

# The Journey of College-Educated Immigrants Enrolled in Adult Education CTE Programs



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# Agenda

- What this presentation is about
  - The **experience** of college-educated immigrants
  - Enrolled in CTE noncredit courses
  - Case-study with 14 participants
- What this presentation is not about
  - Not about immigration
  - Not about ESL enrollment

# Doctoral Dissertation Outline

- Traditional 5-chapter dissertation
  - Chapter 1: Overview of the study
  - Chapter 2: Literature review
    - History of adult education – funding structure and goals
    - AB86/AB104 CAEP restructuring, current delivery model
    - Demographics of immigrant populations and current students enrolled
    - Conceptual framework: Convoy Model
  - Chapter 3: Methodology (IRB through USC and research site)
  - Chapter 4: Findings (Specific to this data collection)
  - Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

# Background of the Study

- The California Adult Education system created in 1856 was to provide immigrants a form of integration through language acquisition, teaching vocational skill, and parenting classes.
- The adult education system was created as a response to a growing immigrant demographic that needed basic skills and language acquisition.
- Dissertation – Problem of Practice
  - College-Educated Immigrants enrolled in CTE noncredit courses
  - Students enrolled in a system that was not created for them



# Tale of Two Cities Delivering Adult Education

- Two delivery methods of adult education in California
- K-12 Adult Education and Community College Noncredit
- The California Master Plan for Higher Education separated junior colleges from unified or high school districts and resulted in establishing Adult Education in the K-12 system, and noncredit programming as part of the community college system (Lieu et al., 2006).
- Senate Bill 765 clarified that school districts should be responsible for adults functioning below 13<sup>th</sup> grade level, and community colleges would be responsible for 13<sup>th</sup> grade level and above (West, 2005).
- Community colleges would offer programs leading to an Associate in Arts degree, transfer courses, and vocational courses needed for technical skills acquisition.
- The Adult Education segment would provide basic education, literacy, ESL, high school completion, entry-level vocational, parenting, personal, and cultural development.

# Tale of Two Cities Delivering Adult Education

- In 1996, a landmark community college bill was introduced, AB1725, which impacted how community colleges operated. AB1725 amended Education Code to include adult noncredit education and community service to the mission and functions of the California Community Colleges (Lieu et al., 2006).
- Noncredit programming provided a pathway for both immigrants and residents of the community to acquire workplace skills by enrolling in short-term vocational programs, leading to employment or a second chance at completing a high school diploma or equivalent (Lieu et al., 2006).
- With both systems offering programs, there was a lack of clarity about governance over adult education.
- Today, AB104, CAEP has oversight from both CDE and CCCCO.
- Some community colleges offer noncredit programming that includes CTE pathways to certificates and workforce.



# Immigrant Demographics

# Immigrant Demographics

- Immigrants contribute to a diverse landscape by bringing their cultures and traditions, language, age range, educational level, and skill.
- Immigrants can be classified as being naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents, temporary residents, or unauthorized immigrants; regardless of how they arrive, they comprised 13% of the total U.S. population in 2017 (Zong et al., 2019).
- The immigrant population is in a constant ebb and flow, peaking in 1890 at nearly 15% of the total population and at its lowest in 1970 at almost 5% of the total population (Zong et al., 2019).
- In addition to age, the immigrant population was comprised of approximately 52% females in 2017, with little fluctuation from previous years, hovering around the 50% mark over the past two decades (Radford & Noe-Bustamante, 2019).

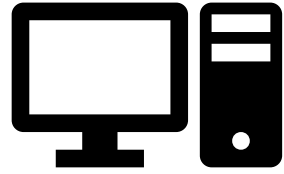


# Immigrant Demographics

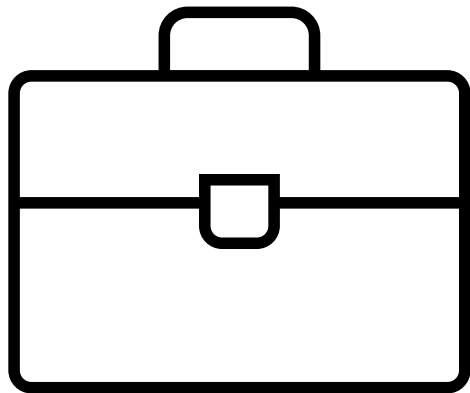
- The top five states with the highest English Language Learner (ELL) populations are California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois.
- Spanish was the language most spoken by ELL students, but variations exist based on immigrant and refugee settlement patterns (Ruiz et al., 2015).
- Of the 306 million people age five and older in the U.S. in 2017, 78% reported speaking English at home, and the remaining 22% spoke a language other than English (Zong et al., 2019).
- Spanish was the top language at 62%, followed by Chinese at 5%, (including Mandarin and Cantonese), Tagalog at 3% and Vietnamese, Arabic, French, and Korean at about 2% with the remaining languages in the top 15 were Russian, German, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Portuguese, Italian, Polish, and Urdu all contributing roughly one percent to the total (Zong et al., 2019).

# College-Educated Immigrant Crossroads

- The number of immigrants possessing a college education increased 89% from 3.1 million to 5.9 million in the decade between 1990 and 2000 and continued to grow between 2000 and 2014 to a total 10.5 million immigrants having a college education earned in their country of origin (Zong & Batalova, 2016).
- Crossroads happened in 1990 when immigrant's levels of education were noticeably higher. (This study is not about immigration, so I will not be presenting an analysis of “why” this occurred)



