gender differences in their cross-gender invariance tests.

Only one study used PWT to examine the experience of immigrant population. Autin and colleagues (2018) studied undocumented immigrants using PWT model and explored the impact of lack of choice and resources in their career development. The results highlighted that lack of

resources like transportation, healthcare, social capital is limiting the opportunities for undocumented immigrants to access to decent work.

Work Meaningfulness

PWT is useful in understanding recent higher educated and higher skilled immigrants also because of its inclusion of work meaningfulness (Duffy et. al., 2016). Work meaningfulness is identified as the subjective experience that individual's work can bring meaning or contribute to greater good (Steger, Dik, and Duffy, 2012). It was revealed that individual may gain more meaningfulness from work when having higher subjective social class (Allan, Autin, & Duffy, 2014; Allan, Autin, & Duffy, 2016). Individual may even give up high salary for more meaningfulness from work (Hu & Hirsh, 2017). Work meaningfulness is an important construct to consider as recent Asian immigrants experiencing social class shift during the immigration process. However, as found in the South Korean qualitative results, work may consider decent when it allows enough time for individuals to be with families. Similarly, a qualitative study also found that work meaning for African immigrants also involve connecting to family and community (Stebleton, 2010). In addition, the results also showed that culture and individual identities are also considered when conceptualizing meaningfulness.

Previous conceptualizations of work meaningfulness were mainly based on white mainstream cultures. PWT studies found that work meaningfulness is a concept that derived from the concept of calling, which means that individuals view their career as meaningful, purposeful, and can serve a better good for the society (Dik, Duffy, & Eldridge, 2009). Recent studies have used calling to measure people's perceived meaningfulness at work (Steger & Dik, 2009; Dik & Duffy, 2009). Other researcher further clarified that meaningfulness of work does not only means certain work is perceived as being meaningful by an individual or the larger

society, but also means that the individual is attaching personal importance to the meaning of their work (Robertson & Hannah, 2019). Self-determination theory (SDT) was also used to explain the mechanism behind seeking meaningfulness at work (Allan, Autin, & Duffy, 2016). Those researchers suggested that when individuals experience congruence between their work behaviors and their own self-concept, they are more likely to find meaningfulness and feel motivated in their work.

Acculturation Theory

Acculturation was described as a unidimensional process from earlier theory, where individual's cultural beliefs change once they migrate to the new country and are influenced by the host culture (Graves, 1967). Berry (1980) first argued that acculturation process is not unidimensional but is the interaction between heritage culture and host culture. His model includes four acculturation styles: assimilation (adopting the host culture but give up the heritage culture), separation (rejecting the host culture but maintain the heritage culture), integration (adopting the host culture while maintaining the heritage culture), and marginalization (rejecting both cultures). He also brought up the concept of biculturalism, which is considered as the "optimal acculturation where people integrate both cultures" (Berry, 1997). Acculturation process came with stress (Berry, 2006) whereas successfully achieving biculturalism is associated with positive psychosocial outcomes (Schwartz & Unger, 2010).

However, acculturation might not only happen within people's value system. There are two features in acculturation process: visible artefacts (e.g., customs, eating habits, and language) and values (e.g., beliefs, norms, and attitudes) (Lu et al., 2012). Similarly, Schwartz and others (2010) developed a multidimensional theoretical acculturation model and argued that both heritage culture, and receiving culture are multidimensional. More specifically, the

dimensions include cultural practices (e.g., food, language), cultural values, and cultural identification. Later research has supported the model and suggested that immigrants might be used to speaking the host language and identify themselves more with the host cultural group, but still hold some of their heritage culture values and traditions (Iwasaki & Brown, 2014).

Enculturation is another concept in Schwartz's model (Schwartz et al., 2010) which is similar to Berry's biculturalism. It is "selectively acquiring or retaining elements of one's heritage culture while also selectively acquiring some elements from the receiving cultural context." Therefore, for some immigrants, they might choose to receive certain culture practices from the host culture to fit in or feel more accepted but also choose to maintain some of their heritage culture.

Graves (1967) separated two different acculturation types: acculturation as a collective or group-level phenomenon and individual level psychological acculturation. This distinction is important because "not all individuals from an immigrant group will reflect the general level of acculturation, which is experienced by most members of the group" (Bhagat & London, 1999), but there are also individual differences at the same time. Schwartz (2010) in his theory emphasized the role of individual differences and contextual influences in the acculturation process. When trying to understand the process and outcome of acculturation, Schwartz pointed out that it is important to evaluate the "characteristics of the immigrants themselves, the groups or countries from which they originate, their social economic status and resources, the country and local community in which they settle, and their fluency in the language of the country of settlement." Age can make a huge impact when it comes to acculturation. Immigrants who migrate at an older age might experience a more intense culture shock but also tend to hold a stronger tie to their heritage culture and identity to be more resilient to acculturation stress

(Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Moreover, immigrants who came at a younger age are less likely to migrate by themselves, which means that they will have their social support from their family throughout acculturation process.

In fact, Berry also agreed that acculturation might look different for different types of immigrants (Berry, 2006). Based on immigration status, there are four types of immigrants: Voluntary immigrants are individuals who voluntarily left their home country and move to another country for reasons such as employment, marriage, family reunion, and other opportunities; Refugees are people who were involuntary displaced by their home country due to war, persecution, or natural disaster and were helped resettled in the host country by the government of the host country; people can also voluntary leave their home country if they were afraid of persecution or violence, and they are called Asylum seekers; the last type of immigrant is Sojourners, people who only stay in the host country for certain period of time and for a specific purpose such as education and work. Depends on the intention of the migration, immigrants will experience acculturation very differently. Immigrants who came as refugee and asylum seeker tend to be viewed as people who take resources from native people and might therefore experience more discrimination at workplace and in daily life. Research also found that individuals who experience a raise of social or economic status after migration will generally experience less psychological stress (Chen, Zhang, & Liu, 2021).

Gibson (2001) pointed out that the social class, job, living environment that immigrant had in their home country and the environment in their host country will together impact their acculturation. For example, some does not need to have a job that require them to emerge in white culture, or even learning native language in the host country, while others need to work in a very different culture environment compared to in their home country. At the meantime, these

background factors (social class, job, living environment) also interact with each other to impact immigrants' work experience. For example, some immigrants who had higher educational attainment tend to work in higher demand jobs, or professional setting, where communicating with team, boss, and clients might be required. For them, language might be a more significant impact than other people who has service, labor jobs (Shang, O'driscol & Roche, 2017).

Acculturation may also impact career decision indirectly through other factors like family. Asian cultures traditionally values family. Many people take family into consideration when making career decisions. Recent immigrants might also become immigrants in developed counties in order to provide a better life for their family, and better educational opportunities for children. Chuang (2001) found significant differences in generational conflicts for different acculturation level immigrant families. The results showed that the more acculturated the families are, the less conflicts there will be. Therefore, first generation immigrants will likely struggle in family relationships when the parents are less acculturated, and the children are more acculturated due to their interactions at school, learning abilities. Shang and colleagues (2017) examined the relationship between work family conflict in Chinese immigrants and found out that family conflict is positively related to strain-based family influence work, which suggested that having conflict at home will likely increase immigrant stress and impact performance at work. They hypothesized that the reason might be immigrants who prescribe to traditional Asian culture might value interpersonal harmony in both work and family settings. More stress may be generated when the cultural expectation does not match with immigrants' own culture. It is also important to note that family may also serve as important resource of support when less acculturated immigrants struggles from feeling rejected and discriminated from their workplace.

Social Class Theory

Shift of social status is something that many immigrants experience when migrating to another country. As mentioned in acculturation section, different type of immigrants has different motivation and experience in migration process. Depending on reasons for migration, immigrants may hold different social status in their home country as well as in the host country. Recent Asian immigrants, especially individuals who have higher skills and educational background are considered voluntarily immigrants who move to the US for better quality of life by their own choice. These individuals normally would not experience oppression and discrimination from the society until becoming a member of the minority group in the host country (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). The experience and perceptions of social class in immigrants home country and in the host, country will together impact immigrants' adjustment to the new environment (Gibson, 2001).

Social class was used to be understood as a solely objective concept and it is highly associated with the human capital and economic status (Liu, 2011). Another commonly used word for social status is social economic status (SES) which is normally measured with income, educational attainment, and occupation prestige (Diemer & Ali, 2009; Hughes, Camden, & Yangchen, 2016). Social class is commonly assessed and used as a variable in many counseling psychology research (Liu et al., 2004). However, Liu (2004) argued that many has used an objective way of measurement. When using the objective social class measurement, researcher assumed that the subjects had the same conceptualization of different social class status as theirs.

Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM)

Liu further developed the social class world view model and the modern classism theory (Liu et al., 2004) to help researchers conceptualize social class. Within SCWM, the social class

worldview is defined as the framework people use to understand the demands of their social class group (i.e., economic culture) and then turn these demands into meaningful actions to meet the expectations of the economic culture (Liu, 2011). He mentioned that individual social class worldview consists of five domains: attitudes, behaviors, group of reference (peer, origin, and aspiration), lifestyle, and property relationships.

