An Examination of the Occupational Engagement of First-Generation College Students and the Predictive Nature of Career Courses

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine occupational engagement among first-generation as compared to continuing-generation college students who enrolled in different types of career courses at a single institution of higher education. In performing the study, the relationship between participation in these career courses and the occupational engagement of first-generation college students (FGCS) was analyzed. This was determined by reviewing the results of pre and post-test Occupational Engagement Scale – Student (OES-S) scores that were completed by student participants in college career courses at the University of Kansas, a large public institution in the Midwest. The occupational engagement of FGCS was examined controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level (e.g. sophomore, junior).

A total of 958 pre and post-test OES-S scores were analyzed. These came from five different career courses over the span of five terms (spring 2017, summer 2017, fall 2017, spring 2018, and summer 2018). The study found no significant difference in OES-S scores between first-generation and continuing-generation students. The study did find a relationship between increased grade level and increased OES-S scores. The study found a significant difference (increase) between pre and post-test OES-S scores for each of the course for all students participating. This demonstrates the positive value of these career courses in improving the occupational engagement of students. However, only two of the courses showed significantly improved OES-S scores for first-generation students specifically. Controlling for first-generation status, gender, grade level, and race/ethnicity, no career course showed a significant relationship between the difference between pre and post-test OES-S scores and the predictor variables.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Recent studies have found career development and job preparation to be the primary reason for college attendance both from the parent and student perspective (Carlson, 2017; Wyer, 2013). Thus, a major demand exists for robust and effective services in the area of career development. For-credit career courses are an important type of career development service offered by institutions of higher education. Colleges and universities have offered career education programs for more than 90 years (Hansen, Jackson & Pederson, 2017). Career courses are diverse in their design and implementation, whether being administered within certain departments and majors or as an elective credit open to all students on campus (Folsom & Reardon, 2003; Reardon, Folsom, Lee, & Clark, 2011).

Within the field of career development, various theories, constructs, and surveys exist to guide the work of career counselors in assisting individuals in their career development (Holland, 1973; Levinson, Ohier, Caswell & Kiewra, 1998). One career development construct that was developed in recent years is called occupational engagement (Krieshok, Black & McKay, 2009). Occupational engagement is defined "…as taking part in behaviors that contribute to the career decision-maker's fund of information and experience of the larger world, not just the world as processed when a career decision is imminent" (Krieshok et al., 2009, p. 284). Occupationally engaging behaviors include participating in internships, working part-time, job shadowing, attending career presentations as well as other career development related activities (Cox, Bjornsen, Krieshok & Liu, 2016). Ultimately as individuals engage in such activities, they gain knowledge about themselves, the world, and the relationship of themselves and the world. Such knowledge helps students make a better decision in terms of major selection and job choice (Cox

et al., 2016). Thus, this construct seeks to measure students' engagement in career development activities that will help students understand themselves and the world which in turn will support them in making better career decisions (a form of career development).

Today, students can take the occupational engagement survey, known as the Occupational Engagement Scale - Student (OES-S), to determine their perceived score of occupational engagement (Cox, Krieshok, Bjornsen & Zumbo, 2015). The OES-S can be useful to career counselors in helping individuals with their personal career development. It also can be useful to administrators at institutions of higher education to determine the influence of specific programming, such as career courses, on students' career development.

One group of students who may benefit from more career engagement are first-generation college students (FGCS). These students often struggle in their career development compared to continuing-generation students (i.e. students whose parents attended college or completed a bachelor's degree) (Hirudayaraj & Mclean, 2018; Parks-Yancy, 2012). Administrators can use the OES-S to determine FGCS' career development and whether new programming is needed to better serve this population. This study utilizes the OES-S to measure the career development of first-generation students who participated in career courses at a single institution. This introductory chapter defines the purpose, problem, and research questions for this study. It also includes a discussion of the sample for the study and general organization of the dissertation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine occupational engagement among first-generation students as compared to continuing-generation college students who enrolled in different types of career courses at a single institution of higher education. In performing the study, the relationship between participation in these career courses and the occupational

engagement of FGCS was analyzed. This was determined by reviewing the results of pre and post-test Occupational Engagement Scale – Student (OES-S) scores that were completed by student participants in college career courses at a single institution of higher education. The occupational engagement of FGCS was examined controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level (e.g. first-year student, sophomore, etc.).

Statement of the Problem

Research shows that first-generation college students (FGCS) struggle more in their career development and transition compared to continuing-generation college students (Hirudayaraj & Mclean, 2018; Parks-Yancy, 2012; Olson, 2016; Tate, Caperton, Kaiser, Pruitt, White & Hall, 2015). FGCS may struggle because of the differences in the types of work their own parents perform in comparison to the types of jobs college graduates are being prepared to undertake (Olson, 2016). They may struggle because of a lack of knowledge of the wide variety of career fields and opportunities that exist (Hirudayaraj & Mclean, 2018). One study found that most FGCS who already have a job plan to remain with their current employer following graduation with a hope of eventually moving up (Parks-Yancy, 2012). As a result, many FGCS who graduate are likely to be employed in entry level positions that do not require a bachelor's degree (Parks-Yancy, 2012). FGCS report their family's lack of knowledge of the college and career process as well as lack of professional network as factors in their career development struggle. All of these factors may be unique to the first-generation student regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity. The present study explores both the difference in career development between first and continuing-generation students as well as how participation in career courses may predict increased career development.

Research Questions

The following research questions were created to focus this study's purpose.

1. Are there significant differences in occupational engagement comparing first-generation and continuing-generation college students?
2. Controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level (e.g. first-year student, sophomore, etc.), is there a significant relationship between first-generation student status and occupational engagement scores?
3. Are there significant differences in occupational engagement among different types of career courses for first-generation and continuing-generation college students?
4. Controlling for first-generation status, gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level, does participation in particular types of career courses predict an increase in occupational engagement?

Data Sample

This study took place at the University of Kansas (KU) which is a large public institution in the Midwest. KU has approximately 18,500 undergraduates and 6,300 graduate students at its main campus in Lawrence, Kansas (Analytics & Institutional Research, n.d.). Approximately 22% of KU's students are first-generation students (U.S. News and World Report, n.d.). It is a predominantly white institution with 78.3 percent of students being white. Approximately 4.2 percent of students are Hispanic, 2.2 percent are Asian, 10.4 percent are black or African American, and 4.9 percent are two or more races (Analytics & Institutional Research, n.d.). KU is the flagship institution of higher education for the state of Kansas and is a premier research institution (University of Kansas, n.d.)

Data for this study were gathered from the University Career Center at the University of Kansas. This department administers five different career courses throughout the year that undergraduate students can take to improve their career knowledge and skills. These courses are named as follows:

- Career and Life Planning
- Job Search Strategies
- Professional Career Management
- Global Career Management
- Internship Exploration

The sample for this study includes a total of 958 responses from students who participated in these courses over a period of five consecutive terms (spring 2017, summer 2017, fall 2017, spring 2018, summer 2018). These courses are not major specific nor exclusive to any grade level though certain courses are generally aimed for lower and upper grade levels. Thus, respondents represent first year to senior year college students as well as students from a wide variety of majors. Section sizes for these classes varied widely from greater than 70 students to less than 20 students. Students in these courses completed pre- and post-surveys of the Occupational Engagement Scale – Student (OES-S) to determine whether the respective courses could predict changes in their occupational engagement. This study represents a secondary analysis of these data.

Significance of the Study

While many studies exist concerning first-generation students as well as career development, research regarding the career development of FGCS is more limited (Hartung & Blustein, 2002). Little to no research exists considering the effect of different types of career

courses on first-generation students. Measuring FGCS' occupational engagement in comparison to continuing-generation students as well as measuring the relationship of participation in different career courses and occupational engagement for FGCS are new approaches to studying these topics.

Such information is useful both in a local and broader context. At the University of Kansas, this study provides administrators with data concerning the occupational engagement of first-generation students. In recent years, the university has invested heavily in programming to support under-represented students including the Hawk Link and the Multicultural Scholars Program which both specifically focus on supporting first-generation students (University of Kansas, n.d.a). These programs are primarily focused on the retention and successful graduation of these students (University of Kansas, n.d.a). Data obtained from the present study may provide evidence of the need for additional career programming specifically focused on supporting FGCS. Also, while the University of Kansas invests heavily in career development for its students, this study will provide a form of assessment of the outcomes associated with career courses and whether adjustments should be made.

Beyond the University of Kansas, this study provides a greater understanding to higher education administrators of where FGCS stand in terms of their career development. It also provides further understanding to college administrators concerning the relationship of career courses and the occupational engagement of first and continuing-generation students. This is particularly beneficial to career services administrators who are often the primary implementers of various types of career courses. While studies regarding the effect of career courses on career planning, career decision making, major selection, and time to graduation have been undertaken, this study will provide a greater understanding of how particular types of career courses

influence students in terms of their career development (Folsom & Reardon, 2003). This study provides a template for college administrators to determine the career development of their own first-generation students and the influence of their respective career courses. Such information will assist administrators in their efforts to better support the unique needs of FGCS. This may result in the creation of more specified career programming for FGCS.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter one introduced the topic by describing the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, a brief description of the sample, as well as the significance of the study. Chapter two reviews the meaningful literature concerning career development, occupational engagement, career courses, and first-generational college students. Chapter three relates important information concerning the research methodology including further information about the data source and sample size, variables used to examine the research questions, statistical tests utilized for analysis, ethical considerations and limitations to the study. Chapter four presents the results of the data analysis. Chapter five provides a discussion of the findings while considering the context of the existing literature. This chapter also provides the contributions to practice and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the important literature pertaining to this study. Topics reviewed include career development, occupational engagement, career education in college, and first-generation college students.

Career Development

The roots of career development and counseling can be traced back to the work of Frank Parsons in 1909 (Hartung & Blustein, 2002). In his book, *Choosing a Vocation,* Parsons outlined a three-part model for career decision making. He stated:

> In the wise choice of a vocation, there are three broad factors: (1) a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations, and their causes; (2) a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; (3) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts (Parsons, 1909, p. 5).

Parson's theory is a trait-factor theory (Krieshok et al., 2009). It is rooted in a positivist, rational worldview and is identified by the scientific and logical matching of a person's traits and the requirements of a career field (Chen, 2003). "This match can be reasonably predicted and achieved by tools such as assessment instruments" (p. 204). Thus, according to the positivist worldview, objective observation, reason and measurement are all important factors to the career development process (Chen, 2003). Throughout the 20th century several career development theories have been created.

Today one of the most prominent career development theories is John Holland's theory of vocational personality types which was developed in the 1950s (Bailey, Larson, Borgen, &

Gasser, 2008; Holland, 1973). Holland's theory employs the similar rational approach as Parson's in that it asserts that personality types can be matched to certain job environments and this ultimately will lead to job satisfaction (both on the employee and employer end) (Krieshok et al., 2009).

According to Holland, there are six vocational categories: realistic, investigative, conventional, social, enterprising, and artistic (Holland, 1973). Those in the realistic category usually perceive themselves as having strengths in their mechanical or athletic skills but not in their human relation skills. Those in the investigative category utilize their intelligence to succeed. They prefer vocations in the sciences or other scholarly fields. They are usually introverted. Conventional types seek to reduce stress through social conformity. They see themselves as stable and may choose such fields that require clerical or computational tasks. Social types seek out fields that require a high level of social interaction. They may choose to be in leadership or other types of positions where individuals depend on them. Those in the enterprising category are impulsive, adventurous, and enthusiastic. They may seek positions in sales or leadership as they seek to gain power and acquire possessions. The artistic type prefers work that is creative in nature. They are non-sociable and introspective (Holland, 1973). Holland's theory can be utilized by individuals through completion of the Strong Interest Inventory survey which measures individual's dominant and non-dominant vocational personality types.

Another theory developed in the 1950s was Donald Super's Career Stages theory. This was adapted from Charlotte Buehler's concept of life stages proposing that throughout one's life there are five primary career stages that impose unique developmental tasks (Savickas, 2002; Super, 1957). First there is the Growth Stage (Savickas, 2002). This stage is usually between

ages four and thirteen and includes the development of a self-concept and a conception of how to make career decisions. Next is the Exploration Stage. This stage is usually between ages fourteen and twenty-four and includes the crystallization phase where individuals determine a vocational preference. After this is the Establishment Stage where one becomes stable in their occupational position. Individuals in this stage assimilate their respective organizational culture. This stage is usually between twenty-five to forty-four. Following this stage is the Maintenance Stage where individuals are tasked with re-evaluating their work experiences and revising their vocational self-concept. This is usually from forty-four to the mid-to later sixties. Finally, the Disengagement Stage happens usually around 65 or older. During this stage individuals are tasked with their retirement planning (Savickas, 2002).

As a means to measure Super's career development theory, a prominent assessment known as the Career Development Inventory (CDI) was created. The CDI measures a person's responses to the tasks within the following career stages: exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline (Savickas, 1984). Out of these responses an individual's total score is placed on a continuum from exploration to decline. Ultimately this score allows an individual to determine what tasks have been completed and can be anticipated (Savickas, 1984).

Another prominent assessment to measure career development was created by John Crites called the Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) (Hansen, 1974). The CMI "...was designed to measure the maturity of attitudes and competencies necessary for realistic career decision making" (p. 168). Crites (1965) developed four distinct dimensions to career maturity: 1) consistency of career choice over time, 2) realism of career choice in relation to personal capabilities and employment opportunities, 3) career choice attitudes, and 4) career choice competencies. The inventory includes an attitude scale and competency test to measure the latter

two dimensions. Attitude measurements include involvement in the career choice process, orientation toward work, and conceptions of career choice processes. The competency test specifically includes five items: 1) knowing yourself (self-appraisal), 2) knowing about jobs (occupational information), 3) choosing a job (goal selection), 4) looking ahead (planning), and 5) what should they do? (problem solving) (Hansen, 1974). The CDI and CMI are both prominent career development tools that have been utilized for decades (Levinson et al., 1998).

The present study utilized the more recently developed construct of occupational engagement to measure career development. Occupational engagement is a construct within the trilateral adaptive career decision making model (Krieshok et al., 2009). The theory of career adaptability is considered an update to the career maturity theory (Savickas, 1997). Occupational engagement and the trilateral model of career decision making will be discussed further in the next section.

Occupational Engagement

In the current global economy, one's career is generally marked by unpredictability (Savickas, 2000). Gone are the days when an individual would spend a career with one company let alone in a particular career field. "Multiple transitions now characterize the arc of a typical career" (Krieshok et al., 2009, p. 275). As a result, success in vocational decision making in many ways is much less a process of making a rational match between personality type or traits and a particular career field. But rather it is more about one's ability to adapt to change (Krieshok et al., 2009).

Krieshok (1998) reviewed literature on career decision making and determined that the process is not as rational as what may be perceived. In fact, most of the literature reviewed posited two systems of processing information. One being logical and conscious; the other being

intuitive and automatic (Krieshok, 1998). Neisser (1967) often considered the founder of cognitive psychology outlined two phases of decision making: one being where memory is accessed in a passive way providing a "rough draft" interpretation and the other requiring more analytic thought and evaluation where an initial interpretation may be manipulated. Neisser (1967) asserted that most forms of decision making never make it to the second phase.

Krieshok et al. (2009) asserted that both rational and intuitive (experiential) modes of processing are essential to career decision making. Krieshok et al. (2009) proposed a trilateral model for adaptive career decision making, which included rational decision making, intuitive decision making, and occupational engagement. Thus, career interventions that solely focus on introspective decision making (e.g. matching one's personality type to a particular career field) should be given less focus (Krieshok et al., 2009).

Occupational engagement is defined "…as taking part in behaviors that contribute to the career decision-maker's fund of information and experience of the larger world, not just the world as processed when a career decision is imminent" (Krieshok et al., 2009, p. 284). Occupational engagement consists of two subcomponents: exploration and enrichment (Cox et al., 2015). Exploration is gathering information in order to make a decision while enrichment is taking part in activities that increase information about self and the world as well as the relation between self and the world to make future decisions. According to Cox et al. (2016), "…occupationally engaging behaviors among college students include interning, volunteering, working part time, conducting informational interviews, and engaging in job shadowing" (p. 169). Others include "...attending presentations or seminars, visiting museums, joining clubs, and simply talking with professionals about their experience of work" (Cox et al., 2016, p. 169).