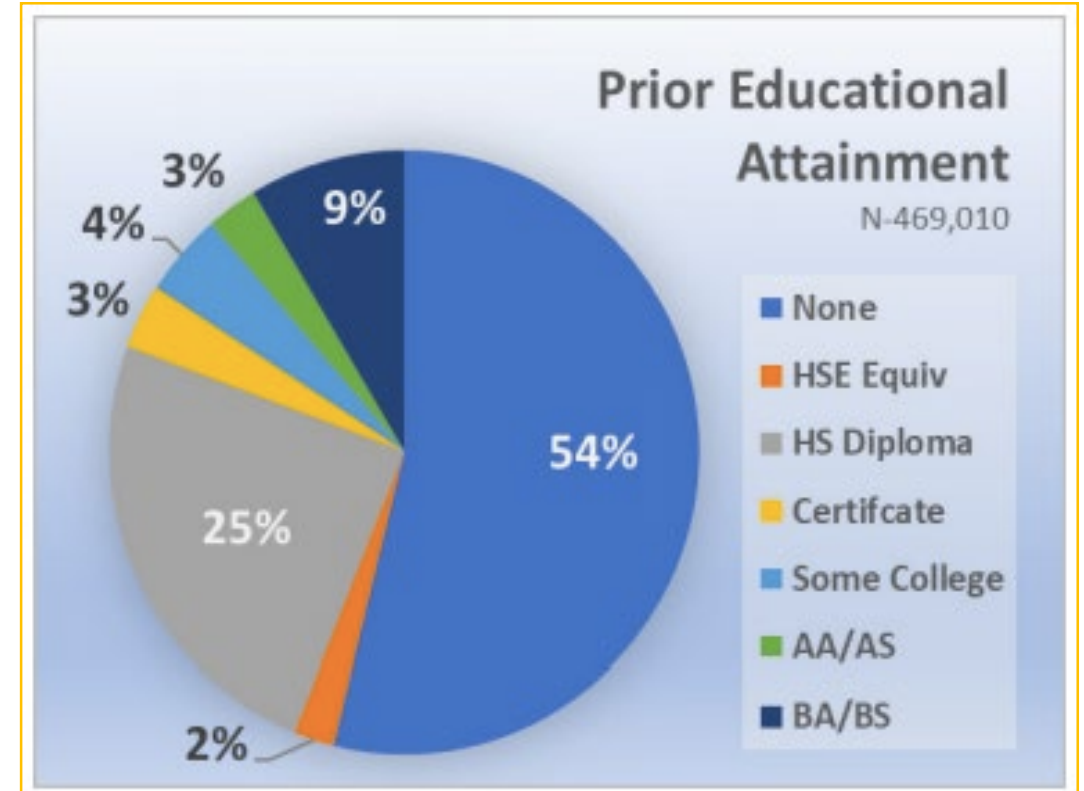
## College-Educated Immigrant Demographics



- In 2014, the state of California was home to the largest number of college-educated immigrants with 2.5 million (Zong & Batalova, 2016).
- What is happening with these 2.5 million college-educated immigrants in CA?
- Many are enrolling in adult education CTE programs trying to bridge into the workforce.

# 2016-17 AEBG Enrollment of College-Educated Population

- The 9% with a bachelor's degree represents over 42,000 individuals who are college-educated enrolled in adult education programs.
- The attainment level aligns with reports that significant numbers of immigrants enrolled in adult education have an earned degree from their country of origin and may be enrolled in CTE courses to enter the workforce (WestEd, 2018).



Adapted from *End-of-year report on implementation and effectiveness of the Adult Education Block Grant program for the 2016-2017 program year*, 2018, p. 28.

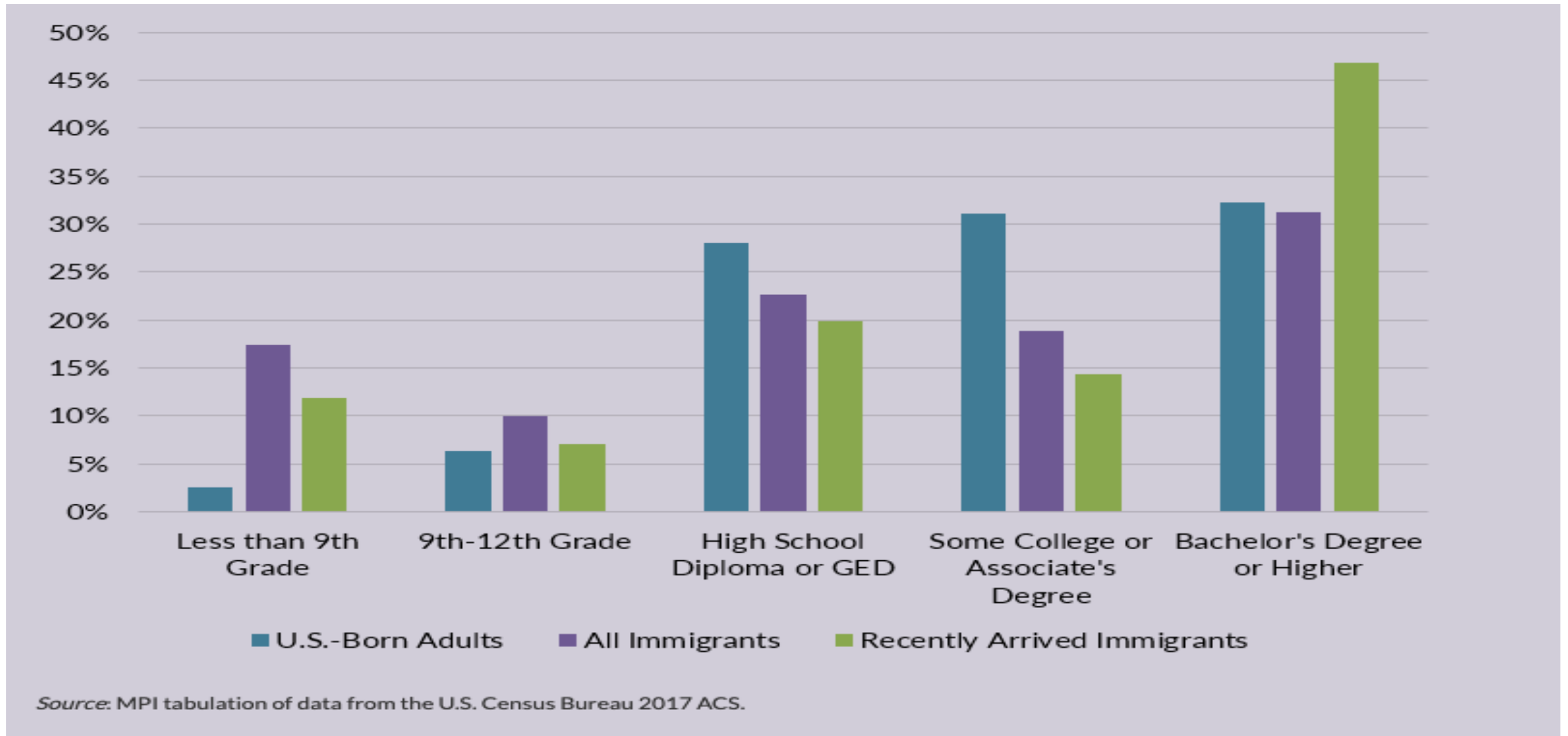
# Mismatched Academic Enrollment

- The conundrum is that they are enrolled in work certificate programs that are a mismatch for college-educated immigrants who may already possess professional level skills, enrolled in adult education CTE programs.
- Thus they are enrolled in a system not created for them.
- Examples included a doctor who was enrolled in a medical assistant program, a pharmacist enrolled in a pharmacy technician program, an economist enrolled in a business certificate. (Exception was those wanting to change careers... more on that later).