Individuals have the tendency to maintain and uplift their social class status. If one fails to hold their status, there may be anger, stress generated as a result. Anderson et al (2015) also suggested that keeping one's status is an important motivation for people to pursue goals. The importance of status was observed across individuals who differed in culture, gender, age, and personality, supporting the universality of the status motive. A recent study has proved that this hypothesis on immigrant population. Immigrants who experienced downward shifts in perceived subjective social status, interpersonal support, and income are more likely to report depressive symptoms. (Chen, Zhang, & Liu, 2021).

As mentioned in the PWT section, social class was found to have positive relationship with work meaningfulness (Allan et al., 2014). Other research also indicated that individuals from higher social class background have an easier time transitioning from school to work, which may associate with having higher levels of self-concept crystallization, greater access to external resources, and greater levels of career adaptability (Blustein, et al., 2012).

Chapter III. Method

Leong (1997) has called for research to use not only an etic approach, but also an emic approach in studying the career decision process for understudied minority groups. Etic approach refers to the approach where many different cultures are studied, and differences are revealed through comparison. Emic approach, on the other hand, is to study only one cultural group at a time and measure the characteristics relevant to this specific cultural group to reveal the structure of behavior through an internal lens. This study is aimed to focus on the examination of recent first Asian immigrants and reveal their challenges and conceptualization of work after immigration.

The research questions that are asked in this study are:

5. How do Asian immigrants conceptualize decent work and work meaningfulness?
6. What are the challenges that Asian immigrants face after immigration to obtain desired work experience?
7. What are the strengths and supports Asian immigrants have that helped them improve their work experience?
8. Did Asian immigrant's subjective social class shift after immigration. Does social class intersect with their Asian and immigrant identity to impact on their work experience and how?

Given the fact that many previous theories have not successfully explained the full experience of immigrants and Asian American population, a qualitative method is a better fit for this study (Levitt et al., 2018). Specifically, Consensual qualitative research method (CQR; Hill, 2001) was selected for this study because it allows the researcher to describe the lived experience of the participants and allow themes to emerge from participants' own narratives. This chapter

will present an overview of the methods used in this study. The research questions will be addressed in this chapter, followed by a description of the plan for recruiting participants, research team, procedures, data collection and analysis. Methods to ensure trustworthiness will also be discussed.

Participant Recruitment

The study is conducted with a sample of 10 self-identified first generation Asian immigrants which fit with the recommended 8-15 sample size (Hill, 2005). CQR researchers also concluded that if study participants are homogenous in terms of certain personal characteristics, large sample sizes are unnecessary (Hill, 2012). The participants voluntarily migrated to the United States and was living in the US at time of when the interview was conducted. Snowball sampling and convenience sampling method were used to recruit participants who meet the criteria. Recruitment information were distributed through the Asian American Psychology Association list serv and a Chinese social media platform. Two of the participants were recruited through the author's personal connection. Two of the participants were referred by participants. To ensure the generalizability of the data, this study only included participants who identified as Chinese and Taiwanese. The common characteristics of these two groups include Mandarin-speaking and influenced by collectivism and Confucius culture. Participants need to have at least one year of work experience before and after migrating to the US. Participants also need to have at least a bachelor's degree.

Procedures

Prior to the interviews, the researchers explained consent to the participants and make sure participants fully understand the purpose and goals of this study, confidentiality, use and storing of the data, and their rights to withdraw from the study at any given time. After

participants agreed to the consent (verbally), the interviewer moved on to the semi-structured interview.

Before the start of the interview, participants were asked about demographic information including age, gender, year of immigration, educational level, current occupation, and years worked pre and post immigration. The initial interview questions were developed based on previous CQR studies on Asian Americans (Fouad et al., 2008; Iwasaki & Brown, 2014) and immigrants (Autin et al., 2018). Then the initial protocol was tested with two pilot interviews and some of the wordings of the questions were revised to provide greater clarity. The interview protocol is the following:

1. How do you like your current work experience?
2. What are the characteristics that you think decent work should have?
3. What makes your work more meaningful?
4. What are the barriers and challenges you faced/are facing at work after immigration?
5. What are the supports you have or other things that helped you in pursuing your career or desired work experience after migration?
6. Where do you see yourself on the social class ladder in both US and your home country? How has your experience with social class impacted your work or decisions or experience of work?

Question 6 is adapted from the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler & Stewart, 2007). Participants will see a scale presented as a “social Ladder.” Participants can place an “X” on the rung that they think represents their social class (Adler & Stewart, 2007).

The interviews range from 60 minutes to 90 minutes in length. All the interviews were held via Zoom or phone call. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed flexibility regarding to the research questions. This allowed participants to raise issues that were solicited indirectly in the interview and encourage participants to share all relevant details of their experience.

Data Collection

Each interview was audio taped by a digital recorder and stored in a password protected drive that was only shared with the team members and the auditor. All the interviews were transcribed by the author. Interviews were conducted in either English or Mandarin. Any interviews that are conducted in Mandarin (9/10) were translated into English before analyzing (Hill, 2012). All the title of the recording the transcripts were deidentified. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant that were used in all the files and analysis process.

Data Analysis

Coding Team

The coding team consists of five counseling psychology graduate students including the author. Three of the team members are doctoral student and two are master student. Three of the team members have previous experiences and training of CQR method. The team consist of four females and one male. The team is also divers in racial/ethnic identity and culture background where three identify as Asian (two are Chinese immigrants and one is Asian American), one identifies as African (immigrant), and one identifies as Caucasian American. The team also include an auditor who is the committee chair of this dissertation. The auditor has previously conducted CQR study as well as has served as auditor for another CQR study.

Team completed training for CQR method prior to participating. The training requires the members to read the Hill article (2005) about CQR method. As part of the training, the team also met and learned about each analyzing process and practiced the skills using a case example. (Hill, 2012).

Coding Domains

Initial domain list was developed based on the previous literatures and the interview questions (Hill, 2012). Team members then all independently coded the first two interviews, fitting data into the initial domains while identifying themes that are not captured by the existed domain list. Then the team members came together and compared the themes that were developed and made changes to the existed domain list. In this process, a few domains were taken out since they were only represented in singular cases. Some domains were combined and formed into a boarder domain.

Then the team members independently fitted the rest of the data into the developed domain list. Each coding team members were assigned 2 to 3 transcripts and coded independently. Then every member reviewed each member's coding results. Finally, the members discussed the coding and came to consensus during the group meetings. The domain list continued to be revised throughout the initial coding process until it was stabilized.

Core Ideas

The next step was to summarize each block of raw data into core ideas, which aimed to capture the essence of each chunk of the raw data so that it is concise and ready to be reviewed for cross-analysis. As stated by Hill (2012), "the goal of constructing core ideas is to transform the individual participant's narrative into clear and understandable language that will enable researchers to then compare data across cases." The team members worked on the first domain as

a team to make sure everyone has the same level of understanding of the process of creating core ideas. Then, the team worked independently with the rest of the domains and then came together and compare ideas to arrive at consensus. Once the domains and the core ideas are finalized, a consensus version of each case was made in a excel worksheet. The auditor then reviewed the consensus version and recommend potential changes. After receiving the auditing feedback, the team went back to the raw data and decided any changes that were made to ensure the domains and core ideas are accurate reflections of the data.

Cross-Analysis

In the cross-analysis process, a more detailed structure was abstracted after analyzing the core ideas across cases. The goal here was to develop categories that can capture all the core ideas under each domain. Each team member worked independently to develop categories in each domain and then the group came together and discuss to reach consensus on the overall structure of the coding tree, what categories to keep, and which language to be used to name the categories. After the cross-analysis process, the categories (final coding tree) were reviewed by the auditor. Based on the auditor's comment, the coding tree was revised again, and the group came to consensus on the final version. (Hill, 2012, p124).

After all the categories and subcategories are finalized, frequency was calculated. According to Hill (2012), General represent the categories that include all or all but one cases (9 or 10); Typical represent categories that include half to all but one cases (5-8); and Variant represent two to half of the cases (2-4). The categories that are only represented by single case were not reported in this paper.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an important component in CQR as it is comparable with validity in a quantitative study (Hill, 2012). The researcher made effort to ensure the integrity and rigor of the data collection and analysis process. The following approaches were used in this study to ensure the validity of the results.

Addressing Biases

Prior to the coding process, team members self-reflected and discuss expectations and biases related to this study as well as how their personal identities and culture background could impact their judgments in the coding process (Hill, 2012). The researcher also made effort to open up conversations during the team meetings to help the team members reflect on potential biases and make sure that the judgements were made without influence of personal biases. Auditing process was also used to receive constructive feedbacks and check on any biased interpretations.

Member Check

During the data collecting process, member check was used where the transcripts will be sent back to the participants to make sure that the transcripts accurately represent the meaning within the original narratives from each participant (Hill, 2012). However, all transcripts were sent but only 3 of them were responded by the participants. All three agree that the transcripts reflected their original narratives.

Theoretical Saturation

Theoretical saturation (Williams & Morrow, 2009) was be used to establish trustworthiness in this study. This approach is to ensure the stability of the domains and categories that were developed, and the researchers may become “empirically confident.”

Theoretical saturation was accomplished by linking the individual results to the overarching categories. The individual results can be presented as core ideas or direct quotes from the interviews. According to Hill (2012), linking the general findings back to individual cases may give “a strong sense of the applicability of the emerging categories as well as good documentation of the integrity of the data” (Hill, 2012).