Cox et al. (2016) further explained that being occupationally engaged helps students develop sophisticated self-recognition in terms of their personal likes or dislikes, strengths or limitations as well as their values and skills. They also come to understand academic and vocational possibilities that lead to different career-related opportunities. Occupational engagement enables an interpersonal network that empowers their own career goals. Therefore, students can use knowledge about themselves, the world, and the relationship of themselves and the world to enact satisfying decisions (e.g. major selection and job) (Cox et al., 2016).

The OES-S can be a useful tool for career counselors in higher education (Cox et al., 2015). Counselors can use it to help clients identify occupationally engaging behaviors. They can assist their clients in understanding themselves, and the world, the relationship of themselves and the world so as to facilitate making sound career decisions. The OES-S can also be utilized by career counselors to pinpoint what occupationally engaging behaviors clients are not engaging in. Counselors can then more effectively collaborate with clients to participate in or execute experiential activities that will improve their occupational engagement. Counselors can play a crucial role in helping resolve concerns and misunderstandings to ultimately motivate the client to engage in occupationally engaging activities (Cox et al., 2015). Thus, according to proponents of occupational engagement, career counselors should focus on encouraging and supporting participation in engaging activities as opposed to helping clients make introspective decisions about their careers (Cox et al., 2016).

Krieshok (1998) reviewed the literature and found evidence of negative effects from reflective, rational introspection when it comes to making career decisions. According to Bargh and Barndollar (1996), when individuals do a great deal of introspecting, they generate reasons not particularly salient to the decisions at hand as they are forced to depend on their memory.

Memory is not a reprint or pure reflection of the past but rather is created or reconstructed by an individual (Krieshok, 1998). This can cause individuals to make errors in their decision making that can lead to career dissatisfaction. Similarly, Wilson and Schooler (2008) concluded that too much introspection in decision making can lead to errors. They asserted that evaluation of multiple attributes can moderate people's judgments, and actually cause less ability to discriminate between alternatives (Wilson & Schooler, 2008). This is important to understand because the Occupational Engagement Scale utilized in this study focuses on measuring the actions one has taken regarding their career development as opposed to introspecting in a rational way about where one may be on a career spectrum or what type of career may be a good fit according to one's personality or interests.

Previous studies utilizing the occupational engagement scale have focused on the relationship of OES-S scores and demographic variables. Cox (2008) sought to find relationships between OES-S scores and several variables including major, race/ethnicity, gender, and grade level. The study reported no significant relationships between gender nor race/ethnicity. However, the study did find first-year student OES-S scores to be significantly less than the three higher grade levels. Further, a significant relationship was found between student major and OES-S scores with humanities students having the highest scores and undecided students having the lowest (Cox, 2008).

Duave (2015) studied sports management majors and found a significant relationship between OES-S scores and both grade level and locus of control. This study included a sample size of 198 participants in sports management major courses. The average OES-S score was 30.91. Hook (2012) reviewed the relationship of occupational engagement and student athletes. They found athletes to have significantly lower scores of occupational engagement than non-

athletes. Hook (2012) similarly found grade level to be a predictor of OES-S scores, but in contrast to Cox (2008), found female athletes to have significantly higher occupational engagement scores than males. Ghosh and Fouad (2018) studied 100 veterans and found that as career adaptability resources increase, occupational engagement scores decrease. The average occupational engagement score for the sample group was 30.89 (Ghosh & Fouad, 2018). Literature on occupational engagement and the prior studies that have utilized the OES-S provide an informative foundation for understanding the results of the present study. For example, relating a previous study's sample findings of the mean OES-S score provides a useful comparison to the present study's sample mean OES-S score.

College Students and Career Education

For more than 90 years, institutions of higher education have offered formal career education and vocational support programs (Hansen et al., 2017). Today students' primary rationale for attending college has to do with career preparation and success (Carlson, 2017; Wyer, 2013). When one large public university in the Western United States surveyed parents of college students about their expectations for a college degree, the most common answer was to help their child find a job (Carlson, 2017). Further, when asked what aspects of the college campus was of most interest to them, the career center came in second to campus safety. In 2014, the think tank New America commissioned a poll to determine why students go to college. The three most prominent answers included 1) to get a job, 2) to make more money and 3) to get a good job (Carlson, 2017). Thus, today's parents and students are highly focused on the career outcomes of a college education.

These hopes for employment and higher income are based in the reality of what statistics show a bachelor's degree can offer in comparison to only holding a high school diploma.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate and median annual salary for those with a bachelors is 2.7 percent and $60,112 respectively; whereas for those with a high school diploma, the unemployment rate and annual wage is 5.2 percent and $35,984 respectively (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). While a college degree is statistically a positive investment, the focus of parents and students on career preparation during the college experience is likely to only intensify because of the burdensome cost of attaining a bachelor's degree today (Carlson, 2017). The average student debt load nationwide is $30,100 (DiGangi, 2017). As a result of the high costs and large debt loads, parents and students want to ensure that they are getting a decent return on their investment through effective career preparation programming including coaching, mock interviews, employer panels and career courses (Carlson, 2017). Thus, the present study is important as it helps administrators understand the relationship of career courses and student's occupational engagement. Ultimately participation in career courses may result in an improved return on investment from the student and parent perspective.

Career Courses

Credit-bearing career courses have long been an important program for students' career development in higher education. One of the earliest was offered to women at Barnard College, Columbia in 1921 (Maverick, 1926). Folsom and Reardon (2003) and Reardon et al. (2011) provided comprehensive literature reviews on career courses in the higher education setting. Folsom and Reardon (2003) reviewed literature published from 1920 to 2001 and Reardon et al. (2011) from 1976 up to the time of its publication. Both literature reviews described that career courses vary in design, scope and function. Some are for-credit while others are not. Number of credits for a credit-bearing career course may range from 1-3. Some are designed for entering first-year students while others are designed for departing seniors (Folsom & Reardon, 2003).

Some are elective in nature while others are designed for those within specific majors (Reardon et al., 2011). Some include career development self-assessments and some focus on labor markets and specific industry employability. Career services staff teach some of the courses while others are taught by faculty (Folsom & Reardon, 2003; Reardon et al., 2011).

Both Folsom and Reardon (2003) and Reardon et al. (2011) reviewed the impact of career courses and divided the impact into two categories: outputs and outcomes. "...outputs refer to the skills, knowledge, and attitudes acquired by participants as the result of an intervention" (Folsom & Reardon, 2003, p. 427). Examples of outputs include positive career planning thoughts, greater career decision making skills, and increased career maturity. Outcomes include course satisfaction, major selection, and time to graduation (Folsom & Reardon, 2003). The majority of studies reviewed in both Folsom and Reardon (2003) and Reardon et al. (2011) found positive effects on career outputs and outcomes. Folsom and Reardon (2003) found positive results for 90% of the output variables studied and positive results for 87% of outcome variables studied. Reardon et al. (2011) found positive effects for 90% of the output variables and 91% for outcome variables. Thus, career courses are successful in producing positive results for those students who participate.

More recent studies continue to find positive results for those who participate in career development courses. Hansen et al. (2017) matched a group of 3,546 students who successfully completed a career development course with a group of 3,510 students who did not take the course. Then the two groups were compared in terms of their graduation rate, time to graduation, course withdrawals, and cumulative GPA. Those who participated in the course had a significantly higher number of credits completed (five or more on average) and a significantly

higher cumulative GPA. No significance was found in terms of time to graduation or withdrawals (Hansen et al., 2017).

Miller, Osborn, Sampson, Peterson and Reardon (2018) studied the impact of a career course offered at a large public university in the Southeastern part of the U.S. Specifically the researchers performed a pre and post-test on students' career decision states to see to what extent the course impacted students at different levels in their college career (e.g. first-year, sophomore, senior). The study found that participation in the course helped students become more certain about their occupational choice, be more satisfied with this choice, and confident about the process of making this decision. The course was particularly helpful to lower division students as their certainty, satisfaction and clarity regarding their career decision state increased more than upper division students (Miller et al., 2018). The present study will provide greater understanding about the relationship of career courses and student career development. The next section describes components that should be included in a career course intervention to assist students in their career development.

Five Ingredients to Effective Career Interventions

Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) performed a meta-analytic study and asserted that effective career interventions including career courses should contain five ingredients: 1) workbooks or written exercises, 2) counselor dialogue or individual feedback, 3) world of work information, 4) modeling, and 5) building support for the client's career decision. Each of these will be briefly discussed. Whiston, Li, Mitts, and Wright (2017) performed the same type of meta-analytic study and continued to find support for the importance of these five ingredients in career interventions. Each of these ingredients will be briefly related.

First, workbooks or written exercises include activities that have students or clients record their thoughts or feelings concerning their personal career development (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). These written exercises could be contained in journals, diaries or logs of various form. Students may reflect on stereotypes or occupational misperceptions they have concerning a certain field. Students may make goals and plans for their further development. Committing goals in writing is often more effective than merely talking about them (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000).

Second, counselor dialogue or individualized feedback involves one-on-one discussion between a counselor or advisor concerning the student's vocational interests, concerns and plans for development (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). Small group discussion concerning these topics can also be effective though it needs to be tailored to the interests and needs of each participant. Counselor or instructor interpretation of student perceptions and modes of decision making can effectively support students in their decision-making process (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000).

Third, information on the world of work includes practical information related to earnings of different types of jobs and positions, opportunities that exist within certain fields, the outlook for a particular job or career, the specific nature of the work involved, etc. (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). Such information can provide up-to-date, accurate information about a particular career field. For example, what type of training does a type of career require, or what other specific challenges exist within a particular field (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000)? Such information is crucial for students to make informed decisions about major and career selection.

Fourth, modeling is exposing students to individuals who have been successful in the career exploration process (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). Such individuals may have succeeded in implementing career development strategies that led them to their desired positions. Generally,

this may be facilitated through guest speakers or workshop activities. Film or video presentations may also be utilized for performing modeling interventions (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000).

Fifth, building support for the client's career decision involves the networking aspect to career development. Interventions should provide opportunities for clients or students to build support networks. Such interventions may include significant others from the student's personal life such as different family members or close friends. Or an intervention may include a facilitator who helps students develop skills to effectively interact in their social and cultural environment (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). Each of these five ingredients are critical for the success of a career intervention. Career courses can be an effective career intervention due to the reality that there is time over multiple sessions to include each of these five ingredients in the course (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). Understanding these five ingredients is useful to the present study because it provides a rationale as to why the career courses in the present study may have a positive effect on occupational engagement. Because this study focuses on the career development of first-generation students, the next portion of the literature review will define first-generation students and discuss characteristics of them in the context of higher education.

First-Generation College Students Defined

Navigating career decisions can be a difficult process for any college student. But it can be particularly difficult for first-generation college students (FGCS) often referred to as the hidden minority (Maietta, 2016). Two widely used definitions for first-generation students exist (Maietta, 2016). One is a college student whose parents never persisted past a high school diploma or its equivalent (i.e. they did not attend any college). This is a more limited definition and has been used by many researchers (August, Kim, & Sax, 2009; Dumais & Ward, 2010; Gofen, 2009; Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012; Warburton, Bugarin, Nuñez, & Carroll,

2001). The other widely used definition is broader in nature. It is a college student whose parents may have attended some college but did not earn a bachelor's degree (Maietta, 2016). This definition has also been used by many researchers (Aspelmeier, Love, McGill, Elliott, & Pierce, 2012; Collier & Morgan, 2007; D'Allegro & Kerns, 2010; Demetriou, 2014; Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012; Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014).

One of the reasons for the differences in definitions among researchers stems from how the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) defines FGCS and how TRIO programs define them. Both NCES and TRIO are within the Department of Education. Yet NCES defines FGCS as "undergraduates whose parents never enrolled in postsecondary education" (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1998), and TRIO programs define FGCS as the following:

> ...an individual whose natural or adoptive parents did not receive a baccalaureate degree; an individual who, prior to the age of 18, regularly resided with and received support from only one parent and whose supporting parent did not receive a baccalaureate degree; or an individual who, prior to the age of 18, did not regularly reside with or receive support from a natural or an adoptive parent (Dortch, 2018, p. 2).

Thus, there is not one clear definition for first-generation students within the literature. For the present study, a "yes" or "no" answer to the following question was provided: "Are you a first generation student?" No further definition was provided to participants. So, participants self-selected their answer according to their own understanding of what it means to be a FGCS. Therefore, in the present study, neither definition historically utilized in the literature is specified.

Prevalence of First-Generation College Students by Institution Type

NCES performed a national study reporting on the enrollment by institution type of three different groups as pertaining to first-generation students (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Table 1 outlines the enrollments of these groups. Four-year public institutions have the second most enrollments of students whose parents never attended college and whose parents attended some college representing 26 and 33 percent respectively. Community Colleges have the largest share of the enrollments of these student groups. Students whose parents earned a bachelor's degree are most represented at four-year public institutions (45 percent) (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Thus, four-year public universities have a diversity of student groups with large portions of first-generation and continuing generation students attending their campuses.

Table 1

2002 high school sophomores who had enrolled in higher education by 2012. Percentage distribution of three student populations by institution type first attended

	Parent(s) w/no college attendance	Parent(s) w/some college attendance	Parent(s) w/ earned bachelor's degree
4-year public	26%	33%	45%
4-year private non-profit	7%	12%	23%
2-year public	46%	42%	26%
Private for-profit	16%	10%	5%
Other	4%	3%	1%

(U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018)

Characteristics and Challenges of First-Generation College Students

Maietta (2016) listed several challenges that FGCS commonly face:

- They can possess unrealistic career goals or make career goals without understanding the aspirations associated with their decision.
- They are uncomfortable in a college environment.

- They have trouble navigating campus services.
- They are more likely to work full time.
- They are more likely to commute.
- Their participation in events/extracurricular activities is low.
- They are underprepared academically.
- They face acute financial pressures.
- They are more comfortable with professors and staff than peers, viewing faculty and staff as experts whose acceptance they crave, while being less focused on the social aspects of college.
- They take longer to choose a major.
- They are under the impression they should not ask questions.
- They lack cultural capital.
- They lack study skills/time management.
- They have low self-efficacy.
- They are more oriented to the present than to the future.
- They experience social/cultural isolation.
- Their professional network is nonexistent.
- They experience feelings of not belonging/impostor syndrome (Maietta, 2016, para. 6).

Many of these items are interrelated and explain the challenges or characteristics of first-generation students. Several of these items will be discussed with a special focus on those that are most relevant to this study.

Financial challenges. FGCS are more likely to be of a lower socioeconomic status compared to continuing generation students (Bird, 2018). This means that these students often

have additional financial strains acting as barriers to their college attendance, completion and success. For example, a first-generation college student may not be able to afford living on campus, which has been found to be an important contributor to student success. Schudde (2011) reported the probability of students remaining enrolled into their second year of college is 3.3 percentage points higher for students who live on campus versus those who live off campus. Related to this are the findings that students who attend college at a distance are more likely to complete than those who attend an institution locally (Garza & Fullerton, 2018). Therefore, FGCS who attend four-year public institutions that are some distance from their home, may have a better chance at graduating than those who attend a local school such as a community college.

Another challenge FGCS face is that these students often end up working too many hours each week while enrolled in a full-time load of classes (Maietta, 2016). Dundes and Marx (2006) found working 10-19 hours a week to be beneficial to students but working beyond this results in lower academic performance. One of the major problems of working full-time or nearly full-time is that these students are unable to exert the appropriate effort to obtain needed internships that can launch them into their desired career field (MarksJarvis, 2015). According to a survey by the Washington, D.C.-based Hart Research Associates, business executives and hiring managers are much more likely to hire college graduates who have participated in an internship (Bauer-Wolf, 2018). This is important to understand, as it may help explain differences in occupational engagement between first-generation and continuing-generation students.

Integration. One of the major challenges of FGCS is that they often participate less in co-curricular activities on campus (Maietta, 2016). This inhibits their ability to become integrated into the campus environment. Tinto's theory of academic and social integration asserted that intellectual and social integration in the institutional environment is essential to student

persistence and success (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1993). A student integrated in the campus environment will share the institutional values and culture as well as demonstrate behaviors in accordance with the environment. According to Tinto's model, a student not sufficiently integrated academically or socially is likely to depart from college (Tinto, 1993). First-generation students have been found to have lower levels of involvement on campus compared to continuing-generation students (2004; Maietta, 2016, Pascarella et al.). Academic and social integration is a state of being as opposed to a means to an end (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). Thus, students need to be engaged in the curricular and co-curricular activities offered by the institution in order to become integrated. The stress of financial and other challenges common to many first-generation students makes becoming integrated especially difficult. The Occupational engagement scale utilized in this study will provide a better understanding of FGCS in terms of their engagement in career related programming.