# College-Educated Immigrant Demographics

- Independent of how immigrants arrive in the U.S., they arrive with different levels of educational attainment.
- As shown in the graph on the next slide, in 2017 recently arrived immigrants with a bachelor's degree or higher was the largest of all categories at 47%, a total much higher than the 32% for U.S.-born adults. One of the largest educational disparities is for all immigrants 25 years of age and older who possess less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade level of education.

# College-Educated Immigrant Demographics



*Educational Attainment of U.S.-Born Adults, All Immigrant, and Recently Arrived Immigrant Residents, 2017*

# College-Educated Immigrant Demographics

- College-educated immigrants are more likely than the overall immigrant population to have proficiency in English, thus increasing the pathway to employment.
- In 2014, for those immigrants with a college-education, only 27% reported they had limited English proficiency as compared to 50% of the total immigrant population (Zong & Batalova, 2016).



# College-Educated Immigrant Demographics

- As the research has indicated, recent immigrants tend to have higher educational attainment than those from previous immigrant generations, and shifts have occurred in the countries of origin for all immigrants with Asia, Central America and Africa showing large areas of growth (Zong & Batalova, 2019).
- From 2010-2017, the immigrant population in the U.S. increased by 4.6 million, and 15 countries contributed 76% of that growth came from India, China, Dominican Republic, Philippines, Cuba, El Salvador, Venezuela, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala, Nigeria, Brazil, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Haiti (Zong & Batalova, 2019).
- In 2017, California had the largest population of college-educated immigrants with 10.7 million, Texas had 4.9 million, New York had 4.5 million, Florida had 4.4 million, and New Jersey had 2.1 million immigrants (Zong et al., 2019).



Economic Impact

# Brain Waste

- The pathway to employment for college-educated immigrants has a focus on the underutilization of their skills and education.
- This phenomenon is known as brain waste, which refers to foreign born and college-educated immigrants that have earned professional qualifications but are underutilizing their skills on the job or are unemployed altogether (Batalova et al., 2016).
- The brain waste phenomenon is important because it impacts an individual and their family across the life-span and socio-economic standards and productivity.
- There is a cost associated with underemployment and underutilization of skills on the economy as immigrants earn less in wages.

# Economic Impact of Skill Underutilization

- In 2016, 1.9 million of those college-educated individuals experienced unemployment or underemployment by working in low-skilled jobs (Batalova et al., 2016).
- The brain waste phenomenon is the result of a temporary mismatch between an immigrant's career development, language skills, and education, due to imperfect information about the deliberate search for employment (Hartog, 2000).
- In the U.S. between 2009 and 2013, there were nearly two million college educated immigrants who were either underemployed or unemployed (Batalova et al., 2016).

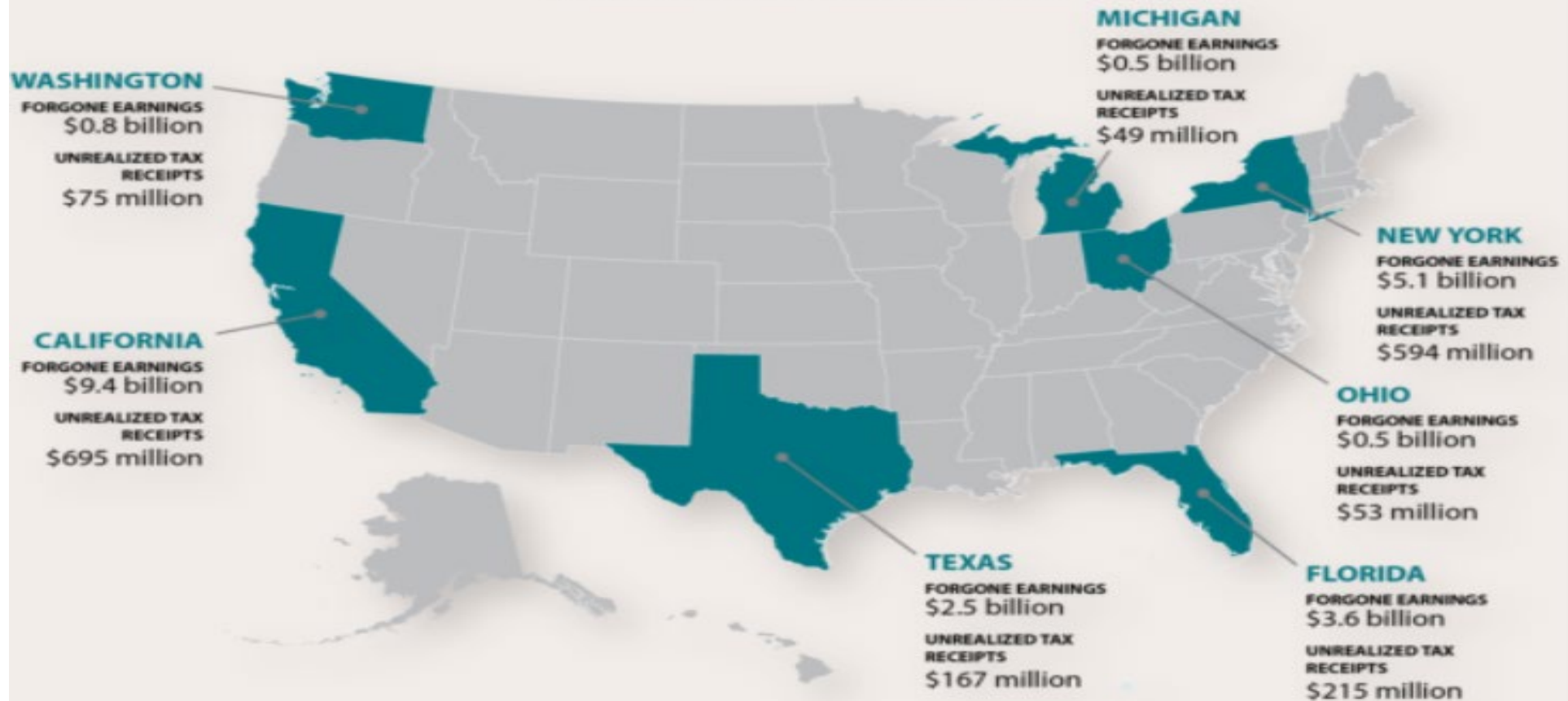
**UNITED STATES**

**\$39.4 billion in forgone earnings annually**

**\$10.2 billion in forgone taxes annually**

\$7.2 billion in federal taxes

\$3 billion in state and local taxes



# Brain Waste in California

- College-educated immigrants in California forgo approximately \$9.4 billion in annual earnings by being underemployed, and this translates to California experiencing \$694.8 million in forgone state and local annual tax revenue (Ruiz et al., 2016).
- 25% of college-educated immigrants in California experienced brain waste as compared to 19% of their U.S. born counterparts. Additionally, low-skilled employment is higher by six percentage points for immigrants than U.S. born individuals in California. As noted in the table on the next slide