Chapter IV. Results

Research Team's Exploration of Biases

Research team members reflected on their biases and expectations both in writings and through discussions. Before starting the analysis process, team members reflected in written format about our potential biases related to how their personal cultural identities, values, and previous personal experiences or interactions with Asian immigrants might shape their interpretations or expectations of the participants' experiences in this study. Themes raised from this process include: immigrants may face unique challenges working in the US resulted from factors such as immigration n status, cultural adjustment, and the recent racial and social justice movements. During the consensual process, the team members also put efforts to reflect on our biases when opinions varied, and through discussion, came to an agreement that was the most objective and true to participants' experiences.

Demographics of the Participants

Participants include 10 Asian immigrant workers where 6 identified as female, 4 as male. Eight of them immigrated from China and two of them immigrated from Taiwan (see Table 1). They all migrated to the US between 1998 and 2019. Although one of the participants reported that he had lived in the US with his parents for a few years when he was as child but had spent all his life after 9 years old in China before the recent move. This participant identified Mandarin as his first language and identified himself as first-generation immigrant. Due to the homogenous characteristics that he has with other participants, his data was included in the analysis. All participants have a bachelor's degree or higher, while 4 have master's degree and 3 have doctoral degree. Their work experience before coming to the US range from 1 to 21 years, and their work experience in the US range from 2 to 21 years.

Domains

Domain 1: Satisfaction with Work

Positive Aspects of Work in The US (general)

When sharing about their work experience in the US, participants generally shared about their positive experiences. Participants think that working in the US allows them to have a ***clearer work-life boundary and a good work life balance*** (typical, see Table 2). For example, P3 shared, “it is obvious in here that people have a clearer boundary of work and life... Here, it is not that you don’t work after hours but you know everyone else value the boundaries, this is their style. Gradually, you will know to protect your boundaries.” Participants also reported typically having ***less stress*** but are available to ***more opportunities*** (variant) to explore their own career goals and challenge themselves to do something different, especially when compared to their previous experience working in China. Participants also reported having ***adequate income*** (variant) and the possibilities their work brings that allows them to ***attend to their family and support their children’s education*** (variant). Another aspect of work that was shared by participants is ***internal fit*** (typical). Participants feel a sense of fit in their work regards to value, work ethics, skills, or needs. P9 shared that they had more time outside of work which allowed him to go back to school. P4 also shared that being a librarian in China was a very plain job, however, it is different in the US where is able be creative and actually get fulfillments from her work.

Negative Aspects of Work in the US (variant)

Despite having five people sharing negative experiences, the areas where people feel less satisfied with are quite distinct. A theme for a negative aspect of work is feeling ***insecure and regret*** (variant) their decision to transition their life and work to the US. Like P4 said, “when I

first came here, I had anxiety, I was insecure, because I gave up a job that was so easy and prestige. I even had dreams of going back and people asked me are you sure you want to give up, and then I could only get part time jobs or contract jobs that I used to despise. So even though logically you know what is more meaningful, unconsciously people still search for things that bring comfort and security.” Similar to P4, P8 also had an established career in China before coming here. He quitted his job and started from scratch, getting another educational degree when he moved to the US. He shared that “I was a new graduate, but my peers were much younger. When I tried to find jobs, people think that I was overqualified. I was stuck in the middle. So, I regrated a little bit thinking I should transfer my job to the US instead of quitting it and starting new.” In addition, two participants perceived themselves to be *inadequately paid* (**variant**), considering their skill level and contributions.

Environment/Cultural Differences (typical)

For some, works is the reason why they move to the US. However, some people did not know what they were facing in terms of the work environment and the culture until acutely moved and lived here for a while. Some found that the environment and culture here is different from what was like at work back home.

Workplace relationships (**variant**) in and outside of work are very different. As immigrants who speak a different language and from a different culture, participants found it hard to fit into the social circles of the natives or other ethnic/cultural groups at their work. P9 shared that he realized culture gaps between different racial/ethnic groups at his work since they share different behavioral norm, history, even humor. Thus, it made it hard for him to connect with them in any none-work related conversations. Participants ended up forming their own social circles with immigrants from the same place, which are normally isolated and are

normally small in size. Like P3 shared, “here (in the US) when you have a break, you will still hang out with people like you, or say Taiwanese. Other than at work, you still feel like you are hanging out with the same group of people. Because you have the same experiences, same culture, speak the same language. But the difference is that in Taiwan there are more opportunities for you to expand your social world.”

People have also noticed that the *work cultures* (typical) are different comparing to their home countries. Multiple participants have noted that work life balance is more valued in the US work culture. P11 said that it is surprising to her that, “in the US, many mothers have high educational degrees but will put their time to be with their family and their kids. You don’t find that often in China.” P8 mentioned that the differences he noticed was people at his work in China were expected to work overtime but that is not what he experienced in the US.

Domain 2: Constraints and Challenges

Marginalization (general)

Participants generally experienced marginalization, among which, the most reported experiences was *language barriers and difficulties* (general). Some reported that the language barriers prevented them from fully expressing themselves, as a results, they were perceived as less competent. P7 said “people might question my ability since I am not a native speaker.” It also created a barrier for people to establish connections and relationships at work and created barriers for them to accrue social capitals. Like P9 shared, “What they talk about, jock about, after work, I can only understand 50% at most. You can understand every question at work, but after work, when everyone goes to have beers and they talk about histories and fun things, you may only understand 60-70% at most. You cannot jock or connect with your co-workers in English because it is not your first language.” In addition, P3 also reported being potentially

exploited for speaking another language. Her company has business with China and Taiwan, and she was expected to work with the overseas partners who speak Mandarin outside of regular work hours (due to the time zone differences). These tasks were assigned to her because she is the one who can speak their language, however, she also shared that she is not *paid* (variant) for those extra work.

Discrimination (variant) was typically identified as one of the challenges. Participants shared experiences being discriminated at work because of their immigrant and marginalized identities. P1 is a Chinese teacher at a high school, and she said that “students said they can say anything because we are Chinese teachers, we cannot understand what they are saying.” Other participants also talked about being discriminated against by colleagues, front desk staff, or being excluded from job opportunities. Four participants noticed that there is a “ceiling” when it comes to promotion and it is a result from being a foreign worker and an Asian.

Participants recognized the impact of both language barrier and the cultural differences on the “*ceiling*” (variant) effect. P3 shared that, “I think the language barrier prevented you from fully showcase your competencies. But I also think this is subjective, in a sense that it impacts your confident level, and thus creates a ceiling. Not necessarily because of the environment. You put the pressure on yourself sometimes.” P11 said that, if you want to move up, there’s still a glass ceiling. Not easy to break, because your culture is different, what you talk about is different, you can talk about things but the core values are still different, and you will not go deep in conversations.”

In addition, in terms of the *cultural differences* (typical), P9 shared that it is a significant barrier when he navigates the workplace in the US, “Asian cultures are reserved, values “*yi de fu ren, hou de zai wu*” (meaning convincing people with virtue and a man of virtue should strive

continuously to strengthen himself). Western cultures value freedom and equality. Asian cultures believe people should carry things inward, not expressive or showing off. One needs to convince others with virtue and the actions, you have to be good to influence others.” He noticed a disconnection between his own cultural values, behavioral patterns and the expectations in his work environment.

Familial Responsibilities (variant)

Family responsibility is reported by two of the participants as a main challenge. As moving to the US normally means detaching from their old social support system, participants found it to be a significant challenge navigating their work and life with limited support.

The most challenging time was then I was pursuing tenure. I had a baby to care for, I also had to

publish papers and get fundings. But basically, you have 6 years, at most 7 years to achieve the bar, if not they will not renew your contract. My husband at that time had a lot of oversee business travels. I had to take care of the baby by myself while writing papers to publish. I had a lot of pressure at that time. I had to have my friends help me take care of my daughter after she got off from day care. I could see she (daughter) was stressed but I had no other options.

P4 also shared that when they first moved to the US, the only job opportunity she found requires a long commute that does not allow her to pick up her son from school.

Stress from Work (variant)

Although many participants have shared that working in the US is less stressful compared to working in their home countries, three of the participants reported feeling stress as one of the challenges they faced working in the US. Superficially, P1 mentioned that she perceived those stress to be mainly coming from the leaderships. P7 also reported feeling stressed at the

beginning stage of her career as a professor having to meet the publication requirement. However, as P9 shared the reason why he was so “scared of being laid off” and was “always cringing and careful at work” was because losing his job means losing the status (working visa) to live in the US.

Domain 3: Strengths and Supports

Strengths and Supports Located in the Workplace (general)

Two main themes raised from this category are **social support** (variant) and **previous work experiences** (variant). Participant identified receiving support from co-worker, mentors, and finding opportunities through social connections.

Strengths and Supports Located within individual (general)

Even though the question asked in interviews was specifically about support, many participants mentioned strength located within self helped them get the experience they want and reach their career goals.

Ego strength (typical) was reflected in the narratives and seems to be a significant strength. Two of the participants mentioned that they are “forgiving” when facing discrimination or value conflicts. P7: I don’t care about those people; I just ignore them. I will find a way to deal with them. If it crossed my boundaries, I would speak up, if there’s any problem. Those attitudes are hard to document. If I can document the evidence, I will just...speak up about it. But if it’s just something small, I will not care about it. My personality is like I am forgiving, I don’t usually remember a lot of small things. There are good people, supporting me, I am enjoying my work, why do I need to focus on these negativities? I didn’t do anything wrong, and especially now I’m aged/matured. I teach my daughter too to not care about these people. If they

don't bother you much, just ignore them; if they bother you, just deal with them. Don't feel down and let them win."

