AN ALUMNI MENTORING PROGRAM:
THE IMPACT ON THE CAREER PLANNING PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL
GRADUATE STUDENTS

A doctoral thesis presented
by
Kimberly Chu
To
The College of Professional Studies

Doctoral Thesis Committee
Dr. Bryan Patterson
Dr. Tova Sanders
Ronald Clare Jr., Esq.

Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
January 2019
Abstract

International graduate students often encounter difficulties in making career decisions and may turn to help-seeking resources and guidance in order to assist them in making a successful transition into the American workplace. However, little research exists that focuses on international graduate students and the career needs of this specific population. This inductive analysis study sought to understand the experiences of international graduate students whose career interests and choices have been shaped through involvement in a university-based mentoring program through a conceptual framework based on Bandura and Lent’s social cognitive career theory. Using an inductive analysis approach, this study engaged eight participants in a semi structured interview. The findings indicated five major themes, including: international status was perceived as a barrier to employment; the mentoring program provided an opportunity for the international students to enhance their career planning process; students described mentor qualities as important to the success of mentor–mentee relationships; students experienced personal growth through the mentoring program; and student engagement in additional campus support services increased the students’ career planning process. This study concludes that international graduate students’ experience in a university-based mentoring program was positive and acknowledged the importance of mentors in helping them grow professionally and personally as they completed their studies. Each participant noted the mentor’s professional background and knowledge of industry as crucial for a successful mentor–mentee relationship. The findings are significant for college administrators as they illuminate a need for mentoring and potentially demonstrate a missing component for international graduate students as they begin their career planning process.

Keywords: career planning, international students, mentoring
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my father, Winston Chu, and my uncle, Peter Lau, both of whom always believed in my ability to succeed in the academic arena. Thank you for always giving me the strength and support I needed to achieve my goals. This has been quite a journey, and although there were many times during this process when I wanted to quit, I always heard your voices telling me to keep going. I wish you were here to celebrate this accomplishment, but I know you are here in spirit. I love you and miss you both dearly.
Acknowledgements

It takes a village. The process of my educational journey is one that I did not travel alone. I would not have been able to accomplish what I have without the never-ending support of colleagues, friends, and family.

First, I want to thank Dr. Bryan Patterson, my amazing advisor, for his incredible guidance, advice, and assistance throughout this entire dissertation journey. His consistent timeliness and encouragement allowed me to remain on track throughout this process. I also want to express my deepest gratitude to my second reader, Dr. Tova Sanders, and my third reader Ronald Clare Jr., Esq. for their time, guidance, and thoughtful insights. Additionally, I want to extend my sincere appreciation to Leslie Wirspa for reading the various versions of my work and steering me in the right direction every time I felt lost.

I wish to thank all my friends and family for the million ways you have supported and encouraged me over the years. I am incredibly grateful for your patience and love throughout this journey. An extra special thank you to my mother, Mee Yee Chu. I cannot even put into words my gratitude for your unwavering support, love, and encouragement. You have always been my firm foundation and are always by my side helping to see me through some of life’s most difficult challenges. My love and thanks to my siblings, Grace, Betty, and Nelson, who always believed in me.

Finally, I want to thank my wonderful husband, William Campos, who never left my side throughout this entire journey. Thank you for your constant understanding and loving support. At the many junctions where I thought it could not be done, you were there to offer a kind word or a push forward. You always believed in my ability to finish, often when I did not. Thank you for all the times you had to pitch in a little extra with the housework. I am so grateful for your
patience and willingness to be flexible with my writing schedule which would often run into our weekends together. Last, but not least, to our daughter, Leia Campos. You are my greatest gift. I hope that you will grow up to find your passion and meaning in life. May you know that resilience and forward motion toward a goal pays off. I love you both!
Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 9
Statement of the Problem ........................................................................................................ 10
Research Question .................................................................................................................. 13
Theoretical Framework ........................................................................................................... 14
Significance of the Study ......................................................................................................... 18
Key Terms and Definition ........................................................................................................ 19
  International Student ............................................................................................................. 19
  Mentor ..................................................................................................................................... 19
  Program ................................................................................................................................. 20
  Protégé ................................................................................................................................... 20
Summary ..................................................................................................................................... 20
Chapter 2: Literature Review .................................................................................................. 21
Mentoring for International Students .................................................................................... 21
  Mentoring Concept ................................................................................................................ 22
  Defining Mentoring From an Academic Context ................................................................. 23
  Functions and Phases of Mentoring ..................................................................................... 24
  Mentoring in Higher Education ......................................................................................... 27
Summary ..................................................................................................................................... 30
Chapter 3: Methodology ....................................................................................................... 32
Research Design ...................................................................................................................... 33
Research Tradition .................................................................................................................. 34
Participants ............................................................................................................................... 35
Recruitment and Access ......................................................................................................... 36
Data Collection ....................................................................................................................... 37
Data Storage Management ..................................................................................................... 38
Data Analysis ............................................................................................................................ 38
Protection of Human Subjects ................................................................................................. 41
Trustworthiness ....................................................................................................................... 42
Limitations ............................................................................................................................... 45
Summary ..................................................................................................................................... 46
Chapter 4: Research Findings ............................................................................................... 48
Participant Profiles .................................................................................................................. 48
James ........................................................................................................................................ 48
Annie ........................................................................................................................................ 49
Jenny .......................................................................................................................................... 50
Katie .......................................................................................................................................... 51
Sophia ......................................................................................................................................... 53
Amy ........................................................................................................................................... 54
Emily ........................................................................................................................................ 55
Zoey ........................................................................................................................................... 56

Significant Themes ................................................................................................................... 57
Theme 1: International Status Was Perceived as a Barrier to Employment ......................... 59
  Limited proficiency in English ............................................................................................... 59
  Unfamiliarity with the U.S. job market .................................................................................. 60
  Limited connections to professionals and networking opportunities ............................... 60
Theme 2: The Mentoring Program Provided an Opportunity for the International Students to
  Enhance Their Career Planning Process ............................................................................... 62
  Gaining knowledge about the field and industry. ................................................................. 62
  An opportunity to network with professionals and build their connections. ..................... 63
  Preparing more effectively for the job search process ......................................................... 65
  An opportunity for students to enhance their communication skills .................................. 66
Theme 3: Students Described Mentor Qualities as Important to the Success of Mentor–Mentee
  Relationship .............................................................................................................................. 68
  Industry worked in and mentor’s career path ....................................................................... 68
  Availability and accessibility. ................................................................................................. 69
  Willingness to help and sense of caring .............................................................................. 70
Theme 4: Students Experienced Personal Growth Through the Mentoring Program ............ 71
  Increase in self-confidence ..................................................................................................... 72
  Students take on new learning opportunities and challenges without hesitation and doubt. .. 74
  Improvement in critical and logical thinking skills ............................................................... 75
Theme 5: Student Engagement in Additional Campus Support Services Increased the Students’
  Career Planning Process ........................................................................................................ 76
  Graduate career center ......................................................................................................... 76
Career related events sponsored by student clubs and professional organizations were deemed helpful. .................................................................78
On- and off-campus career fairs. ......................................................79
Summary .........................................................................................80
Chapter 5: Discussion of the Research Findings ...............................81
Findings in Relation to Theoretical Framework ................................82
Self-efficacy Beliefs ........................................................................82
Outcome Expectations ......................................................................83
Goals .............................................................................................84
Contextual Affordances .................................................................84
Findings in Relation to Literature Review .......................................85
Mentoring in Higher Education Institutions ....................................85
Constructing the Terms of the Relationship .....................................86
Function and Phases of Mentoring ..................................................87
Significance .....................................................................................91
Limitations and Future Research ....................................................91
Implications for College Administrators .........................................94
Reflections as Scholar–Practitioner ................................................96
Conclusion .....................................................................................97
References .....................................................................................99
Appendix A ....................................................................................107
Appendix B ....................................................................................108
Appendix C ....................................................................................111
Chapter 1: Introduction

The number of international graduate students attending U.S. colleges and universities has dramatically increased over the past decade (Institute of International Education, 2013). Many countries lack the proper infrastructure to accommodate the needs of their graduate students. As a result, these students migrate to other countries like the United States to pursue their education (Trice, 2003). An international student defined by the Council of Graduate Schools “is a person who is not a citizen, national, or permanent resident of the U.S. and who is in the country on a visa or temporary basis and does not have the right to remain indefinitely” (2007, p. 1). In 2012, 4.5 million students pursued higher education outside their country of citizenship, more than doubling the number in 2000 (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013). The United States attracts the largest share of international college students worldwide (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013), with an average annual growth rate of 5.6% over the past 10 years (Institute of International Education, 2015). They represent more than 186 nationalities and attend over 2,500 institutions of higher learning across the country (Crockett & Hays, 2011). In 2015, a record high of 974,926 international students were enrolled in U.S. graduate programs (Institute of International Education, 2016).

Although this growth in international student enrollment appears to reflect international learners’ motivation to enhance their educational opportunities and achieve personal career aspirations that are more readily available in the United States (Leong & Chou, 2002), on-campus services addressing international students’ needs remains limited (Crockett & Hays, 2011). In addition, existing campus services are designed primarily for domestic learners (Shen & Herr, 2004). Thus, educators and administrators on U.S. campuses have faced major
challenges in responding effectively to the needs of international students, particularly in relation to career placement services (Crockett & Hays, 2011).

**Statement of the Problem**

Since the mid-20th century, the United States has been the destination of choice for international students. When pursuing education abroad, many international students are drawn by the quality of the U.S. higher education system, its welcoming culture, and the prospect of transitioning into the labor market after graduation (Zong & Batalova, 2016). As a result, the number of international students studying at American higher education institutions has grown and become an increasingly important part of the higher education system of the United States (Aguirre & Gonzalez, 2017). International graduate students comprise a sizeable segment of the student body in the U.S. higher education system. At present, international students represent over 20% of all graduate enrollments in the United States (Roberts, 2012). These students are eagerly courted by American institutions because they offer an important diversity of viewpoints, cultural backgrounds, and experiences to the student body and help to offset a declining applicant pool. They often also come with full funding (Curtin et al., 2013). Although international students are an important asset to institutions, the needs of this population are not widely met (Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, & Kormers, 2012).

International students enter graduate studies with the achievement of their career aspirations as their goal (Shen & Herr, 2004). However, upon graduation, international students are often required to negotiate numerous challenges when seeking employment (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Those challenges include language barriers, cultural differences, immigration status, and complicated legal requirements such as obtaining H1B visas (Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). Visa regulations surrounding study and work permits place restrictions on the
choices that international students can make for their internships and post graduate career plans (Saltzman et al., 2012). In addition, students must adjust to a different value system, learn new interview styles, and access career guidance resources (Sangganjanavanich & Lenz, 2011).

Despite these challenges and limitations, many international students are motivated to obtain work experience or begin long-term careers and residency in the United States. Thus, these students express a strong desire to receive assistance in career planning and job seeking (Lin & Flores, 2013), and research has indicated that international students express greater needs for career and academic assistance than domestic students (Leong & Sedlacek, 1986). Additionally, evidence suggests that today’s system of graduate education does not adequately prepare students for the needs of a changing workforce (Nyquist & Wulff, 2000).

Research has demonstrated that international students will often first seek out university resources and programs to overcome challenges (Wu, Garza, & Guzman et al., 2015). The difficulties of living in a new home and being geographically distant from friends and family often leave international students feeling isolated once they arrive on campus. The use of university services helps international students to reduce levels of uncertainty and anxiety, thereby facilitating a positive adaptation to their new academic and career environments (Curtin et al., 2013). International students reported relying on academic advisors and campus support services for a successful transition, career assistance, and professional development (Hyun, J.K. & Doren 2015). Therefore, campus resources are crucially important to international students, helping them adapt easily and reducing the challenges they often face (Banjong, 2015).

One such resource that has shown to have a positive impact on students is mentoring. In the past 3 decades, mentoring has become a formal and informal vehicle for empowering individuals in both educational and corporate environments (Yang, E., Wong, S.C., Hwang, M.,
& Heppner, M.J., 2002). Colleges and universities have established mentoring programs similar to those in the corporate sector to retain students and contribute to their academic and future success (Vogel, 2003). Many mentoring programs are designed to foster relationships between faculty and students, and others offer students the opportunity to mentor each other. Most recently, a slightly different type of mentoring program has emerged on college and university campuses: alumni mentoring programs. Alumni mentoring programs primarily seek to support, engage, and connect students with graduates from various personal and professional backgrounds (Allen & Eby, 2007). Although mentoring can benefit all students, it may be particularly useful to international graduate students (Ku et al., 2008) who have ventured far from their home countries to pursue higher education and career opportunities and who are unfamiliar with both the university and the career culture in the United States. Successful interaction with mentors during graduate school can increase graduate students’ satisfaction with their academic programs (Lyons, Scroggins, & Rule, 1990) and can significantly boost retention and completion rates (Golde, 2005). Despite the wide range of mentoring literature related to college student success, only scant research exists describing or evaluating the influence of mentoring on international students’ transition from college to career (Priest & Donley, 2014).

The growing number of international students has stimulated a small but increasing body of literature addressing the adjustment and psychological needs of international students (Lehker & Furlong, 2006); this research, however, focused primarily on the university experience with less emphasis on the career needs of international students (Yang, E., Wong, S.C., Hwang, M., & Heppner, M.J., 2002). Furthermore, the few available reports on international student’s career needs have focused predominantly on undergraduate students. Career services are crucial and can prove instrumental in fostering graduate students’ career development in general, and this is
particularly true for international students (Yang, E., Wong, S.C., Hwang, M., & Heppner, M.J., 2002). Many international students arrive from countries where formal career guidance does not exist and opportunities for career exploration are limited (Singaravelu, 2005). Herr (2001) suggested that colleges and universities need to extend the quantity and quality of career development services that are sensitive to the unique needs of international students. Given the many benefits of having a strong international presence within the United States academic environment, there is a significant need for innovative programs and increased research related to improving the graduate and post graduate school experience of international students.

The purpose of this study was to explore the career planning process for international graduate students. International graduate students are a significant part of campus communities that need and deserve services designed to help them reach their professional and personal goals (Lekher & Furlong, 2006). In a labor market and economy that increasingly demands high-level and specific skill sets, graduate students need to be prepared to add value to a broad range of organizations (Mamiseishvili, 2011). As a result, it is crucial to understand the career planning process and the needs of this particular population in order to ensure that the services provided meet the needs of the students they are attempting to serve (Nowakowski, 2010). The services and resources integrated throughout a student’s experience can help ensure that international graduate students are making thoughtful and intentional career decisions as they make the transition to a professional path following graduation (Gopal, 2016).

**Research Question**

What are the experiences of international graduate students whose career interest and choices have been shaped through involvement in a university-based mentoring program as they move into professional employment and future career development?
Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was selected as the theoretical framework and foundation for this study. SCCT focuses on understanding educational and occupational behavior. In particular, it brings together common elements identified by earlier career theorists to create a unifying framework for explaining how people (a) develop vocational interests, (b) make occupational choices, and (c) achieve varying levels of career success and stability (Lent, 2012). SCCT has evolved as a tool for understanding how career interests are developed; it outlines an array of factors that interact in the shaping of an individual’s career development process (Bozionelos et al., 2015).