Lower sense of belonging and mental health. In connection to the above characteristics of FGCS, Stebleton, Soria and Huesman (2014) found that first-generation students tend to have lower ratings of sense of belonging and satisfaction in comparison to continuing-generation students. Sense of belonging is related to mental health and FGCS have a higher frequency reporting feeling stressed and depressed compared to continuing generation students. Unfortunately, Stebleton et al. (2014) also found in their study that FGCS were less likely to seek out campus mental health services than continuing-generation students. It was reported that reasons for lack of utilization of services was related to inconvenient location and hours, lack of knowledge of services, or not having time to seek out services (Stebleton et al., 2014).

Covarrubias, Romero, and Trivelli (2015) performed a study comparing first-generation students and continuing-generation students' mental health and also found that first-generation

students reported significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms. The study connected these depressive symptoms to family achievement guilt. Family achievement guilt is a feeling of guilt students may feel about their educational achievements when their parents or other family members did not or do not have similar access to higher education (Covarrubia et al., 2015). This lower sense of belonging and depressive symptoms demonstrated by FGCS, may provide further support for understanding any significant differences in occupational engagement scores that may be found from this study between first-generation and continuing-generation students.

Social and cultural capital. Social capital refers to one's social connections, network or social obligations within certain settings (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). In accessing and navigating higher education and especially the career transition process, social capital is especially useful. First-generation students unfortunately fall short in this area usually because of a lack of close connections to those who have gone through this experience.

Another form of capital that FGCS may lack is cultural capital. According to Winkle-Wagner (2010), "Cultural capital can be grasped as those culturally based resources that can act as a form of "capital"" (p. 5). Cultural capital is inclusive of knowledge, skills, abilities, norms, preferences, or mannerisms. Thus, cultural capital is not only about the connections that can provide knowledge or support in navigating the higher education process, but it has more to do with a way of being. For example, the types of behaviors, norms, preferences or skills are likely to be different for a student raised in a family whose parents are college educated compared to a student not raised in such a circumstance. Financial resources can certainly influence one's cultural norms and values but this is not always the case. There is a major difference in the culture between a student raised in a home and community that values and expects one to complete a college degree and a student not raised in such an environment. Tugend (2015)

related that first-generation students are often torn between their parents and peers at home and peers and professors in college. This idea of being torn is not only about missing family (should they go a distance to college) but being torn between the differing values represented by the worlds of home and college (Tugend, 2015). Understanding social and cultural capital is crucial in considering the challenges first-generation students face and may help explain their occupational engagement which is measured in this study.

Academic performance. Several studies (both national and institutional) have shown first-generation students to have lower academic performance than continuing-generation students (Chen & Carroll, 2005; D'Allegrio & Kerns, 2010; Mehta, Newbold, O'Rourke, 2011; Pascarella et al., 2004; Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007). Chen and Carroll (2005) performed a national study comparing the college transcripts of first-generation and continuing-generation students. It was found that first-generation students had lower first-year undergraduate grade point averages (i.e. 2.5 versus 2.8) than continuing-generation students. This lower performance by first-generation students continued throughout the entire undergraduate experience and was particularly evident in several academic areas (e.g. mathematics, science, foreign language, history). This study included several thousand students at hundreds of institutions across the U.S (Chen & Carroll, 2005).

D'Allegro and Kerns (2010) found a statistical difference between first-generation and continuing-generation college student outcomes as well. Data were reviewed from six fall semesters at a less selective public 4-year institution. It showed that first-generation students completed fewer credits on average and received lower GPAs (2.56 versus 2.69). Ramos-Sánchez and Nichols (2007) sought to determine whether self-efficacy could mediate the first-generation status on college GPA and college adjustment. Self-efficacy was not found to have an

impact, but GPA was statistically significantly correlated to generation status with FGCS having lower GPAs. This study was performed on 192 entering students at a small private liberal arts college on the west coast (Ramso-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007). Similarly, Mehta et al. (2011) performed a study at a midsized institution in the Southwestern United States. The sample included 452 students and showed FGCS to have significantly lower GPAs than continuing generation students (Mehta et al., 2011). Reviewing the literature regarding the academic performance of FGCS, provides further context for understanding the characteristics of FGCS and why differences in occupational engagement may exist between them and continuing-generation students.

First-generation students' race/ethnicity and gender. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), first-generation students are more likely to be of a minority race/ethnicity than continuing-generation students (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). In terms of racial percentage, 49 percent are white, 27 percent are Hispanic or Latino, 14 percent are black or African American with the remaining 10 percent from other racial groups. This is compared to continuing-generation students with 70 percent white, 11 percent black or African American, 9 percent Hispanic or Latino with 10 percent from other racial groups (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Put in a different way, according to a 2016 national survey of more than 130,000 student respondents at four-year colleges and universities in the U.S., the following percentage of students from different racial/ethnic groups identified as first-generation status: 57.3 percent of Latino students, 27 percent of black students, 21.5 percent of Native American students, 17.3 percent of multi-racial, 18.2 percent of Asian American/Pacific Islander and 10.5 percent of white students (Statista, 2019). According to the same study, 20.3 percent of

student respondents identified as women FGCS and 17.3 percent as men FGCS (Statista, 2019). Understanding the racial/ethnic and gender makeup of first-generation students is important to the present study because these variables will be controlled for to help better determine the relationship between first-generation status and occupational engagement.

First-Generation Students and the Career Transition

Several studies have been performed on first-generation college students and their transition to careers (Tate et al., 2015). Tate et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative study utilizing the well-researched model for career development called Social Cognitive Career Theory. The study included 15 interviews with FGCS asking questions about their external influences on and internal beliefs about their career development process. Participants described witnessing their families struggle with finances as a motivating factor to have a professional career that provided a higher income. Many described their family's support and encouragement but lack of understanding regarding the process of navigating college and their career development. Another theme that emerged included the lack of professional social network to support students in their career development. Students shared their concern of not having family or family friends to go to for help in finding internships. Students also noted the positive influence of support programs they participated in both before and during college. High school career programs or college programs such as first-year seminars, tutoring, and career programming were discussed as having a positive influence. FGCS generally had a confident self-concept viewing themselves as much more independent and self-reliant than continuing-generation students (Tate et al., 2015). This information is helpful as it relates the positive perception FGCS have for certain college programming to help them be successful. The present study is helpful because it will measure in

a quantitative manner whether career courses can predict improved career development for those who participate.

Hirudayaraj and Mclean (2018) interviewed 14 employees at a large multinational corporation and found that the FGCS status limited these students' awareness of and access to different opportunities of graduate employment. These students tended to have less familiarity with corporate culture and expectations. They lacked the connections to people who can ease the process of entry into the world of work. This translated into FGCS first starting in entry-level roles that don't actually require a college degree or having to provide additional efforts compared to continuing generation students to reach graduate level positions (Hirudayaraj & McLean, 2018). Parks-Yancy (2012) found similar expectations among FGCS concerning employment following graduation. The study was performed at a mid-size urban institution in the Southwestern part of the U.S. Among survey participants, 67 percent planned to work full-time following their completion of a bachelor's degree. Among this group, 88 percent expected to remain with their current employer. This meant following graduation they would likely remain in the same job that they had during college, which did not require a college degree. Ultimately Parks-Yancy (2012) found first-generation students to lack understanding of the many different career fields that exist for those with a bachelors.

Olson (2016) found FGCS to struggle with the career transition because of the differences in the type of work parents perform in comparison to the types of jobs college graduates are being prepared to undertake. Examples of those interviewed in this study had parents who were electricians, construction workers or held other types of positions that required a level of manual labor. In contrast, graduates were getting jobs as editors, therapists or performing different forms of office work. Olson (2016) described a breakdown in

communication between the FGCS and their family because of the lack of ability to relate to one another. Parents for example felt the type of work their children were obtaining was not "real work" because of its lack of manual labor. For Some FGCS, graduating from college represents a challenge as in many ways they are leaving existing friendships that share their experience in transitioning to a college educated career (Olson, 2016). This is important to the present study because it relates that FGCS for systemic family reasons may struggle to engage themselves in their career development.

Summary of Literature

Today's students and parents are primarily focused on the return on investment for one's career when it comes to participation in higher education (Carlson, 2017). Many career development concepts exist to help individuals navigate where they may stand in terms of their own development or provide assistance in choosing a career that will be satisfying to the individual (Holland, 1973; Parsons, 1909; Savickas, 1984). Occupational engagement is a more recently developed construct within the adaptive career decision making model that has two parts: exploration (i.e. gather information to make decisions) and enrichment (i.e., participation in helpful activities to learn about careers) (Cox et al., 2016; Krieshok et al., 2009). A survey was developed to measure students' occupational engagement called the Occupational Engagement Scale – Student (OES-S), which is the survey that will be used in this study (Cox et al., 2015).

Career courses are an important way for students to develop greater understanding of the career process as well as develop clarity and satisfaction in their decisions (Hanson et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2018; Reardon et al., 2011). The literature displays positive results for students who participate in career courses not only for their career development but also for other outcomes. These may include positive outcomes such as improved GPA, credit completion or even time to

graduation (Folsom & Reardon, 2003; Miller et al., 2018). Based on this literature, it is expected that participation in career courses studied in the present study would be able to predict significant improvements in OES-S scores.

Two widely used definitions for first-generation students exist. One definition is a student whose parents never attended college and the other definition is a student whose parents may have attended some college but did not attain a bachelor's degree (Maietta, 2016). This study did not define these two possible definitions to participants. Thus, student participants self-selected "yes" or "no" to the question, "Are you a first generation college student?" First-generation students are prevalent in higher education and many attend public four-year institutions, which is the type of institution where the present study took place (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). These students typically face challenges related to the lack of social and cultural capital, financial resources, lower mental health, lower levels of involvement on campus, and lower academic performance (Bird, 2018; Covarrubia et al., 2015; D'Allegrio & Kerns, 2010; Pascarella et al., 2004). These characteristics provide greater context for understanding FGCS' career development that the present study measures.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter discusses the purpose of the study, research questions, data sample, ethical considerations, the occupational engagement scale, variables, data analysis, and limitations to the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine occupational engagement among first-generation as compared to continuing-generation college students who enrolled in different types of career courses at a single institution of higher education. In performing the study, the relationship between participation in these career courses and the occupational engagement of FGCS was analyzed. This was determined by reviewing the results of pre and post-test Occupational Engagement Scale – Student (OES-S) scores that were completed by student participants in college career courses at the University of Kansas, a large public institution in the Midwest. The occupational engagement of first-generation college students (FGCS) was examined controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level (e.g. sophomore, junior).

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. Are there significant differences in occupational engagement comparing first-generation and continuing-generation college students?
2. Controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level (e.g. first-year student, sophomore, etc.), is there a significant relationship between first-generation student status and occupational engagement scores?

3. Are there significant differences in occupational engagement among different types of career courses for first-generation and continuing-generation college students?
4. Controlling for first-generation status, gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level, does participation in particular types of career courses predict an increase in occupational engagement?

Data Sample

The study was conducted among students at the University of Kansas, a Midwest large public university. The sample was derived from participants in five different types of career courses which are administered by the University Career Center. The University Career Center provides career support services for all students at KU. Some departments have their own specific career service centers, such as the school of business, but the career courses offered by the University Career Center are open to all undergraduate students at the institution with no restriction to grade level or major. Thus, survey participants varied in these areas. Each of the career courses are taught by University Career Center administrators. The data sample was collected from five academic terms (spring, 2017, summer 2017, fall 2017, spring 2018, and summer 2018).

The name and brief description for each of the five University Career Center courses follows. Appendix A displays a syllabus for each of these courses which provides further details of the content of each of these courses.

- Career and Life Planning – This course helps students better understand themselves and career options available. Students perform multiple informational interviews with either those who have majored in their area of interest or had a career in that field. Students leave this course with a written practical action plan for the future. This course is taught

on campus in the classroom. It is a 3-credit course with an enrollment size usually between 60 and 70 students. First-year students are the primary group who take this course. It becomes fewer and fewer from sophomore up to senior though they are all represented. The course is usually co-taught by administrators from the University Career Center.

- Job Search Strategies - This course introduces students to the fundamentals of planning and organizing their job search. It is meant to teach the practical application of employment search tools for post-graduation employment or graduate school. The course is aimed to serve juniors and seniors but is open to all students. The course's official title is Job Search Strategies for Liberal Arts & Sciences Students but students of all majors complete the course. This is a 1-credit online course. The vast majority of participants in this course are seniors though all grade levels are represented. Usually 30 to 40 students enroll in this course per semester. It is taught by a University Career Center administrator.
- Professional Career Management – This course introduces important theories to be applied in students' future professional career progression such as career development, organizational and industrial psychology, and human resources. This is a 3-credit online course. It is generally made up of seniors and juniors. Enrollment in this course varies among the semesters from 30 to 60 students. This course is also taught by a University Career Center administrator.
- Global Career Management –This course introduces students to theories of cross-cultural communication and analyzes the global economy as a means to help students prepare for successful global careers. This online 3-credit course varies in enrollment from 10 to 30

students per semester. It is mostly made up of seniors. As with the others, this course is taught by a career services administrator.

- Internship Exploration – This is a practical internship course. Students complete reading and writing assignments while participating in their work-related activity. The course is variable credit from 1 to 5-credits depending on how many hours a week students work in their internships. It is taught by a University Career Center administrator. Enrollment varies from 15 to 40 students per section. In the summer the department usually offers multiple sections because this is a time when students are often performing their internships. A majority of students enrolling in this course are seniors and juniors though all grade levels are represented.

As a means to measure the predictive nature of these courses, the University Career Center required participants in these courses to complete a pre- and post-survey, which included questions related to student characteristics and their answers to the 9-item Occupational Engagement Scale – Student (OES-S). As noted in Table 2 below, the data sample consists of a total of 958 responses to the pre- and post-tests (*n*=958). This includes male (*n*=392) and female (*n*=566) responses. The sample included responses from first-generation students (*n*=208) and continuing-generation students (*n*=750). In terms of grade level, participant responses included the following: first-year student (*n*=140), sophomore (*n*=120), junior (*n*=178), and senior (*n*=520). Race/ethnicity responses were allocated as follows: white or Caucasian (n=750), black or African-American (*n*=100), Hispanic-American or Latino(a) (*n*=40), Asian-American (*n*=21), and "other" (*n*=47) with a variety of answers such as pure Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Korean, and mixed/biracial to name a few. Each of the respective career courses include the following sample sizes: Career and Life Planning (*n*=204), Job Search Strategies

(*n*=198), Professional Career Management (*n*=179), Global Career Management (*n*=103), and Internship Exploration (*n*=274).

Table 2

Data Sample

Variable	*n*	Percentage
Total	958	100%
Gender		
Male	392	41%
Female	566	59%
First-Generation Status		
First-Generation	208	22%
Continuing-Generation	750	78%
Grade Level		
First-Year	140	15%
Sophomore	120	13%
Junior	178	19%
Senior	520	54%
Race/Ethnicity		
White or Caucasian	750	78%
Black or African American	100	10%
Hispanic-American or	40	4%
Latino(a)	21	2%
Asian American	47	5%
Other		
Career Course Participation		
Career and Life Planning	204	21%
Job Search Strategies	198	21%
Professional Career Management	179	19%
Global Career Management	103	11%
Internship Exploration	274	29%

In addition to the data represented in Table 2, it is helpful to have a general understanding of the areas of reported study within the sample. Table 3 does not designate each major but displays the general areas of study for the entire sample. This is based on the academic units at the University of Kansas. Individuals studying majors within the Liberal Arts and Sciences represent the largest contingent (approximately 59%). This table incudes some double majors

who are studying in more than one area of study. This is why Table 3 includes more than 958 data points.