The factor that was mentioned by the participants the most in this domain was **adaptability** (typical). Moving to a new environment is hard. However, despite having limited understanding about the culture and the environment in the host country, most participants were aware of the cultural differences and allowed themselves time to adapt. P10 shared when talking about adjusting to the new culture, "I also do not want to stress myself. I know whatever culture I have growing up; it was accumulated over 20 something years and it is hard to change it overnight." P2 shared that, "When you just arrived at a new place, you will be very confused, but over time you will understand, there's different rules everywhere and every time... Overtime, you will understand a lot of the reasonings behind."

Participants have typically talked about adapting to new environment both at work and in their personal life, in addition, most of them also talked about **proactively** (typical) coping with the change, taking a temporary part-time job, learning people's accents, getting another degree or certificate. P10 shared, "there are actually a lot of people from different countries at my work, they all have accents. It takes time to adjust to their accents, especially when I realize someone work closely with me has certain accent, if I cannot fully understand their English, I will use a recording pen, to record our communications. This helped me to first avoid missing important information, second, helped me adjust to their accents." P10 shared, "in terms of culture, if you have to ask, I mainly pushed myself. I am not an extrovert, but I tried to attend different local events and activities, to become a part of this culture."

Another strength is having a **growth-oriented** (variant) mindset. Many people experienced a downward shift in their career, having to start over or doing repetitive or less

challenging work. However, people have talked about finding other ways to improve themselves and looking forward to the long-term growth. For example, P4 shared, “I also think long-term. So, I was not dissatisfied but I was still preparing to pursue a better career. That was why I decided to get another master's degree and get certified in the US.” P8 shared “although there are still discriminations and inequalities at the job market but it’s less obvious, it allowed me more opportunities.”

Finally, family *support and support from friends* (variant) is also considered as the strength people have. As mentioned previously, immigration comes with loosing majority of the social support, to them, the support from immediate family (normally spouse) and friends who are here with them is critical. P7 talked about having a new born during the starting time of her career as a professor, she had to ask her friends to babysit her kid while she works on writing papers.

Domain 4: Decent Work

Values/Components of Decent Work that Align with ILO Standards (typical)

Aspects participants talked about when conceptualizing decent work that align with ILO standard include work hours and intensity, adequate earnings (variant), stability (variant), well-being (variant), work environment/culture (variant) and relationship with colleagues, career outlook, and freedom. Among those, *stability and security* of work seems to be the most valued component. As it is rooted in the culture to have stability and to be able to be a reliable support for family.

Values/Components of Decent Work that are not Included in the ILO Standards (variant)

Participants also talked about some aspects that are not included in the ILO standard, which are family expectations and opinions of others, improves prestige and social status,

matches with personal strength, and decent work is subjective. Align with the goal to be stable and support family, *family's opinion/expectation* (variant) is also important. P 10 shared, "I was interested in gene engineering. But you know when I was in college, it was not easy for people to find a job in this field, mainly some academics jobs doing research, the income was limited. That did not match with my family background; therefore, I did not follow through this idea."

Many people recognized that what is "decent" might look differently for different people *depending on their personal values and needs* (variant). Like P1 said, "I don't think you can categorize decency for a work. As long as someone enjoys the work, no matter it is blue collar or white collar, I think this is "decent." People have also talked about that they have gained certain realizations after coming to the US. Since normally in their home countries in China or Taiwan, decent work is captured more based on how it's perceived by others, the society, whether or not it is a prestige or higher-class career. P4 said that "I think decent work in China is based on other's judgement, it looks nice from the outside, but might not be meaningful." P1 also said that "my parents were like, "you have to work hard (academically) to have a decent job in the future." They will not ask what you are interested in, what you like to do. We were in the village; all we cared about was how to feed the whole family." This indicated that perceptions of decent work are based in contexts. In addition, a few participants had mentioned considering decent work to be able to *bring respect* (variant). As P7 said, he thinks his work as a post-doc researcher is decent because the "pay is not the best, but I get the respect."

Values/Components of Decent Work changed after immigration (variant)

Participants have also talked about their values and conceptualizations of decent work has changed after moving to and living in the US. P1 shared that the educational system and parenting she received growing up have taught her to value financial security. She said, "they

(teachers and parents) will not ask what you are interested in, what you like to do. We were in the village; all we cared about was how to feed the whole family.” P4 talked about how she values subjective experience more after coming to the US, compared to back home, she had to care about the stereotypes or and social cognization of her occupation.

Domain 5: Meaningful Work

Personal Factors (typical)

Participants mainly talked about meaningful that meets their *personal needs* or *relational needs*.

Personal Factors (typical)

For personal needs, *enjoyment* (variant) seems to be as important as *long-term development* (variant). P1 shared, “I think now...I probably will evaluate more of how I like it or not like the job, what can it bring to me and my future, not only just to get money and food for living.”

Relational Factors (typical)

Align with collectivism value, motivation to create positive impact on others, their field, or the society (*prosocial motivations, typical*) is the most reported relational factor associated with work meaningfulness. P4 is a librarian at a middle school where she developed system that helped improve students’ interest of reading. She said that “I hope this will have some long-term impact on them. I think this is meaningful.” P1 stated that, “I think work that help people and work that has longer term influences on others and society (are meaningful). I think meaningful is about its action, like someone picking up trash, it still it’s meaningful. Because it has positive influences on others.”

Prioritizing Meaningful Work over Decent Work (variant)

In addition, participant 3 and participant 5 both shared that to them, having a work that is meaningful is more important than having the work to be decent. P3 said, “I personally value meaningful work a lot. I care a lot about my career development so I will first consider if the work is meaningful or not, then I will consider if it’s decent. I will sacrifice having qualities of decent work to have a more meaningful work. I think that’s acceptable for me. If my company is always providing opportunities for learning and relational values, I will probably not care too much if it is decent or not.”

Domain 6: Social Class

Perceptions of Social Class Depends on the Context (variant)

Participants also shared believes that perception of social class is fluid rather than fixed and will depend on the context. P10 shared that, “I personally do not really care about social class nor will I pay attention to my social class. In another perspective, I am not engaged in determining my social class. I think which social class you are in will depend on the context. You know I can be a manager to my company, but I can be a service provider to my client.” P5 said that the reason why her social class shifted downward after coming to the US “it's not because life home was better. It is a relative status, when there’s more people in the lower classes (you will move up).”

Social Class Perceived by Others (variant)

A few participants also acknowledged that social class can be perceived by other and has a social value. However, they also pointed out that others’ perceptions normally do not represent or match with their own perceptions. P10 shared that, “in China, you know if you live in a small town, people know people in your town, there’s relatives, neighbors, who will judge you and you will be influenced a lot. It’s like an invisible net controlling over you.”

Perceptions of Social Class Depends on One's Value System (variant)

Half of the participants suggested that social class is a subjective construct and how people perceive their social class status will depend on their own values. In addition, some of them indicated that their values associated with social class has changed moving to the US. P1 shared that she came from a lower social class family which taught her to value having higher income to ensure stability of life. However, at the time of the interview, she was pregnant had just quitted her job as a Chinese teacher. Her perceived social class has raised even though now she does not have a stable income. This is because she has learned to value meaning and fit of work. Participants has perceived social class to be valued differently in the US society than Asian society. P11 said that "I think the more I live in the states, the less I care about social class." The reason why these participants changed to value less about social class might be because it has less significant impact on individual's actual living quality in the US society than in Asian society. Like P8 explained, "I have a friend here who does not have high income but still enjoy his life. I think this is the difference between these two societies. Here even though people might not be in high social class but can still live a stress-free life. They can still have leisure time, read, that's nice. "

Comparison/shift of Social Class (general)

Participants were asked to rate their social class and compare them pre and post migration. Five reported downward shifts, two reported upward shifts, and two reported no change.

Factors Impacted Perceptions of Social Class (general)

Income and occupation (typical) are still effective in determining social class for many participants. P7 shared that, "me and my husband both have relatively good income, we are also

both highly educated, both Ph.D., our community where we live is nice. If anything happens, a recession or something, my family might not be the most vulnerable group.”

In addition, level of *acculturation* (typical) seems to be important to how the participants view themselves on the social ladder. First of all, for people who just moved to the states and have less understanding of the US society, it is difficult for them to form a reasonable comparison. For example, P4 shared that, “because we have only been here a short amount of time, I can’t really compare and see, oh, your kid can go to schools that others cannot. Like a private school or something. But if only looking at the income, I think we are fine so, about the middle class.” She is aware that her acculturation level limited her ability to experience social class. Secondly, people who have learned about the individualism culture and have accepted the culture seems to have changed their attitudes about social class. P2 shared that, “I think the more I live in the states, the less I care about social class. In China, you find that people who are in the lower social class talk differently, have lower income, but I met people here and found that blue collar might have higher income than the white collar, some of them have higher education as well, they also like to read, can enjoy their leisure time, traveling, playing sports. So, the line is very blurred. People in the higher social class might be able to have a better work environment, might look well off, but in reality, some blue-collar workers do not really have a worse quality of life.” Lastly, people who had learned about the culture and is aware of the constraints as immigrant mentioned that their answer might be different (lower) if considering their immigration status.