Although SCCT may share certain features with other career developmental theories, it is also relatively distinctive and designed to complement the other theories (Lent & Brown, 2012). The researcher chose SCCT as a framework to highlight relatively dynamic and domain-specific aspects of both people (e.g., future expectations, behaviors) and their environments (e.g., social supports, financial barriers). Through SCCT, the researcher will focus on the individual and their environments and recognize that people and environments do not always remain constant (Olson, 2014). SCCT is a useful framework for studies where people have the capacity to exercise some degree of self-direction and can contend with many factors that can strengthen, weaken, or even override personal preferences when it comes to the career planning process (Lent, 2012).

According to Lent et al. (1994), career development consists of three aspects: (a) the formation and elaboration of career-related interests, (b) selection of academic and career options, and (c) performance and persistence in educational and occupational pursuits. In the career development process of early career theories, unique human traits are matched with
occupation requirements. Career development theories provide general explanations of why and how individuals make career plans and choices. In addition, career theorists outline systems for explaining how factors operate together to determine occupational choice and development over an individual’s life course (Lent, 2012). Over time, theorists expanded the career development process to include other variables such as values and unique life events that can influence an individual’s decision-making process. In addition to providing varying perspectives of which variables contribute to the career development process, career development theorists guide research approaches and practices that ultimately lead to new counseling interventions (Zunker, 2012). In the major theories of career development, theorists have directly or indirectly implied the importance of mentors as contributing to the personal and professional development of individuals. In career development theories the importance of mentoring relationships is recognized because they facilitate career and self-exploration (Yeh, 2001).

SCCT was developed to explain career development through focusing on socio-cognitive constructs. Grounded in Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory, SCCT highlights the interplay among three cognitive-person variables: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals. These variables help explain how career and academic interests mature, how career choices are developed, and how these choices are turned into action. (Gibbons & Schoffner, 2004). SCCT further postulates that positive career development depends on an individual’s experiences resulting from interactions with the environment and personal factors (Yakushko et al., 2008).

In the SCCT framework, self-efficacy refers to the beliefs people have about their ability to successfully complete the steps required to achieve specific goal. These beliefs are not fixed but are constantly changing based on interactions with other people, the environment, and one’s
own behaviors (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004). Self-efficacy is often viewed as the single most important factor in academic and career choices (Hall, 2003). According to Lent (2012), individuals develop their sense of self-efficacy from personal performance, learning by example, social interactions, and how they feel in a given situation. The second major component of SCCT is outcome expectations, defined as the consequences or outcomes of performing particular behaviors (Cozart & Rojewski, 2015). Lent (2000) stated that people develop outcome expectations regarding different academic and career paths from a variety of direct and vicarious learning experiences, such as perceptions of the outcomes they have received in past endeavors and the secondhand information they acquire about different career fields.

In the final construct of SCCT, goals are an important piece of the self-regulation of one’s career development. Under SCCT, a goal is defined as the decision to begin a particular activity or to produce a particular outcome (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004). Goals offer an important means by which people exercise agency in their educational and occupational pursuits. Lent et al. (1994) identified three major outcomes of goals: They organize and guide behavior; they can sustain behavior over long periods of time; and their presence increases the likelihood that the individual will attain the desired outcomes. SCCT theorists view self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals as having a constant, complex, everchanging relationship that affects career development (Lent et al. 1994).

Lent (2012) stated that choosing a career path is not viewed as a single, static event but, rather, as part of a larger set of dynamic processes. According to Lent (2012), career choice is preceded by the development of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interests, and skill sets. Over time, these processes make certain career paths more attractive and viable for a given individual and make other options less appealing (Lent et al., 2012). Moreover, once initial
career choices are made, they are subject to future revision because individuals and their environments are dynamic entities. Events may well transpire that could not have been foreseen during the initial choice or career entry (Lent & Sheu, 2010). Lent (2012) argues that environments are not always supportive of individual’s preferences and people are not always free to pursue their primary interests. For international students, choices may be constrained, for example, by family obligations to return home, economic realities, and visa regulations.

SCCT focuses heavily on the role of contextual factors, specifically environmental supports in the development of vocational interests, career planning, and satisfaction with career choices (Kenny & Medvide, 2013). Environmental supports can include family, peers, and other adults in school and community settings. According to Bandura (1986) and Lent (1994), environmental supports serve as role models and can contribute to one’s career outcome and learning experiences. Role models facilitate students’ career decisions because these individuals provide knowledge and information about how to prepare for a particular field (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004). Role models may be especially important for international students’ career development because a history of discrimination and limited career options may have decreased their self-efficacy and outcome expectations, leading some to have lower educational and career aspirations (Roberts, 2012). SCCT claims that role models who have been successful in their careers may serve as a contextual support that would increase such individuals’ self-efficacy and outcome expectations, thereby increasing aspirations toward and persistence in various educational and career realms (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004).

There is significant potential for SCCT as a relevant model for explaining international students’ career development, particularly because it integrates both personal and environmental variables that are salient to the career development process. Another important consideration in the selection of this theoretical framework is its application for use with students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the United States. SCCT is one of the only theories of career development that adequately accounts for the role of the individual, which means use of this theory allows for variations based on the individual’s background (Cozart & Rojewski, 2015).

Significance of the Study

International student mobility at the graduate level has become an important policy issue in the internationalization of higher education due to the global movement of students across borders (Gopal, 2016). International students are moving across national borders in greater numbers than ever before to seek advanced degree opportunities due to a shortage of graduate programs in their home country. Students also cross borders to increase their employability, and to obtain access to Western culture and its tools, as these are highly valued in the global job
market (Altbach & Reisberg, 2013). However, restrictive job markets in the United States have been increasingly reluctant to absorb the growing number of international students who want to remain in the United States after they graduate (Roberts, 2012). Visa requirements and policies regarding employment have only complicated this reluctance. Many international students who come to the United States specifically for job and social mobility may be sorely disappointed when their plan to work here does not come to fruition as a result of a lack of services and assistance from their university in career planning (Roberts, 2012).

Perna, Orosz, Jumakulov, Kishkentayeva, & Ashirbekov (2015) pointed out that educational attainment is inextricably linked to a nation’s level of prosperity and global economic competitiveness. Given the importance of international students to the social, economic, and political development of the United States, it is imperative that U.S. educational institutions actively explore ways to attend to the changing needs of international students. Therefore, examining the career planning process for graduate international students is crucial on both practical and scholarly levels.

**Key Terms and Definition**

**International Student**

An individual who is enrolled for credit at an accredited higher education institution in the United States on a temporary visa who is not an immigrant (permanent resident with an I-51 or Green Card), an undocumented immigrant, or a refugee.

**Mentor**

A person, usually older and more experienced (Levinson, 1978) that has an interest and takes action in providing advice and support (Fagenson, 1989) and guiding and fostering
progress (Moses, 1989) of a younger, less experienced person in an academic, social, or career setting.

Program

A system of procedures or activities with established goals and objectives (Smink, 1999) in which a mentor provides a student protégé with guidance, advice, encouragement, and opportunities while emphasizing academic, career, and personal development.

Protégé

A person who receives guidance, training, and support regarding academic, social, or career aspects from a mentor (Levinson, 1978).

Summary

Chapter One defined the scope and purpose of the study. Additionally, this chapter outlined the significance of the research problem, articulated the research question, and explained the theoretical framework that will guide this study. In the following chapter, a review of the current literature on the study’s topic is provided.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Role models act as mentors, provide vocational information, and both directly and indirectly influence one’s goals and decisions, often playing a critical role in career development (Gibson, 2004). Qualitative investigations have found that role models are influential in the vocational development of Latinas (Gomez et al., 2001) and Asians (Fouad et al., 2008). In an investigation by Gomez and her colleagues, role models were identified as critical influences in the career development of Latina women. The participants in these studies identified their mothers as their role models and stated that they lacked professional role models. As a result, the women in these studies had to seek role models across professions to assist them with their career development.

Research has found that the presence of a mentor, typically identified as a nonparental adult, can play a significant role in fostering psychosocial development, academic achievement, and career development (Kenny & Medvide, 2013). Mentoring may be particularly important for international students who often face discrimination, racism, and additional obstacles in gaining successful employment (Kenny & Medvide, 2013). Mentoring can offer students a safe place to discuss barriers that limit opportunities for employment and workplace advancement (Benishek et al., 2004).

**Mentoring for International Students**

Given the number and diversity of international students enrolled in U.S. universities, a significant need exists for innovative programs aimed at improving the graduate school experience for this population (Lee, 2013). One approach shown to increase graduate student success is the use of mentoring. Mentoring is not a new phenomenon. Mentoring has long proved effective as a strategy to help individuals develop professional and personal qualities that
can lead to success (Renuga & Ezhilan, 2014). Researchers have documented that in many circumstances, promotions, early career advancement, higher income, and greater job satisfaction can be attributed to effective mentoring (Hansman, 2002). Mentoring programs provide opportunities to build potential employees and acts as a forum to provide constructive and honest feedback to support the career development of the students (Ranuga & Ezhilan, 2014).

Mentoring is an essential component of graduate education; the guidance of experienced individuals can have a significant effect on the career outcomes of a protégé (Yang et al., 2002). While mentoring can benefit all students, it may be particularly useful to international graduate students, who have ventured far from their home countries to pursue higher education (Ku et al., 2008). Research has shown that successful interaction with mentors during graduate school increased students’ satisfaction with their academic programs, bolstered retention and completion rates, and facilitated peer socialization. According to Yang et al. (2002) a productive mentor–protégé relationship is essential for international graduate students who may have limited support from family and friends in the host country. The mentor–mentee relationship is vital for international graduate students because they are dealing with a high level of cultural adjustment, including language barriers, while simultaneously attempting to understand the cultures of both academia and work (Ku et al., 2008). Therefore, these students may be more dependent on intentional ties with mentors to succeed in graduate school. Mentors provide international students with the necessary support to overcome challenges that can often interfere with their professional and personal success (Huang & Weng, 2012).

**Mentoring Concept**

The origin of the term mentor is quite old. Dating as far back as 3000 years to Homer’s *Odyssey* (Butcher & Lang, 1879), an epic poem from ancient Greece, is frequently cited as the
original source for the concept of mentoring. Mentor was the name of a faithful friend of the poem’s hero Odysseus. When Odysseus left for war, Mentor was left behind to serve as a tutor to his son, Telemachus. Mentor serves in this role, earning a reputation of being wise, sober, and loyal (Renuga & Ezhilan, 2014). The classic understanding of the term mentorship evolved from the relationship of these two characters. Since then, mentoring has evolved and developed in many different disciplines resulting in a variety of diverse definitions.

Levinson (1978) provided the first, most complete description of mentoring from the field of psychology. Levinson defined a mentor as a teacher, advisor, or sponsor, leaving the term open to personal or professional connotation (Hansman, 2002). Others have chosen to define mentors as helping more with professional life, such as Ragins (1997), who described mentors as people with advanced experiences and knowledge who are willing, and, in most cases, committed to providing upward mobility and support to their protégé’s career development (Hansman, 2002). Sands, Parson, and Duane (1991) added the idea of nurturing, defining mentoring as a “professional guide who nurtures and promotes the learning success of his or her protégé.” Kerry and Mayes (1995) defined a mentor as someone who nurtures and acts as a role model, specifically focusing on the professional development of the mentee. Recent literature has helped define the term mentor as a more experienced person who guides and enhances the protégé’s personal growth and professional advancement (Green and Bauer, 1995). According to Mansson and Myers (2012), a mentor is a senior person who supports, tutors, guides, and facilitates a junior person’s career development.

**Defining Mentoring from an Academic Context**

Daloz (1986) studied mentoring within the educational context and found that his students viewed learning as a transformational journey and sought guidance from their mentor
when they encountered unexpected challenges along the way. As a result, Daloz (1986) defined a mentor as someone who engenders trust, provides encouragement, and offers a vision for the journey. For many mentees, the mentor serves as a concrete manifestation of what they wish to become (Hayes & Ljungberg, 2011). Moreover, Johnson and Huwe (2003), who were interested in academic mentoring, defined mentoring as a personal relationship in which a more experienced individual acts as a guide, role model, or teacher for a less experienced student. A mentor provides the protégé with knowledge, advice, challenge, counsel, and support in the protégé’s pursuit of becoming a full member of a particular profession (Johnson & Huwe, 2003).

As outlined above, there are many definitions and nuances of mentoring. Based on research, many terms are synonymously used for mentor: guide, role model, and sponsor are commonly among them. Whatever the term, a mentor usually represents the superior characteristics, accomplishments, skills, and virtues to which the protégé aspires (Mott, 2002). Levinson (1978) noted, however, it is not the definition or terms used for mentors or mentoring that are important, but rather the character of the relationship and the functions it serves.

**Functions and Phases of Mentoring**

Mentoring theory and practice has become important across a broad range of disciplines. Formal research in mentoring commenced in the mid-1970s with the influential work of Kathy Kram (1985) and has provided the basis for much of the research conducted on the topic. As the pioneer in mentoring research, Kram focused primarily on the development of the relationship between a mentor and a protégé. In the theory she espoused, Kram (1985) outlined two basic mentoring functions: career and psychosocial. Career mentoring functions include sponsoring professional advancements and overseeing career preparation (Renuga & Ezhilan, 2014). Psychosocial mentoring functions include helping the protégé develop a sense of self through
acceptance and affirmation, providing counseling, establishing rapport, and serving as a role model (Mott, 2002). According to Kram (1983), mentoring relationships progress through a series of 4 developmental phases: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. Kram (1985) discovered that career functions emerge during the initiation phase and psychosocial functions become more important in the cultivation phase, with both sets of functions becoming less important in later stages of the mentoring relationship.

As a result of Kram’s work, additional studies emerged examining the functions of mentoring. In his earlier biographical study of four well-known mentor pairs, Hobbs (1982) depicted a similar redefinition stage to include the protégé’s internalization of the mentor and reflective assessment of their relationship. In each of these phases, interaction patterns and interpersonal experiences are shaped by the individuals in the relationship and their needs, circumstances, and responses to one another (Mott, 2002). Scandura (1992) identified three factors to describe mentoring functions. Her vocational function is similar to Kram’s career related function, whereas the psychosocial function was divided into role modeling and social support functions. In examining the relationship between these functions and career mobility outcomes of managers, Scandura (1992) found the vocational and social support functions to be significantly related to promotions and salary (Chao, 1997).

Although all the studies conducted found significant relationships between mentoring function and outcomes, many of these models were applicable to business settings (Hayes & Ljungberg, 2011). Building on Kram’s work, Brzoska et al. (1987) developed six mentoring functions for educational settings. These include:

1. informal contact,

2. role modeling,
3. direct assistance,

4. demonstration,

5. observation and feedback, and

6. professional development planning assistance.

Brzoska et al. (1987) reported informal discussions as the most valuable source of assistance for both mentors and protégés during the mentoring relationship. Brzoska et al. (1987) defined informal contact as contact or discussions that take place outside of the scheduled meeting sessions of the mentoring process. In addition to having contact with the protégé, Brzoska et al. (1987) stated that a mentor must also be a role model. Role modeling is much more than demonstrating. It includes exhibiting professionalism; showing a protégé how to get things done properly; demonstrating realistic ways of problem solving; and exhibiting enthusiasm, self-confidence, security, and competence (Brzoska et al., 1987).