Table 3

Distribution of areas of study

Area of Study	*n*	Percentage
Total	962	100%
Architecture and Design	4	0.4%
Business	131	13.6%
Education	26	2.7%
Engineering	8	0.8%
Journalism	76	7.9%
Health Professions	24	2.5%
Languages, Literature, Culture	11	1.1%
Liberal Arts and Sciences		
Arts (Visual Arts, Film, Theatre)	23	2.4%
Social Sciences	214	22.2%
Natural Sciences	38	4.0%
Humanities	134	13.9%
General Studies	152	15.8%
Public Affairs	3	0.3%
Music	1	0.1%
Pre-Nursing	6	0.6%
Pharmacy	1	0.1%
Social Welfare	2	0.2%
Deciding	108	11.2%

Permissions, Data Transfer, Data Cleaning, Ethics

The data for this study were provided to the principal investigator by the Assistant Vice Provost for Career and Experiential Learning, who oversees the University Career Center at the University of Kansas. The Assistant Vice Provost oversees each of the career courses in this study and is responsible for the participant data gathered from these courses. The pre and post-test scores were gathered via the online Blackboard course component for each of the respective courses. The pre and post-survey scores were then exported by a University Career Center

administrator to Microsoft Excel. In order to keep the identity of participants anonymous to the principal investigator, the administrator de-identified student participants by removing the student ID numbers and providing new number codes to associate the pre and post-survey responses of the individual students. Then all of these files were provided to the principle investigator via Drop Box link. The files since then have been kept in a secure location on the principal investigator's computer and backed up via the principal investigator's Microsoft OneDrive account.

After receiving the data, the principal investigator transferred all of the data into one Excel file and separated each of the responses onto separate sheets within that file by the five courses. The principal investigator then analyzed the data to make sure it was clean and could be transferred to SPSS properly. Survey responses that included no answer, were deleted. When information was transferred from Blackboard to Excel files, all of the "1" and "5" scores included additional language in the Excel cells. These needed to be cleaned so they only included a number. After this process, all the data was ready to be easily transferred to SPSS for statistical analysis.

Following the principal investigator's dissertation proposal meeting in June 2019, a study protocol was submitted to the University of Kansas Institutional Review Board (IRB). Following a review of the protocol, the IRB office found the study to not require IRB oversight. The study is not considered human subjects research. While the study did not require IRB oversight, the study was still conducted in an ethical manner.

It should be noted that the principal investigator is not nor ever has been an employee of the University Career Center where the research was performed. The principal investigator's employment background is inclusive of various areas in student affairs including enrollment

management, academic advising, admissions, career services, tutoring services and supplemental instruction. Bias should always be considered in any study as it influences what the principal investigator is seeking to find out as well as the conclusions the principal investigator will make about those findings.

Occupational Engagement Scale – Student

This study utilizes the Occupational Engagement Scale – Student (OES-S) to examine career development among first-generation as compared to continuing-generation students. The OES-S is also utilized to determine if participation in career courses can predict improvements in student OES-S scores.

Occupational engagement is defined "…as taking part in behaviors that contribute to the career decision-maker's fund of information and experience of the larger world, not just the world as processed when a career decision is imminent" (Krieshok et al., 2009, p. 284). According to Cox et al. (2016), "…occupationally engaging behaviors among college students include interning, volunteering, working part time, conducting informational interviews, and engaging in job shadowing" (p. 169). Others include "...attending presentations or seminars, visiting museums, joining clubs, and simply talking with professionals about their experience of work" (Cox et al., 2016, p. 169).

Initially a 14-item survey was established called the Occupational Engagement Scale – Student OES-S (Cox, 2008). Likert scale type questions were asked to determine an occupational engagement score. The higher the score the greater the occupational engagement. According to Cox (2008), the OES-S was found to be a psychometrically sound measure with face validity and initial reliability of 0.85.

Occupational engagement was theoretically postulated relying on inferences of neuropsychology, vocational psychology, social psychology as well as other related disciplines (Cox et al., 2015). Upon further analysis of the OES-S, Cox et al. (2015) found certain items to be theoretically similar. Ultimately this analysis resulted in a 9-item OES-S. This scale was found to be both valid and internally consistent (Cox et al., 2015). The present study utilized the OES-S 9-item scale. The measure was also found to be normally distributed with skewness (.15) and kurtosis (.35) within the acceptable range (Cox et al., 2015).

The OES-S nine statements for the present study include the following:

1. I talk about my career choices with family or friends.
2. I have contact with people working in fields I find interesting.
3. I gain hands on experience that I might use in the future.
4. I volunteer in an area that I find interesting.
5. I attend presentations or talks related to a career I might find interesting.
6. I ask people in social settings about what they do for a living or what they are interested in doing.
7. I visit places I'm interested in working at so I can learn more about them.
8. I pursue opportunities in life because I just know they will come in handy.
9. I do lots of things that are interesting to me.

Answers to these nine statements are in the format of a Likert Scale from one to five gauging the level of agreement with the statements presented. A score of five indicates the highest level of agreement to a statement and a score of one indicates the lowest level of agreement. Thus, a score of 45 indicates the highest possible score on the OES-S and a score of nine the lowest

possible score. These scores are all self-reported according to the perception of students at the time they take the scale.

Variables

Independent, dependent and control variables were utilized for this study. Each of these will be briefly discussed below.

Independent variables. For this study, two primary groups of independent variables were utilized. First, the student characteristic of first-generation status was utilized to determine if a significant relationship exists with the occupational engagement scores of the student respondents. First-generation status is a dichotomous variable (continuing-generation=0, first-generation=1) presented to students on the pre and post-tests within the career courses, so students are self-reporting either a yes or no answer to the question "Are you a first generation student?" The other group of independent variables is participation in each of the five separate career courses. This is not a question to be selected on the pre or post-tests but rather is simply determined by the respondent's participation in a given course. The pre and post-test scores of occupational engagement will be compared to one another among the different courses to determine if certain courses have a greater influence on first-generation or continuing-generation students' Occupational Engagement Scale – Student (OES-S) scores.

Dependent variables. Dependent variables include the ordinal variables from the pre and post-test scores from the 9-item OES-S as well as the difference scores between the pre and post-tests. In comparing first and continuing-generation student occupational engagement scores, the pre and post-test scores from the entire data sample were utilized. In comparing the influence of participation in the different types of career courses on the OES-S scores, the differences between the pre and post-test OES-S scores were utilized. These difference scores are known as

delta variables (Δ, δ). The delta scores help determine any statistically significant relationships between the independent/control variables and participation in particular career courses.

Control variables. Gender, race/ethnicity and grade level were utilized as control variables for this study. Grade level is an ordinal variable (freshman=0, sophomore=1, junior=2, senior=3). For purposes of this study, race/ethnicity was dichotomized as follows: minority (i.e. white or Caucasian) (minority=1) and non-minority (i.e. non-white or non-Caucasian) (non-minority=0). Within the original data set (prior to cleaning), two respondents noted "other" for their gender preference. Because of the low number of responses and need to dichotomize this variable for running a linear multiple regression, the two "other" gender respondents were not included in the sample. Thus, the gender variable for this study was dichotomous (male=0, female=1).

Data Analysis

The following procedures were used in the data analysis: descriptive statistics, paired and independent sample t-tests, and linear multiple regression. Descriptive statistics were calculated to provide a better understanding of the frequencies (Freq) and percentages (%) of the demographic data including first-generation status, gender, race/ethnicity and college grade level. Further, the means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) for each of the statistical tests, the pre and post-test OES-S scores, as well as the difference OES-S scores for each course was computed to provide a visual presentation of the data. Cronbach's alpha for the pre and post-test OES-S scores was 0.78. The predictor variables (i.e. independent/control variables) were analyzed for multicollinearity; the data showed that this was not a problem.

Each of the statistical tests utilized is discussed according to the research questions they seek to answer. A .05 alpha level is utilized to determine statistically significant relationships.

Research Question #1 asked: Are there significant differences in occupational engagement comparing first-generation and continuing-generation college students? To answer this question three independent sample t-tests were run. The first compared first and continuing-generation students' pre-test OES-S scores to determine if a statistically significant difference exists between the two groups. The second compared the post-test OES-S scores between the two groups, and the third compared the difference scores between the two groups.

Research Question #2 asked: Controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level (e.g. first-year student, sophomore, etc.), is there a significant relationship between first-generation student status and occupational engagement scores? To answer this question, two multiple regressions were run on the entire sample of respondents. Independent and control variables for both tests included first-generation status (dichotomous), gender (dichotomous), race/ethnicity (dichotomous), and grade level (ordinal). The first test dependent variable was the pre-test OES-S scores and the second test used the post-test OES-S scores. OES-S scores are ordinal variables. The regression seeks to determine any significant relationship between the independent/control variables and the dependent variables.

Research Question #3 asked: Are there significant differences in occupational engagement scores among different types of career courses for first-generation and continuing-generation college students? In order to answer this question, 15 paired sample t-tests were run. First, the t-tests compared the pre and post-test OES-S scores of all participants in each of the respective career courses to determine if any significant difference exists. Then paired sample t-tests compared the pre and post-test OES-S scores for only the first-generation students within each of the five career courses to determine any significant difference. Finally, the same test was performed comparing the pre and post-test scores for continuing-generation students within each

of the five respective career courses. These tests will demonstrate whether certain courses can predict differences in OES-S scores for specifically first-generation and continuing-generation students as well as participants as a whole in each of the courses.

Research Question #4 asked: Controlling for first-generation status, gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level, does participation in particular types of career courses predict an increase in occupational engagement scores? This question was answered by running six multiple regression tests for participants in each of the respective career courses as well as on the entire sample. Independent and control variables included first-generation status (dichotomous), gender (dichotomous), race/ethnicity (dichotomous), and grade level (ordinal). The dependent variable for each test is the delta score ordinal variable (i.e. difference between the pre-test and post-test OES-S scores). The purpose is to determine any significant relationship between the independent/control variables and the OES-S difference scores. For example, did participation in a particular course have a statistically significant relationship with higher OES-S scores for first-generation students, male students, or first-year students? These tests will provide greater understanding to these questions. Multiple regression test sample sizes for the entire sample and each of the five respective courses are as follows: full sample (n=958), Career and Life Planning (n=204), Job Search Strategies (n=198), Professional Career Management (n=179), Global Career Management (n=103), and Internship Exploration (n=274).

Limitations

As with any study, limitations exist. As noted within the literature review, two primary definitions have been used throughout the years for first-generation college students. One is a college student whose parents never persisted past a high school diploma or its equivalent (i.e. they did not attend any college) (August et al., 2009; Maietta, 2016). The other is a college

student whose parents may have attended some college but did not earn a bachelor's degree (Aspelmeier et al., 2012; Maietta, 2016). Regarding the data collected for first-generation student status in this study, the question asked in the survey was: "Are you a first generation college student?" The question does not clarify which definition of first-generation college student is utilized. The study would be stronger if further clarification was offered to student respondents providing one of the commonly used definitions from the literature. The data gathered for this study was pre-existing data the principal investigator received from the University Career Center. Thus, it should be noted that respondents claiming to be a first-generation student are self-identifying themselves in this manner based on their own understanding of what it means to be a first-generation college student.

Any time self-reported demographic data is utilized, it is subject to the perceptions of those responding to the questions, which can cause errors. Another one of the questions used in this study is "What is your year in school?" The options provided are freshman (i.e. first-year student), sophomore, junior, and senior. Students may identify as a senior or junior based on their year in college but may not be in this grade year based on credits completed.

Other limitations to this study include the fact that it is a single institution study. The data sample was gathered based on the limited resources and contacts of the principal investigator. Single institution studies provide for more biased responses according to the demographics and culture of the particular institution. Further, the study would be strengthened by having several years-worth of data. The present study includes data gathered from five terms (spring 2017, summer 2017, fall 2017, spring 2018, and summer 2018). Additionally, other variables such as GPA and financial status of the participants would provide more clarity regarding the relationship of OES-S scores and the sample in the present study.

Moreover, data from the present study only represents the perceptions of students who self-selected to complete a career course. Students who self-select to engage themselves are generally demonstrating a level of increased engagement compared to those who do not. Thus, the study would likely be strengthened if it included students who both participated and did not participate in career courses. Such a group of non-participants would act as a type of control group for the study. Finally, questions on the OES-S are likely tasks that students would perform as a result of participating in these career courses (e.g. attend a presentation). Thus, it is expected that OES-S scores would improve as a result of participation. If other outcomes were available such as job status after graduation, this would strengthen our understanding of OES-S scores.

Despite the limitations of this study, it still provides an important understanding regarding the career development of first-generation students compared to continuing-generation students. It adds to the literature regarding the relationship of career courses in higher education and student career development. It also provides further insight regarding the relationship between other demographic variables (i.e. race/ethnicity, gender, college grade level) and career development.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine occupational engagement among first-generation (FGCS) as compared to continuing-generation college students who enrolled in different types of career courses at a single institution. This was determined by reviewing the results of pre and post-test Occupational Engagement Scale – Student (OES-S) scores that were completed by student participants in college career courses at the University of Kansas, a large public institution in the Midwest. Occupational engagement of FGCS is also be examined controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level (e.g. sophomore, junior, etc.).

SPSS was used to analyze the descriptive statistics and statistical tests including independent and paired sample t-tests as well as multiple linear regressions. For the study, 26 different statistical tests were administered. In this chapter, the demographic descriptive statistics are presented for the entire sample as well as for each respective course. Then the descriptive statistics for the OES-S scores are presented for both the whole sample and each respective course. Finally, results for each of the statistical tests are related in accordance with the corresponding research questions that guide the study.

Demographic Data for the Entire Sample

This study included a total of 958 student respondents who participated in five different University of Kansas career courses over five terms (spring 2017, summer 2017, fall 2017, spring 2018, summer 2018). Table 4 provides an overview of the demographic descriptive statistics for the entire sample.

Table 4

Demographic statistics for the entire sample

Variable	*n*	Percentage
Total	958	100%
Gender		
Male	392	41%
Female	566	59%
First-Generation Status		
First-Generation	208	22%
Continuing-Generation	750	78%
Grade Level		
First-Year	140	15%
Sophomore	120	13%
Junior	178	19%
Senior	520	54%
Race/Ethnicity		
White or Caucasian	750	78%
Black or African American	100	10%
Hispanic-American or	40	4%
Latino(a)	21	2%
Asian American	47	5%
Other		
Career Course Participation		
Career and Life Planning	204	21%
Job Search Strategies	198	21%
Professional Career Management	179	19%
Global Career Management	103	11%
Internship Exploration	274	29%

As Table 4 demonstrates, more than half the sample is made up of seniors (54 percent). This is understandable as most of the courses are at the 400 level and geared toward those students getting close to transitioning out of college. A vast majority of the sample is white or Caucasian (78 percent). This statistic as well as each of the other race/ethnicity percentages are reflective of the institution-wide statics (Analytics & Institutional Research, n.d.). A majority of the sample are continuing-generation students (78 percent), which is also reflective of the institution (U.S. News and World Report, n.d.). A majority of the sample are female (59

percent). In regard to gender, the institution-wide gender population is approximately 51 percent female and 48 percent male (Analytics & Institutional Research, n.d.). Thus, career courses are highly utilized by females in comparison to the number of males on campus.

Demographic Statistics within Each Career Course

Demographic descriptive statistics for each of the career courses are presented in Tables 5 through 9. The Career and Life Planning course is presented first.

Table 5

Demographic statistics for the Career and Life Planning course

Variable	*n*	Percentage
Total	204	100%
Gender		
Male	85	42%
Female	119	58%
First-Generation Status		
First-Generation	44	21%
Continuing-Generation	161	79%
Grade Level		
First-Year	130	63%
Sophomore	61	30%
Junior	11	5%
Senior	4	2%
Race/Ethnicity		
White or Caucasian	153	75%
Black or African American	24	12%
Hispanic-American or	10	5%
Latino(a)	3	1%
Asian American	15	7%
Other		

As displayed in Table 5, the gender, first-generation status, and race/ethnicity demographics for this course are similar to the whole sample's demographics. The major difference is related to the grade level characteristic. This course has many more first-year students in particular but also sophomores than the full sample for this study. Naturally this

course has many fewer juniors and in particular seniors (only 2 percent compared to 54 percent in the full data sample). This is reflective of the fact that this course has historically been a 200-level course. The purpose of the course is introductory in nature to the field of career development and planning.