# Brain Waste in California

	California		United States	
	Immigrants	U.S. Born	Immigrants	U.S. Born
<b>Total labor force</b>	<b>1,806,000</b>	<b>3,896,000</b>	<b>7,618,000</b>	<b>37,936,000</b>
<i>Percent</i>	100	100	100	100
Unemployed	6	6	6	4
Employed by job type				
High-skilled	56	63	57	62
Middle-skilled	19	18	18	19
Low-skilled	19	13	19	14
<b>Brain waste: Unemployed or in low-skilled jobs</b>				
Number	452,000	728,000	1,918,100	6,974,800
Percent	25	19	25	18

*Source:* Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data from the pooled 2009-13 American Community Survey (ACS) and 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), with legal status assignments by James Bachmeier of Temple University and Jennifer Van Hook of The Pennsylvania State University, Population Research Institute.

# Factors Linked to Skill Underutilization

- There are several factors that contribute to skill underutilization of immigrants, including place of education, English proficiency, legal status or citizenship, place of origin (race/ethnicity), length of time in the U.S., and level and field of degree earned (Batalova et al., 2016).
  - The first contributing factor, *place of education*, leads to questions of *perceived differences in the quality of domestic versus foreign education*, the access to professional networks, and recognition of foreign acquired licensing by educational and government agencies (Ruiz et al., 2016).
  - Both foreign-born and U.S. born individuals reporting very low and medium levels of English proficiency were *three times more likely to experience brain waste* than those who were reported higher levels of fluency and proficiency in English (Bergson-Shilcock, 2015).
  - Other reasons include the lack of U.S. work experience, *the lack of work experience validation* by U.S. employers, and the lack of *recognition of foreign-earned credentials* (Morse & Chanda, 2018).
- The largest disparities exist for those immigrants holding degrees in education and business, and the least disparity is for those with computer sciences or biological sciences degrees, resulting in equal underutilization percentages for both groups.



# Global Recognition of Foreign Credentials

- Credential recognition by a host country is complex because it brings together policy, immigration, trade, employment, education, and immigrant integration.
- To assist with overcoming this barrier of education and qualification recognition, several policies have emerged, but no industry has solved the problem altogether.
- Many of the entities involved in the solution process include employers, regulators and professional associations, national and subnational governments, and nonprofit organizations such as universities and credentialing assessment bodies (Sumption, 2013).
- Some of the challenges with the recognition of foreign earned credentials also include defining what “recognition” means, because industries exist both as regulated and unregulated entities. An additional barrier for some immigrants is access to documentation to prove educational attainment especially if they arrived from a conflict-torn country of origin (Rabben, 2013).

# Career Laddering

- One pathway available to immigrants while they are working on having their credentials recognized is called “career laddering,” where they work in a lower-level position while working toward professional certification by retraining.
- Currently both the United Kingdom and Canada have established special programs built on mentoring, teaching vocational English, and offering continuing education to ease the integration of professionals into their respective fields (Rabben, 2013).

# Recognition of Foreign Credentials in the U.S.

- The U.S. does not have any single structure that governs the qualifications of professionals who need certification in regulated occupations.
- Each state has its own rules, regulations, and fees for professional licensing.
- Additionally, state-based professional licensing is often not transferable across states, thus compounding the barrier to recognition, certification or licensing (Rabben, 2013).
- For some industries, individuals are required to perform hours on site at internships, residencies, or apprenticeships to obtain hands-on experience in addition to academic course work.
- The gatekeeping role in many instances is held by professional associations and accreditation bodies, this is representing a vast patchwork of fragmented articulation between different organizations (Rabben, 2013).

# Impact and Fluctuations on Workforce

- There are many factors that affect the labor force participation in the U.S.
- Three major influencers include the demographics of the labor force, automation and alternative staffing and employment.
- The current U.S. labor force demographics are influenced by an aging workforce, the retirement of baby boomers, increased presence of racial and ethnic minorities and continued immigration.
- Automation will force workers to make skill adjustments, especially for those less educated, and alternative staffing is creating a new relationship between employer-employee relations as the “gig” economy grows and independent contracting is more pronounced (Holzer, 2019).

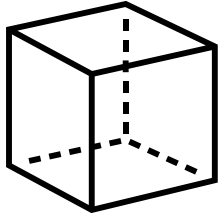


# Case-Study Reserach

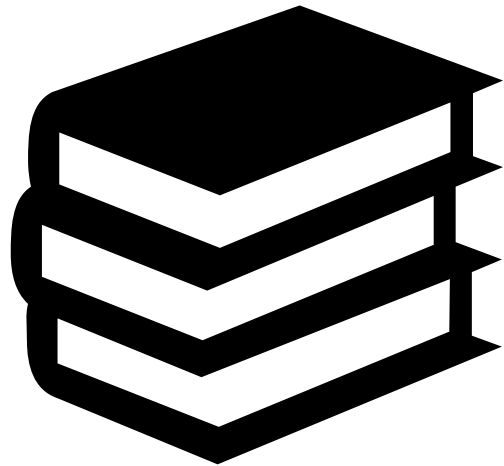
## Research Question

What are the experiences of college-educated immigrants enrolled in Career Technical Education (CTE) adult school programs seeking to acquire essential workplace skills to enter the workforce in the U.S.?





# Limitations of the Research



- Only collecting research from one site offering adult education noncredit CTE programs, thus the findings are not generalizable.
- Participants could have been enrolled in multiple adult education programs in addition to the CTE program.
- The research was conducted over the period of one trimester with participants who were currently enrolled. There was no possibility of any longitudinal data being collected by including individuals who had already finished the program.
- This study was conducted at a community college noncredit CTE site; it did not include a K-12 Adult Education CTE program.