Participants reported that they evaluate based on subjective experience ---- whether or not they *enjoy and are happy* (variant) about their current situation. P5 said that “even though it was lowered but my actual life quality actually was improved. I feel more freedom and I am more

satisfied.” P10 also mentioned that “I assess social class based on if I enjoy what I have. For example, if someone has a million dollars, one might buy a fancy car and I might buy a good quality speaker. The person who bought a car can be viewed as being very well off, but a good set of speakers is really what I can enjoy.”

Domain 7: initial Decision to Immigration

Employment and job opportunities (typical) was reported by half of the participant as (one of) the reason(s) that led them to move to the US, either being transferred by their company, or seeking their personal career goals. There were also half of the participants reported that they initially came here for *education* (typical) instead of work. For these participants, they either did not think through their plan until after getting the educational degree, or education was a necessary step for them to qualify for certain position or a longer-term stay. It is also important to note that other than work and education, people also made the decision to move to *pursue better life* (variant) that meet the needs of their own or their family especially their children.

Domain 8: Decision to Stay in the US

Half of the participants reported *consideration of family* (typical) is (one of) the reason(s) they decided to stay. More specifically, participants talked about there are better educational resources for their children in the US. Another participant shared that they did not want to go back to China since what he wants to do for his career would not be appreciated by his parents in the Chinese context. Although only several participants identified *freedom and equality* (variant) as well as *work opportunity and culture* (variant) as one of the reasons that made them stay in the US despite all the other challenges, these two factors were mentioned by several participants as a positive aspect of work and positive aspect of living in the US.

Different from the initial reason to move, people have lived here and the reasons keeping them here are the ones that actually outweigh all the other downside of living in the US. This could be considered as another strength that helped improve resilience and participant's satisfaction. When talking about their rationale to stay, participants indicated that these are decisions made with deliberate comparison of the two environments and with understanding of the pros and cons of both societies. P8 shared, "although there are still discriminations and inequalities at the job market but it's less obvious, it allowed me more opportunities."

Tables

Table 1

Demographics

Participant	age	gender	Educational level	Country of origin	Year of immigration
1	31	Female	Bachelor	China	2018
2	50	Female	Master	China	1998
3	35	Female	Master	Taiwan	2018
4	45	Female	Doctoral	China	2019
5	33	male	Doctoral	China	2020
6	37	Female	Doctoral	Taiwan	2012
7	44	Female	Doctoral	China	2003
8	43	male	Master	China	2006
9	50	male	Master	China	2017
10	37	male	Bachelor	China	2017

Table 2

Cross-analysis

Domains	Categories	Frequencies
Satisfaction with work	Positive aspects of work in the US	General
	<i>Work life balance</i>	Typical
	<i>Less stress</i>	Variant
	<i>Adequate pay</i>	Variant
	<i>More opportunities</i>	Variant
	<i>Supporting family</i>	Variant
	<i>More challenging</i>	Variant
	<i>Internal fit</i>	Typical
	Negative aspect of work in the US	Variant
	<i>Insecurity and regret</i>	Variant
	<i>Inadequate pay</i>	Variant
	Environment/cultural differences	Typical
	<i>Workplace relationships</i>	Variant
	<i>Cultural differences</i>	Typical
Constraints and challenges	Marginalization	General
	<i>Discrimination</i>	Variant
	<i>Unfair pay</i>	Variant
	<i>Ceiling</i>	Variant
	<i>Cultural/value differences</i>	Typical
	<i>Language barriers and difficulties</i>	General
	Family responsibilities	Variant

	Stress from work	Variant
Strengths and supports	Located in the workplace	Typical
	<i>Previous work experiences</i>	Variant
	<i>Social support</i>	Variant
	Located within the individuals	General
	<i>Proactive personality</i>	Typical
	<i>Adaptability</i>	Typical
	<i>Growth oriented</i>	Variant
	<i>Ego strength</i>	Typical
	<i>Support from family and friends</i>	Variant
	Decent work	Values/components of decent work that are included in the ILO standard
<i>Well-being</i>		Variant
<i>Adequate earnings</i>		Variant
<i>Stability and security</i>		Variant
Work environment		Variant
Values/components of decent work that are not included in the ILO standard		Variant
<i>Family expectations and opinions of others</i>		Variant
<i>Bring respect</i>		Variant
<i>Decent work is subjective</i>		Variant
Values of decent work changed after immigration		Variant
Meaningful work	Personal factors	Typical
	<i>Enjoyment of work</i>	Variant
	<i>Personal development</i>	Variant

	Relational factors	Typical
	<i>Prosocial motivation</i>	Typical
	Prioritizing meaningful work over decent work	Variant
Social class	Perception of social class depends on one's value system	Variant
	Perception of social class depends on context	Variant
	Social class perceived by others	Variant
	Comparison/shift of social class	General
	<i>Upward shift</i>	Variant
	<i>Downward shift</i>	Typical
	<i>No change</i>	Variant
	Factors impacted perceptions of social class	General
	<i>Acculturation and outcomes of immigration</i>	Typical
	<i>Income and occupation</i>	Typical
	<i>Enjoyment and happiness</i>	Variant
	<i>Education</i>	Variant
	<i>Lifestyle</i>	Variant
Initial decision to immigration	Career, employment, and job opportunities	Typical
	Pursuing better life	Variant
	Education	Typical
Decision to stay	Consideration of family	Typical
	Freedom and equality	Variant
	Less financial stress	Variant
	Living quality, public resources	Variant

Work culture and opportunity

Variant

Domains	Categories	Frequencies
Satisfaction with work	Positive aspects of work in the US	General
	Work life balance	Typical
	Less stress	Variant
	Adequate pay	Variant
	More opportunities	Variant
	Supporting family	Variant
	More challenging	Variant
	Internal fit	Typical
	Negative aspect of work in the US	Variant
	Insecurity and regret	Variant
	Inadequate pay	Variant
	Environment/cultural differences	Typical
	Workplace relationships	Variant
	Cultural differences	Typical
Marginalization	General	
Constraints and challenges	Discrimination	Variant
	Unfair pay	Variant
	Ceiling	Variant
	Cultural/value differences	Typical
	Language barriers and difficulties	General
	Family responsibilities	Variant
	Stress from work	Variant
Strengths and supports	Located in the workplace	Typical
	Previous work experiences	Variant
	Social support	Variant
	Located within the individuals	General
	Proactive personality	Typical
	Adaptability	Typical

	Growth oriented	Variant
	Ego strength	Typical
	Support from family and friends	Variant
	Values/components of decent work that are included in the ILO standard	Typical
Decent work	Well-being	Variant
	Adequate earnings	Variant
	Stability and security	Variant
	Work environment	Variant
	Values/components of decent work that are not included in the ILO standard	Variant
	Family expectations and opinions of others	Variant
	Bring respect	Variant
	Decent work is subjective	Variant
	Values of decent work changed after immigration	Variant
Meaningful work	Personal factors	Typical
	Enjoyment of work	Variant
	Personal development	Variant
	Relational factors	Typical
	Prosocial motivation	Typical
	Prioritizing meaningful work over decent work	Variant
Social class	Perception of social class depends on one's value system	Variant
	Perception of social class depends on context	Variant
	Social class perceived by others	Variant
	Comparison/shift of social class	General
	Upward shift	Variant

	Downward shift	Typical
	No change	Variant
	Factors impacted perceptions of social class	General
	Acculturation and outcomes of immigration	Typical
	Income and occupation	Variant
	Enjoyment and happiness	Variant
	Education	Variant
	Lifestyle	
Initial decision to immigration	Career, employment, and job opportunities	Typical
	Pursuing better life	Variant
	Education	Typical
Decision to stay	Consideration of family	Typical
	Freedom and equality	Variant
	Less financial stress	Variant
	Living quality, public resources	Variant
	Work culture and opportunity	Variant

* General = 9 or 10 cases; Typical = 5-8 cases; and Variant = 2-4 cases.

Chapter V. Discussion

In this section, we will engage in a comprehensive discussion of Chapter IV. This study investigated the professional background of recent Asian immigrants who possess advanced degrees. This study focuses on the impact of the immigration process, particularly the social class shift after immigration, on individuals' perceptions and experiences of their desired employment. Prior studies have often focused on investigating the experiences of individuals who are enrolled in college or young adults who are in the initial stages of their career development. These populations primarily encounter an initial choice regarding their career trajectory. The decisions made by individuals are more likely to be influenced by factors such as their family history, personal interests, and psychological variables, including work motivations and self-efficacy (Fouad et. al., 2008; Hui & Lent, 2017). This study utilized a framework derived from the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) to examine individuals' work experiences, with a specific emphasis on the influence of contextual and personal factors on their ability to achieve desired work outcomes.

Research questions that were explored in this study were:

1. How do Asian immigrants conceptualize decent work and work meaningfulness?
2. What are the challenges that Asian immigrants face after immigration to obtain desired work experience?
3. What are the strengths and supports Asian immigrants have that helped them improve their work experience?
4. Did Asian immigrant's subjective social class shift after immigration. Does social class intersect with their Asian and immigrant identity to impact on their work experience and how?

Question #1: How do Asian immigrants conceptualize decent work and work meaningfulness?