Providing direct assistance and demonstration are two other mentoring functions a mentor must provide. According to Brzoska et al. (1987), mentors should directly assist their protégé by: helping them set and achieve goals, helping them become aware of written and unwritten rules, informing them of workshop opportunities, and introducing them to other staff members. Demonstration is incorporated when the mentor shows the protégé how to properly use any strategy, technique, or skill (Liu, 2009). In conjunction with assisting and demonstrating, formal observation and feedback is essential for the protégé to improve (Liu, 2009). Brzoska et al. (1987) recommended using a 3-step procedure including a preconference, an observation, and a post observation conference. This process allows the mentor and protégé time to identify goals, review, and analyze in order to recognize accomplishments and make recommendations for improvements. Completing the model are functions that assist in
professional development planning. Brzoska et al. (1987) suggested that a mentor serve as a resource to provide information or opportunities to potential careers or further education. Mentors should assist protégés in creating opportunities to become involved in professional activities, associations, and special projects (Chan, Yeh, & Krumboltz, 2015).

**Mentoring in Higher Education**

A growing base of research in educational settings has examined the benefits of mentoring (Urs, 2014). However, very little research or information exists on alumni mentoring programs for graduate international students. The research on mentoring in higher education has predominantly focused on peer-to-peer mentoring, faculty–student mentoring, mentoring for beginner teachers or faculty, and mentoring for at-risk students (Campbell & Campbell, 2007). This research has also provided an overview of mentoring and examined forms and consequences of mentoring (Urs, 2014). According to Jacobi (1991), mentoring in higher education has included faculty members and peer mentors who provide informal mentoring to students. There are two types of mentoring programs that exist in institutions of higher education: formal and informal (Bell & Treleaven, 2011). Informal mentoring usually develops through mutual identification between mentors and mentees and is formed on a voluntary basis (Cornelius et al., 2016). Formal mentoring programs are arranged by a third party, and in many cases, the mentor and mentee have not even met before they are formally matched (Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). In addition, formal mentoring programs provide established goals and objectives and clarify expectations for the mentor and mentee (Cornelius et al., 2016). Although both informal and formal programs exist, formal mentoring programs are gaining popularity in higher education environments (Miller et al., 2013).
Lunsford’s (2011) mixed-method study on the relationship of mentoring focused on the identity development formation of university students’ through the exploration of values and goals. Mentoring supported the identification of these values and goals, especially as it related to career paths. One hundred eight university students were interviewed and given a mentor relationship quality survey that asked questions about their relationship with their faculty mentor. Through mixed method analysis, which included qualitative content analysis of interviews findings, indicated university students with more highly refined career interests reported a greater faculty mentoring relationship than those who did not. The researchers’ discussion posited that career commitment was a part of identity development and it may have been that those who wanted to learn more about career fields benefited more from mentors.

Research on mentoring programs has indicated that many initiatives were found to have often been created with a focus on academic outcomes for undergraduate university students, with the mentors being faculty who can further guide the students towards their academic pursuits. To this end, Campbell and Campbell (1997) examined academic success of 339 undergraduate university students who had participated in a faculty mentoring program with another 339 university students who had not participated in a mentoring program. Mentors were encouraged to keep in contact with their mentees and keep a log of their interactions and reflections. The written notes of faculty, along with academic standing and grade-point-averages of mentored students were compared with nonmentored students. Mentoring program participants showed evidence of completing more course units and grade results were consistently higher than participants who had not participated in the program, which suggested that participating in a mentoring program benefits students.
Similarly, D’Abate (2001) surveyed undergraduate business students and business program alumni. The research was conducted through two surveys, one with 236 students in their senior year of college and the other with 48 alumni. The surveys inquired about developmental support, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and promotion rate. Results demonstrated that students who were mentored showed significantly higher levels of psychosocial support. Alumni who were mentored during their university experience reported significantly higher levels of career development support than those who were not mentored.

The limited existing research on alumni mentoring included an article by Dowd, Markus, Schrader, and Wilson (2011) regarding an honors alumni mentor program at Butler University. The mentor program was modeled after a similar program for premed students at the same university. As part of the honors program, the students gained access to the knowledge and resources of the alumni, including exposure to networking opportunities through their mentor, and received assistance with postgraduation plans and thesis writing. The honor students and mentors were provided with a questionnaire asking about their education, career or life path, major, interests and hobbies, and expectations for the mentorship. Based on the responses, the mentors and mentees were paired by the program coordinator and formal in-person meetings were coordinated to introduce the matches.

After the conclusion of the first year, some noticeable challenges emerged, including recruiting alumni mentors and fostering successful student completion of their academic program. At the end of the first year, only seven students completed the full program. However, of those students who completed the program, the college found that these students were far more active in on-campus activities and social events. The also had a higher completion rate for their thesis and the overall program (Markus, Schrader, & Wilson, 2011). The department
renewed the budget to continue the program for another year and found the same results present with the second-year group.

Murphy’s (2011) correlational study examined effects of e-mentoring or utilizing online tools of communication. The researcher cites Kram’s (1985) seminal work on mentoring and the function of coaching as a benefit for students in mentoring relationships. Two hundred six students in business programs were paired with alumni or friends of the university who then initiated email conversations regarding coursework and career related questions. The surveys that were conducted collected demographic information as well as measures of self-evaluation and developmental initiation. The results indicated that frequency of mentor–mentee interaction was significantly associated with career support.

Research on university mentoring covered a wide variety of factors such as the type and size of the program, characteristics of the individual mentoring relationship and frequency, and modes of communication. Overall findings from the literature review demonstrated that university student’s benefit from participating in a mentoring program. The review of research confirmed that research on alumni mentoring programs was very limited.

**Summary**

Despite the desire to study in the United States, it is evident that the pursuit of a U.S. degree and improved career opportunities does not come easily and can present many challenges for international students. The transition to the U.S. culture can create additional stressors for international students, causing them to experience more adjustment problems that, in turn, can affect their career decision-making process (Cozart & Rojewski, 2015). As a result, mentoring is an important component that can help international students successfully transition from the university to work.
Previous researchers have investigated the concept of mentoring, the functions of a mentor, and the impacts of mentoring. They have also explored the mentoring phases and how a mentor and protégé might interact as the relationship evolves. Definition of these phases has helped define different roles for the mentor and protégé. These roles serve different functions that define the quality of the mentoring relationship and its likely outcomes. Fowler and O’Gorman (2005) pointed out that due to the positive outcomes mentoring provides, organizations are increasing the use of mentoring to improve individual and organizational effectiveness.

Mentoring research in education has supported the use of undergraduate mentoring programs. Over the years, dozens of colleges and universities have implemented peer-to-peer and faculty–student mentoring programs for undergraduate students. Limited research has been done related to graduate international students. As a result, more research is warranted in this area.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Despite their ubiquity, international graduate students on U.S. campuses have been understudied (Ren & Hagedorn, 2012). For many international graduate students, attaining a fulfilling career is the primary reason for seeking an education in the United States (Potts & Schultz, 2008). The literature review included in this study revealed that insufficient research exists related to the unique needs of international graduate students, particularly in regard to career planning and the important variables that impact the career development of this student population. Ren and Hagedorn (2012) pointed out that international graduate students typically face more challenges than domestic students such as language barriers, insufficient academic and career advisement, and incomplete knowledge of the dynamics of the workforce.

In addition, the majority of entering students are unclear about their career options, given the challenges they face as F-1 students (Cueso, 2005). An F-1 student, as defined by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (2017), is one who enters the United States and enrolls as a full-time student at an accredited college or university. The students must be enrolled in a program or course of study that culminates in a degree. As a result, these challenges can interfere with the achievement and success of international students (Gajdzik, 2005). Past studies have largely failed to examine what happens when international students must navigate their career aspirations while handing the challenges associated with being an international student. Using an inductive analysis approach, the purpose of this study is to explore the career planning process of international graduate students at a large public urban college in New York City. The central research question guiding this study is: What are the experiences of international graduate students whose career interest and choices have been shaped through involvement in a university-based mentoring program as they move into professional employment and future
career development? The following chapter outlines the methodology selected for this particular study. Through in-depth interviews with graduate students who have completed an alumni mentoring program, the research was designed to contribute new knowledge, fill in the gaps, and address the needs related to the career development process of international graduate students.

**Research Design**

For this study, a qualitative research design was been selected. Qualitative research honors an inductive style of research and is often described as a naturalistic, interpretative approach aimed at exploring or understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2013). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) described qualitative research as:

Interpretive material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

According to Creswell (2013), a qualitative research approach is appropriate when a problem or issue needs to be explored—usually related to a group or population—and when a researcher aims to describe and identify variables and outcomes that cannot be easily measured. It is also used when the goal of a study is to give resonance to voices of individuals or groups that have been silenced or marginalized by mainstream research traditions or social power dynamics (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, in qualitative research, the researcher keeps a focus on
uncovering the meaning that the participants imbue upon a problem or issue (Silverman, 2011). A review of the literature regarding the experiences of international students focused on their different learning styles, academic engagement, English proficiency, adjustment issues, and psychological well-being (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). There are only a few studies that directly explore the career development process for international graduate students from a qualitative approach. Given the research topic and the need to truly understand the everyday experiences of international graduate students who are pursuing career trajectories in an unfamiliar environment, the researcher determined that the qualitative study would best serve to assist her in documenting and analyzing the problem of practice.

**Research Tradition**

To understand the career planning process for graduate international students, an inductive analysis design was selected. The inductive approach is a systematic procedure for analyzing qualitative data in which the analysis is likely to be guided by specific evaluation objectives. An inductive analysis primarily uses detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from raw data (Thomas, 2006). Thomas (2006) identified the following as reasons underlying the development of the inductive analysis approach: (a) to condense extensive and varied raw data text into a brief, summary format; (b) to establish clear links between the research objectives and summary findings derived from the raw data and to ensure these links are both transparent and defensible; and (c) to develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the text data.

Given the research question employed for this study, an inductive analysis provided a useful approach to understanding the experiences of international graduate students. The research rationale for engaging in such an approach, given the topic of international graduate
students, was to understand how students navigate their career plans as they pursue their degree and to understand how this shaped their proposed future trajectories. The rationale also supported and examination of the role of mentorship in this navigation process. In particular, there is a gap in scholarly literature regarding the examination of international graduate students and the career planning process, as well as the ways in which universities can best support this population of students during their educational experiences (Renn, 2008). Subsequently, inductive analysis allows findings to emerge from the frequent or significant themes inherent in the raw data without restraints imposed by structured methodologies (Thomas, 2006). With this approach, the researcher was able to explore the experiences of international students and their interactions with mentors.

**Participants**

The participants for this study were recruited from an urban college located in New York City. A purposeful, homogeneous sampling was used to recruit the participants. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling will increase the credibility of the study because the selected individuals are knowledgeable and have experienced the phenomenon of interest. This sampling strategy follows Creswell’s (2014) recommendation that qualitative researchers purposefully select participants and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon from people and a place that can most richly inform a study.

Smith et al. (2009), discussed the importance of the homogenous sample and suggested that it is wise to recruit a homogenous pool of participants for whom the research question will be meaningful. The following inclusion criteria was applied to the study:
• Participants must be a full-time graduate student.
• Participants must possess an F-1 visa.
• All participants must have participated in and completed the mentoring program that is the focus of this study at the time of the interview.

Given that this study was aimed at producing an in-depth examination of certain phenomena, the study was conducted with a small sample size (Smith, 2009). Although there is no rule regarding how many participants should be included, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) suggested that qualitative studies be kept small to enable a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of a participant’s experience. In order to provide a diverse perspective, the researcher selected eight participants from a variety of majors.

**Recruitment and Access**

In considering the research topic, the researcher looked at various institutions located in New York City. The selected institution for this study is a 4-year public college located in the city of New York with an enrollment of 18,000 students, 4,000 of which represent the graduate student population. Of the 4,000 graduate students, 20% are classified as international. The institution currently has the longest and largest running mentoring program for graduate students in the tri-state area of New York, which includes New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. The mentoring program is administered by the Office of Alumni Relations and therefore, the recruitment of the students was conducted in partnership with that administrative body.

Upon receiving approval to conduct this study from the appropriate authority at the site and from Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher worked with the alumni relations director to determine which cohort of students met the inclusion criteria for the study and to begin recruiting participants. With permission, the researcher then sent an
invitation email to those individuals. The email provided general information about the study, participant expectations, and a statement confirming that participation was voluntary and confidential, with a right to withdraw at any time. Those who were willing to participate were asked to email the researcher with their intent to participate. The researcher then confirmed their eligibility and followed up orally to answer any questions and to provide them with an informed consent form to be signed and returned to the researcher either through campus mail or during the initial interview. Once the researcher received the signed consent forms from the students, an email was sent to all confirmed participants so that an interview schedule could be established and a pseudonym that would ensure data confidentiality could be chosen. At the conclusion of the interview process, interviewees received a $20 Barnes and Nobles gift card for their willingness to participate in this study.

**Data Collection**

Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) defined a good qualitative study as one in which participants can offer rich, detailed, first-person accounts of their experiences. For this research, data was collected through in-person, semistructured interviews. In a semistructured interview, the researcher selects a specific topic to explore, prepares a limited number of questions in advance, allows questioning to evolve during the interview process, and plans to ask follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interviews are intended to help facilitate the elicitation of stories, thoughts, and feelings about the target phenomenon. For this study, the interviews provided insight on how students navigate their career planning process and their engagement in a mentoring program. Information about reasons for seeking a mentor, topics discussed with the mentor, professional and personal insights gained by the student from the mentor, and benefits of the mentoring relationship were some of the areas explored.
Data Storage Management

The data generated by a qualitative study can be extensive (Creswell, 2013). In order for the data to be thoroughly analyzed, it must also be well organized and managed (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). After receiving transcripts from the confidential service Rev.com, the data was stored electronically using a password protected computer. All physical documents were stored in a locked drawer to maintain respondent confidentiality. In addition, to protect the anonymity of participants, each student was de-identified through the use of pseudonyms. All recordings from the interviews and transcripts will be destroyed within the time period established by the IRB.

Data Analysis

There are four elements of data analysis as presented by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014): data collection, data condensation, conclusions, and data display. Thomas focused on the latter three and described analysis for a general inductive approach as a process that identifies core meanings in the interview transcripts, determines the themes most relevant to the identified research objectives, and describes the most important themes. The result of the analysis was the development of themes that the researcher identified as the most significant based on the researcher’s interpretation (Merriam, 2002).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Saldana (2012) suggest a 2-cycle methodology to coding: open and axial. The first cycle of coding, known as open coding or initial coding, involves breaking down the raw transcribed data into distinct parts or splitting data into individual units for closer examination (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Saldana, 2012). Data are broken down into meaningful units by identifying crucial phrases, short phrases, and paragraphs (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Saldana 2012). Codes are then assigned to the units, stabilized, and recorded in
a codebook in order to index and standardize the meanings. The second cycle of coding is known as axial coding (Saldana, 2012), which ultimately leads to categories of thematic and theoretical findings of the study. Axial coding is more interpretative than the open coding (Hatch, 2002) and creates synthesized categories (Saldana, 2012).