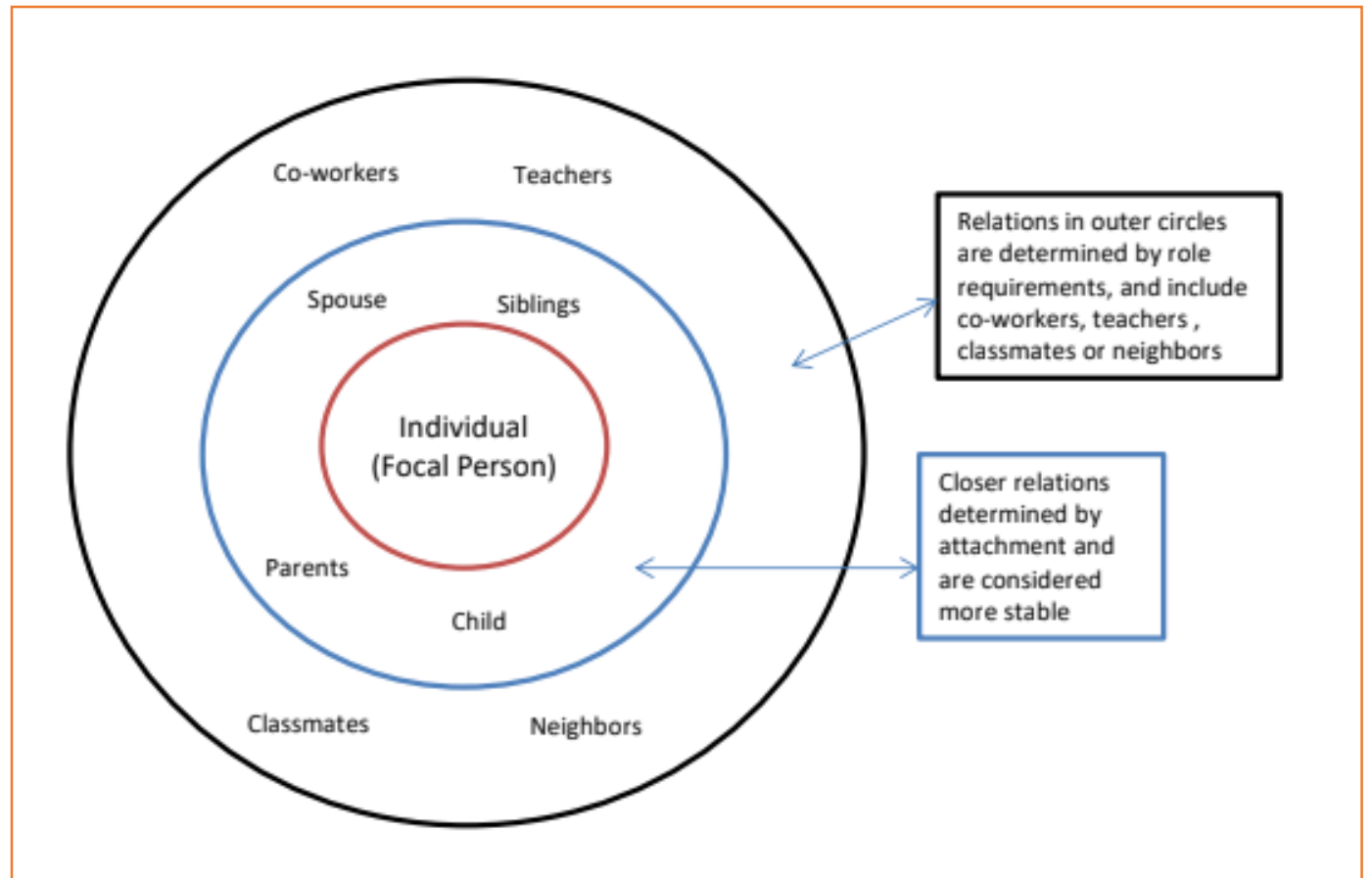
# Theoretical Framework



- The delimitations for this study included the decision to use the Convoy Model as the theoretical framework which has the focus on social networks, not on social capital.
- The study explored how college-educated immigrants may create and use CTE adult education programs to develop social networks as they connect with other students, teachers, and staff.
- The purpose of this qualitative case study was to collect information from participants on how they engaged in and made meaning of their activities or experiences in adult education as a means of career preparation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).
- The Convoy Model highlights the importance of the cumulative effect of social relations; the quality of relations is more important than the structure or durability as the convoy travels with an individual through time and space (Antonucci, 2009)



# Hierarchical Map of Convoy Model



The Convoy Model was used as a framework to explain the multiple dimensions of support that social relations provide an immigrant. The notion of a social convoy supports the aspects of an immigrant's life as set in their divergent cultural and national contexts (Antonucci, 2009)

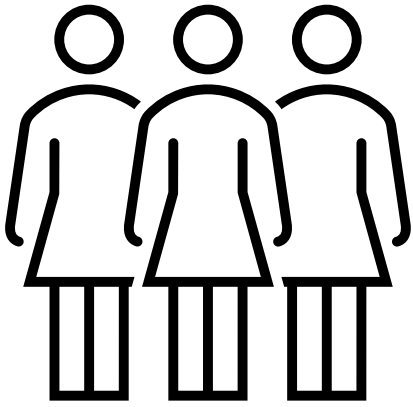
# Methodology

## Qualitative Case Study

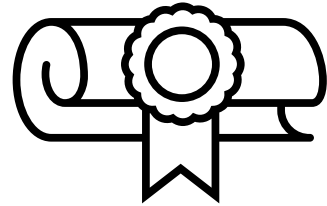
- Conducted research during the Winter 2020 trimester January–March 2020
- 14 individuals matched the study characteristics
- Individual interviews were conducted over an 8-week period

## Study Participants

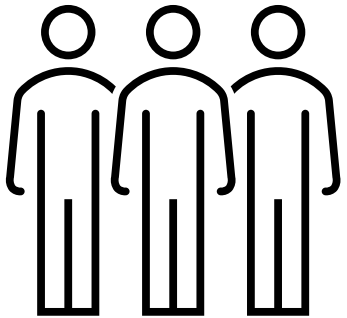
- 14 Participants interviewed
  - Currently enrolled in a CTE program
  - Earned a bachelor's degree or higher from their country of origin
- CTE career pathway with highest enrollment were healthcare careers