Table 6

Demographic statistics for the Job Search Strategies course

Variable	*n*	Percentage
Total	198	100%
Gender		
Male	81	41%
Female	117	59%
First-Generation Status		
First-Generation	51	26%
Continuing-Generation	147	74%
Grade Level		
First-Year	5	3%
Sophomore	15	8%
Junior	20	10%
Senior	158	80%
Race/Ethnicity		
White or Caucasian	160	81%
Black or African American	13	7%
Hispanic-American or	9	5%
Latino(a)	6	3%
Asian American	10	5%
Other		

The Job Search Strategies course has similar demographics for gender with the full sample. First-generation students tend to be a little more likely to participate in this course (26 percent vs 22 percent in the data sample) than the other courses. Similarly, seniors (80 percent) appear to participate in this course in much larger numbers relative to the percent of seniors in the full sample (54 percent). Clearly this is a popular course for seniors to take as they are in that transition period of learning how to perform a job search and utilizing their career skills to help

them overcome the competition. Race/ethnicity is not so different from what is in the broader sample.

Table 7

Demographic statistics for the Professional Career Management course

Variable	*n*	Percentage
Total	179	100%
Gender		
Male	84	47%
Female	95	53%
First-Generation Status		
First-Generation	46	26%
Continuing-Generation	133	74%
Grade Level		
First-Year	1	1%
Sophomore	12	7%
Junior	45	25%
Senior	121	68%
Race/Ethnicity		
White or Caucasian	135	75%
Black or African American	27	15%
Hispanic-American or	6	3%
Latino(a)	5	3%
Asian American	6	3%
Other		

This course does not have nearly as wide of a gender gap as the others, which demonstrates greater male interest in this course compared to others. Perhaps the focus on career management and development once in the workforce is a more appealing topic to males in comparison to the Job Search Strategies and Career & Life Planning courses. The other demographics for this course are similar to the wider sample.

Table 8

Demographic statistics for the Global Career Management course

Variable	*n*	Percentage
Total	103	100%
Gender		
Male	41	42%
Female	62	58%
First-Generation Status		
First-Generation	28	27%
Continuing-Generation	75	73%
Grade Level		
First-Year	0	0%
Sophomore	8	8%
Junior	18	17%
Senior	77	75%
Race/Ethnicity		
White or Caucasian	68	66%
Black or African American	19	18%
Hispanic-American or	6	6%
Latino(a)	2	2%
Asian American	8	8%
Other		

This course is reflective of the gender imbalance seen in the larger sample. The first generation-status is also similar to the full sample. Grade level is similar to the entire sample in regard to sophomores and juniors. But there are no first-year students who have participated in this course and many more senior students in terms of percentage participating (75 percent vs. 54 percent in the entire sample). In terms of race/ethnicity, this course is the more diverse than the larger sample, with only 66 percent of the course participants being white or Caucasian. This course has nearly twice as many black or African American students in terms of the percentage participating compared to the full sample. Perhaps the diversity of the course can be explained by its global and cultural focus.

Table 9

Demographic statistics for the Internship Exploration course

Variable	*n*	Percent
Total	274	100%
Gender		
Male	101	37%
Female	173	63%
First-Generation Status		
First-Generation	40	15%
Continuing-Generation	234	85%
Grade Level		
First-Year	5	2%
Sophomore	24	9%
Junior	84	31%
Senior	161	59%
Race/Ethnicity		
White or Caucasian	235	86%
Black or African American	17	6%
Hispanic-American or	9	3%
Latino(a)	5	2%
Asian American	8	3%
Other		

The Internship Exploration course has the smallest percentage of males participating in it of all the courses as well as the smallest percentage of first-generation students. Grade level is relatively similar to the entire sample except there are many more juniors relative to the other courses. This course is the least diverse in terms of Race/ethnicity compared to the other courses. Given that first-generation students are more likely to be of a diverse race/ethnicity, it is understandable for a course with the least percentage of first-generation students to also be the least diverse (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Also, given that this internship course requires a level of network connections to have obtained an internship, it is understandable that this course has the least first-generation students, who have historically had fewer social connections for their career development (Tate et al., 2015).

Summary. While many of the different course demographics are reflective of the entire sample, this is not always the case and certain courses do tend to draw particular types of demographics. Understanding the demographics of those participating in a course, can help an instructor better prepare for the needs of a particular course; thus, making it better.

Descriptive Statistics for Occupational Engagement (OES-S) Scores

This section displays pre and post-test Occupational Engagement Scale – Student (OES-S) scores for the entire sample as well as for participants in each course. It also displays OES-S scores according to the different demographic variable groups analyzed for the entire sample.

First of all, the scores displayed in Table 10 are relatively high OES-S scores in terms of the range of possible scores (9 to 45). Thus, pre-test scores of 34.96 and post-test scores of 36.94 for the entire sample are relatively high for the range of possible scores. For example, the score of approximately 37, means the average score on each of the nine questions within the OES-S was 4.11 (on a 1 to 5 scale for each question). This means that overall students are staying quite engaged with their career development (e.g. volunteering in their fields of interest, attending presentations on their field of interest, making contact with people in their fields of interest, etc.). Table 10 clearly displays that the post-test OES-S scores are higher than the pre-test scores for the entire sample and for each respective course. For the entire sample the mean difference score is 1.98. The next section will determine if these differences in OES-S scores between the pre and post-tests are statistically significant.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for pre and post OES-S scores for entire sample and each course

Course Name	Pre/Post	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Entire Sample	Pre	958	34.96	6.79
	Post	958	36.94	6.20
	Difference		1.98	5.49
Career & Life Planning	Pre	204	31.24	7.30
	Post	204	33.68	6.51
	Difference		2.44	6.35
Job Search Strategies	Pre	198	34.30	6.88
	Post	198	37.15	5.75
	Difference		2.85	5.68
Professional Career Management	Pre	179	34.68	6.57
	Post	179	36.84	7.18
	Difference		2.16	6.40
Global Career Management	Pre	103	35.75	6.71
	Post	103	37.04	5.79
	Difference		1.29	4.62
Internship Exploration	Pre	274	38.11	4.69
	Post	274	39.26	4.43
	Difference		1.15	4.03

The data in Table 10 displays that those within the Career and Life Planning course represent the lowest scores (31.24 pre OES-S scores and 33.68 post OES-S scores) whereas those in the Internship Exploration course represent the highest (38.11 pre OES-S scores and 39.26 post OES-S scores). This makes some sense because Career and Life Planning is a course taken by many more first-year students and sophomores relative to the other courses. As for the Internship Exploration course being the highest, this is likely because those starting an internship and who have completed an internship are likely to be highly engaged students in terms of their career development. According to Table 10, the greatest increase in OES-S scores, took place in the Job Search Strategies course (difference score of 2.85). This may be the case because the course introduces students to new career activities that they would not have done without participating in this course.

The data in Table 11 below shows the pre and post OES-S scores of each of the primary predictor variables (i.e. independent/control variables) utilized in this study. For race/ethnicity, this variable was dichotomized to minority (non-white) and non-minority (white/Caucasian). The data in Table 11 displays an increase in OES-S score for each group from pre-test to post-test. It also shows a general progression in OES-S scores as a student's grade level increases from the first year to senior. This is true for both pre and post-test scores. It is interesting to note that females (pre score 35.25, post score 37.18) have higher OES-S scores than males (pre score 34.56, post score 36.60) for both pre and post OES-S scores. Similarly, non-minority (pre score 35.12, post score 37.14) students pre and post OES-S scores are higher than minority students (pre score 34.42, post score 36.23). Interestingly continuing-generation students are slightly lower than first-generation students for the pre-test scores (34.94 vs. 35.07), but then higher than first-generation students on the post-test scores (37.09 vs. 36.60). This demonstrates a greater

improvement in OES-S scores for continuing-generation students than first-generation students. Perhaps this is the case because first-generation students are participating in more of the occupationally engaging activities on campus prior to participating in the career course than continuing-generation students.

Table 11

Demographic variable group OES-S scores for the entire sample

Variable	*n*	Percent	Pre		Post	
Total	958	100%	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Gender						
Male	392	41%	34.56	6.72	36.60	6.36
Female	566	59%	35.25	6.83	37.18	6.07
First-Generation Status						
First-Generation	208	22%	35.07	6.77	36.40	6.67
Continuing-Generation	750	78%	34.94	6.80	37.09	6.05
Grade Level						
First-Year	140	15%	31.92	7.38	34.50	6.34
Sophomore	120	13%	32.92	7.46	34.99	6.74
Junior	178	19%	35.80	6.43	37.61	7.03
Senior	520	54%	35.97	6.24	37.82	5.42
Race/Ethnicity						
Minority	208	22%	34.42	7.15	36.23	6.19
Non-Minority	750	78%	35.12	6.68	37.14	6.19

Research Question Findings

This section relates the findings to the statistical tests undertaken for this study. These findings are reported according to each research question they seek to answer.

Research Question #1. This question asked: Are there significant differences in occupational engagement comparing first-generation and continuing-generation college students? To answer this, three independent sample t-tests were administered on the entire sample (*n*=958). OES-S scores for continuing-generation (*n*=750) and first-generation students (*n*=208) were compared to determine any statistically significant differences between the two

groups. Independent sample t-tests were performed on both the pre and post OES-S scores as well as the mean difference scores (post-test – pre-test) to compare first and continuing-generation students.

According to the independent sample t-test results, the mean of the pre-test OES-S scores for continuing-generation (*M*=34.94, *SD*=6.80) students was slightly lower than first-generation students (*M*=35.07, *SD*=6.77). This only slight difference in the mean scores of the two groups resulted in a P value greater than .05. Thus, there is no significant difference between the two groups for the pre OES-S scores; t(956)=0.247, *p*=0.805. As for the post-test OES-S scores, a slightly greater mean difference was found between continuing-generation (*M*=37.09, *SD*=6.05) and first-generation students (*M*=36.40, *SD*=6.67), but it still did not result in a significant difference. Thus, similar to the pre-OES-S scores for the two groups, no significant difference was found between them: t(956)=1.428, *p*=.177. Finally, an independent sample t-test was run comparing the difference scores (post-test – pre-test OES-S scores) between first-generation (*M*=1.33, *SD*=4.69) and continuing-generation students (*M*=2.16, *SD*=5.69). While a difference of .824 was found between the mean difference scores, no statistical difference was found t(956)=1.918, *p*=.055.

Research Question #2. This question asked: Controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level (e.g. first-year student, sophomore, etc.), is there a significant relationship between first-generation student status and occupational engagement scores? In order to answer this question, a multiple regression was administered on the entire sample (*n*=958). The regression was used to test if first-generation status (first-generation or continuing-generation) significantly predicted participants pre and post OES-S scores controlling for gender (male or female), race/ethnicity (minority or non-minority) and grade level (first-year, sophomore, junior,

senior). Thus, each of the predictor variables are dichotomous except grade level. Grade level is an ordinal variable. The data in Table 10 below displays these findings. The results of the regression indicated all of the predictor variables explained roughly 5 percent of the variance (R^2 =.051, F(4,953)=13.87, p<.01). First-generation status did not significantly predict pre OES-S scores (β = .01, p>.05), nor did gender (β = .06, p>.05) or race/ethnicity (β = -.03, p>.05). However, grade level did significantly predict pre OES-S scores (β = .22, p<.05). This finding falls in line with the descriptive statistics that showed an upward trend from first-year student to senior. This is understandable as a student with more college experience is likely to be more occupationally engaged.

As for the post OES-S scores, the results of the regression indicated all of the predictor variables explained roughly 5 percent of the variance as well (R^2 =.047, F(4,953)=12.68, p<.01). First-generation status did not significantly predict post OES-S scores (β = -.04, p>.05), nor did gender (β = .06, p>.05) or race/ethnicity (β = -.04, p>.05). However similar to the pre OES-S scores, grade level did significantly predict post OES-S scores (β = .21, p<.05). Table 12 displays the results of both multiple regression tests for the pre and post OES-S scores.

As displayed in Table 12, the results of both multiple regressions indicate no significant relationship between first-generation status and OES-S scores. But the results do indicate a significant relationship between grade level and OES-S scores (for both the pre and post-tests). It is interesting to note that while gender was not significant, it was close to being a significant predictor especially for the pre OES-S scores (P = .051).

Table 12

Relationship of pre-test and post-test OES-S scores and study variables

Model	Pre OES-S Dependent Variable			Post OES-S Dependent Variable		
	Standardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	*t*	*Sig*	*Beta*	*t*	*Sig*
Constant		56.09	.000		66.58	.000
Gender	.06	1.95	.051	.06	1.79	.074
Race/Ethnicity	-.03	-1.00	.320	-.04	-1.27	.205
First-Generation Status	.01	.42	.671	-.04	-1.20	.229
Grade Level	.22	7.14	.000	.209	6.61	.000

Research Question #3. This question asked: Are there significant differences in occupational engagement scores among different types of career courses for first generation and continuing-generation college students? To answer this question, 15 paired sample t-tests were administered. Five tests compared the pre and post OES-S scores for all responses from each of the respective courses. Five tests compared the pre and post OES-S scores for only first-generation students from each of the respective courses. The last five compared the pre and post OES-S scores for only continuing-generation students from each of the respective courses. Tables 13, 14 and 15 display the results.

Table 13

Paired sample t-test for all students within each course comparing pre and post OES-S scores

Course Name	Pre/Post	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*Sig*
Career & Life Planning	Pre	204	31.24	7.30			
	Post	204	33.68	6.51			
	Post-Pre		2.44	6.35	5.48	203	.000
Job Search Strategies	Pre	198	34.30	6.88			
	Post	198	37.15	5.75			
	Post-Pre		2.85	5.68	7.06	197	.000
Professional Career Management	Pre	179	34.68	6.57			
	Post	179	36.84	7.18			
	Post-Pre		2.16	6.40	4.51	178	.000
Global Career Management	Pre	103	35.75	6.71			
	Post	103	37.04	5.79			
	Post-Pre		1.29	4.62	2.84	102	.006
Internship Exploration	Pre	274	38.11	4.69			
	Post	274	39.26	4.43			
	Post-Pre		1.15	4.03	4.71	273	.000

The data in Table 13 displays that the post OES-S mean scores for each course are significantly higher than the pre OES-S mean scores. Such consistency for each course demonstrates the value of each course to significantly increase the occupational engagement of college students. As previously noted, those in the Career and Life Planning course have the

lowest mean scores for both pre and post OES-S scores. This is not surprising due to the reality that a large number of students in this course are first-year students (63 percent) whereas a majority of those in the Internship Exploration course are seniors (59 percent).

Table 14

Paired sample t-test for first-generation students within each respective course comparing pre and post OES-S scores

Course Name	Pre/Post	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*Sig*
Career & Life Planning	Pre	43	31.49	6.99			
	Post	43	33.05	8.00			
	Post-Pre		1.56	4.86	2.10	42	.041
Job Search Strategies	Pre	51	33.39	6.45			
	Post	51	35.24	5.45			
	Post-Pre		1.84	5.45	2.41	50	.019
Professional Career Management	Pre	46	36.28	6.57			
	Post	46	37.52	6.24			
	Post-Pre		1.24	4.59	1.83	45	.073
Global Career Management	Pre	28	37.07	6.80			
	Post	28	37.57	6.16			
	Post-Pre		.50	4.64	.57	27	.573
Internship Exploration	Pre	40	38.25	4.75			
	Post	40	39.38	5.67			
	Post-Pre		1.12	3.62	1.97	39	.056

While Table 13 demonstrated a significant improvement in occupational engagement for all students within each of the respective career courses, Table 14 displays that for first-generation students, scores significantly improved in only two of the courses. For first-generation students, the Professional Career Management, Global Career Management, and Internship Exploration courses did not result in a significant increase in OES-S scores on the post-test. It should be noted that a smaller sample size is likely playing a role in this lack of significance. Both the Internship Exploration and Professional Career Management courses resulted in a greater than 1-point improvement. Table 13 displayed a 1.15 improvement in OES-S scores in the Internship Exploration course for all students and that resulted in a statistically significant difference. But in Table 14, a 1.12 improvement in the Internship Exploration course for only first-generation students did not result in a significant improvement (P = .056). In Table 13, the Internship Exploration course had a much smaller sample (*n*=40).

But sample size is not the only factor contributing to the lack of significance. The change in actual mean OES-S scores for first-generation students are less than continuing-generation students overall. For example, the Global Career Management course only resulted in a .50 change in OES-S mean scores for FGCS. This is compared to a change of 1.29 for the wider sample for this particular course. Considering the sample of FGCS for this course was very small (*n*=28), the low improvement and smaller sample led to a P value nowhere near the level of significance (P = .573). The next table (Table 15) displays the change in OES-S scores only for continuing-generation students.