The results showed that some of the components of decent work that ILO focused on including a) employment creation and enterprise development, b) social protection, c) standards and rights at work, d) governance and social dialogue (Decent Work Indicators, 2012) are consistent with what are important for these highly-educated Asian immigrants, while some unique aspects appear to be equally important to Asian immigrant employees that were not emphasized by ILO. In addition to providing a secure existence for their family, participants discussed the need for their occupation to meet family expectations and to be viewed as respectable by societal standards. In accordance with a recent study that sought to comprehend the work experience of low-income Asian immigrants, this study also found that family is one of the most essential factors when Asian immigrants address their work (Tu, et. al., 2019). However, this study examined the low-income population to whom supporting family might be the survival basic needs. The participants of this population has higher income and their kids' educational needs are fulfilled. While family remains an essential consideration for Asian immigrants, it manifests not as a primal survival need but rather as a unique and distinct cultural value.

Furthermore, it seems equally important for Asian immigrants to have a work that would bring social recognition, which seems to be intertwined with the collectivism culture (Zhou, Qu, & Li, 2022). Nevertheless, other Asian immigrants also recognized that decent work is subjective and depends on one's value and needs. Some individuals appeared to have acquired this belief subsequent to relocating to the United States, as they learned that different from their experiences in home countries, in the US, members of the working class can also live a prosperous lives and

receive equal respect from society. These findings suggest a shift in perspective that may warrant further exploration, underscoring the complexity of integrating familial considerations for decent work within the broader context of immigration and cultural adaptation.

Existing literature has shown that individuals with a higher level of education and a higher social class status are more likely to choose meaningful work (Hu & Hirsh, 2017; Allan, Autin, & Duffy, 2016). Hence, this study also encompassed inquiries pertaining to the concept of meaningful work. The hypothesis put forth in this study has been confirmed by the research findings, indicating that certain highly educated Asian immigrants prioritize the significance of their work over its qualities of decent work. In fact, some participants have had relatively decent work prior to moving to the US. Their work might be stable and well paid but might not necessarily meet their higher-level self-determination needs and social contribution needs such as benefiting professional development, gaining fulfillment, or having positive influence for others or the society (Autin et. al., 2019). This might be why they are satisfied now. One does not have to meet all criteria for decent work to gain meaningful work.

Question #2: What are the challenges that Asian immigrants face after immigration to obtain desired work experience?

Consistent with the hypothesis, the intersectionality of being of Asian descent and an immigrant has been found to significantly influence an individual's work experiences, giving rise to a multitude of challenges. Like other immigrant groups, highly educated Asian immigrants also face challenges related to language barriers (Fosslund, 2013). These barriers primarily affect their ability to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, rather than their professional competencies. Language is not only viewed as vocabulary and or grammar, but also local tones, this involves culture and will not be prepared by people when they enter the country (Föbker, &

Imani, 2017). The finding of this dissertation also supported previous research in suggesting experiences of discriminations is considered as one of the barriers for immigrants. In addition, how individual deal with those discriminations might varies depending on their immigration status and cultural background (DelCampo, et. al., 2011).

Many research studying Asian American or Asian immigrant populations has supported the notion that family is an important consideration and factor that impact their work experience (Fouad et. al., 2008; Hui & Lent, 2017). For many participants from Asian cultures, back home, family is normally one unit and members will help each other out. Therefore, moving to the US and away from family support might be a challenge that involves adjustment to new culture. As far as family responsibility, only two reported it to be a significant consideration which seems to be disconnected with the previous research findings. It is possible that family-oriented as a significant characteristic of Asian culture impacted previous researchers in developing research questions and hypothesis. As a result, family impact was more frequently studied and discussed in previous research. At the same time, traits that are individualistic in nature, such as proactive personality and ego-strength, have received limited attention in research due to their perceived incongruity with Asian cultural norms. In fact, one of the participants mentioned being “self-centered” as their strength so that they can value their own needs instead of being manipulated by collectivism norm.

The narratives indicated that individuals encountered stress arising from their work as a prominent challenge experienced while working in the United States. At the beginning when immigrants moved to the new environment, they might have not yet established a sound social support system which put them in higher risk of being impact by any stress (Avarjani, Yeh, & Brouwers, 2020). Furthermore, immigrants may perceive a need to exhibit flawless performance

in their employment due to concerns about potential job loss, thereby placing their immigration status at risk. Prior studies have also indicated that the mental health of immigrants, particularly those with uncertain immigration status (e.g., undocumented individuals), is significantly influenced by their immigration status (King et al., 2023; Autin et al., 2018). According to Sinclair et al. (2020), when immigrants received long-term immigration status, their immigration status then seems to have less impact on their mental health.

Question #3: What are the strengths and supports Asian immigrants have that helped them improve their work experience?

The concept of adaptability appears to be a recurring theme among the majority of the participants. According to the Psychology of Working Theory, career adaptability refers to the conceptual framework that encompasses an individual's recognition of their preparedness and capacity to effectively manage present or future vocational development tasks (Duffy et al., 2016). In line with the conceptualization of adaptability, Asian immigrants has also reflected a sense of awareness of differences resulted from immigration, a sense of readiness to adapt (changing themselves), and a confidence of reaching their career and personal goals despite knowing the difficulties. This attitude also matches with the philosophy of Dao, that emphasis on the values of the process, while believing that the external world is ever changing and has its way to come together, individuals may make an impact if only transforming with the external environment. As one participant stated, "I think when you are changed by your environment you are also changing your environment." Influence of Asian culture was perceived as a barrier for Asian and Asian Americans to fit in to the western workforce as it prevents individuals from "speaking up," fitting in the leadership roles, or facilitating effective communications (Chin, D., & Kameoka, V. A. 2019; Sy, Tram-Quon, & Leung, 2017). Results of this study added to the

existing discussion and emphasized that Asian culture also ~~reflected as~~ was a strength that helps Asian immigrant cope with all the constraints and challenges and find satisfaction out of work.

Prosocial motivation was a significant theme when participants talked about meaningful work. Consistent with the conceptualization of prosocial behaviors studied in organizational psychology field, these are the behaviors that intend to benefit others, individuals or group. Recent research has also linked prosocial motivations with other psychological constructs such as forgiveness and gratitude and can be considered as a strength further impact individual's work experience (Freidlin & Littman-Ovadia., 2020). This connection was also reflected in this study. This further suggested that meaningful work might not only be an outcome of work but also serve as a predicting factor that led to better coping and greater satisfaction (Allan, Autin & Duffy, 2016).

The proactive personality trait appears to hold substantial significance for highly educated Asian immigrants as they navigate the process of adapting to a new work environment in the United States. This is consistent with the hypothesis of PWT (Duffy et. al., 2016). Moreover, other strengths, including ego-strength, growth oriented, and immediate family support that are located within the individuals, were also shown to be critical for helping the Asian immigrants getting their desired work experience. Family support has been well studied and tested to be critical for Asian American and immigrant's work experience (Lee, Lam, & Ditchman, 2015). The study conducted by Joo et al. (2023) examined the relationship between a growth-oriented mindset and the experiences of Asian migrant children. The findings revealed that a growth-oriented mindset was linked to lower levels of perceived discrimination and more effective coping strategies in response to discriminatory situations. The examination of ego-

strength in relation to the Asian immigrant population remains limited, although its influence on the experiences of other immigrant groups has been observed (Teitelbaum et al., 2000).

The findings also showed that this population has more acceptance and flexibility when adapting to new work and life environment, whereas different connections were found with Asian Americans. Studies that examined Asian American young adults showed that Asian American young adults tend to be perfectionistic, have higher standards, and are impacted by the stereotype of the “modeled minority” and the systematic oppressions (Suh, & Flores, 2022; Russell, & McCurdy, 2023). Many factors including developmental stage and immigration status might play a role in creating this discrepancy.

This study also demonstrates that participants' motivations for remaining in the United States are often aligned with their original reasons for migrating, which serves as an additional source of resilience in overcoming challenges and adjusting to the unfamiliar surroundings. As P9 shared, even though due to the constraints he had lost his “dreams” for his career, he still chose to adapt by changing his own strategies for gaining satisfaction out of work (from achieving higher position to learning new knowledge and skills). This is because he knows he had achieved his goal to have more freedom and better educational resources for his child. This finding is consistent with the findings of the connections between individual’s self-determination needs, especially self-determination needs that are consistent with the collectivism culture values, and work satisfaction (Lee, Lam, & Ditchman, 2015; Ewalt, & Mokuau, 1995).

Question #4: Did Asian immigrant’s subjective social class shift after immigration. Does social class intersect with their Asian and immigrant identity to impact on their work experience and how?

The findings showed that most of the participants perceived their social class as having shifted after moving to the US and half of them experienced a downward shift. However, the findings revealed more nuances in how social class plays a role in the work and life experience for this population. What makes this population more complicated is that they could have a high level of education, belonged to a higher social class prior to migration, and shifted to a lower social class after migration due to economic constraints or marginalization. This finding of social class matches with the hypothesis of the Social Class Worldview Model (Liu et. al., 2004) in suggesting social class is multidimensional and would impact individual in various ways depending on the context (type of social activity and which reference group is used). Therefore, some participants in this study claimed to have lost a high-status employment but did not perceive their social standing to have declined significantly because they have internalized a relatively higher social class status from their previous experience (might be higher educational attainment, wealthy family, prestige occupation and/or higher income) prior to moving to the US. Once individual has internalized a social class status, the effect might be rather long-termed than immediate. Research indicated that social class is internalized by the participants and will impact how immigrants engage in their new environment (Ainslie, 2009). In this aspect, immigrant identity may serve as advantageous as they bring unique pre-migration experiences (Hakak, Holzinger, & Zikic, 2010), whereas in other previous research immigrant identity are viewed as disadvantageous as it lead to discriminations and systematic constraints (Allan et. al., 2023). In addition, immigrants who held higher social status before immigration might also be exempted from internalizing some of the marginalized social status and have better coping mechanisms that could help them gain better work experiences even when there is a large gap between pre and post migration experiences (Allan, Autin, & Duffy, 2016).