To promote authenticity, a full analysis was conducted on each individual transcript. To begin the process, the researcher read and rereading the interview transcripts the listened to the original audio recordings. Smith et al. (2009) asserted that this helps to “set the tone” of the narrative to follow. Initial notes were taken at this time. These notes simply involved the researcher’s comments and thoughts on the data and the interviewees’ responses and demeanor. Comments are either descriptive, linguistic or conceptual (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher therefore explored descriptive comments, which are those describing participant thoughts and experiences; linguistic comments, which are those concerning the participant’s use of language; and conceptual comments, which are chunks of text that prompt the researcher to engage in a higher level of interpretation and reflect upon the participant’s understanding of the matters they are discussing (Miles et al., 2014, pp. 83–91). This process assisted the researcher in managing large amounts of raw data and allowed for further analysis to effectively continue.

In vivo and descriptive coding was used to establish substantive categories (Maxwell, 2005) as opposed to organizational categories. Organizational categories are broad areas or issues that researchers establish prior to their interviews or observations and are easily anticipated (Maxwell, 2005). In contrast, substantive categories are often inductively developed through the open coding of the data (Maxwell, 2005). Inductively developed means researchers gather data and build concept and theories, rather than test hypotheses, as in deductive analysis (Merriam, 2009). They are descriptive in that they are “descriptions of participants’ concepts
and beliefs, and stay close to the data categorized and do not imply an abstract theory (Maxwell, 2005). The researcher quoted the participants when necessary to show how mentoring contributed to the students’ career planning process.

The initial cycle of coding often results in fragmented codes and conceptual connections, therefore, the coded units were reexamined and recoded to stabilize the codes (Saldana, 2012). Throughout the data analysis process, there was a constant evaluation of data to look for patterns. This evaluation was followed by recoding and a grouping of patterns based on noted similarities and differences to produce substantive categories. Codes were recorded in a codebook to index and standardize their meanings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which led to a categorized inventory of the content and grounds for the next cycle of coding to further the data analysis (Saldana, 2012).

In the second cycle of coding, codes from the first cycle were analyzed to create theoretical categories by looking for recurring regularities in the data that have common properties (Merriam, 2009). Coded data were regrouped and reanalyzed by constantly comparing, reorganizing, or refocusing the codes into categories to prioritize, integrate, synthesize, abstract, and conceptualize those categories into thematic and theoretical findings (Saldana, 2012). This process was used to establish explanatory or inferential codes that identify emergent themes or assertions by condensing the coded data into a more meaningful unit of analysis as specific categories or subcategories using a few words that explain the study (Saldana, 2012). Using the iterative process, the researcher read the transcripts closely after each interview and coded them. They were continually compared throughout the data analysis process. Thus, the data was frequently compared and analyzed from the initial cycle to the second cycle until themes emerged. The result of the coding was the creation of a small number of summary categories, which identified the key aspects of the themes in the coded raw data as
important and beneficial to this study (Thomas, 2006). The identified themes were used as main headings to organize findings, and more specific themes were used as subthemes in the report of findings in this study.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

According to Creswell (2012), “it is important to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals who participate in the study” (p. 148). Permission was obtained from the IRB at Northeastern University to conduct this study under the guidance of the principal investigator, the student researcher’s advisor. The researcher received written permission from the director of alumni relations to access participant information and student applications.

Upon IRB approval and departmental consent, recruitment began, and chosen participants were asked to sign and return the informed consent form that was sent to them via email. Included in this form was contact information for the researcher and the researcher’s advisor to be used in the event that subjects had questions or concerns about the study. Additionally, the researcher included a statement letting participants know that the researcher would not use, discuss, or benefit from the data gathered without informed consent from the individuals providing that data. It was also important to include the following items identified by Butin (2010): a brief description of the study’s purpose and procedures, confidentiality protection information, a statement with respect to foreseeable risks and benefits, and a phrase offering participants the ability to opt out of the study at any time without penalty. No direct risks to any participants were anticipated.

To assure the full protection of the subjects, data was secured in several different ways. During data collection, confidentiality of the participants was preserved through the use of participant-chosen pseudonyms. When presenting findings, the researcher avoided the inclusion
of any specific information that could lead to identification of any individual participant or to the specific program and institution that are the site of the study. Electronic files of transcripts were secured on a password protected computer. All materials written in hard copy, such as interview or postinterview notes, printed transcripts, or notations made following document review, were stored in a locked safe with a key that is available only to the researcher.

**Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research recognizes that complete objectivity is impossible, as it is shaped by the researcher’s interpretive worldview, grounded in subjectivity, and dependent upon the researcher’s conceptions (Morrow, 2005; Sampson, 2013). As recommended for use in qualitative research studies and as described in Smith et al. (2012), Yardley (2000) offered four characteristics of good qualitative research which will be used to guide and assess this study. Yardley’s criteria include: (a) sensitivity to context, (b) commitment and rigor, (c) transparency and coherence, and (d) impact and importance.

Sensitivity to context highlights the multifaceted aspects and depth of qualitative research. Sensitivity to context was demonstrated through an extensive review of the applicable literature and through placement of the research question within an appropriate theoretical framework and research methodology (Smith et al., 2012). Since inductive analysis research relies on interviews as the data source, sensitivity to context was ensured through carefully constructed interview questions that promoted participant comfort and that were informed by the researcher’s extensive knowledge of the environment in which the phenomena has been occurring.

The second characteristic, commitment and rigor, was demonstrated throughout the research in multiple ways. Yardley (2000) defined commitment as “prolonged engagement with
the topic” (p. 221) which is a foundational aspect of the data analysis process. Specifically, Smith et al. (2012) stated that “to begin the process of entering the participant’s world it is important to enter a phase of active engagement with the data” (p. 82) through the use of repeated readings of the verbatim interview transcripts. Yardley (2000) defined rigor as the resulting completeness of the data collection and analysis. This includes the completeness of the interpretation, which should ideally address all of the variation and complexity observed, and may need to be undertaken at several levels of analysis and should rely on more than one reading of the data (Yardley, 2000). Rigor was reflected in the researcher’s immersion into the data and completion of a full analysis of the interviews conducted using a systemic approach to identifying and categorizing emergent themes. According to Smith (2012), a good inductive analysis study tells the reader something important about the particular individual participants, as well as something important about the themes they share.

Third, Yardley (2000) emphasized the need for transparency and coherence. Inductive analysis research seeks to “enhance transparency by carefully describing how participants were selected, how the interview schedule was constructed and the interview conducted, and what steps were used in analysis” (Smith, 2012). For this study, the researcher described, summarized, and recorded in a notebook all aspects and steps of the research conducted. Coherence, on the other hand, relates to the fit between the research question and the philosophical perspective adopted and the method of investigation and analysis undertaken (Yardley, 2000). To promote coherence, the researcher’s interview questions were guided by the theoretical framework, the philosophy of the constructivist–interpretivist paradigm.

Finally, impact and importance refers to the theoretical and practical contributions of the overall research study. Both theoretically and practically, this research aimed to be useful and
helpful in light of the increased presence of international graduate students in higher education, coupled with lack of research related to international graduate students and how mentoring influences the career planning process. In an effort to fulfill this criterion, the researcher provided implications for theory and practice and recommendations for future research related to the findings.

Given that in qualitative studies the researcher is the primary data gatherer, it is important to ensure the trustworthiness of the study in question. Guba (1985) stated that a trustworthy study must adhere to following criteria: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. Credibility refers to confidence in the reality of the findings or its believability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, credibility was ensured through extensive interviewing and long-term engagement with the participants. Although the majority of the data for this study was collected through interviews, the researcher also examined supporting documents such as student applications and end-of-the-year surveys. This provided additional background and helped explain the choices and behavior of the international graduate students.

For this study, the researcher also engaged in member checking. Member checking served as a tool to ensure the accuracy of the data and clarify potential bias (Creswell, 2013). Once the verbatim transcriptions were completed, the participants provided a copy and were asked to review their interview transcripts in order to confirm, edit and clarify anything said.

Transferability refers to the ability to show how the findings can be applied to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, the researcher provided an in-depth, thick description of the reported experiences to help other researchers determine the extent to which the finding may be applicable in a similar context. Creswell and Miller (2009) asserted that thick description aims to create statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have
experienced, or could experience, the events being described in the study, and that they therefore may transfer part of the results to their particular circumstance.

Dependability relates to the ability to replicate this study through an independent audit trail by maintaining a detailed chronology of the research design (Murrow, 2005). Smith et al. (2009) stated that a proper audit trail would allow someone else who is not related to the study to hypothetically follow the logic of the study and understand the full process from the initial concept of the research question to the final report. For this study, the researcher provided a comprehensive and detailed audit trail of the study that included the purpose and significance of the study, how the participants were recruited, how data was collected, an explanation of the data analysis techniques, and a discussion of the findings.

Confirmability involves identifying and minimizing the extent to which the findings might be shaped the bias of the researcher rather than by the participants’ responses. A key criterion for confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits his or her own predispositions (Shenton, 2004). Understanding one’s positionality will allow the researcher to be aware of any biases. Additionally, the researcher acknowledged the reasons for favoring one approach over another and provided grounded explanations to support the decisions made.

**Limitations**

This inductive analysis examined how individuals have experienced the mentoring program given that the current study looked at international graduate students at one 4-year college in New York City, the findings in this study may not be easily generalized to include students at other colleges and universities. The experiences may be different for students at other institutions. Additionally, the size of the sample was relatively small, and the participants’
experiences will be analyzed ideographically; hence a larger sample may generate different results from the current study.

Willig (2001) stated that the limitations involved in the use of qualitative research involve the role of language, suitability of accounts, and explanation versus description. Critics have argued that “language does not constitute the means by which we can express something we think or feel; rather, language prescribes what we can think and feel” (Willig, 2001). Because interviews were the primary means by which information was collected, language was the sole mechanism available for participants to describe their experiences and perceptions of their experiences (even the student applications and surveys were language based). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that verbatim interview transcripts may not always describe the entirety of the participant experiences. The words a participant may use to answer an interview question could be limited by a number of things, including distractions, first-time reflections on the subject, and English not being their primary language. However, the researcher attempted to address these limitations through enhanced reflexive interpretation. Additionally, member checking which allowed the participants to review the final reports, descriptions, and themes for accuracy (Creswell, 2014) was employed for this study.

Summary

Despite the rise of the number of international students attending institutions of higher education in the United States, very limited research exists on the factors that shape the career planning process for this population, including access and use of mentors. Much less is known about this process for graduate students (Bozionelos et al., 2015). This study conducted a qualitative methodology—more specifically inductive analysis—to examine the career planning process for international graduate students. The study utilized purposeful sampling to recruit the
participants. The researcher collected data through in-person semistructured interviews, as well as thorough responses from the students’ mentoring program application and the year-end program evaluations participants were asked to complete. The interview data was analyzed by conducting multiple readings of the interview transcripts, coding the transcripts, and identifying emergent themes. The privacy of the participants was maintained at all times, and all files were stored in a password protected computer or a locked drawer. The trustworthiness of the study was accomplished using Yardley’s (2000) four principles for assessing the validity of a qualitative study.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

The purpose of this inductive analysis study was to understand the experiences of international graduate students and how their participation in a university mentoring program shaped their career interests and choices. The participants for this study provided rich descriptions, specifically explaining how mentoring affected their transition to the workplace and contributed to their professional development. The first section of this chapter will highlight each participant profile and provide information about their area of study, campus involvement, career interests, goals prior to starting their graduate program, and their present activities. The next section will present the significant themes that emerged from the data analysis in Table 1 to illustrate the experiences each participant had with mentoring.

**Participant Profiles**

The following section contains profiles for the eight participants in this study. While all the participants fit the selection criteria and are either in their last year of the program or a recent graduate of the college, their backgrounds and their involvement at the college provided a deeper understanding of their mentoring experiences, which provided a foundation for the themes which emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts. All names in this study are pseudonyms.

**James**

James is completing his second year of graduate school, majoring in accounting. Currently, James works as a part-time college assistant in the Department of Arts and Sciences while completing his studies. James is also highly involved in two accounting-related professional organizations to stay current in the field. Upon completion of the master’s program, James hopes to find full-time employment here in the United States.
Prior to beginning his graduate program, James’s passion was to ultimately pursue a career as a consultant. However, James learned that the opportunities in consulting are limited for international students and most employers do not offer sponsorship. As a result, James was undecided regarding which route to take. After completing an internship at Viacom and actively volunteering as a tax preparer, James realized he wanted to work for an accounting firm as a tax professional.

When James started his studies, he immediately went to the graduate career center to seek assistance on resume writing and employment opportunities. James explained that his decision to join the mentoring program was related to having the opportunity to speak with professionals in the tax field. James said, “I don’t know anything about the industry and what I should do to get started. I need to find a way to get started with my career” (personal communication, June 17, 2018). Therefore, James decided to apply and give the program a chance.

Annie

Annie recently graduated from the college with her master’s degree in accounting. Originally from Korea, Annie came to the United States to pursue her graduate studies, hoping to find better opportunities here. Annie is currently studying for her certified public accountant exam and will begin working full-time as an auditor for a prominent accounting firm. During her time as a student, Annie was involved in the graduate business fraternity and held several positions including assistant treasurer, treasurer, and executive vice president.

Before entering the master’s program, Annie’s goal was to become an entrepreneur and open her own coffee importing industry. She hoped her study of entrepreneurship would afford her the opportunity to better understand small business owners and someday be a consultant for them. However, during her first semester at the college, after attending the career fair, she
realized she needed to change her major. Annie shared that employers would say to her “Oh you’re going to get your own company, so you’re not interested in getting hired” (personal communication, June 17, 2018). Annie said that comment was a shock to her and made her rethink her career plans.

From there, Annie changed her major from entrepreneurship to finance because she thought finance sounded “really fancy” (personal communication, June 17, 2018). However, as she began to get more involved on campus and attended networking events, Annie realized that she would be better off studying accounting. According to Annie, accounting would provide her with the “solid foundation to understand a business” (personal communication, June 17, 2018). Ultimately, Annie still would like to start her own company or become involved in international trading, but for now she has focused on building her accounting skills.

Although Annie was involved on campus, she decided to join the mentoring program because “I wanted to get a connection with the professionals who are already in my field so that I can get a sense of what’s going to happen and how can I prepare for my job search” (personal communication, June 17, 2018). Annie shared that she also used the career center to gain assistance with her resume and interviewing skills, but she wanted more specific guidance on how to approach the employers she was targeting. According to Annie, the combination of both the career center and the mentoring program helped make her a better candidate and guided her to her current path.

**Jenny**

Jenny was born and raised in Taiwan and came to the United States in 2016 to pursue her master’s degree in quantitative math and modeling. Jenny graduated from the program in May 2018. Unlike the other participants, Jenny was the only one who was not working or in the
process of seeking employment. Instead, Jenny decided to apply for a second master’s degree at the college. When asked why she decided to pursue another degree, Jenny shared that she was having difficulties with sponsorship and was advised that perhaps she should complete another master’s at this point. Compared to the other participants, Jenny was also the least involved on campus. Jenny attended club meetings for two on-campus organizations but not on a regular basis.