Table 15

Paired sample t-test for continuing-generation students within each respective course comparing pre and post OES-S scores

Course Name	Pre/Post	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*Sig*
Career & Life Planning	Pre	161	31.17	7.40			
	Post	161	33.84	6.07			
	Post-Pre		2.67	6.69	5.06	160	.000
Job Search Strategies	Pre	147	34.61	7.02			
	Post	147	37.81	5.72			
	Post-Pre		3.20	5.73	6.76	146	.000
Professional Career Management	Pre	133	34.13	6.50			
	Post	133	36.60	7.48			
	Post-Pre		2.47	6.90	4.13	132	.000
Global Career Management	Pre	75	35.25	6.67			
	Post	75	36.84	5.67			
	Post-Pre		1.59	4.61	2.99	74	.004
Internship Exploration	Pre	234	38.09	4.69			
	Post	234	39.24	4.20			
	Post-Pre		1.15	4.10	4.29	233	.000

The data in Table 15 displays the change in OES-S mean scores for continuing-generation students within each of the respective courses. Each of the courses resulted in a significant improvement in OES-S mean scores. Comparing continuing-generation and first-

generation students, continuing-generation students who participated in the career courses overall improved in their OES-S scores more than first-generation students. Table 16 below compares the mean OES-S scores and difference scores for both first-generation and continuing generation students.

Table 16

Comparison of first-generation and continuing-generation students OES-S Scores

		First-Generation		Continuing-Generation	
Course Name	Pre/Post	*n*	*M*	*n*	*M*
Career & Life Planning	Pre	43	31.49	161	31.17
	Post	43	33.05	161	33.84
	Post-Pre		1.56		2.67
Job Search Strategies	Pre	51	33.39	147	34.61
	Post	51	35.24	147	37.81
	Post-Pre		1.84		3.20
Professional Career Management	Pre	46	36.28	133	34.13
	Post	46	37.52	133	36.60
	Post-Pre		1.24		2.47
Global Career Management	Pre	28	37.07	75	35.25
	Post	28	37.57	75	36.84
	Post-Pre		.50		1.59
Internship Exploration	Pre	40	38.25	234	38.09
	Post	40	39.38	234	39.24
	Post-Pre		1.12		1.15

As displayed in Table 16, continuing-generation students' OES-S scores improved more compared to first-generation students. For example, the difference score for continuing-generation students in the Global Career management course is three times greater than the first-generation student mean difference score (1.59 compared to .50). Continuing-generation students who participated in the Career and Life Planning, Job Search Strategies, and Professional Career Management all had an increase of 1.5 to 2 points higher. Only the Internship Exploration course had a similar level of improvement of OES-S scores for both first and continuing-generation students (1.12 increase for first-generation and 1.15 increase for continuing-generation students). Note that there are many more continuing-generation students in each course compared to first-generation students (e.g. the Internship Exploration course has 40 first-generation and 234 continuing-generation students). So, the smaller sample size for first-generation students likely contributes to a lack of significance in terms of improvement in OES-S scores.

Research Question #4. This question asked: Controlling for first-generation status, gender, race/ethnicity, and college grade level, does participation in particular types of career courses predict an increase in occupational engagement scores? Tables 17-22 display the multiple regression tests run for the entire sample and each of the five respective career courses in order to answer this question. For this research question, the difference (delta) score of the pre and post-test OES-S scores was utilized as the dependent variable while grade level, gender, race/ethnicity and first-generation status were control (predictor) variables. Thus, the intention of these tests is to determine if participation in the career courses can predict any change in OES-S scores for particular variable groups.

For the entire sample (n=958), the results of the regression indicated that all of the predicator variables explained 0.2 percent of the variance (R^2 =.002, F(4,953)=1.378, p>.05).

None of the predictor variables significantly predicted the OES-S difference scores. Table 17 displays the P values (*Sig)* for each of the variables.

Table 17

Relationship of delta OES-S scores and study variables for the entire sample

Model	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	*t*	*Sig*
Constant		5.775	.000
Grade Level	-.043	-1.313	.190
Gender	-.013	-.387	.699
Race/Ethnicity	-.006	-.194	.846
First-Generation Status	-.061	-1.838	.066

Dependent Variable = Delta Score (Post OES-S Scores – Pre OES-S Scores)

According to Table 17, none of the variables significantly predict the difference scores for participants in the career courses for the whole sample. The closest group to predicting a lower difference score is first-generation status (P = .066). The next is grade level (P = .19). But neither of these P values are below the .05 threshold so they are not statistically significant in predicting difference scores.

Next, regression tests were run to determine if any of the independent variables predict higher or lower difference scores within each of the five career courses. Tables 18 to 22, which are located in Appendix B (see page 108), displays the findings from each of these regressions. For each course, the results of the regressions explained approximately 2 percent or less of the variance (R^2 = 2 percent or less).

The data in Tables 18-22 (see Appendix B) show that none of the career course predictor variables predicted a significantly higher or lower difference score for any of the respective variables utilized in the study. While Research Question #3 demonstrated that participation in the career courses do result in significant improvements overall in OES-S scores, Research Question #4 displayed that none of the courses have a particular ability to predict change in OES-S scores for any of the distinct variable groups studied (i.e. gender, race/ethnicity, grade level, or first-generation status). This is interesting given that Research Question #3 displayed through paired sample t-tests that some courses resulted in a significant difference in OES-S scores for continuing-generation students but not first-generation students (i.e. Professional Career Management, Global Career Management, Internship Exploration). The next chapter provides a detailed discussion regarding the results. These results are discussed in the context of the existing literature.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine occupational engagement among first-generation as compared to continuing-generation college students who enrolled in different types of career courses at a single institution of higher education. In performing the study, the relationship between participation in these career courses and the occupational engagement of first-generation students was analyzed. This chapter discusses the descriptive statistics and each of the findings according to the research questions that guide the study. The descriptive statistics and findings are discussed in relationship to the existing literature. This chapter also includes a general discussion of the contributions to practice both at the University of Kansas (KU) and within the broader higher education landscape. This chapter closes with recommendations for future research and a concluding summary of the study.

Discussion of Descriptive Statistics

There is much to be learned from the descriptive statistics. The sample for this study included 958 respondents who participated in five different types of career courses at KU over the span of five semesters (spring 2017, summer 2017, fall 2017, spring 2018, summer 2018). One of the first notable items is that female students participated in the career courses much more than male students (41 percent male and 59 percent female, see Table 3). This is not representative of the University of Kansas (KU) as a whole which has a much more evenly divided population of males and females (48 percent male and 52 percent female) (Analytics & Institutional Research, n.d.). Career courses represent a major commitment to career development as they span a semester and include multiple assignments and tasks in order to complete. This is a much more time-consuming activity than attending a single lecture or

meeting with a career counselor. In fact, these types of activities are often assignments within the respective career courses. Thus, this clearly demonstrates the female student's seriousness in engaging in their career development. Perhaps male students do still engage themselves at KU but participate in less structured activities. Maybe males participate more in job shadowing or do internships that are not for college credit? Male students may perceive career courses as unnecessary for their personal career development but rather find other elective credits to be more beneficial to their college experience. Such a student may find engagement in student clubs or part-time work outside of the college environment to be more beneficial to their career development.

In terms of the participation of minority (22 percent) and non-minority (78 percent) students in career courses, the sample as a whole is representative of the population of minority (21 percent) and non-minority (79 percent) students at KU (Analytics & Institutional Research, n.d.). This is the same for first-generation students with 22 percent of sample participants being first-generation and 22 percent of KU students also being 22 percent first-generation students. But one of the descriptive statistics that does stand out is that only 14 percent of minority students and 15 percent of first-generation students participated in the Internship Exploration course. As with male students, perhaps minority and first-generation students are still engaging themselves in their career preparation but in different ways. They certainly could be participating in internships that are not for credit. Or maybe an internship is not a possibility because of other family and financial pressures. MarksJarvis (2015) asserted that a major issue for first-generation students is that they often work full-time which hinders their ability to obtain necessary internships that would help launch them into their desired career field.

In regard to the occupational engagement (OES-S) scores that were studied, one of the notable items is that these are generally very high scores for all student populations and grade levels. This means that KU students who enroll in a career course are quite engaged in their career development even before taking the course. Perhaps these students are engaging themselves early on in various career activities offered through the University Career Center. KU has invested heavily in career education to make it a ubiquitous part of the student experience on campus, so when first-year students who have yet to even take a career course answer the questions on the OES-S, they are already perceiving themselves as quite engaged. The high OES-S scores might also be because those who self-select to enroll in a career course may have higher career engagement levels than those who do not enroll in these courses. This is based in the sense that those who volunteer for various activities are likely already more engaged than those who do not volunteer. Given the data collected, the researcher is unable to provide comparisons to the larger KU population of students including those who do not participate in career courses. However, the literature supports the idea that these scores are higher based on self-selection because previous studies show OES-S score averages to be around 31. Duave's study (2015), which included a sample of mostly juniors and seniors, demonstrated an average OES-S score of 31. Ghosh and Fouad (2018), who studied veteran students, found that the average OES-S score was also approximately 31. Neither of these studies were based around participation in career courses (Duave, 2015; Ghosh & Fouad, 2018). The present study's average OES-S pre-test scores were approximately four points higher for both continuing-generation and first-generation students (approximately 35).

Another noteworthy finding among OES-S scores is the major improvement in the mean OES-S scores between first year pre-test OES-S scores (31.92) and senior post-test OES-S scores

(37.82) (see table 10). This nearly six-point jump should be noted because it clearly demonstrates that toward the end of their college experience, KU students who enroll in career courses are perceiving themselves as much more engaged in their career development than in the beginning of their college experience. Perhaps this is due to the many courses they complete as well as the career education programming they participate in throughout their college experience. Again, maybe this nearly 6-point difference is only found among career course participants at KU. Perhaps a different change in improved OES-S scores would be found among students who do not self-select to take a career course.

One more OES-S score statistic that stands out is how the Job Search Strategies course has the highest difference score between pre and post-tests out of all the courses (2.85 mean difference OES-S score). This one-credit online course has the highest percentage of seniors completing it among all the courses (80 percent). It would seem that the Career and Life Planning course would have the highest difference score because it is made up of a majority of first-year students (63 percent), is worth 3-credits, and has an in-person format. Or it would make more sense to me that the Internship Exploration course would generate the greatest mean difference score given that students in it are spending many, many hours participating in a highly practical and valuable experience of on the job training. But the difference score for the Internship Exploration course is only 1.15. Perhaps the Job Search Strategies course has the greatest improvement because it has the highest percentage of seniors (80 percent) compared to the other courses and these seniors in particular are students who have been comparatively less engaged. So, once they do participate in this course, even with it only being one-credit, and fulfill tasks within the course, they suddenly perceive themselves as being significantly more engaged in their career development. This makes sense when comparing the numbers. Students

in the Internship Exploration course have a mean pre-test OES-S score of 38.11 whereas students in the Job Search Strategies course only have a mean pre-test OES-S score of 34.30. Thus, these numbers represent two very different types of student populations in terms of their career engagement at the start of each respective course. The next section discusses the findings to the statistical tests that were run in order to answer the research questions.

Discussion of the Research Findings

Each of the findings to the statistical tests are discussed in this section. This discussion is organized according to each research question. The discussion includes connections to the literature foundations for this study.

Research Question #1. The first research question investigated whether a significant difference exists between first-generation and continuing-generation college student OES-S scores. This research question included the entire sample of respondents. The pre and post OES-S scores as well as the mean difference scores of continuing-generation and first-generation students were compared. No statistical differences for any of these comparisons were found. This finding was not expected because of the existing literature. For example, Pascarella et al., (2004) found first-generation college students (FGCS) to be overall less engaged on the college campus than continuing-generation students. Hirudayaraj and Mclean (2018) found FGCS to lack awareness of and to have limited access to college graduate employment. Parks-Yancy (2012) similarly found FGCS to lack an understanding of the many career opportunities that exist for college graduates. Such literature reasonably supports the idea that FGCS would be less occupationally engaged than continuing-generation students. Perhaps in reality, FGCS may statistically be as engaged in their career development as continuing-generation students but still struggle in their awareness and access to job opportunities after college. The connection between

OES-S scores and access to employment after graduation was not looked at in this study but is an important topic for future research. Such issues of awareness and access to employment for FGCS' is deeply connected to their family's lack of ability to support them in this transition (Olson, 2016).

Likely the sample is a factor in finding no statistical difference between first and continuing-generation students because it only includes students who self-selected to enroll in career courses. It is likely that these first-generation students are more occupationally engaged than the larger population of first-generation as well as continuing students attending the institution. Prior studies on occupational engagement (not based on participation in career courses), found OES-S score averages to be around 31 compared to the present study's average pre-test OES-S score of approximately 35 (Duave, 2015; Ghosh & Fouad, 2018).

The literature does assert that FGCS generally have a confident self-concept viewing themselves as much more self-reliant and independent than continuing-generation students (Tate et al., 2015). This may lead to the idea that FGCS are actually more occupationally engaged than continuing-generation students as they are forced to make their own way and not rely on family or other connections for their career development. Perhaps this forced independence due to their circumstance is what drives first-generation students to engage themselves? Further, perhaps among FGCS there are those who are highly occupationally engaged because of their circumstances while other FGCS demonstrate little engagement resulting in no statistical difference in OES-S scores from continuing-generation students.

In addition to finding no difference between first and continuing-generation students' OES-S scores, it was also a little surprising to find no statistical difference between the two groups' OES-S difference scores. Again, based on the literature which asserts struggles in career

development for FGCS as well as the positive effects of career courses, it would seem that career course participation would result in a significant improvement in occupational engagement scores compared to continuing-generation students (Folsom & Reardon, 2003; Olson, 2016; Parks-Yancy, 2012; Pascarella et al., 2004; Reardon et al., 2011). Perhaps the career courses contain certain aspects that are helpful but not as helpful to first-generation students as to continuing-generation students. Again, the sample is likely a contributing factor in that those first-generation students who self-select to participate in these courses are already engaging themselves prior to their participation in a course, so there is no statistical difference in the difference scores between first-generation and continuing-generation students. Perhaps if this study included mandatory career courses which would remove the volunteer aspect, there would be a significant difference in the difference scores between first-generation and continuing-generation students. Or perhaps not because then the volunteer aspect for continuing-generation students would be removed as well resulting in no significant difference.

Research Question #2. The second research question investigated whether a significant relationship exists between first-generation student status and occupational engagement scores while controlling for the variables of grade level, gender, and race/ethnicity. No significant relationship was found between first-generation status, gender, or race/ethnicity with the pre or post OES-S scores. But a significant relationship was found between grade level for both pre and post OES-S scores. This demonstrates as students increase in years in school, their occupational engagement score increases.

This finding makes sense as students who have progressed in their college career have reasonably engaged in career related activities resulting in a higher occupational engagement score. Other studies utilizing the occupational engagement scale have also found a relationship to

exist between grade level and occupational engagement scores (Cox, 2008; Duave, 2015; Hook, 2012). In fact, if no relationship between grade level and improved OES-S score was found, this would be alarming. It would demonstrate a lack of positive influence the college experience is having on the students. Rather, it is reasonable to conclude that career educational programming including career courses at KU are helping students to be more engaged in their own career development.

The fact that no relationship was found between men and women and OES-S scores is not surprising. The literature is mixed in this regard with Cox (2008) finding no statistical difference to exist and Hook (2012) finding there to be a significant difference (female scores being higher than male scores). It is likely that the samples have an influence on these different outcomes. Hook (2012) specifically studied student athletes whereas this study focused on students who volunteered to take a career course. Perhaps female student athletes take their career engagement more seriously than male athletes whereas students in the present study's sample include students (both male and female) who are already highly engaged exemplified by their volunteering for a career course. Gender nonbinary students were not included in this study. Perhaps if they were, the findings would be different.