Despite the relative consistent report of strengths that seems to be related to having higher social class pre-migration, also consistent with previous findings (Ainslie, 2009), a few participants also talked about regrets and insecurity (about giving up their previous status and moving to the US), and indicated some disappointment of having repetitive work, less opportunities, and had to change their career aspiration. This finding matches with the result from research looking at the paradox effect of social class on career. The study suggested that, social class lead to higher career adaptability and self-esteem, but contrarily, it can also be detrimental to career adaptability through higher perceived anxiety if they have higher standard and expectations for themselves (Wang & wang, 2022).

In general, this study has highlighted both the positive and negative aspects of immigrant workers' experiences. When asked about their general satisfactions of work, more positive experiences were reported than negative ones, indicating that immigrant workers perceive their work experience in the United States to have many more advantages than concerns. This is consistent with data from the Pew Research Center (2012), which indicates that over three quarters of immigrants would say they would make the same decision to migrate if they had a second opportunity. Research had named this phenomenon of immigrants experiencing positive outcomes despite the obstacles and constraints “immigrant optimistic” which may result from having lower critical consciousness or believing that the host society (US) is better than where they came from (Arce, Bañales, & Kuperminc, G2022). Previous research has also demonstrated that the reverse state of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction (Wanberg, & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000; Tims, & Derks, 2013), which is consistent with the findings of the present study and suggests that the experience of work is a multidimensional construct. As one of the participants quoted

from her favorite book, which portrays a Chinese immigrant's life in New York City, "it's heaven and hell."

Implication for future research

The psychology of working theory is based on the ILO's assertion that everyone has the freedom to pursue their desired occupation (International Labor Organization, 2013). The findings of this study have provided extended understandings of what decent work looks like for the highly educated Asian immigrants and serve as a guidance for future research. The findings indicated that the recent highly educated Asian immigrants experience of work is different from the work experience of younger population, population who grow up in America, or other immigrant groups from different culture and social class backgrounds. This indicated that future research needs to continue to study populations that has heterogenous characteristics.

This dissertation also added to the literature of PWT by including the work experience for mid-career adult and adults who transitioned from different social status and in from Asian cultural background. Although research has tested decent work and meaningful work in the Asian context and was found to be applicable in Asian context that research was conducted for participants who did not experience a shift in social status (Nam & Kim, 2019; Wang et. al., 2019). Moreover, that research applied PWT still with the western individualistic assumption and biases. The results of this study indicated that the standard of decent work does not fully capture what is considered as "decent" in Asian cultures. Future research needs to further consider influence of culture when assessing decent work for Asian and Asian immigrant population. As far as meaningful work, the study added to the previous literature in suggesting that meaningful work would rather be considered as a predicting factor for work satisfaction. It would be beneficial for researchers to examine this connection further with different populations.

Another implication of this study is that researchers need to understand immigrants' strengths and challenges within the cultural context. Previous research mainly understands the strengths and challenges of Asian and Asian immigrants in a western perspective. In fact, consistent with the suggestions of previous researcher (Seay, 2016), the findings of this dissertation also reflected that we need to understand the strengths and challenges from the participants' perspective and within specific context. Ultimately the strengths will work to "minimize the bad and maximize the good" (Seay, 2016) even sometimes it means to "be quiet" and "give up your dream." This approach might be helpful for this first group of Asian immigrants based on their context and their needs; however, it might not work for the second generation who are more acculturated. To understand the Asian immigrant's work experience better, researchers might also focus on examine the generational effect with consideration of their different contexts and needs. Future research may also study different ethnic groups within the Asian immigrant population.

When considering context, this study focused on social class and revealed its impact on Asian immigrants' experience transitioning to a new work and living environment. Especially, the results of this study indicated that higher perceived social class pre-migration granted individual strength. Consistent with the SCWM (Liu, 2011), this dissertation also highlighted the importance to consider the "inference group" when discussing social class. For the immigrant population, how they use the "inference group" and conceptualize their social class in the host culture also seems to be related to their acculturation level. Future research should use social class as a construct of identity and take into consideration the specific context (reference group) when examine subjective social class and further investigation on the link between social class and acculturation will be beneficial.

The finding also has some implications for Psychology of Working theory. First, the differences between the common standard of decent work (defined by ILO and PWT) and the understanding of decent work by Asian immigrants suggested that when applying Psychology of Working Theory on different cultural group, it is important to consider the emphasis of decent work based in the cultural context. Second, previous PWT research suggested that one may pursue meaningful work after successfully attained decent work. This study suggested that meaningful work might not be an outcome that should be placed after decent work (Blustein, Lysova, & Duffy, 2023) the results has revealed that for highly educated Asian immigrants, the need for achieving meaningful work might be prioritized over achieving decent work possibly due to having higher educational achievement or higher subjective social class. Future research may study other higher educated or social class population and test out different placement of meaningful work in the PWT model.

Finally, this study is a qualitative study which does not examine any correlation or causation. The findings may serve to support hypothesis of future research to confirm the relationship between factors raised from the results such as social class, decent work, meaningful work, and career adaptability.

Implications for clinical practices

As far as in clinical practice, the results of the study indicated in working with recent highly educated Asian immigrants, although it might be helpful to educate them on the constrains and the host culture, it might be even more beneficial to help them recognize their strengths based in their own cultural and personal background. In addition, the results also indicated that recent highly educated Asian immigrants constrains and challenges at work and coping mechanism are depended on their previous work and life experiences. These experiences are

significantly unique to the current social and global environment. Therefore, it is important to understand Asian immigrant's unique needs in their own cultural and personal contexts, exploring how their pre, during, post immigration experience, educational and cultural background, as well as acculturation level influence their experience of work and career aspirations (Autin, Cadenas, & Diaz Tapia, 2023). It is important for the clinicians to keep in mind that needs of other groups (e.g., Asian American, Asian immigrant moved to the status in previous eras, low SES Asian immigrants) might not be generalizable to all Asian immigrants. As suggested by the findings of this study, decent work is a subjective construct and depending on the social class and personal value, and might not be prioritized by different immigrant clients. It might be helpful in clinical setting when working with the immigrants on their vocational related issues to first understand their value and how they conceptualize their career needs.

To provide culturally relevant interventions, clinicians also need to understand the strengths, support and challenges and constraints Asian immigrants are facing in a culturally appropriate way. As an example, Language is a significant barrier but it impacts individual's work experience through impacting individual's ability to communicate in both professional and relational setting, gain social capital, and gain a sense of belongingness. However, it is indicated that the issues might not be the language skills, the vocabulary, the grammar, but more of the cultural barrier and the participant's acculturation level, whether or not they understand the cultural background and feel comfortable and open with the culture. This might be the focus on clinical work. instead of referring client to ESL, working with them on cultural acceptance and overcome stress related to acculturation.

The findings of the present study elucidate how social class intersects with other identity components, thereby exerting a significant influence on individual experiences and coping

strategies. The understanding and interpretation of social class appear to be context-specific, contingent on various factors such as the target population, comparative groups, and the unique goals and needs of the individuals involved. In light of these complexities, the author advocates for clinicians to conscientiously consider the intersectional effects of social class when engaging in therapeutic practice.

Limitations

The results of this study were developed based on the stories of 10 recent highly educated immigrants from China and Taiwan. It is a relatively small sample which was partially resulted from ensuring the homogeneity. Participants' immigration status was not set as a criterion because the researcher found that it is not the most efficient for indicating marginalized identity or challenges in their work experience. Especially, considering many immigrants might have changed their immigration status during the time they are in the US, their current sates does not necessarily help to indicate everything in one's work history during the immigration process. However, since temporary status (e.g., work and student visa) has more legal and structural limitations compared to green card and citizenship, participant's experience of marginalization might still be impacted differently based on their status. Sampling bias might exist as most of the participants interviewed were either in the education field or IT field. Their experiences might be different from other immigrants who work in field where Asian immigrant workers are less represented.

In terms of development of the interview protocol, although researcher referred to previous literature and have tested with two pilot study, some of the questions were still confusing to participants. Hill (2012) has mentioned that the nature of semi-structured interviews includes flexibility and rapport building. To help participants understand the question, additional

prompts and alternative wordings were used to help the participants understand the direction of the questions. During the interviews, a few questions were also skipped by the interviewer if the participants had already discussed related content in other sections of the interviews. However, these decisions may impact the consistency and the richness of the data.

Previous research had suggested that immigrants who experience downward social class shift experience less work satisfaction and more mental health problems (Blustein, et. al., 2012; Diemer & Ali, 2009), however, this was not reflected prevalently in the data of this study. This could be because of the participants underreport due to potential lack of trust to the interviewer or stigma for mental health issues (Livingston et. al., 2018). Future research might consider other approach to eliminate participant's resistant to assess impact on psychological aspect.