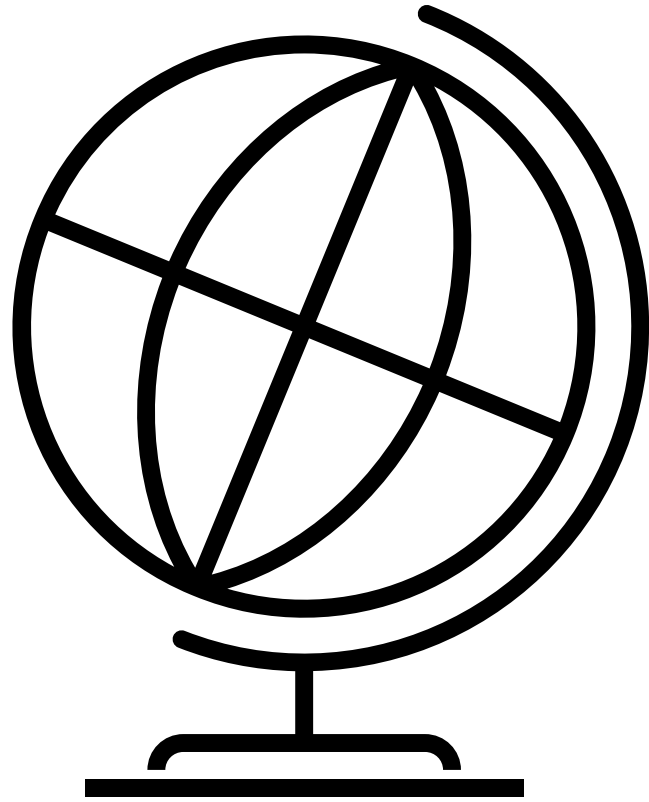


## Demographics of the Participants



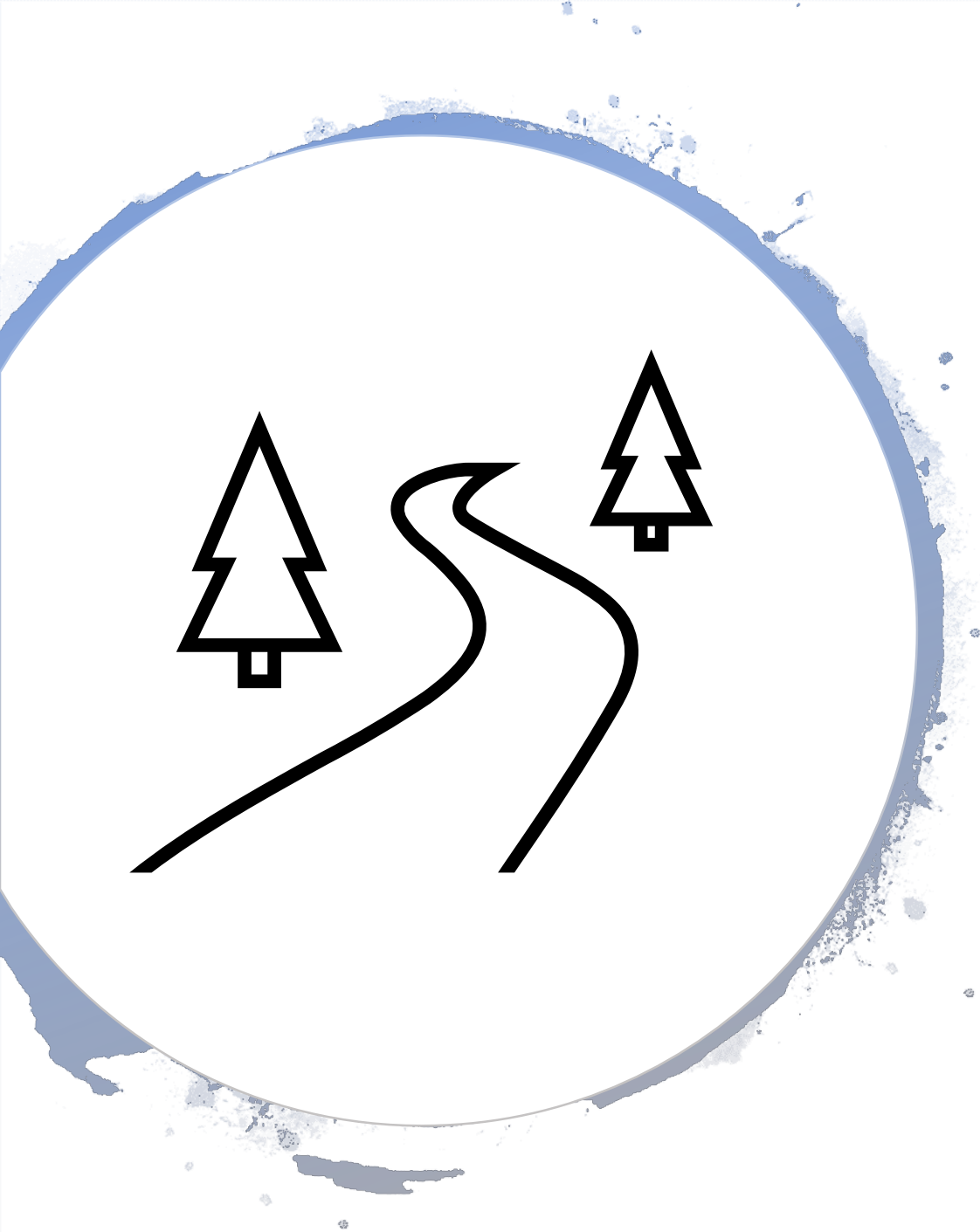
- 12 female and 2 male
- 10 between ages of 22-55 years old
- 2 medical doctoral degrees
- 1 master's degree
- 11 bachelor's degrees





## Demographics of the Student Participants

- Egypt – 3 Participants
- India – 1 Participant
- Korea – 1 Participant
- Mexico – 2 Participants
- Palestine – 1 Participant
- Peru – 1 Participant
- Philippines – 1 Participant
- Romania – 1 Participant
- Thailand – 1 Participant
- Turkey – 1 Participant
- Syria – 1 Participant



## Their Journey's & Stories

- Qualitative study is meant to highlight the participant stories, when you can't observe them, the "interview" process is used.
- Pseudonyms for participants
- Pseudonym for campus

# Themes

## **Career Changes**

- Dedicated to starting over
- Career exploration and choices
- Building and modifying their new career pathway
- Emotions and complexity behind degree validation
- Learning the American way

## **Resiliency**

- Not knowing anyone at MDC College
- Acquiring a new language
- Overcoming personal circumstances
- Navigating an unfamiliar educational system

## **Welcoming Campus Environment**

- Emotional and psychological wellbeing
- Campus characteristics support goal achievement

# Theme One – Career Change & Exploration

- In the interviews, all participants described experiencing a career change; they were in transition, and aware that their profession may not pick up in the U.S. where they left off in their home country.
- They were asked to share details about their backgrounds, the type of profession, and career they held before moving to the U.S., their perceptions of attaining a college education, and about their long-term career goals.
- All the interview participants discussed being aware they were starting over, the early influences on their career exploration, the impact these had on the degrees they earned, and their options and access to higher education.
- They were willing to begin a new career path, as evidenced by 10 participants selecting a new profession, and four seeking to build and modify previous ones

# Theme One – Career Change & Exploration

## *Dedicated to starting over*

- All participants displayed situational awareness of needing to adapt and potentially start over along a career path.
- This investment in their future was tied to their choice to stay in the U.S. and their resilience in overcoming the anxiety caused by the unknown details of starting a new career.
- All the interview participants expressed being aware of their reality in starting over, yet they were focused on the future and the start of a new profession.