Jenny is currently pursuing her second master’s in finance because her long-term goal is to work in venture capital. According to Jenny, having financial concepts under her belt will help her when she gets started in this industry. Before starting the graduate program, Jenny intended to follow in her parent’s footsteps and become a banker. However, as she began to take classes, she found herself struggling with the classes due to a lack of interest. Jenny became more interested in the analytical side of business which is what led her to consider venture capital as a career.

Jenny shared that she utilized the career center as a student but felt that they helped her in a very limited way. Jenny said she felt that if one needed general advice on resume writing, interviewing, and job searching, the center was great for that. However, for more specifics on how to target a specific industry, the center was not as helpful. Therefore, she turned to the mentoring program in hopes of getting advice and industry-specific information from a mentor. Jenny felt that she needed a clear career plan and hoped having a mentor would help her accomplish this.

Katie

Katie is completing her master’s degree in information systems and will be graduating in May 2019. Like many other international students, Katie is originally from China and came to
the United States to seek better opportunities. Katie is a career changer and holds a bachelor’s degree in Spanish and literature back in China. While attending school, Katie works part time at Morgan Stanley focusing on software asset management in the information technology department. Katie is involved on campus as a member of the graduate business club and participated in a 10-week career-coaching program sponsored by the career center.

Katie has a strong passion for data and would like to get her feet wet in the data field. After graduating from her master’s program, Katie hopes to pursue a career in information technology project management where she can work with software and data management. Katie shared that she has always had an interest in data and software, even prior to starting her master’s degree. While teaching back home in China, Katie also worked a few side jobs for both an e-commerce and gaming company. From there, her interest in technology and software grew and led her to study information systems. Upon graduation, Katie is hoping to get an offer for full-time employment from Morgan Stanley.

In her second semester of the graduate program, Katie utilized the career center while simultaneously participating in a 10-week career-coaching program that the office offered. Katie shared that she visited the office and took advantage of this program to seek help with interviewing and to “get to know herself better” (personal communication, June 27, 2018) by completing the various personality assessments that were offered to students. When asked why she decided to apply to the mentoring program, Katie shared that she wanted to have a professional who was committed to meeting with her on a regular basis to get to know her well; more importantly, she hoped this individual could provide her with “customized professional advice” (personal communication, June 27, 2018).
Sophia

Sophia was born and raised in Bulgaria and came to the United States in 2016 when she was accepted to the graduate program. Sophia is a recent graduate of the full-time master’s of business administration program. Currently, Sophia works for Kraft Foods. Although she completed the master’s program, her professional background has been in marketing and she chose to remain in the field even after completing the program. Sophia shared that before coming to the United States, she worked full time for a large international chocolate company. However, Sophia hit a point where she felt she needed to brush up on her skills because she was falling behind with the current industry trends. Therefore, she decided to quit everything and come to the United States to study. She specifically chose to come to this college because of their reputation and her long-time dream of working in New York City. While completing her program, Sophia was an active member of the Graduate Marketing Club and served on the committee responsible for bringing in professionals to connect with students.

Sophia shared that her intention was never to switch careers. She had always worked in brand management, and her ultimate goal was to become a brand manager upon graduation. Sophia said her goal was not to leave the marketing field but to “find a position that would grant me more responsibilities, work in a completely different environment, and help me gain experience in a different market than what I am used to” (personal communication, June 27, 2018).

Given that Sophia already had extensive professional experience in the field of marketing, she was asked to share what led her to participate in the mentoring program. Sophia stated that, because she was an international student, she faced many challenges. Sophia said she felt she had “no idea about the job market and was not familiar with how things worked here in
the States” (personal communication, June 27, 2018) Sophia said she really wanted someone to communicate with on a regular basis who would help her understand how things work here.

**Amy**

Amy graduated in May 2018 with her master’s degree in taxation. Amy is an international student from China who came to the United States in 2010 to pursue her bachelor’s degree. Due to her inability to find an employer who was willing to sponsor her after graduating, Amy decided to continue her education by applying to graduate school. Since graduating from the master’s program, Amy has been working for a small accounting firm as an auditor. However, her hope is to someday transition to work on the tax side rather than in auditing. When asked if she intended to stay in the United States to work, she said yes. Amy shared that she has grown accustomed to New York and also knows that the connections here in New York for employment are far greater than what is available back home in China. During her time at Baruch, Amy was an active member of the Graduate Tax Society and was a member of an accounting professional organization called ASCEND.

Prior to starting her graduate program, Amy was clear she wanted to study taxation. While she was completing her undergraduate degree, Amy interned for a year at an accounting firm working in the tax area. Amy shared that she really enjoyed her experience and the direct client contact, so from that moment she knew tax was for her. During the interview, Amy said she was unsure about which specific area of tax she was interested in though because tax is quite broad and can include areas such as federal tax, corporate tax, or even foreign international tax. She hopes in the short term to be able to get as much experience as she can. However, given her visa status she feels seeking an opportunity will be challenging.
Although Amy utilized the career center during her time as a student and found it helpful, she decided to join the mentoring program for extra support. More specifically, Amy participated in the program to gain more knowledge about the career she wanted to pursue. Amy shared that she wanted to hear directly from a professional what is expected of candidates and how to better prepare herself for the field. Also, Amy said she felt this opportunity would allow her to build more connections and increase her network.

Emily

Emily was born and raised in Taiwan and came to the United States in 2016 when she was accepted into her graduate program. Emily graduated in December 2017 with her master’s degree in marketing. Currently, she works as a market researcher for a small market research consulting firm. While completing her master’s program, Emily shared that she did not get involved in any on-campus organizations and rather used that time to figure out her career goals.

Prior to starting her graduate program, Emily completed her bachelor’s degree in Taiwan where she majored in taxation. However, Emily shared that she majored in taxation because she was good at it but never really had an interest in the subject. Since Emily had an interest in marketing, she spent her first semester taking numerous marketing courses to see if this was truly what she was interested in pursuing. Simultaneously, Emily was visiting the career center to work on her resume to secure an internship. Emily said she felt that she did not want to waste her time during her studies and that an internship would help narrow down the areas in marketing she was considering. Although Emily was working with a career advisor in the career center, she decided to also apply for the mentoring program.

For Emily, the mentoring program was an opportunity for her to connect with someone who could guide her and lead her to the appropriate path. Since Emily had so many interests, she
wanted to be able to sit down with someone who could give her guidance on what to do in order to make the appropriate decision. Although Emily said the career center was very helpful, her mentor was even more helpful in giving her insights about the industry trends, what specific companies to target, and how to better prepare for the interviews.

Zoey

Zoey graduated in December 2017 with her master’s degree in statistics. Zoey was born and raised in Shanghai, China and came to the United States a month before beginning her graduate program. Currently, Zoey works at Accenture as a data analyst. Upon starting the graduate program, Zoey majored in marketing but ended up switching to statistics. Zoey was more interested in data analytics and the technical side of data which is what led her to statistics. During her time as a student, Zoey was an active member of the Women in Business club on campus.

Zoey shared that she was not clear about her career path before starting graduate school. She was interested in marketing data, which is why she started out as marketing major. However, she did not have her heart set on this and found herself taking on a number of internship positions. By interning in various positions, Zoey said she was able to “filter out positions I did not want to do in the future” (personal communication, July 10, 2018). Knowing the challenges that go along with being an international student, Zoey said finding your ideal career path can sometimes be stressful. In order to overcome the stress, Zoey sought help from the career center. Zoey often spoke with a career advisor to get assistance with improving her resume and updating her cover letter when necessary.

Like many of the other students, Zoey found the career office to be helpful. Her interest in the mentoring program first started with her peers. Zoey shared that all her friends were
talking about this program and had heard it was very popular. Given that it sparked her interest, Zoey researched it further and decided to apply. For Zoey, the mentoring program would afford her the opportunity to talk to someone who was more experienced in her chosen career path. Zoey shared that she wanted a mentor who could give her suggestions about her specific career and where to get started. In addition, Zoey said what she liked about the program was that the mentor was an alumnus of the college who could provide her with tips on how to balance academics while searching for a job.

**Significant Themes**

After completing the first and second cycles of coding and analysis, five significant themes emerged to answer the research question: What are the experiences of international graduate students whose career interests and choices have been shaped through involvement in a university-based mentoring program as they move into professional employment and future career development? These themes provided insight into the students’ experiences and the role mentoring played in their career development process. The significant themes and subthemes are detailed in Table 1.
### Table 1

**Emergent Themes From Data Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Theme 1: International status was perceived as a barrier to employment. | • Limited proficiency in English  
• Unfamiliarity with the U.S. job market  
• Limited connection to professionals and networking opportunities |
| Theme 2: The mentoring program provided an opportunity for the international students to enhance their career planning processes. | • Gain knowledge about the field and industry  
• Network with professionals and build their connections  
• Better prepare for the job search process  
• Enhance their communication skills |
| Theme 3: Students described mentor qualities as important to the success of mentor–mentee relationship. | • Industry worked in and mentor’s career path  
• Availability and accessibility  
• Willingness to help and sense of caring |
| Theme 4: Students experienced personal growth through the mentoring program. | • Increased self-confidence  
• Reduced hesitation and doubt regarding new learning opportunities and challenges  
• Improved critical and logical thinking skills |
| Theme 5: Engagement in additional campus support services increased the students’ career planning processes. | • Graduate career center  
• Career-related events sponsored by student clubs and professional organizations  
• On- and off-campus career fairs |
Theme 1: International Status Was Perceived as a Barrier to Employment

With the challenges of finding employment, international students felt domestic students had a higher probability of finding opportunities upon graduation. All the students participating in this study described the areas that were the most difficult in the career planning process. As a result, because of these barriers, the need to participate in professional development activities such as mentoring was crucial in order to increase their probability for employment given their legal status.

Limited proficiency in English. Participants shared that English was a concern when seeking employment and, because it was not their primary language, they would be at a disadvantage in receiving an offer. Jenny said “Not all students come here with great English. For me, I can express myself, but it is very limited and that stands in the way of me getting a job” (personal communication, July 10, 2018). Emily shared a similar viewpoint by stating:

My biggest challenge was speaking English. When I first came here, I was just too afraid to speak. Whether it was in class or at an interview, I would get extremely nervous. Every time I spoke and answered a question, I would have negative thoughts in my head that I was not expressing myself clearly. (personal communication, July 17, 2018).

Likewise, Zoey stated:

Coming here as an international student when you’re an adult and trying to communicate efficiently compared to noninternational students is not easy. It’s a lot challenging because you are new to the culture and when you speak, you don’t think you are being clear or that people can understand you. (personal communication, July 27, 2018).

Clearly, language played an important factor in international students’ confidence and in their ability to network and seek out employment opportunities. Katie stated:
It’s the language thing. I learned to speak Chinese back home so coming here, this is all I knew. This is the most challenging part, I think. I think employers are looking for someone who can adapt to the culture easily and know how to carry themselves in a conversation. When you’re not an international student, that means you’ve spent more time in the United States, so you can adapt socially. For others, like me, it’s not that easy and there is more pressure. And because of that, it is so much more competitive.

(personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Although the students overcame the language barrier, most of the students did emphasize that it was a challenge and felt pressured to keep up with their domestic peers in order to make themselves more marketable to employers.

**Unfamiliarity with the U.S. job market.** The students interviewed for this study compared the U.S. job market to what existed in their home countries. It was evident through the interviews that the jobs in the students’ home countries were limited, and the opportunities in the United States were much more extensive. According to Zoey, “The environment from China is different than here. There are some jobs and industries I have never heard of, so I need to explore them as well” (personal communication, July 10, 2018). Amy shared the same by stating, “Even though there is less competition at home, there are so little positions. The reputation in New York is much better” (personal communication, July 9, 2018).

**Limited connections to professionals and networking opportunities.** The students expressed that as an international student who was new to the country, it was a lot harder than being in the home country because they did not know anyone, nor did they know where to start networking. Annie shared:
Since we are here by ourselves, we don’t really know anyone, and it is hard to have someone stick with us besides our professors. So, I think having a mentor is important because they help you prepare for a job. Without the preparation, it is really hard to know where to look for jobs and how to prepare because we have no one else to ask. (personal communication, June 17, 2018).

However, Katie admitted that U.S. culture was more amenable to actual networking than in China. She stated:

If I had to compare the United States with China, it’s very different. I don’t think in China people really help you as strangers, so trying to network is impossible. Here in the United States, there is so much more help. I remember even my classmates helping to make referrals. In the United States, if you put in effort, someone sees it, and they want to help you out, but in China, that will never happen (personal communication, June 27, 2018).

It was evident that the students felt the desire to have the opportunity to be connected with professionals. Sophia noted: “For someone who comes from a country so different, you need to be well connected. Having access to professional helps you meet someone in the industry as well as staying connected with the field” (personal communication, June 27, 2018).

The students participating in this study shared that coming to the United States was quite scary considering they had no contacts here. It was clear that building relationships with professionals and networking with individuals in their field of interest was an important aspect to their career planning process.
Theme 2: The Mentoring Program Provided an Opportunity for the International Students to Enhance Their Career Planning Process

Students in the study noted the challenges that significantly impacted their ability to prepare for and engage in the career planning process upon arrival in the United States. Those challenges contributed to the international students’ lack of knowledge of U.S. employment opportunities and how best to prepare for the field. As a result, students expressed that they felt the mentoring program was an opportunity to learn from a more experienced professional who could help them solidify their career plans.

**Gaining knowledge about the field and industry.** The students identified that it was crucial for them to learn more about their industry and the field. They were eager to learn how best to prepare for their particular industry, so they could better market themselves to employers. According to Emily:

The main reason I applied to the mentoring program was that I wanted to figure out what specific paths in marketing I would be interested in and capable of doing. At that time, I was taking a bunch of marketing courses, so I was hoping to have a mentor who could guide and lead me to figure out the right path. I really enjoyed a lot of my marketing classes, so I wanted a mentor who could talk to me and tell me what is going on with me and how do I figure out what is for me. The other part of joining this program was to have a mentor who I could discuss the industry trends with (personal communication, July 10, 2018).

Meanwhile, Amy shared:

I wanted to learn more about the career I wanted to pursue. For example, tax has many different areas so there were times I was sometimes confused and wasn’t sure how to
make a decision on what to choose. And by having a mentor, I was hoping to hear about what employers expect from their candidates and avoid any common mistakes before applying. (personal communication, July 9, 2018)

On the other hand, James was not familiar with his industry—accounting—and stated: When I first arrived here in 2016 and started school, I basically did not know anything about the industry and what to do. I did not know anything about the accounting programs that existed and how to get into consulting or taxation. The only way I knew to gather information on the industry was to talk to professionals. So, I decided to give the mentoring program a chance. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)

Clearly, the students expressed the need to better understand the industries and career paths most common here in the United States. More awareness is needed so that students know how best to prepare themselves for the job market and make better informed decisions regarding their career plans.