Even though CQR training was provided to the team members prior to the analysis process, the team members and the auditor are still considered relatively less experienced with CQR method. During the analysis process, the researcher consulted external experts of CQR method with questions regarding double coding and fitting core ideas into categories. Decisions were made considering the expert's opinion, the CQR manual (2012), and the team members' agreements.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Message and Informed Consent

Email to recruit participants:

My name is Yixing Song, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. I am going to study Asian immigrants' work experience for my dissertation. I am hoping to recruit 13-15 participants who identify as Chinese-speaking, currently live in the US, and have in total at least 1 year(s) of work experience in the US (work including being a homemaker) and in your home country.

Purpose and Description: The purpose of this study is to better understand how recent Asian immigrants experience work in the US. The researcher would like to invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview including questions about demographic information and your work experience in the United States. The interview is approximately 60 minutes. Upon completion of the interview, participants will be compensated with a \$20 amazon e-gift card.

Risks and Benefits: It is possible that some participants may find answering questions about past experiences distressing or embarrassing although this is rare considering the questions used in this particular study. The researcher is aware of this rare risk and is prepared to be as sensitive to participant needs as possible. If you become upset or uncomfortable at any point and time during the interview, you are able to terminate the interview and the researcher will also assist you to seek help from your local mental health services. You also have the option to choose not to answer a particular question at any point as well. The research being conducted will not have a direct benefit to you as the participant except receiving a \$20 e-gift card. However, participation in this research study provides an important contribution to the proposed research questions for the current study. Results of this study will be used to inform other researchers,

mental health professionals, and medical health professionals who study or work with Asian immigrants.

Confidentiality: The interviews will be audio recorded for data analyze purposes and will be stored in a secured drive until the study is completed. The interviews will be transcribed without any identifiable information and will be also stored in a secured drive. Only the coding team member will have access to the transcripts. Participant will be shared with the transcript of their interview for reliability check. All the transcripts will be depersonalized and will also be deleted when the study is completed. Upon completion of the interview, you receive a gift card as a way to appreciate your time and participation, which will be send to you via email.

Having read the above information, if you meet the above criteria, agree to the consent, and will like to participate in this study, please contact me at yixing@uwm.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns regarding the study or research methods, please feel free to contact me as well.

Verbal script to recruit participants:

My name is Yixing Song, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. I am going to study Asian immigrants' work experience for my dissertation. I am hoping to recruit 13-15 participants who identify as Chinese-speaking, currently live in the US, and have in total at least 1 year(s) of work experience in the US (work including being a homemaker) and in your home country.

The purpose of this study is to better understand how recent Asian immigrants experience work in the US. I would like to invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview including questions about demographic information and your work experience in the United States. The

interview is approximately 60 minutes. Upon completion of the interview, participants will be compensated with a \$20 amazon e-gift card.

It is possible that some participants may find answering questions about past experiences distressing or embarrassing although this is rare considering the questions used in this particular study. I am aware of this rare risk and is prepared to be as sensitive to participant needs as possible. If you become upset or uncomfortable at any point and time during the interview, you are able to terminate the interview and I will also assist you to seek help from your local mental health services. You also have the option to choose not to answer a particular question at any point as well. The research being conducted will not have a direct benefit to you as the participant except receiving a \$20 e-gift card. However, participation in this research study provides an important contribution to the proposed research questions for the current study. Results of this study will be used to inform other researchers, mental health professionals, and medical health professionals who study or work with Asian immigrants.

Confidentiality: The interviews will be audio recorded for data analyze purposes and will be stored in a secured drive until the study is completed. The interviews will be transcribed without any identifiable information and will be also stored in a secured drive. Only the coding team member will have access to the transcripts. Participant will be shared with the transcript of their interview for reliability check. All the transcripts will be depersonalized and will also be deleted when the study is completed. Upon completion of the interview, you receive a gift card as a way to appreciate your time and participation, which will be send to you via email.

Do you have any questions about the information I shared? Do you agree to the consent?
Will you participate in this study? Thank you!

Appendix B: Coding Tree

1. Satisfaction with Work
 - a. Positive aspects of work in the US (case 8, 5,3,1,11,10,6,7,4, 9)
 - i. Clear work life boundary/work life balance (case 3, 5, 4, 11, 7)
 - ii. Less stress (case 11, 10, 9)
 - iii. Adequate pay (case 10, 8, 4, 9)
 - iv. More opportunities (case 10, 11, 6, 7)
 - v. Internal fit (case 4, 7, 5, 6, 9)
 - vi. Supporting and attending to family (case 10, 7)
 - vii. More challenging (case 6, 7)
 - b. Negative aspects of work in the US (case 11, 3, 4, 8, 9)
 - i. Insecurity and regret (case 4, 9, 8)
 - ii. Inadequate pay (case 8, 3)
 - c. Environment/cultural differences (case 3, 10, 11, 9, 1, 6, 8)
 - i. workplace relationships (case 3, 11, 9, 8)
 - ii. Culture differences (case 11, 10, 9, 1, 6, 8)
2. Constraints and Challenges
 - a. Marginalization (case 1, 3, 8, 7, 10, 11, 6, 2, 9)
 - i. Discrimination (case 1, 3, 8, 7, 9)
 - ii. Unfair pay (case 3, 10)
 - iii. Ceiling (case 11, 10, 3, 9)
 - iv. Cultural/value differences (case 11, 8, 6, 3, 9)
 - v. Language barriers and difficulties (case 1, 11, 10, 8, 7, 6, 2, 3, 9)

- b. Family responsibilities (case 4, 7)
 - c. Stress from work (case 1, 7)
3. Strengths and Supports
- a. Strengths/support located in the workplace (case 6, 8, 7, 1, 4,3, 9)
 - i. Previous work experiences (case 6, 8, 9)
 - ii. Social support (case 7,1,8,4,6)
 - b. Strength/support located within the individuals (case 1, 9, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11)
 - i. Proactive personality (case 11, 10, 4, 1, 6, 9)
 - ii. Adaptability (case 1,4,11,10,6,8,7, 9)
 - 1. Adapting for work (1,4, 10, 6)
 - 2. Adapting as a value or personality (case 11, 4, 8)
 - 3. Cultural adaptability/awareness (case 11, 10, 4, 7, 6, 8, 9)
 - iii. Growth oriented (case 3, 4, 9, 8)
 - iv. Ego strength (case 3, 7, 10, 11, 4)
 - v. Support from Family and friends (case 7, 1)
4. Decent Work
- a. Values/components of decent work that align with ILO standard (3, 5, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11)
 - i. Well-being (mental health, work life balance; benefit) (case 6, 4, 9)
 - ii. Adequate earnings (case 3, 5, 9)
 - iii. Stability (support living, support family) and security of work (case 10, 6, 8, 5, 4)
 - iv. Work environment/culture/relationship with colleagues (case 10, 11, 8)
 - b. Values/components of decent work that are not Included in the ILO standard (case 1, 4, 7, 10)

- i. Family expectations/opinions of others (case 10, 7)
 - ii. Prestige or social status (case 4, 7)
 - iii. Decent work is subjective (case 1, 10, 4, 9)
 - c. Values of decent work changed after immigration (case 1, 4)
5. Meaningful Work
- a. Prioritizing meaningful work over decent work (case 3, 1)
 - b. Personal factors (1,3,7,10,6, 11)
 - i. Enjoyment of work (case 1, 3, 7)
 - ii. Personal development (continuous learning/opportunities/challenges) (case 1, 3, 10, 6)
 - c. Relational factors (1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10)
 - i. Prosocial motivation (positive influences/helping others, revolution/contributions in field) (case 1, 3, 10, 6, 4, 7, 8)
6. Social Class
- a. Perception of social class depends on one's value system (case 1, 10, 8, 11, 9)
 - b. Perception of social class depends on the context (10, 7, 9)
 - c. Social class perceived by others (Case 10,9)
 - d. Comparison/shift of social class (5,6,3,11,4,7,10,8,1,9)
 - i. Higher in the US (case 5, 6,1)
 - ii. Lower in the US (case 3, 11, 4, 7, 5, 9)
 - iii. No change (case 8, 10)
 - e. Factors impacted perceptions of class shift
 - i. Enjoyment and happiness (case 10, 8, 5, 9)
 - ii. Income and work (case 4, 6, 7, 1, 9, 10)

- iii. Education (case 3, 7, 1)
 - iv. Lifestyle (case 4, 10)
 - v. Acculturation and outcomes of immigration (1,3,4,5,7,8,9, 10)
 - 1. Acculturation (case 4, 7, 3, 9, 10)
 - 2. Availability of family support (case 7)
 - 3. Immigration status (case 4, 5, 1)
 - 4. Freedom (case 8, 5)
7. Initial Decision to Immigration
- a. Career, employment, and job opportunities (case 1, 3, 10, 5, 9)
 - b. Pursuing better life (self, family, child) (case 3, 2,9)
 - c. Pursuing education (case 11, 2, 6, 7, 5)
8. Decision to Stay in the US
- a. Consideration of family (parents, spouse, offspring, expectations) (case 11, 1, 3, 5, 4)
 - b. Freedom and equality (case 1, 5, 9, 4)
 - c. Less financial stress (case 1, 6)
 - d. Living quality, public resources (3, 4)
 - e. Work culture and opportunity (case 8, 11, 3, 6)