# Participant Voice

“I am very aware that the medical assistant job I am studying for now would be a beginning level, and I did not expect a high salary. I do hope that, one day, once I become a nurse, that I will make more money.”

[Sarah]

“So, the same way that I changed from going from hotel management to accounting, I am now changing from accounting to the medical field. I am ok with starting over because my plan is to go to a new field now.”

[Norma]

# Theme One – Career Change & Exploration

## *Career exploration and making choices*

- All the interviewees spoke about career exploration, choices, and the influences on their careers.
- Influence came from close family members who were already in a specific field, and parents who guided the decisions participants made.
- In all, all participants shared personal details of successes and failures that were a part of their journey to MDC College.

# Participant Voice

“My high school scores were not good enough for me to go into pharmacy school. My limited choices allowed for me to get a degree in art and literature. I enrolled here because they had my first choice: pharmacy.” [Lexi]

“There are four doctors in my family, dating back when I was in elementary school. I found I liked medicine. That’s why I entered medical school to become a doctor.” [Miles]

# Theme One – Career Change & Exploration

## ***Building and modifying their new career pathway***

- All participants expressed a willingness to modify their career paths or build new ones by incorporating elements of their previous professional experiences.
- Some participants planned to build on previous knowledge by enrolling in a master's degree program as a second step along their career advancement,
- The theme in these findings is important because career exploration is a part of creating a new professional identity, and individuals need a place to feed their curiosity that also allows them to explore areas of interest.
- Five participants chose to build on existing knowledge and chose to advance within the same professional field by enrolling in graduate programs

# Participant Voice

“I want to do the management certificate program so that I can prepare to do an MBA. I would like to be an entrepreneur and establish my own engineering and construction company.” [Sofia]

“My degree did not match the experience I have. I then decided to change from accounting to the medical field by enrolling in the pharmacy technician program.” [Norma]

# Theme One – Career Change & Exploration

## *Emotions and complexity behind degree validation*

- Through degree validation, foreign credentials are translated and evaluated to receive equivalency in the U.S.
- All participants were asked about their level of knowledge about the degree validation process in the U.S. and if they would consider this process. There were mixed emotions in response to this.
- As participants spoke, their voice grew softer and pauses between their words grew longer, as if they were reliving the emotion of past decisions.
- Five of the ten participants needed some time to collect themselves and their emotions before continuing with the remaining interview questions.

# Participant Voice

“I did not consider to validate my degree because it has been almost 20 years since then and the program path was not clear. Even though the degree is a bachelor’s in computer science, it was a mix of subjects.” [Coco]

“I had heard something about validating, but I thought you had to do it within 5 years of getting your degree, but I am not really sure it is true. I heard that from a friend.” [Diana]

“I am not very young right now, so, by the time I would finish in 7 years to validate my medical certificate to practice as a doctor, it would be time for me to retire. So, that is why my choice [is] to do a master’s degree instead. [That] would take me 2 to 3 years, and I can still make some good income. All this research took me 1 year. I do not have 7 years to give up with no guarantee at the end.” [Miles]

# Theme One – Career Change & Exploration

## *Learning the American way*

- All participants reported having a sense of responsibility to learning the American way of doing things, either through work experience or through workshops offered on the MDC College campus.
- Half of the participants were excited when they spoke of becoming and behaving more American.
- They spoke of being committed to integrating into the American culture, and thus building a new professional identity by learning the professional etiquette and behavior for the U.S. work culture.



# Participant Voice

Lexi worked in a fast-food restaurant and said “I work there to try and understand the country, the culture, the people, how to go here, how to go there. I needed to update my behavior here in America, and, little by little, I began to love America more and more.”

“The resource center also showed me how to talk in an interview and how to apply and how to fill out the application. They also taught me how I should dress for an interview and what to say and what not to say in an interview.” [Sofia]

# Theme Two - Resiliency

- The theme of resiliency emerged in all interviews, particularly in terms of what interview participants did not say.
  - None said they wanted to leave the U.S. and return to their country of origin.
  - None of the 14 participants expressed remorse about their decision to move to the U.S. or voiced a desire to leave.
- The commitment to staying in the U.S. motivated and pushed them to overcome challenges and to be resilient.
- Interview data showed that participants learned how to cope with not knowing anyone on campus, overcame challenges in learning a new language, and did not let personal life challenges hold them back.
- Additionally, participants admitted they were unfamiliar with how to navigate the education system in the U.S., relying heavily on direction from academic counselors.



## Theme Two - Resiliency

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### ***Not knowing anyone at MDC College***

- Participants were asked if they knew someone at MDC College prior to enrolling.
- 12 of the 14 participants expressed that they did not.
- 6 participants made friends while enrolled in courses and stayed connected with them after the courses had finished.

# Participant Voice

“I didn't know anybody when I started, and thanks to some of the classwork, we had to do group work, I was able to meet some people, and they became my friends. I would say about half the people in the class I made friends with afterward.” [Lexi]

“I come here from zero. I did not know anybody, although, when I came here, I also brought my wife with me, but she enrolled in some ESL classes. I keep to myself. Maybe because I am older, I don't have any friends here.” [Miles]

## Theme Two - Resiliency

### *Acquiring a new language*

- All 14 participants said they had previously enrolled in English classes in their home countries and spoke some English when they arrived in the U.S.
- Three participants enrolled in ESL programs at other community colleges, and four were enrolled in ESL courses at MDC College alongside their CTE programs.