**An opportunity to network with professionals and build their connections.** All the students understood that networking and connecting with professionals was deemed important to the career planning process. Students shared that networking and connecting with professionals was important in order to learn more about the industry. Therefore, they all saw the mentoring program as a great way to network. Annie said, “I really wanted to get a connection with the professionals who are already in my field, so I can get a sense of how to prepare for my job search” (personal communication, June 17, 2018). Similarly, Sophia said, “The minute I arrived in the states, I understood that it was very important to network. And when you’re searching for a job, having a connection is helpful for positive development” (personal communication, June 27, 2018). Emily also shared:
I was hearing from a lot of people about the importance of networking but even though I knew it was important, I did not want to do it because I was shy. No matter how much I tried to push myself, I just did not want to do it. Especially when it comes to open networking—I get very intimidated. As an international student, we are not used to networking at all and it is unlikely for us to just reach out to someone. The mentoring program is organized so they help us make that connection rather than us doing it on our own. (personal communication, July 10, 2018)

Like Emily, the students saw the mentoring program as the starting point to building their network. Amy said:

The job market in New York is so competitive. Not only are you competing against the other students at the college, but you also have to compete with students from other schools when it comes to finding a job. So, with that competition in mind and so little positions available, having a mentor is really important. A mentor can really help you prepare for the job and also open you to other networking events and professionals who can help you. (personal communication, July 9, 2018)

Sophia shared a very similar viewpoint by saying:

It’s really hard to build a relationship with someone, just from scratch. Coming here from a foreign country, you’re basically starting from zero. It’s really hard to just find someone in your first few months of school who is willing to share his or her story, tell you about their experience, and give you advice. Mentoring is a really great opportunity and makes this program unique. (personal communication, June 27, 2018).
Networking was considered an essential component to an effective job search as emphasized by the students. For these students, knowing where to look for these professionals or how to start a conversation did not come naturally to them.

**Preparing more effectively for the job search process.** The lack of knowledge about the industry and limited access to professionals led students to feel less equipped about the job search process. The lack of preparation ranged from not knowing what resources were available to how to interview for the position. Sophia openly shared:

> When I came here, I knew it was going to be a challenge to find a job, mostly because I am an international student but the other part was I also had no experience whatsoever. I had no idea about the job market, so I wanted to meet someone who could help me to understand how things work here, specifically in terms of job searching. I didn’t know much about interviewing or even how to respond once you get an offer and the negotiation process. I also wanted someone to help me understand what kind of skills I needed to focus on during my education here. (personal communication, June 27, 2018)

For Katie, the interviewing component was essential for her when seeking employment. Katie said:

> There was a point when everyone was getting offers but me and I thought something must be wrong with me. I ended up sharing with my mentor this problem and she somehow got me talking about my experience so naturally that later I realized she was doing a mock interview. By working with her, she introduced me to so many different styles of interviews that I ended up coming across later on. I was feeling more comfortable as I started going on interviews because of her. She really helped me a lot. (personal communication, June 27, 2018)
While Sophia and Katie shared strong concerns about interviewing, Amy, on the other hand, described her anxiety preparing her resume and cover letter. Amy shared:

Many times, I found myself needing help with the resume and cover letter revisions. When you apply for a specific position, it is a lot harder. There are often more technical terms or words you are supposed to use, and it was very confusing. (personal communication, July 9, 2018)

Meanwhile, Annie wanted to gain an understanding on what would make her more marketable. She explained:

I wanted a mentor who was working in the position I wanted to work in. Specifically, for me, I wanted to understand what kind of qualifications I needed to obtain while I was in school. I wanted to be a better candidate, so it was important for me to hear how my mentor got where he was today. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)

Limited exposure to the U.S. job market and career resources for international students can contribute to the students lack of knowledge and readiness to prepare for a particular industry.

**An opportunity for students to enhance their communication skills.** Many of the international students interviewed for this study openly shared that their communication skills needed improvement. The students expressed that they felt they needed more practice with the English language and that this was a contributing factor to them interviewing skillfully with employers. Katie mentioned:

Because I majored in Spanish back home, I was fluent in both Chinese and Spanish. When I arrived here, my English was not covered so I thought let me take a chance with the mentoring program and use it to practice my English. Because the mentoring
program was so well organized and professional, I thought it would also help me learn and behave in a more professional way. (personal communication, June 27, 2018)

James shared a similar concern and stated:

It’s the way you talk to people and how you act during an interview that makes a difference. The mentors in this program are all high-level executives so this is an opportunity for us to learn how to communicate and interview to secure a job or internship. I see the mentor also educating us on how to communicate with your manager once you get the job and how you should handle different situations. (personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Amy said she also felt strong about the communication skills. She shared:

I needed a lot of help with my communication. My English is not so great, so I wanted help with interviewing but also to learn how to interact with my coworkers. I was worried people would not understand me when I walk into the room. There is so much expectation for how you should act on the job and so I felt confused. (personal communication, July 9, 2018)

By having strong communication skills, students were aware that this would help them be more confident in marketing their strengths during the interview process. Sophia emphasized this by stating: “I needed a lot of advice on when it came to communication skills. It was important for me to have a better understanding of how to interview and present myself to employers” (personal communication, June 27, 2018).
Theme 3: Students Described Mentor Qualities as Important to the Success of Mentor–Mentee Relationship

The students identified the mentoring program as beneficial. When it came time to discuss what helped make their mentor–mentee relationship so successful, students openly expressed that it was the quality of the mentor that made the difference.

**Industry worked in and mentor’s career path.** Given that the students were not familiar with many industries or the job market here in the United States, it was not surprising that many of them noted that the industry and the path taken by the mentor was an important factor for them. Zoey remarked, “The mentor’s experience and educational background is what I looked for. I wanted the person to be more relevant to what I was studying” (personal communication, July 10, 2018). Emily described:

I think the biggest part for me was having a mentor who was working in the industry. Knowing I was working with someone who was in the industry and marketing savvy was a big incentive. For me, this meant I would be able to learn from my mentor and be up to date on current trends and what is happening in the industry. I wanted to be able to learn as much as I could and gain their perspective from this experience. (personal communication, July 10, 2018)

Amy also described her agreement regarding the importance of the mentor’s industry by stating:

It would be the relevance of the career path. I really wanted someone in the public or private accounting area. I also looked at their educational background. Having someone in the same direct career path makes them a more helpful resource. Accounting is very broad, so having a mentor who can share their experience and give me some direction on
which is the better path to choose was really helpful. (personal communication, July 9, 2018)

In speaking with Sophia about what qualities were important in this relationship, she shared, “The current role and industry the mentor works or worked for. I would like for them to have similar experience to what I want to do so they can talk to me a bit about how they reached this path” (personal communication, June 27, 2018). Katie also reported that “the quality of the industry was the most important and having someone who knew about the field” (personal communication, June 27, 2018). Finally, Annie described how the work environment was also important to her. Annie stated:

The mentor’s work environment is really important and how my mentor actually got their job. For me, as both a student and a job seeker, it was important to understand how to approach the industry and understand how the work environment operates on a daily basis. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)

As an international student, hearing about the mentor’s career path and how they landed their current positions was important given that many of the student had no professional contacts upon their arrival to the United States.

**Availability and accessibility.** The students also shared that having a mentor who was available and had the time to meet with them was crucial. Emily explained:

I would say having a mentor who is accessible and available was important. I know I needed a lot of help and had a lot of questions about marketing and the industry, so it was important for me that I had a mentor who was able to meet with me on a consistent basis. (personal communication, July 10, 2018)

Annie noted how time was an important factor by stating:
[The mentor] having more time for the students, that was the first factor. I knew a lot of friends who had great mentors, but they didn’t spend enough time with them. The more time a mentor spends with the mentees, they can get to know each other, and it allows for us, the students, to hear more about their experience. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)

Meanwhile, James was involved in the mentoring twice and described that his first mentor was not as helpful as the second one due to his unavailability. James noted:

My first mentor was not really available. We spent most of the sessions speaking over the phone because he would tell me he was busy. But talking over the phone was not beneficial, at least for me. I preferred face-to-face, and that is what the second mentor and I did all the time. He was always available for our meetings and was helpful in answering my questions. I think a mentor who has time for their students helps keep the relationship consistent. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)

With a busy school schedule, the students appreciated a mentor who had the time and availability to meet with them on a consistent basis. The consistency in meeting with their mentor helped students feel more confident that their concerns and issues were being addressed and made the mentee feel comfortable approaching their mentor for advice.

**Willingness to help and sense of caring.** The last quality that was deemed important to students was a mentor who wanted to help and showed that they cared. The students described that the mentoring relationship worked when the mentor showed a desire to provide the one-on-one guidance. Emily shared:

Willingness to help, well maybe it’s more than willing. I think it’s not about the students just wanting help, I mean it’s obvious they do, otherwise they would not be in the
program. But I believe the mentors have to show they want to help students as much as students want to be helped from them. As a student, especially an international student, it is really important to have the help because we don’t have any other friends or family here. (personal communication, July 10, 2018)

Katie expressed a similar perspective and explained that having a caring mentor was important. According to Katie:

Sometimes my mentor would write me an email first. But what was impressive was she could always see right through me and my problems. She would always check in with me and ask me questions like what was bothering me or what was I so worried about? And, whenever I would show that I was confused or anxious about something, she would give me motivation to not give up. It was really nice to have a mentor who cares about you because you feel like you can always talk to them about anything. (personal communication, June 27, 2018)

For the mentoring relationship to be successful, students openly shared that the mentor had to show a genuine interest in their mentee and in wanting to participate in the program.

Zoey shared:

I think a mentor who helps and genuinely cares about their mentee’s interests will want to see them succeed and find other ways to help them whether it’s introducing them to their contacts or just helping them land their first interview. Every little help goes a long way. (personal communication, July 10, 2018)

**Theme 4: Students Experienced Personal Growth Through the Mentoring Program**

The students were asked to share in depth their experiences and ways they felt they had grown from participation in the mentoring program. Overall, the participants shared that they
benefitted from the program. More specifically, the students emphasized that working with a mentor helped them grow personally and professionally which led them to feel better about themselves both in school and in the workplace.

**Increase in self-confidence.** Overwhelmingly, the students who participated in the mentoring program identified self-confidence as one of their top areas of growth. According to Amy:

For the longest time I thought my English needed a lot of improvement and the more I thought it was not good enough, the less confident I felt. Since I was feeling less confident, I was not good at interviewing and getting any offers. My mentor helped me a lot by motivating me to keep practicing and because she was a native speaker, she supported me by giving me practice scenarios and mock interviews. Now, when I go on interviews, I feel more confident and see them as just having a general conversation with someone. (personal communication, July 9, 2018)

Annie shared a similar experience, referring to her communication skills by stating: When I first met my mentor, I was shy and did not know what to say at all. I had a hard time speaking in front of people. By working with my mentor, they taught me how to be more confident in front of people, but also how to handle myself professionally. I also observed them a lot too and how they handled themselves in a conversation so that helped me as well. This program has definitely helped me become a better communicator. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)

James also shared the following: My mentor definitely helped me improve my confidence in talking to people and how I present myself. He taught me that the way I talk to people and how I act in an interview
is really important. And because of that, I was able to secure my internship and translate it into a long-term contract. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)

Clearly the students in the program were shy and nervous to openly speak in front of others. The students found that having their mentor provide mock interviews and scenarios with them was helpful in increasing their confidence. Emily described:

This program has definitely helped with my confidence. So, when I first started this program, I always felt nervous presenting in front of a class or during interviews. Part of me was nervous because I felt different from others, but I think it was more because of the cultural difference. My mentor helped me see that we are all equal and not really much different from the others. He also taught me how to address situations in a much politer and respectful way. The more we practiced, the more I felt comfortable talking to people at work and even in class. (personal communication, July 10, 2018)

Similarly, Katie shared:

I feel like I know myself a lot more now than I did before. I have become so much more confident, and much more comfortable talking about experience and myself during interviews. I found it really hard to interact with others and have a conversation. Sometimes you just don’t know how to answer questions. My mentor gave me a lot of feedback and direction on interviewing and did practice scenarios with me. The practice really got me comfortable. (personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Self-confidence was certainly an area that was important to the individual in terms of growth and has played a pivotal role in the success of the students both inside and outside of the classroom.
Students take on new learning opportunities and challenges without hesitation and doubt. The lack of self-confidence these students described prior to participating in the mentoring program contributed to them being hesitant about seeking out new and challenging opportunities. Amy openly stated:

The mentoring program helped change my expectations. The work visa was a very challenging issue for me and put a lot of stress on me. My mentor taught me to not put so much of a burden on myself but instead to be grateful for the opportunities that come my way. As a professional, this was really helpful because I learned to be more open minded when it came to accepting my current position. I always wanted to be in the tax side but ended up accepting a position as an auditor. As an auditor, I am really enjoying it and see that I can still contribute to the field, but there is also a lot of room for me to grow. So, at the end of the day, I am overall satisfied with how things turned out. (personal communication, July 9, 2018)

Like Amy, James received internship offers but was not sure what to do given that he was unfamiliar with the accounting field:

I was receiving a lot of offers at the time. However, I did not know what to do because I did not know about the accounting field. When I spoke to my mentor, he encouraged me to give everything a try because I didn’t know where these experiences would take me. I am really glad I listened because the experiences helped me narrow down my decision and gave me a chance to see what is out there. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)

Meanwhile, Sophia said:

Finding a job here in NYC is hard and competitive. I really wanted to become a manager and sometimes I wondered, am I good enough? My mentor was a very well-established
professional, working for a world-known company so he gave me some helpful tips on how to prepare academically and also how to succeed after graduation. With his help, I was offered a leadership position just like how I dreamed. And even until this day, I think about all the personal stories he shared with me that has helped me grow in this current position. (personal communication, June 27, 2018)

The students overcame their fears and doubts to embrace new opportunities and challenges as a result of working with their mentors. Mentors not only shared personal stories to help the students relate but also helped these students to evaluate their beliefs and attitudes and turn them into more positive thoughts.

**Improvement in critical and logical thinking skills.** In discussing personal growth, the students shared that they saw improvement in their critical and logical thinking skills. The students felt that developing their critical thinking skills made them a better candidate when applying for positions and contributed to their success at their current workplace. According to Emily:

I would say my logical thinking skills have improved greatly. When I would first meet with my mentor, I would go into the meetings and just ask a bunch of questions. However, my mentor started to feel like we had several issues to cover at once. So, my mentor would ask me to develop an agenda for every meeting and by doing that, I started seeing that the purpose of that was so our meetings could be focused around one general topic instead of multiple topics which can be overwhelming for one meeting. I realized even at work now, I have learned to be better prepared by preparing agenda meetings and developing a strategy to better complete the tasks or goals at hand. (personal communication, July 10, 2018)
James also shared a similar experience by stating:

Once you get the job, there is still a lot to learn. My mentor taught me how to communicate better and be a better person in the workplace. More specifically because of him, my critical thinking skills have improved a lot. When you are at work, you have to learn how to also work with other people in a team. My mentor taught me how to think critically when it comes to problem solving with my team and also how to deal with conflict when you don’t always agree with your teammates. Dealing with conflict was very important because I feel more confident when I talk to my manager and people at work. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)

By having the mentors present tasks and scenarios that the student might encounter at work, mentees were able to improve their critical and logical thinking skills. As a result, many of the mentees have transferred those skill sets and learning tactics to their current workplaces.

**Theme 5: Student Engagement in Additional Campus Support Services Increased the Students’ Career Planning Process**

The data revealed that students found the career planning process to be beneficial when multiple resources were used. The students shared that, as an international student, one must take advantage of all the services available and not just rely on one.