Finally, the finding that race/ethnicity does not significantly predict occupational engagement scores is not surprising because race/ethnicity and first-generation status are often related to one another. According NCES, the racial makeup of first-generation students is 49 percent white, 27 percent Hispanic or Latino, 14 percent black or African American with the remaining 10 percent from other racial groups (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). This is compared to continuing-generation students who are 70 percent white, 11 percent black or African American, 9 percent Hispanic or Latino with 10

percent from other racial groups (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). The current sample displayed a similar finding with 37 percent of first-generation students being of a minority race/ethnicity whereas only 17 percent of continuing generation students were of a minority race/ethnicity. Thus, because of the relationship between first-generation status and race/ethnicity, it can be expected that the two groups would demonstrate the same type of relationship with OES-S scores. This is an important finding because it demonstrates no major divide in the level of career engagement between white and minority students. Perhaps this is the case because the white and minority students are both being well supported in their career engagement at KU. Additionally, Kansas high schools may be doing a good job to help both minority and white students to engage in their career development. Again, the sample is likely a factor. If the sample included students who were not proactively engaging in their career development through voluntary career courses, perhaps a relationship between race/ethnicity and OES-S scores would exist.

Research Question #3. This research question sought to provide understanding about the relationship between completion of each of the different career courses and occupational engagement scores. In comparing the pre and post OES-S scores for all students in each course, a significant improvement was found in all of the courses. Based on this finding, it can be reasonably predicted that when students participate in each of these different courses, the class as a whole will attain a significant improvement in their occupational engagement scores. This finding demonstrates the positive results of participating in each of these courses. This falls in line with similar findings by Folsom and Reardon (2003) who found participation in career courses to result in positive outputs such as greater career decision making skills and increased career maturity.

Each of these KU career courses contain at least one of the five ingredients outlined by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) that are crucial for a career course to be meaningful: 1) workbooks or written exercises, 2) counselor dialogue or individual feedback, 3) world of work information, 4) modeling, and 5) building support for the client's career decision. In the Career and Life Planning course, the students perform informational interviews with professionals in the field they are investigating. This is an example of modeling which is to bring those who have successfully navigated the career process in contact with students (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000). The Job Search Strategies course includes a reflection paper about the student's career development. This is an example of workbooks or written exercises. The Professional Career Management course has students participate in a mock interview. This is an example where individual feedback can be provided to help a student improve in this skill. The Global Career Management course requires an informational interview to be performed. This is an example of modelling as well as gathering information about a career field. Finally, the Internship Exploration course requires several written assignments where the student must reflect on their experience in the internship which again is an example of workbooks or written exercises noted as a crucial ingredient by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000).

To understand this research question further pre and post-test scores for first-generation and continuing-generation students were compared for each of the courses. Only two of the courses resulted in significant improvements in OES-S scores for first-generation students: 1) Career and Life Planning and 2) Job Search Strategies. For continuing-generation students, each of the courses resulted in a significantly higher OES-S score (comparing pre and post-test scores). The different results from these two groups provides some better understanding about these courses and their relationship with these two student populations. Considering the literature

regarding the lack of engagement and struggles of first-generation students in terms of their career development, it would seem reasonable that every course would result in a significant improvement for first-generation students especially when considering that each course resulted in a significant improvement in OES-S scores for continuing-generation students (Olson, 2016; Parks-Yancy, 2012; Pascarella et al., 2004). This finding may be reflective of various factors that make up the experience of each of these courses.

Regarding the Career and Life Planning course, the in-person nature may be particularly effective for first-generation students. Perhaps first-generation students perceive themselves as more engaged when participating in the classroom as opposed to fulfilling tasks on their own in the online environment. Career and Life Planning is also unique from the other courses in that most students in it are first-year students. This being the case, it is reasonable to conclude that first-year, first-generation students would significantly improve in their OES-S scores after participation in this course given that first-year students tend to experience a greater improvement in OES-S scores after participating in a career course than higher grade level students (see Table 11).

As for the significant improvement in OES-S scores for first-generation students in the Job Search Strategies course, this is likely heavily influenced by the fact that this course focuses on the fundamentals of developing one's career skills (see Appendix A). Students spend time exploring what career field they will pursue as well as potential internship or graduate school opportunities that will support them in their goal. They learn to network and manage applications that will support them in their job search. Given that first-generation students are likely to not have been supported in the development of these skills by their family, it is not surprising that their participation in this course results in a significant improvement in OES-S scores.

As for the three courses that no significant improvement was found (Professional Career Management, Global Career Management, and Internship Exploration), there are multiple possible reasons to explain this. First, perhaps the content in these courses is less appealing to first-generation students than the first two. The first two courses are more fundamental and offer highly practical development for career skills. Professional Career Management and Global Career Management on the other hand are different types of courses focusing more on development for individuals once in their careers. The Professional Career Management course helps with navigating organizational dynamics for improving a career. The Global Career Management course may assist with navigating different cultural dynamics in the workplace or how to develop a global career. This information is certainly helpful, but perhaps perceived as less helpful to first-generation students.

Perhaps even more important in explaining the lack of significant improvement for the Professional and Global Career Management courses in particular is the fact that first-generation students entering these two courses have very high pre-test OES-S scores (36.28 for Professional Career Management and 37.07 for Global Career Management). This is compared to continuing-generation students whose scores are much lower (34.13 for Professional Career Management and 35.25 for Global Career Management). It is reasonable to conclude that the more engaged a student already is when entering a course, the less likely it is for them to perceive significant improvements in their engagement. The first-generation students participating in these courses are serious about their career development prior to starting these courses and thus they experience little perceived improvement.

As for the Internship Exploration course, it seems particularly surprising that an internship course would not result in a significant improvement in career engagement. But

similar to the Professional and Global Career Management courses, this can likely be explained by the high pre-test OES-S scores first-generation students have in this course (38.25). Students who do an internship are earnestly engaged in their career development. Internships require fore-thought and planning to get set up. Thus, these already highly engaged first-generation students experience relatively little difference in their perceived engagement after completing the internship. Combine this possibility with the fact that the sample size is much smaller for first-generation students, and this results in pre and post-tests that are not significantly different. But it should be noted that in terms of the actual difference between pre and post-test OES-S scores, first-generation students and continuing-generation students are nearly the same (1.12 for first-generation students, 1.15 for continuing-generation students). So, while the sample size is not enough to bring about a significant difference for first-generation students, the two groups are both similarly improving in OES-S scores according to the raw numbers.

Finally, it should be noted that while no significant improvement was found in three of the courses for first-generation students, all of the OES-S scores for both first and continuing-generation students are quite high (as noted earlier). The differences between these groups are on the whole fairly minimal. Each course is resulting in an improvement in OES-S score even if only a little. These facts demonstrate that students who participate in career courses are having a positive experience at KU in terms of their career development.

Research Question #4. This research question sought to determine if participation in particular career courses controlling for first-generation status, gender, grade level and race/ethnicity would result in a significant improvement in OES-S scores. None of the predictor variables were found to significantly predict an increase in difference scores. If any significant relationships were found between predictor variables and difference scores, this would mean that

it could be predicted that certain demographic populations who participate in a specific type of career course would result in significantly improved occupational engagement scores. Such information would be useful to administrators to understand how to positively help different demographic groups in their career development.

In some ways this finding is a little surprising. Research Question #3 found some courses to have significant differences in pre and post OES-S scores for first-generation students while others did not (Professional Career Management, Global Career Management, Internship Exploration). Thus, it would not have been surprising to find a significant relationship between first-generation status (yes or no) and the OES-S difference scores for these respective courses. Perhaps no significant relationship was found between first-generation status and the difference OES-S scores within these particular courses because other factors (e.g. grade level or gender) were also influencing the relationship enough to have removed any significance.

Another possible reason why no relationship exists between these variables and the difference scores for each of the courses is because these courses were not developed with a focus to only serve a specific student population. For example, if any of the courses were particularly focused on serving minority students only, then perhaps a relationship would be found with the race/ethnicity variable in that particular course. Or if one of the courses was narrowly focused on serving senior students only, then perhaps a relationship would be found between grade level and difference scores within this particular course. But no course is narrowly focused in such a way. Certainly, some courses are set up with information that is more fundamental in nature and useful for students who are earlier in their college career, but even the courses offering fundamental information can be useful to a student in their junior or senior year

potentially. Similarly, the Job Search Strategies course asserts a focus on serving the broad range of majors for liberal arts and sciences students but can still help students of all majors.

Summary. The findings overall for this study demonstrate no significant differences between first-generation and continuing-generation students. In light of the literature on first-generation students, it is reasonable to conclude that the sample of students for this study is likely the greatest contributing factor to why no difference exists. This sample only includes students who volunteered to participate in career courses which means the sample of students are likely more engaged than students who do not volunteer to complete a career course.

This study also shows that different types of career courses can be predictors of significant improvement in OES-S scores. This is likely due to the components of the courses which include reflective written assignments, modeling, world of work information and more of the crucial components noted by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000). This finding corresponds with other literature showing career courses as a contributor to student career decision making (Hanson et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2018; Reardon et al., 2011). The findings, however, demonstrate that some courses do not predict significant improvements in OES-S scores for first-generation students. This may be the case because these particular courses include information or requirements that is perceived as less engaging to first-generation students compared to continuing-generation students. Or perhaps this is the case because first-generation students who take these courses already have a high OES-S score thus making perceived improvements in occupational engagement less likely from the student perspective.

Finally, the study did not find any particular course to have a specific relationship with first-generation students nor any of the other demographic variables in improving OES-S scores. One reason for this may be that none of the courses are uniquely focused to serve a specific

student population. For example, if a course was primarily focused on the experience of minority students and their career development, perhaps a relationship would be found between the OES-S difference score and race/ethnicity. But none of the KU career courses in this sample are focused in such a way. Rather the courses are generally developed to support all students at KU.

Contributions to Practice

The findings from this study will help administrators both at the University of Kansas as well as in the broader higher education landscape better understand first-generation college students and their career development. It also provides useful information about first-generation students participating in different types of career courses and their career development. Prior to this study, research on this topic essentially does not exist. The results show that first-generation students and continuing-generation students who enroll in career courses do not differ significantly in their occupational engagement scores before or after taking these courses. Such information is useful to administrators at KU. If it was found that first-generation students had significantly lower occupational engagement scores than continuing-generation students, this would immediately encourage administrators to look further into the issue and develop new programming initiatives to support first-generation students better.

The study found grade level to be a significant predictor of improved occupational engagement scores. While an overall increase in career engagement from the first year to the senior year is highly positive, one item that should be reviewed is how to make the participation of males in career courses more representative of the male population at large at KU. Perhaps specific marketing campaigns targeted to males could be implemented. Perhaps male peers who have completed these courses could be utilized to encourage fellow club and fraternity members to participate. Perhaps these same recruiters could be made peer co-instructors in these career

courses. Maybe career courses have a negative stigma on campus among males and if it could be communicated to them effectively that these courses are highly valuable for their career development, then they would participate more.

Additionally, the study found that first-generation students and minority students participate in the Internship Exploration course much less compared to other career courses. One possible solution to this is to work with upper-level leadership at KU and make internships mandatory for all students. Such a policy implementation would require support from the Chancellor and Provost offices to implement and properly communicate to students and parents. Ultimately such a policy would require increased career support services to help students find internships. Such a policy would certainly help first-generation and minority students to seek out and obtain internship opportunities. These students would be well served by the internship experience and the credits would be utilized as electives going toward their graduation. Such a policy would demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that all KU students will receive an internship opportunity.

In regards to the three courses that did not result in a significant improvement in OES-S scores for first-generation students (Professional Career Management, Global Career Management, and Internship Exploration), I recommend a review of these courses by the career center administrators to determine any reasons why these courses did not result in significant improvements in OES-S scores. The primary reason is likely due to students who are already self-selecting to participate in these courses. But perhaps further investigation may bring greater light on the matter. A focus group could be implemented with first-generation students who participated in these courses to learn more about their experiences. Such feedback from these

students may prove useful in implementing minor adjustments to the courses to make them more effective.

Overall, the study found the career courses to result in significant improvements in OES-S scores. This means students are gaining knowledge about themselves, the world, and the relationship of themselves and the world (Cox et al., 2016). Such knowledge will help students in deciding on their major and career. Even the courses that did not result in significant improvements for first-generation students still reported increases in OES-S scores for these students. This is a useful finding for KU career administrators. The findings from this study should provide support for the University Career Center in their continued implementation of these courses as well as offer evidence to support the creation of new career courses focused on different aspects of career engagement as a means to engage different types of students.

As previously noted, the Professional Career Management course had the highest percentage of male participants compared to other courses. Another recommendation would be to create a course similar to this to engage more males. Additionally, the Director of the University Career Center could collaborate with specific majors, who do not have career focused courses, on designing courses that would blend career development within a particular major field. It would help if these courses were aimed to serve first-year and sophomore students. Given the positive relationship between participation in career courses and occupational engagement, helping students participate earlier in their college career would help students be more prepared for career opportunities in their junior and senior years when job opportunities could be extended.

Finally, University Career Center administrators could implement the OES-S to be a part of the new student orientation course online in Blackboard and the KU destination survey when

students are close to graduation. This would provide a greater understanding to administrators regarding the different student populations' OES-S scores at KU including those who do not participate in career courses.

In terms of the contribution of this study to the broader higher education landscape, administrators can follow the example of the KU University Career Center to determine if their institution's first-generation and continuing-generation students are similar to or significantly different in their occupational engagement scores. Such information is highly useful to determine whether or not more specific programming is needed focusing on serving first-generation students. Similarly, implementing the pre and post-test model of the OES-S will allow other institutions to better understand the relationship of their career courses and occupational engagement scores of their students.

Other institutions who do not have funding for career courses but are interested to implement them, may use this study as an example to support their initiatives. This study clearly demonstrates the value of career courses. Further, Appendix A provides each of the syllabi for the career courses. Practitioners who are looking to start career courses or revamp their existing career courses can analyze these syllabi for ideas on what to include in their own respective career courses. My recommendation would be to start with courses that offer fundamental career development information and requirements. Similar to KU's Career and Life Planning and Job Search Strategies courses, these courses offer excellent benefits to all students (first and continuing generation, first year to senior year).

Overall, this study provides useful information about first-generation students as well as useful evidence for the positive nature of career courses to be a part of an institution's programming and services. While other studies have found career courses to have a positive

effect on students, this study contributes to practitioners by providing many specifics about the influence of different types of career courses and their relationship with improving occupational engagement for first-generation students as well as other demographic variables (i.e. gender, grade level, and race/ethnicity) (Folsom and Reardon, 2003; Reardon et al., 2011). Although this study provides useful information, it also spurs new questions and further ideas for research. The next section will discuss this.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research studies build on each other allowing the body of knowledge about a particular topic to grow. This study is no different in that it builds on the foundation of existing literature that provided useful information on the topics of first-generation students, career development (in particular the construct of occupational engagement), and career courses in higher education. Based on the findings of this study, it would be useful to find out what parts of the career courses were most influential to the participants, how did students feel about their experience in these courses and what recommendations do they have for making the experience better. Such information may provide greater understanding why overall the post OES-S scores are significantly higher than the pre OES-S scores as well as how the courses can be improved so that first-generation students also experience significant improvements in every course. I recommend performing a qualitative study in order to answer these questions. Focus groups with student participants or interviews would work well.

Further, it would be useful to dissect each of the nine items in the occupational engagement scale to determine if certain items are significantly improved relative to the full score. For example, perhaps first-generation students significantly improve in their attendance at presentations about their desired career field. But perhaps other items within the scale do not

improve or are reduced such as visiting places they find to be interesting. Dissecting the specific questions in the occupational engagement scale has not been studied before and would be highly useful to administrators to understand the strengths and gaps in certain student populations or how different interventions such as career courses might influence these particular items within the OES-S.

Another idea for future research would be to include the OES-S into exit surveys or a survey of recent alumni to determine if higher OES-S scores actually have a relationship with a higher probability of obtaining a job soon after graduation. Such information would shed further light on the usefulness of the occupational engagement scale as a predictor of employment. This study found no statistical difference between first and continuing-generation students in terms of their occupational engagement. But do first-generation students with similar occupational engagement scores to continuing-generation students fair the same in terms of their employment after graduation? Within such an exit survey, it would also help to include the approximate salary of recent graduates so that this could be compared. Cox et al. (2016) asserts that occupational engagement supports students to enact satisfying career decisions. Including the OES-S within an exit survey may show a relationship between higher occupational engagements scores and both higher employment rates and salary level.