# Participant Voice

“I came to MDC College to practice a little bit more my English. I began to learn English from watching the show *I Love Lucy*.” [Diana]

“I don’t speak English very good. I took classes in my country. I speak enough to come here, but I would like to practice my English with people who speak it here and to get used to the American system of education.” [Isabel]

## Theme Two - Resiliency

### ***Overcoming personal circumstances***

- The commitment of all the participants to reside in the U.S. fueled their drive to overcome personal circumstances and achieve their goals.
- Five interviewees reported difficult personal life circumstances and challenges, yet they found motivation to move forward. Interviewees narrated events like overcoming strained financial situations, lack of access to documentation, and divorce.

# Participants Voice

“At one point, I had also looked at classes at Fullerton College for an accounting program, but I would have to pay for it, and I didn't have the money to pay for the classes, and, here, I found out that they were free. My goal was to start a career.” [Diana]

“I think they were asking me something about the registration for my license for being a pharmacist in Romania. They needed the proof in a sealed envelope, and I needed it translated. So, physically, I need to obtain the transcript, but I'm not able to return to my country for political reasons.” [Isabel]

“I got a divorce, and that's why I needed to start looking for a job. I don't have any family here, but, in the last four years, I have had some very good friends that support and help me. So, I have the challenge right now of rebuilding my life by myself. But I think, now, I'm getting to a stable point in my life here in America where I have my job.” [Lexi]



# Theme Two - Resiliency

## *Navigating an unfamiliar educational system*

- The integration of counseling into the transition to postsecondary education or the workforce is an essential component of adult education.
- The academic counseling offered to immigrant students is integral in addressing the gaps they face when navigating an unfamiliar educational system and acquiring workforce skills.
- Academic counselors are among the first points of contact for a student, as they assist with self-assessment, education planning, and enrollment.
- All participants expressed a sense of abandonment and feeling lost in an unfamiliar educational system, but their commitment to reaching their long-term career goals pushed them to overcoming the fear and enroll at MDC College.



# Participants Voice

“It would be very helpful to have a service that can take copies of our transcripts and walk us through how we could get them translated.”

[Michelle]

“The counselor gave me a website for the evaluation of foreign transcripts, but she didn't actually tell me how to do it. She just gave me the website for the translation, but I wasn't sure about the evaluation part. I don't know what that process is.” [Kevin]

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# Theme Two - Resiliency

- Overall, all the participants were resilient when they faced challenges navigating a new educational system.
- They discussed feeling confused as they determined what the next steps were for their career path.
- Their initial contact with an academic counselor exemplified how much they did not know about the American education system.
- However, the limited knowledge they had about the educational system was only a temporary setback as they worked to inform themselves about their educational options.

## Theme Three – Welcoming Campus Environment



### ***Emotional and psychological wellbeing***

- All the participants expressed that staff were friendly and positive and that they felt welcomed at MDC College.
- Interview participants experienced a sense of wellbeing because staff were helpful and patient, which contributed to their decision to enroll at the campus.

# Participant Voice

“People receive you here, and I feel safe. The people are very kind and helpful. They're very cooperative and positive. When you love the place, you love what you study and the people here, so I'm really excited to see what is next.” [Kevin]

“I really like the education system here. Even though I'm not young, I have had a great opportunity to study here. I felt very welcome, and I feel like they help me have an open mind to encourage me to study more.” [Sarah]

# Theme Three – Welcoming Campus Environment

## ***Campus characteristics support goal achievement***

- Tuition-free courses reduced the financial barriers, mailing the course catalog increased inclusivity, and not requiring residency documentation increased access for college-educated immigrants.
- Participants expressed gratitude for having access to the programs and feeling included and accepted.
- MDC College was accessible and welcoming to an immigrant population that had otherwise experienced rejection and setbacks at other educational sites.

# Participant Voice

“I found the program for medical assistant here and it was free, and they didn't ask me if I had fixed my papers, my documents. When I was about halfway through the program here, my papers were fixed. Here, the people were very friendly and helpful.” [Miles]

“My husband researched. He went on the internet, and, one day, he told me why you don't try and go here. He told me it was free tuition. When he first told me the programs here were free, I didn't believe him. I thought, ‘Why would they do that?’” [Norma]

“I had issues getting my transcripts from my country because I changed my name when I got married, so it made it difficult for me to try to find a school here that will accept me without documents.” [Isabel]

# Study Generated Three Findings

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Career Pathway Exploration

Network Exploration



# First Finding

## ***Accessibility and Inclusivity***

- MDC College policies ensure all students are accepted regardless of residency status, socioeconomics, English proficiency and previous educational attainment.
- Having limited choices elsewhere, participants chose to enroll at MDC College quite simply because they could.
- MDC College has a welcoming environment, tuition-free courses, and no requirement of residency status.

## Second Finding

### *Career Pathway Exploration*

- Enrolled in CTE programs to explore career pathways, and possibly change careers.
- Needed American and workplace cultural integration.
- Had an awareness of the reality of entry level earnings and the underutilization of their skill.

## Third Finding

### ***Network Exploration***

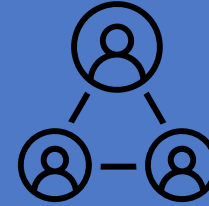
- Interacted with campus staff, counselors, instructors and other students.
- Explored and created relationships with different levels of attachment, framed by the role requirements.

# Convoy Model & Findings

## *Creation of a Network*

- Immigration to the U.S. disrupted the second concentric circle, as immediate family members were left behind in their country of origin.
- After enrollment at MDC College, interactions with campus staff, academic counselors, classmates, and instructors exposed participants to the creation of a new network filling in the third concentric circle.
- The highest level of interaction was with their spouses and children, followed by academic counselors, staff, classmates, and lastly instructors.

# Convoy Model & The Findings



## ***Socialization***

- Immigrants do not have the opportunity to observe elders across the life-span to develop situational awareness and adjust as they integrate into a new culture.
- Participants described a need to be socialized into the American and workforce cultures.
- 11 different countries were represented by the study participants, highlighting the cultural diversity on the campus.
- Academic counselors provided the greatest level of tangible exchange, absent family members to give career advise.

# Recommendations

## Dedicated Counselor

- Hire a dedicated counselor to work with immigrant students.
- Dedicated counselors would assist students with navigating the American education system: connecting them to government assistance, guiding students through the degree validation process, and offering continuous support throughout the semester.

## Mentorship Program

- Establish a mentorship program to assist college-educated immigrant students with socialization and acculturation.
- The program would support students with learning professional etiquette, including professional language and attire for interviews.

## Comprehensive Professional Licensure Data Bank

- Create a dedicated website to house occupational and licensure information with clear employment pathways.
- The dedicated website would be an interactive list of requirements for licensure or certification that can be used during counseling sessions.

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- **So many more references .. Please ask for the complete list via email**



Thank you!



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