**Graduate career center.** All the students shared that at some point as a student, they visited the career office and found it to be beneficial to kickstart their career planning process. For example, Zoey said, “I visited the graduate career center a lot in the beginning. I would attend their resume and networking workshops. I also would schedule to see an advisor to get help on the cover letter and ask about updating my resume” (personal communication, July 10, 2018). James also was vocal in talking about the career center. According to James, “I used the
graduate career center a lot in my first year. I went to them mainly for resume help. They were very helpful on giving me general tips on how to prepare my resume for the tax field” (personal communication, June 17, 2018).

The students described that the career center was helpful in providing general assistance with their career planning and job search process. Emily shared:

I went to speak with a career advisor in the career center to get one-on-one help with resume and cover letter writing. I also used them sometimes for mock interviews. Those three aspects were the most helpful to me. (personal communication, July 10, 2018)

Not only were the students using the career center, but they were frequent visitors, making sure to also meet with a career advisor. Sophia described:

I met with a career advisor almost every 2 weeks during my first year at the college. I also attended some of their workshops like how to navigate the job search process and prepare for interviews. I wanted to make myself more marketable, so I took advantage of everything they offered and made sure I was a regular at the center. (personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Similarly, Katie shared:

I used the graduate career center and they were very helpful. I met with an advisory often mainly for mock interviews and general questions regarding my resume. Sometimes, I would also go if I wanted someone to review my resume or cover letter also. I did also visit the office for their personality assessments because I was in a place where I wanted to know myself better. (personal communication, June 27, 2018)

The career center made a number of services available to students. The use of the career center resulted in students who felt better prepared with their career planning process.
Career related events sponsored by student clubs and professional organizations were deemed helpful. At the time of this study, the college boasted more than 200 student clubs available for students. Additionally, students were consistently encouraged to join a professional organization during their time there. The students interviewed were all involved in either a student club or a professional organization. James said:

I attended a lot of events that either my club or other student clubs held on campus. These events were helpful because the clubs would invite professionals to come on campus to speak and share their experience. The smaller events was a good way to meet people and easier to network. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)

Sophia was highly involved on campus like James and shared:

Besides the career center, I attended many events organized by other student clubs. The college is not very active with marketing professionals and mostly focuses on accounting and finance, so I was trying to use any opportunity I could to network with marketing professionals. For me, I saw it as any opportunity was not to be missed. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)

Likewise, Annie related:

I actually joined a lot of clubs on campus and attended whatever events I could. I liked the club events because I could meet other students who actually were helpful in sharing interview tips and gave me advice on how to be a better candidate. Also, the clubs were helpful because I learned about all kinds of opportunities that were available like career fairs or networking events. I would learn about where all the recruiters were going to be from other students. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)
As international student, the participants explained that they perceived that the employment opportunities available to them were limited compared to their domestic peers. As a result, being involved on campus and seeking out as many opportunities as possible was important in order to increase their visibility with employers.

**On- and off-campus career fairs.** The last area that students described was beneficial was on- and off-campus career fairs. Sophia shared:

I attended a few career fairs off campus because sometimes there are companies that do not recruit at the college career fair. Actually, that is how I found my first internship. I would do my own search online for career fairs related to the marketing field and attend the ones that I could. (personal communication, June 27, 2018)

Amy also mentioned:

I attended many career fairs on campus so that I could meet as many recruiters as I could. It was really helpful because I was able to hear about jobs and internship opportunities that are not always posted on the school or company website. (personal communication, July 9, 2018)

It was clear from speaking with the students that attending both on- and off-campus career fairs was important because the type of recruiters who attended these different fairs was not always the same. According to James:

I attended a few career fairs that I heard about through the professional organizations. It was helpful because I was able to network and gain access to companies that the college does not always invite to recruit. I think the career fairs are also a great way to network with people as well. You don’t know who you will meet there. (personal communication, June 17, 2018)
In attending multiple career fairs, students were able to hear from different recruiters and increase their chances of getting an offer from an employer.

**Summary**

This chapter provided the findings of an inductive study through the data analysis of eight interviews with students who were international students attending graduate school on an F-1 visa, and who participated in a year-long mentoring program. Each of the participants profiles was shared and included information regarding where they were from, their program of study, career aspirations, and what led them to the mentoring program. While each participant brought unique perspectives and experiences to the study based on their individual paths, similarities also emerged. The results and findings of the study have enabled the researcher to have a deeper understanding of the international students’ experiences with mentoring while completing their graduate program.
Chapter 5: Discussion of the Research Findings

This qualitative, inductive analysis study sought to understand the lived experiences of international graduate students who participated in a graduate level professional mentoring program. It is a study that articulated findings from the literature explaining the links between mentorship and professional development for graduate students. The central research question guiding this study was: What are the experiences of international graduate students whose career interest and choices have been shaped through involvement in a university-based mentoring program as they move into professional employment and future career development? The following sections will include a discussion of the themes, specifically how they relate to the theoretical framework and then how they contribute and support what is known about mentoring in the literature. Next, the significance and limitations of the findings, including future areas of research for this study are included. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the implications for practice.

The study generated five themes:

1. International status was perceived as a barrier to employment.
2. The mentoring program provided an opportunity for the international students to enhance their career planning processes.
3. Students described mentor qualities as important to the success of mentor–mentee relationships.
4. Students experienced personal growth through the mentoring program.
5. Student engagement in additional campus support services increased the students’ career planning processes.
Findings in Relation to Theoretical Framework

SCCT, grounded in Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory, provided the theoretical underpinning for this study. Discussions based in SCCT include how basic career interests develop, how choices are made, and how career success can be obtained (Bandura, 1986; Lent et al., 1994). Use of SCCT highlights the interplay among three cognitive-person variables: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals. The following analysis reviews the study’s findings in relation to the main assumptions of SCCT.

Self-efficacy Beliefs

Bandura (1986) described self-efficacy as an individual’s perception or judgment of his or her ability to successfully complete a set of given steps and succeed towards a specific goal. Lent (2000) stated that individuals develop their sense of self-efficacy from personal performance but also from how they feel in a given situation. Each participant in this study expressed their concerns with obtaining permanent employment postgraduation and the factors that they felt contributed to them not successfully seeking employment.

While some of the participants’ top concern was their visa status, for others such as Emily, Zoey, and Katie, their biggest concern was language. These students expressed that they felt that their accent and their inability to communicate effectively would limit the opportunities available to them. Meanwhile, Annie and Sophia stated that they felt they lacked knowledge on the job market and had limited connections to professionals who could assist them with the career planning process. These students wanted the opportunity to connect with professionals to hear about their experiences and gain advice on how to get started in the industry. Many interviewed said they felt that as international students, they were alone in the United States and had no one from whom to seek guidance. By participating in a formal mentoring program, these
students hoped they would be better informed regarding what employers were seeking from candidates attempting to obtain employment postgraduation.

**Outcome Expectations**

Bandura (1986) defined outcome expectations as individual beliefs about the consequences or outcomes of performing behaviors. Outcome expectations involve imagined consequences of courses or action. For example, participants observed: “If I do this, what will happen?” Within the SCCT framework, it is proposed that interest in a career-related activity relies, partly, on the outcomes that are anticipated because of participation in that activity, and the value placed on those outcomes by the individual. Outcome expectations helped to determine the activities that the participants chose to pursue and the ones they avoided. The data from this study indicated that students were interested in participating in the mentoring program because they saw the potential benefits, specifically how mentoring could assist them with their career plans. Additionally, these students expressed that they felt that connecting with a mentor would help them to learn more about their field of interest.

In this study, the findings revealed that the mentoring program under study provided a way to gain knowledge about their industries; it also helped them be better prepared for the job search process. For Amy and Emily, the mentoring program represented a method for them to further develop their professional networks. The students said they felt that having a professional expert in their specified related industry did indeed allow them to not only hear about the individual’s experience, but it also provided them with an opportunity to gain advice about how to overcome any barriers that potentially could be problematic for their international status.
Goals

According to Bandura, goals play a primary role in behavior. Bandura (1986) defined goals as the decision to begin a particular activity or future. It was clear among all the students that their end goal was to remain in the United States after graduation and gain permanent employment. In this study, all the students had very positive experiences with the mentoring program. They expressed that, because of their mentors, they experienced personal growth, which led to an increase in self-confidence, improvement in critical thinking skills, and confidence in taking on new challenges. The shift in their confidence level helped them when applying for employment and seeking out opportunities in their fields of interest. Due to the increase in confidence, Sophia achieved her goal of landing a leadership role in the marketing field. Similarly, James received multiple offers in the accounting field that helped him narrow down his options.

Contextual Affordances

According to Bandura, contextual affordances refer to environmental influences, specifically environmental supports in the development of vocational interests, career planning, and satisfaction with choices. Contextual affordances can shape the learning experiences to which an individual is exposed, and they influence interests and career choices. The present findings support the argument that having a formal mentoring program available for international students is beneficial. The participants stated that a formal mentoring program was beneficial because it provided an opportunity to meet with professionals who would not otherwise be available through an informal program. According to the students, the formal mentoring program was structured in a way that caused them to seek mentors and to meet certain expectations as the program required.
Findings in Relation to Literature Review

According to the literature on international students, a productive mentor–protégé relationship is essential for international graduate students who have limited support from family and friends in the host country (Yang et al., 2016). Furthermore, the mentor–mentee relationship is vital for international graduate students because they are dealing with a high level of cultural adjustment, including language barriers, while simultaneously attempting to understand the cultures of both academia and work (Kuh et al., 2008). The students interviewed for this study identified the key components that they perceived affected their probability of gaining permanent employment after graduation. The barriers that students identified can be categorized into three categories: (a) limited English proficiency, (b) unfamiliarity with the U.S. job market, (c) limited professional networking opportunities. The participants have mostly arrived in the United States only a few months prior to beginning their graduate program. As a result, none of the students were familiar with the American work culture and where to begin their career planning process.

Mentoring in Higher Education Institutions

Based on the literature, the most promising strategies that colleges and universities can use with international students is mentoring (Stevens et al., 2010). Mentors support, guide, and provide counsel to the less experienced to facilitate their careers (Kram, 1988). Mentoring is described as an important mechanism that enables graduate students to acquire the body of knowledge and skills they need to succeed as well as an understanding of the way their discipline operates (The Rackham School of Graduate Studies, 2006). According to the literature, mentoring can create the conditions for success in graduate school by: (a) integrating the student into the college environment, (b) cultivating professional and social networks, and (c) paving the
way to a position in the workplace following graduation (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001).

However, many international graduate students do not have mentors.

Consistent with the literature, the students joined the mentoring program that is the focus of this study without any previous mentor who could guide them both professionally and personally in their transition. Given that all these students came to the United States with no family or friends, they knew little about the employment process. As a result, all these students decided to apply to the mentoring program with the hope of gaining knowledge about the industry, building their professional networks and being better prepared for the job market. All the students described their experience as positive because they recognized that, without the help of their mentor, they would not have been able to develop and achieve the same level of personal and professional success.

**Constructing the Terms of the Relationship**

According to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the origin of the term mentor is quite old and dates as many as 3,000 years ago when it was cited in Homer’s *Odyssey*. The classic understanding of the term mentorship has evolved from its original use in the *Odyssey*. Since then, mentoring has evolved and developed in many different disciplines resulting in a variety of definitions.

Consistent with the literature on mentoring, articulating a singular definition was a challenge for the participants as they each explained the process of mentoring differently. All the participants agreed that mentoring was important, and they said they had a very positive experience. As international students, they generally agreed that mentoring was an essential component for their success and that it played an important role in their career planning process. This finding reflects many of the findings in the literature on mentoring, both in education and
across many other disciplines, where scholars cannot agree to a singular definition. While the term “mentor” can be discussed, and some general attributes of mentoring and mentors can be shared, agreeing to one normative definition is almost impossible. The term can often be misunderstood by international students; therefore, the challenge to finding a definition for mentoring may contribute to students never participating in a formal mentoring program. Given that these eight participants had never previously had a mentor, it was difficult for them to agree on how best to define the word mentor. For these students, this professional mentoring program was their first time having a mentor and for most, the first time they had someone to guide them professionally. This conundrum is shared by many scholars, including Pete Hall (2008) who questions, “What is a mentor, exactly? Though we may each have a mental image of such a figure, the term mentor carries so many definitions that trying to bring it to life is haphazard at best” (p. 450). Daresh (2004) also agrees that a single definition of mentoring does not exist.

**Function and Phases of Mentoring**

Formal research in mentoring began in the mid-1970s with the influential work of Kathy Kram (1985) and provided the basis for much of the research on the topic. Kram’s work mainly focused on the development of the relationship between a mentor and a protégé. In Kram’s seminal work, she suggested that mentoring consists of two functions: career and psychosocial. The career mentoring function as defined by Kram was one who sponsors professional advancements and oversees career preparation. On the other hand, psychosocial mentoring functions are defined as helping the protégé develop a sense of self through acceptance and affirmation (Mott, 2002).

The findings of this study coincided with the literature in that the students sought out the mentoring program to leverage their professional connections; more importantly, they wanted to
have someone who could provide professional support for their career planning process. These students saw the mentor as invaluable and felt that they were given the support, advice, or direction they needed whenever they were confronted with career related questions. In contrast, the function of psychosocial support that can also occur in a mentoring relationship was not an initial expectation of the mentoring relationship. However, many students were surprised when this support developed as they got to know their mentors. At the end of the program, students not only developed better career planning skills, but they also developed self-confidence and saw personal growth through the program. Coming to the United States, these students struggled with limited English and a lack of professionals in their network. However, at the end of this program, the students felt confident communicating and networking with others both in school and professionally. Given that these students are competing in a labor market that values strong communication skills, this was an important area of growth that would contribute to their career success.

Kram (1985) identified the first stage of the mentoring relationship as initiation, a phase during which the mentors and students become acquainted. The students did in fact share that the first few meetings with their mentor were difficult, especially because networking was not something that came easily for them. The next stage of the mentoring relationship identified by Kram (1985) is cultivation, a phase during which deeper bonds included experiences after the mentors and student had more contact. Given that this was a formal year-long mentoring program and the college requires students to meet their mentor at least once a month, students were able to get to know their mentors better and felt more comfortable opening to them as the relationship progressed.
The third phase in Kram’s (1985) mentoring model is the separation phase. During separation, students and mentors tend to have less frequent communication as the protégé focuses more on themselves. Because the program required a specific number of meetings per month, students did not have less communication with their mentors. However, it was evident from student reports that they became more proactive and ambitious during their mentoring experience and sought out information and additional help on their own such as attending more career related or networking events.

Kram’s (1985) final phase of the mentoring relationship is redefinition. The results of this study were consistent with the literature in that all the students but one shared that even though the official mentoring program had ended, they kept in touch with their mentor. These students felt they had developed a close bond with their mentors and felt comfortable that they could still reach out to ask more career related questions and address any employment concerns if needed.

The full mentoring relationship development outlined by Kram (1985) was experienced by the students in the mentoring program. This may be a result of the length of the program and how structured and formal the mentoring program was. The communication and relationship building skills developed in the mentor–mentee relationship led to a deeper relationship.

Kram’s seminal work in 1983 on the stages of the mentoring relationship was followed by additional studies, which included examining trust as a factor in a mentoring relationship. The ability to navigate the uncertainty and challenges of the career decision-making process in consult with a more senior professional who they trusted was integral to the experiences of each participant. Each participant described trust of a mentor as an important influence on their
experiences. The participants all agreed that without trust, they would not have been as comfortable opening up to the mentor.