As discussed previously, one of the limitations of this study is that it only includes students who have self-selected to complete a career course. This idea is supported by the fact that previous literature has reported OES-S score averages to be approximately 4 points lower than the pre-test scores of the present study (Duave, 2015; Ghosh & Fouad, 2018). An exit survey for all graduating students would allow for comparison of students who participated in career courses and those who did not. If the OES-S was inserted into an entrance survey as well

as an exit survey, this would provide a full picture of student occupational engagement scores at a single institution.

KU is a national research university. The type of measurements undertaken in this study or recommended in this section could be performed at different types of institutions such as small or large privates or medium sized regional state universities. KU is a Midwest institution; perhaps different findings would result if performed at a university in the Mountain West or Northeast. Further, these are all voluntary courses, so the same type of study could be performed on mandatory career courses. For example, the KU School of Business offers a required 1-credit business career course during the sophomore year. Pre and post-test OES-S scores could be implemented to see if the findings are different or similar. Any future study should clearly define the meaning of first-generation student as one of the standard definitions (i.e. students whose parents never attended college or students whose parents attended some college but did not earn a bachelor's degree) (Maietta, 2016). This will make any future study similar to this one more cohesive with the existing literature. Thus, the present study provides a foundation for many potential research studies related to the topics of first-generation students, occupational engagement, and career courses.

Conclusion

This study examined occupational engagement among first-generation and continuing-generation college students who enrolled in different types of career courses at a large, Midwest, public university. The study found no significant difference in occupational engagement between first and continuing-generation students. One of the primary limitations to this study is that its sample only includes students who self-selected to engage in a career course. Perhaps if the study included students who did not volunteer to complete a career course, a difference in occupational

engagement scores may have been found between first-generation and continuing-generation students. The study did find a relationship between higher grade levels and higher occupational engagement scores. The study also provided a greater understanding of the relationship that exists between participation in different types of career courses and occupational engagement. On a whole, sample participants significantly improved in their OES-S scores after completing a career course. However, first-generation students' occupational engagement scores only improved in two of the courses. This is likely related to the fact that these first-generation students' pre-test OES-S scores were already quite high making a perceived significant improvement less likely in the post-test. While other studies have been performed on the topics studied, this study is unique in its analysis of different types of career courses and how they influence students' occupational engagement. It is an important addition to the topics of first-generation students, career development, and career education.

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Appendix A

Fall 2019

EPSY 310: Career and Life Planning
Instructor:
Office Location:
Office Hours:

EPSY 310: Career and Life Planning is a practical, hands-on course that relies heavily on student engagement. Through conversation and exploration, you will develop a better understanding of yourself and your career options and will leave with a roadmap for your future.

Course Goals/ Learning Modules

1. **Clarifying Career Identity:** construct a self-narrative that describes what you do best, what drives your engagement, and motivates you to do your best work
2. **Exploring Options**: investigate academic and work cultures and examine how your interests and values align with your discoveries
3. **Networking and Future Planning**: create and expand your professional network and design an engagement map to explore options, develop experiences, and make meaningful connections
4. **Building Skills:** develop practical skills that can be applied to career and life planning both now and in the future
5. **Managing Self:** learn to support and be supported in the process of career and life management, stay organized and productive, manage stress and emotions that come with opportunity, and maintain physical and mental health

Nature of Course Delivery

This class will use interactive activities, class discussions, readings, and individual presentations to accomplish student outcomes.

Blackboard

EPSY 310 has a Blackboard site that contains your gradebook, assignment descriptions, and important announcements about campus-wide activities and opportunities relevant to career exploration (internships, websites, guest speakers, information sessions, events, etc.). Unless otherwise noted, you will also submit your assignments there. If you encounter problems submitting any assignment, email it to your instructor using the subject line EPSY 310.

Assigned Readings

Roadtrip Nation. (2015). Roadmap: The Get-It-Together Guide for Figuring Out What To Do with Your Life. Chronicle Books: San Francisco, CA.

Select chapters from the textbook have been uploaded into Modules 1 and 5 on the Blackboard site. Please see the class schedule for required reading deadlines.

Course Fee

A $20 fee covers the costs of one career assessment: the **Strong Interest Inventory (SII)**. The SII is available at career.ku.edu/assessments. The online payment portal uses Visa/Mastercard. Checks or exact cash are also acceptable, but you will need to email ellenlind@ku.edu to make arrangements and to receive instructions. **Completion of this career assessment by the due date is a requirement of the**

LA&S 470
Job Search Strategies for Liberal Arts & Sciences Students

Syllabus – Spring 2018

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This online course is designed to introduce students to the fundamentals of planning and organizing job search strategies. Emphasis is placed on exploration of career options and effective use of employment search tools (e.g., resumes, cover letters, interviewing, networking and management of career pathways). The course stresses the value of the arts and sciences degree in the labor market and develops job search skills that will be useful throughout life.

COURSE CREDIT: 1 credit hour course, primarily for junior or senior students.

DELIVERY METHOD: online

INSTRUCTOR:

Erin Wolfram: 785-864-7676 / ewolfram@ku.edu
Carly Klynsma (GA): 785-864-5672 / carlyk@ku.edu
Ashley Kuznia (GA): 785-864-5672 / akuznia@ku.edu

REQUIRED:

- You must have access to reliable internet and email throughout the semester to complete the coursework. If you do not feel you will have these resources, you will need to drop the course.
- All assignments should be turned in by the assigned due dates by 11:59 p.m.
- Since this class is taught online, communication relies on email. If your KU email account is not your main account, make sure your non-KU account is connected to your KU account.
- You will need to check your KU email account and access Blackboard regularly (at least once per week at the beginning of each week, minimally).

COURSE PURPOSE:
The purpose of this course is to assist Liberal Arts and Sciences students in assessing the value of their education/skills and managing their own career and employment search. The course will facilitate the development of life-long skills used in career development: self-assessment, career/employment researching and networking, job search skills, career management and adaptability to the changing world of work.

Job Search Strategies for Liberal Arts and Sciences Students provides the opportunity to learn and practice career planning and job searching strategies that will be useful throughout life.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
At the completion of *LA&S 470 – Job Search Strategies for Liberal Arts & Sciences Students*, students will be able to:

- Develop a career-focused action plan and progress through supporting goals during the semester
- Identify marketable skills developed from a liberal arts education and demonstrate how to convey the value of transferable skills to employers
- Identify future employment alternatives
- Construct a professional resume and cover letter that clearly outlines student's unique skills and qualifications
- Effectively use online tools to identify appropriate jobs, internships, or graduate school programs
- Demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of interviewing by effectively presenting unique contributions in an online mock interview setting
- Demonstrate knowledge of appropriate salary expectations and how one's personal value can provide room for negotiation

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

Writing/Grammar
As upper level college students, it is expected that your writing for assignments will adhere to standard professional/business writing grammar (no typos, no contractions, etc.). Your writing makes an impression on employers

SYLLABUS
LA&S 475 Professional Career Management

Instructor information:
Melissa Johnson
Melissa.Johnson@ku.edu

Course Description
This course stresses the value of the arts and sciences degree in the labor market and develops basic job search skills to help students navigate the job search process. Students will learn to perform an effective job search by evaluating the skills and knowledge gained through the students' academic curriculum at The University of Kansas and applying it to their personal career goals. Emphasis is placed upon identification of individual career goals, analysis of the job market, and effective use of employment search tools (e.g., resumes, cover letters, interviewing, networking and management of career pathways).

Requirements:

- You must have access to reliable internet, email, and a webcam throughout the semester to complete the coursework. If you do not feel you will have these resources, you will need to drop the course.
- All assignments need to be turned in by the assigned due dates.
- Since this class is taught online, communication relies on email. If your KU email account is not your main account, make sure your non-KU account is connected to your KU account.
- You will need to check your KU email account and access Blackboard regularly (at least once per week at the beginning of each week minimally).

Americans with Disabilities Act: The KU office of Disability Resources coordinates accommodations and services for all students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted DR, please do so as soon as possible. Their office is located in 22 Strong Hall; their phone number is 785-864-2620 (V/TTY). Information about their services can be found at http://disability.ku.edu. Please also contact me privately in regard to your needs in this course.

The following is Article II, Section 6 of the Rules and Regulations of the University Senate, revised as of August 2006.
2.6.1 Academic misconduct by a student shall include, but not be limited to, disruption of classes; threatening an instructor or fellow student in an academic setting; giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on examinations or in the preparation of notebooks, themes, reports or other assignments; **knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work**; unauthorized changing of grades; unauthorized use of University approvals or forging of signatures; falsification of research results; **plagiarizing of another's work**; violation of regulations or ethical codes for the treatment of human and animal subjects; or otherwise acting dishonestly in research.

Blackboard
Course assignments, announcements, and grades will be posted in Blackboard. You will also submit nearly all of your assignments in Blackboard. Your username and password are the same as those used for your KU exchange account. If you do not use a KU exchange account, go to the Blackboard login page for instructions on how to register your username and password. Also, if the University does not have a record of the e-mail account that you use, you should register your e-mail account on the Blackboard main page under "Personal Information." If you do not do this, e-mails sent to you will be returned to sender, and you will be deleted as a user of Blackboard. To access the site, go to <http://courseware.ku.edu/>.

The Nature of an Online Course
All assignment descriptions, materials, and examples are described or listed in Blackboard. Please reference these materials **before** completing the assignments. Please call or email your instructor with additional questions, or set up an appointment to talk via phone or Skype for Business.

Response time: Your instructor will attempt to respond to any emails or phone calls from students received during normal business hours (M-F, 8a.m. – 5p.m.) within 24 hours; however, a 24 hour response may not always be possible. Emails received over the weekend may take longer.

Course Grading
All assignments will be graded on critical thinking, spelling accuracy and grammar, as well as the other items mentioned in their respective descriptions on the website. Since you are aware of all assignments and due dates from day one of the semester, late work WILL NOT be accepted. If you have a technological issue or other emergency, you need to contact your

Grades Scored Between				Will Equal
93	% and	100	%	A
90	% and	Less Than	93%	A-
87	% and	Less Than	90%	B+
83	% and	Less Than	87%	B
80	% and	Less Than	83%	B-
77	% and	Less Than	80%	C+
73	% and	Less Than	77%	C
70	% and	Less Than	73%	C-
67	% and	Less Than	70%	D+
63	% and	Less Than	67%	D
60	% and	Less Than	63%	D-
0	% and	Less Than	60%	F

SYLLABUS
LA&S 485 Global Career Management

Instructor information:
Melissa Johnson
Melissa.Johnson@ku.edu

Course Description
This global career development course studies the theories of cross-cultural communication and analyzes the global economy to help students apply these concepts to their own lifelong career management.

Requirements:

- You must have access to reliable internet, email, and a webcam throughout the semester to complete the coursework. If you do not feel you will have these resources, you will need to drop the course.
- All assignments need to be turned in by the assigned due dates.
- Since this class is taught online, communication relies on email. If your KU email account is not your main account, make sure your non-KU account is connected to your KU account.
- You will need to check your KU email account and access Blackboard regularly (at least once per week at the beginning of each week minimally).

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Grades Scored Between				Will Equal
93	% and	100	%	A
90	% and	Less Than 93%		A-
87	% and	Less Than 90%		B+
83	% and	Less Than 87%		B
80	% and	Less Than 83%		B-
77	% and	Less Than 80%		C+
73	% and	Less Than 77%		C
70	% and	Less Than 73%		C-
67	% and	Less Than 70%		D+
63	% and	Less Than 67%		D
60	% and	Less Than 63%		D-
0	% and	Less Than 60%		F

Course Grading
All assignments will be graded on critical thinking, spelling accuracy and grammar, as well as the other items mentioned in their respective descriptions in Blackboard. Since you are aware of all assignments and due dates from day one of the semester, late work WILL NOT be accepted. If you have a technological issue or other emergency, you need to contact your instructor IMMEDIATELY—issues relayed after the due date will not be considered. Also, be sure to CHECK YOUR GRADES REGULARLY to ensure assignments were received. If there is a discrepancy, please contact your instructor within 1 WEEK OF THE GRADE BEING POSTED IN BLACKBOARD. Final grades are not weighted and are based on total points.

SYLLABUS
LA&S 490/EPSY 575: Internship Exploration

Instructor information:
Melissa Johnson:
Melissa.johnson@ku.edu

Course Description
This course will provide credit for supervised practical experiences in an occupational area of interest. In addition to the work-related activity, students will complete reflective and career development assignments, as well as create a web portfolio of internship accomplishments. Credit hours will be assigned a letter grade A-F (+/-). Hours of credit recorded (1-5) are based on number of hours at your internship site and agreement of instructor. Prerequisites: consent of instructor, secured internship

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Internship Purpose
Internships represent a learning strategy that integrates practical work experience with a directed, reflective, academic component to help develop personal and academic competencies. Study, reasoning, reflection, theoretical and/or conceptual exploration complement the work experience to help develop new skills and knowledge. A primary and fundamental objective of the internship course is to help students develop the competency of self-directed learning. Self-directed learning requires self-motivation and interest. Multiple support systems have been developed to assist students in this learning endeavor.

Requirements
Students must work **a minimum of 8 hours** per week as an intern (This can earn you 1-3 credits / 15+ hours per week can earn you 1-5 credits)—the more credits, the more tuition but the coursework stays the same.

In addition:

- If applicable, receive permission to enroll in 4-5 credits, and **you MUST select the number of credits in which you are enrolling when you enroll in Enroll & Pay, as it will default to 1 credit.**
- The first week of class you will need to complete the signature document in Blackboard and the internship information form.
- You must have access to reliable internet, email, and a webcam throughout the semester to complete the coursework. If you do not feel you will have these resources, you will need to drop the course.
- **Assignments:** web space, learning objectives, discussions, mid-term and final evaluations by you and your supervisor, an internship spotlight, and demonstrated achievements from your internship.
- Since this class is taught online, communication relies on email. If your KU email account is not your main account, make sure your non-KU account is connected to your KU account.

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Schedule of assignments and due dates for course (Late work will NOT be accepted!)
You will receive an email every Monday; it is required that you read these emails, as they contain important information regarding assignments and the class.

IMPORTANT: Many of your assignments will be turned in by posting on the website you are required to create for the course. It is recommended you use Weebly to create your website; however, if you are comfortable using another program to create your site, feel free to use that program. However, I may not be able to assist you with any issues you have with another program. In addition, step-by-step instructions will be provided for Weebly only.

Appendix B

Table 18

Relationship of delta OES-S scores and study variables for the Career and Life Planning course

Model	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	*t*	*Sig*
Constant		3.299	.001
Grade Level	-.031	-.410	.682
Gender	-.008	-.110	.912
Race/Ethnicity	-.022	-.280	.780
First-Generation Status	-.063	-.807	.421

Dependent Variable = Delta Score (Post OES-S Scores – Pre OES-S Scores)

Table 19

Relationship of delta OES-S scores and study variables for the Job Search Strategies course

Model	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	*t*	*Sig*
Constant		2.198	.029
Grade Level	-.034	-.471	.638
Gender	.011	.148	.882
Race/Ethnicity	.040	.545	.586
First-Generation Status	-.111	-1.528	.128

Dependent Variable = Delta Score (Post OES-S Scores – Pre OES-S Scores)

Table 20

Relationship of delta OES-S scores and variables for the Professional Career Management course

Model	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	*t*	*Sig*
Constant		2.260	.025
Grade Level	-.065	-.851	.396
Gender	-.081	-1.081	.281
Race/Ethnicity	-.068	-.883	.379
First-Generation Status	-.083	-1.100	.273

Dependent Variable = Delta Score (Post OES-S Scores – Pre OES-S Scores)

Table 21

Relationship of delta OES-S scores and variables for the Global Career Management course

Model	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	*t*	*Sig*
Constant		1.491	.139
Grade Level	-.089	-.838	.404
Gender	-.050	-.493	.623
Race/Ethnicity	-.005	-.045	.964
First-Generation Status	-.112	-1.093	.277

Dependent Variable = Delta Score (Post OES-S Scores – Pre OES-S Scores)

Table 22

Relationship of delta OES-S scores and study variables for the Internship Exploration course

Model	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	*t*	*Sig*
Constant		.261	.794
Grade Level	-.040	.656	.513
Gender	.065	1.074	.284
Race/Ethnicity	.014	.235	.814
First-Generation Status	-.002	-.034	.973

Dependent Variable = Delta Score (Post OES-S Scores – Pre OES-S Scores)