The experiences of the participants in this study support the findings of similar prior research. Each participant articulated how critical the component of trust was in establishing, developing, and maintaining a mentoring relationship. Many studies (Bouquillo, Sosik, & Lee, 2005; Burke, 1984; Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1985) have examined the role of trust as a factor in mentoring relationships. Bouquillo et al. (2005) discovered that to improve the efficacy and value of mentoring, mentees needed to trust their mentors. Similarly, Burke (1984) noted that trust was one of the most important factors in mentoring relationships with trustworthiness identified as an essential characteristic of a successful mentor. This study contributes to this finding, specifically for international graduate students.

Kram (1985) quoted a participant’s feeling about the importance of trust in the mentoring relationship as, “I trust him completely; I would have no fear of telling him anything” (p. 35). A particularly poignant example of trust in mentoring for new professionals comes from Parkway and Gene (1992) who provided anecdotal comments from professionals, which support assertions made by students in this study. One participant in their study stated: “Therefore, I have come to believe that every beginning professional should have someone he or she can trust, someone with whom to share those frustrations, anxieties, and fears” (p. 161). The findings from this study support the necessity of trust in maximizing the benefits associated with mentoring in professional situations. While leveraging professional connections for support, trust was an essential element. The participants in this study shared that trust was crucial and an important element in the mentoring relationship. Not only did trust help the relationship grow, but
ultimately, the mentees felt they were able to openly share and communicate their frustrations and concerns with their mentor without hesitation.

**Significance**

The results of this research study provide scholar–practitioners with an increased level of insight into how mentoring affects the career planning process of international graduate students. Prior research has yielded scant evidence for this population, mainly due to the assumption that domestic and international students need the same career resources (Shen & Herr, 2004). The data from this study lend support to the underpinnings of an emerging theory of mentoring and to SCCT. Given the lack of research on international graduate students, the themes provide a foundation for future studies with respect to the needs of this specific population. Additionally, the findings from this study could affect career planning programs and career services at the college or university level as they consider the perspectives illuminated from this study.

An extensive literature review revealed that this study is one of very few to produce evidence of mentoring for international graduate students. Although myriad studies on mentoring across disciplines and various populations have been conducted, the demographic population represented by this study is unique. Further, the insights from this study can provide college administrators information for establishing mentoring programs that include the salient factors yielded from the analysis. Finally, with this information, successful mentoring programs in other colleges and universities might be established to help ensure successful career planning and employment postgraduation for international students.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Qualitative studies seek to avoid generalizing and often aim to provide an examination of how people make sense of their experiences. Although this study looked at how mentoring
affected the career planning process for international graduate students, there are some
limitations. The study included the results of a small sample of participants that attended one
specific college. This was done in order for the researcher to get a deeper dive into the student’s
lived experiences. Of the 200 students who participated in the mentoring program, only eight
students were interviewed. While the interviews with these participants provided a substantial
amount of data, the study could have been more robust with a greater number of participants
sharing their experiences. Given that the sample was small, this study cannot be generalized to
all international graduate students. According to Creswell (2013), it is important to determine
sample size in the data collection process to help elucidate the specific experiences. Future
researchers who wish to expand this study will want to consider increasing the number of
participants so that more voices and perspectives can be heard.

The results from this study focus attention on the areas students had difficulty with and
with which they needed assistance during the career planning process; the study specifically
examined how mentoring contributed to the process. However, the students identified in this
study are from a single institution of higher education and therefore, it is unclear if the
distinction in the career planning process and the experiences are limited to the students of this
college within the university. The selection of one single site limits the ability to develop diverse
perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, the geographic representation of participants only
in the New York City area potentially limited the scope of the analysis. Further research should
replicate this study across multiple colleges and universities to determine if a study of all
international students experiencing a mentoring program would yield similar results.
Additionally, an expansion of this study may consider outreach to participants beyond New York
City to learn more about the lived experiences of international students at other institutions.
This study also lacked diversity in the participant sample. The goal of this study was to examine international graduate students and their experiences, but the findings were limited to the perspectives of the selected group of participants. Although they shared many similarities and differences within their processes, the reported experiences were individual and specific to each participant. Since the students came from diverse cultural backgrounds, they cannot unproblematically be characterized as having certain qualities or experiences. Each person’s experience is different, and part of the value of the graduate student experience in the United States relies on each person’s discovery and application of American culture. Additionally, for future research, it will be beneficial to include domestic students. Comparing the experiences of domestic and international students can help differentiate and uncover specific needs between the two groups. The lack of diversity in this study also included a disproportionate number of female participants. Of the eight participants, only one student was male. Unfortunately, this was the only male student who was interested in participating. It would be helpful for future research to examine whether the experiences for males is different compared to females. Further research focusing on males and females may demonstrate differences in help-seeking behavior and may uncover specific career needs for each group. Lastly, in looking at the diversity of the group, the participants mainly represented China and Taiwan. For future research, it will be helpful to consider students from other countries and regions to examine their perspectives on employment and the career planning process considering that some countries are much more advanced than others.

Finally, it is important to recognize that English was not the first language of the students who participated. Therefore, the questions asked of the participants often had to be repeated for the students to understand. In addition, the career planning process is often very personal, and it
is an emotionally sensitive topic (Krumboltz, 1993), so the ability for these students to express their feelings and experiences in English may have been difficult.

**Implications for College Administrators**

The experiences reported through this study highlighted the benefits international graduate students gained from having a mentor. Specifically, insights were provided regarding students’ understanding of careers, the employment planning process, and personal development during their mentoring experience. The findings support that being mentored by professionals is beneficial in directing them in their careers and for some, into academics. Indeed, mentorship helped the students move through their university experience in a timely manner.

However, this study revealed that students, although motivated to achieve their career goals, may struggle with various aspects of the career planning process and the desire to learn more about career fields. Career decisions are among the most important decisions students can make, therefore, if not addressed, students run the risk of avoiding the planning process altogether by halting their attempts or making decisions that are less than optimal (Amir & Gati, 2006). Additionally, a clear understanding of the influence of international student needs would be critical to providing appropriate career guidance and effective career development interventions. Support for the career planning process must address not only what takes place in the student’s present situation but also their past experiences and future aspirations. Individuals struggling with career decisions often seek assistance from an advisor, a friend, or a family member. The interviews included in this study suggested that the students were already seeking out advisors to answer their basic questions and concerns regarding the career planning process. The findings from this research suggest that career centers need to assist students in understanding better the personal facets that influence their career plans. This shift will require
advisors to take into consideration a broader approach to addressing career needs that includes factors such as improving a student’s sense of confidence and self-efficacy and helping them to adjust to personal or cultural circumstances within the career planning process (Daglet & Salter, 2004; Parker, 2002).

Current research suggests that cultural differences between the student and advisor concerning expectations around help-seeking may lead to premature avoidance or termination of counseling by international students (Zhang & Dixson, 2003). In response, educational programs for career advisors could be developed to aid in preparing advisors for this type of caseload. Advisor education programs could increase the focus of the campus on diversity and on career planning issues as greater multicultural competence may be a central factor in enhancing the help-seeking resources provided to future students. Advisor education programs could include reference materials such as handouts, or cultural guides to help advisors meet various levels of cultural understanding. Additionally, these resources may help advisors guide students to sources of credible and reliable career information that are culturally appropriate. By becoming culturally aware and culturally sensitive to the needs of the international student body, advisors may find that the students’ ability to make informed career decisions is improved.

The students within this research study were open regarding the resources available to them for help. They were not forthcoming in their criticisms of the assistance they received from the career office. During the interviews, students reported times in which they sought the guidance of peers and advisors who suggested they seek specific career guidance from mentors instead of relying solely on their friends or career services. The students suggested utilizing multiple resources to increases the likelihood of gaining employment and knowledge about the industry. Additionally, students were open in sharing that from their personal experience, many
of the career advisors were not fully aware of what preparation is needed for every industry, so using a variety of resources is beneficial.

Gati et al., (2005) suggested the effectiveness of nonhuman sources of information as they related to reducing career planning difficulties, and many organizations are taking advantage of web-based technologies to provide career service information, advising, and student resources (Moneta, 2005). Colleges and universities may consider collaborating with professional organizations who can provide employment best practices in attempt to provide less formal career guidance through nonhuman resources such as a website or career resource database. Serving as outreach partners in developing a career resource for students, these professional organizations could also compile career information relevant to graduate student needs, aid in providing timely and accurate information, or more specifically research an international student’s country of origin to help educate international students on the differences between home and host country job searches.

Students within this study clearly identified the difficulty they had with the career planning process and the lack of information they had regarding various industries. The findings in this study suggest that more resources may be needed to prepare students for their targeted careers. Expanding an institution’s web-based resources to include information about the various tenants of the career planning process could prove beneficial.

**Reflections as Scholar–Practitioner**

As a scholar–practitioner, the findings and conclusions of this study have provided the researcher with greater insight into the factors that influence the career planning process for graduate international students and their ability to effectively make informed decisions regarding their careers. The researcher also developed a greater understanding of the theories that exist
around career planning and decision making. Additionally, the researcher has gained knowledge about how mentoring has developed over the years and how the benefits of mentoring can factor into the career planning process.

This study’s findings show the need to consider the areas where international graduate students lack assistance and knowledge in relation to the career planning process. The failure to recognize and address these areas will result in the failure of international graduate students to make informed decisions regarding their careers. In addition, a lack of attention to these needs could lead to students failing to gain employment after graduation. This study indicated the need for international graduate students to communicate effectively with college administrators regarding their concerns when it comes to preparing for their careers. Furthermore, through such conscientious communication, understanding can be increased and administrators will develop a more positive attitude, increase commitment, and be more willing to support this population of students. These factors could shape how colleges and universities respond to change.

Lastly, this study has allowed the researcher to understand and appreciate the challenges that are often associated with being an international student. As a practitioner, the researcher has acquired understanding of methods which can increase the likelihood of success when working with this population of students. This increased understanding will benefit the researcher moving forward as a leader in higher education.

**Conclusion**

The findings from this study have helped to establish meaning for the central research question. Specifically, each participant spoke about how mentoring assisted with their career planning process and ultimately their experience in the program. All participants were able to cite examples of their positive and negative experiences as they worked with a mentor on their
career goals. The established themes support historical research findings in the field of mentoring; they simultaneously contribute to the current void in data, specifically regarding mentoring for international graduate students.

This study has focused on the lived experiences of eight students who participated in a year-long mentoring program. Specifically, the study looked for answers as to how mentoring impacted the lived experiences of these individuals and subsequently their satisfaction with the program. Participants were able to share their lived experiences with mentoring and to extrapolate meaning from them. The participants shared their thoughts about how mentoring might best be defined, which adds to the body of literature on mentoring.

The results of this study also broaden the current literature on the challenges that international students face when it comes to preparing for employment. Specifically, the results of this study reinforce the need for better career planning preparation programs as well as accurate and consistent access to reliable career information. This study demonstrates that international graduate students clearly need and utilize as many resources as possible, particularly mentoring programs, when planning their careers. Every student hopes to gain a sense of satisfaction from his or her career decisions, and every student wants to be prepared to enter their chosen field of work; this research helps take one step toward advocating for that outcome.
References


Appendix A

Invitation to Participate to Students

[Date]

Dear Student,

My name is Kimberly Chu and I am currently a doctoral student in the Doctor of Education program at Northeastern University. I am conducting research on international graduate students and the impact mentoring has had on their career planning process. I am inviting you to participate in this study, given your involvement in the mentoring program at your institution.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an in-person interview that is expected to last no more than 60 minutes. The interview will ask a series of questions pertaining to your experience and thoughts surrounding the mentoring program. In appreciation of your time, you will receive a $20 Barnes and Nobles gift card upon completion of the interview.

Your participation is completely voluntary and if you choose not to participate, it will not impact your relationship with the program or the college.

The study is supervised by Dr. Bryan Patterson, assistant teaching professor with the School of Education at Northeastern University and has been reviewed and approved by the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please reply to this email. If you would like more information or have questions, please contact me at XXX.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Kimberly Chu, MS Ed.
Doctoral Student, Northeastern University
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies

Investigators: Dr. Bryan Patterson, Principal Investigator
Ms. Kimberly Chu, Student Researcher

Title of Project: An Alumni Mentoring Program: The Impact on the Career Planning Process for International Graduate Students

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study
We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
We are asking you to be in this study because of your previous involvement in a mentoring program.

Why is this research study being done?
The purpose of this research is to explore the career planning process for international graduate students, specifically the role mentoring plays in shaping their career identity.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an in-person interview. The interview will be comprised of 10 questions and should last approximately 45–60 minutes.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?
The interview will take place at a location you choose. The interview is expected to last no more than 60 minutes.

Will there any risk or discomfort to me?
There is no foreseeable risk from participating in this study. However, if at any point, you do not feel comfortable in answering a question, you can choose to move on to the next one.

Will I benefit by being in this research?
There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information learned from this study may help colleges and universities understand the needs of international graduate students in order to better service this population of students.
Who will see the information about me?
Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being of this project.

To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will assign a pseudonym to all participants. All data will be identified with the participant’s pseudonym.

If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?
There is no individual risk if a participant declines the opportunity to participate in the study. Their information will be omitted from the final results.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as a student.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
If you have questions about this study, please feel free to contact Ms. Kimberly Chu at XXX, the person responsible for the research. You may also contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Bryan Patterson at XXX.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, Mail Stop: 560-177, 360 Huntington Avenue, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: XXX, Email: XXX You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?
You will be given a $20 Barnes and Nobles gift card upon completion of the interview.

Will it cost me anything to participate?
There is no cost to participate in this study.

Is there anything else I need to know?
You must be a currently enrolled graduate student who holds an F-1 visa to participate in this study.
I agree to take part in this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of person agreeing to take part</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed name of person above</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed name of person above</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Interview Questions

Introduction Questions

1. Please share a little about yourself
2. What is your current class standing and program of study?
3. How long have you been attending the university?
4. Are you involved in any other on-campus organizations besides the mentoring program?
5. What is your intended career path?
6. What are your plans after graduation?

Experiential Questions

I. Mentoring Program

1. Why did you decide to participate in the mentoring program?
2. What areas or topics of discussion did you feel were the most important when seeking guidance from your mentor?
3. Do you feel you have grown as a student or professional as a result of the mentoring program? If yes, please describe how. If no, why not?
4. Besides the mentoring program, what additional resources did you utilize to help with your career planning process? Did you find them helpful?

II. Mentor (Individual)

5. Was your assigned mentor working in the industry you are considering? If no, do you feel they were still helpful in providing you with the guidance you needed?
6. What qualities were most important to you when selecting a mentor?
7. Are you currently working or have previous work/internship experience? If yes, did your mentor assist you in securing this opportunity. If yes, please describe how.
8. Do you keep in touch with your mentor? Why or why not?

III. Career Planning

9. Did you have a clear career path before starting college? If no, what was it before and what caused you to change?
10. Did you utilize the career center at the college during your time as a student? If yes, did you find it helpful? If no, why not?
11. How did your mentor contribute to helping you decide if you wanted to stay or change career paths?
12. Did your mentor help you in identifying new strengths for you to capitalize on? If yes, how so?