The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School

TACTICS, STRATEGIES, TOOLS, AND SUPPORTS UTILIZED BY SELECTED SUCCESSFUL IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS IN SILICON VALLEY: A HOPE-ACTION THEORY PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation in
Workforce Education and Development

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2021
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify tactics adopted by selected successful immigrant entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley using the Hope-Action Theory perspective. Throughout American history, immigrant entrepreneurs have been important contributors, especially with regards to creating job opportunities in the U.S. economy, but unfortunately 45% of new startups fail in their first five years and 20% of them fail during the first two years. Although many studies have shown entrepreneurs and immigrant entrepreneurs from various perspectives, including positive psychology, which has started to notice the importance of higher levels of hope to become a successful entrepreneur, it is still hard to find research investigating a deep understanding of what helping factors and supporting environmental factors had an impact on maintaining hope toward success. In this dissertation, the researcher examined hope-action competencies and found helping factors that immigrant entrepreneurs with higher hope commonly used to help them face tough times and lead them toward success of their startups in Silicon Valley. For example, they adapted very well to utilizing social capital and were aware with market trends. In addition, the researcher discovered what they wished to utilize to help them in the early startup stage and led their startup businesses to be more successful.

In this qualitative exploratory study, 28 viable helping factors, four environmental helping factors and six wish list items were discovered. The findings revealed that individuals with positive thoughts of hope in starting and maintaining their positive attitude in building their new ventures successfully in Silicon Valley is a complex concept involving the individuals, social networks, technology and the environment. Specifically, entrepreneurs employed tactics, strategies, tools, and supports that participants adapted to demonstrate the seven Hope-Action Theory competencies.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I feel blessed and honored to have worked with great advisors, mentors, and fellows in the Learning Performance Systems Department. These individuals have provided me with knowledge, support, opportunities, guidance and encouragement in so many ways during my graduate study journey in Workforce Education and Development at Penn State.

First, I am indebted to my committee members and must express my appreciation to them. I was privileged to have two advisors: Dr. William Rothwell and Dr. Hyung Joon Yoon. Without their flexibility and encouragement, I would not have been able to resume my doctoral study after pausing for five years. I am especially appreciative of Dr. Rothwell, who always inspires and motivates with his scholarly wisdom and worldwide experiences in the field. Whenever I have had questions or doubts about my direction, his advice has been like a light of hope, pointing to opportunities ahead and preventing me from giving up.

I also am very grateful to Dr. Yoon, who guided and mentored me throughout my doctoral studies, especially during my period of uncertainty about resuming study and continuing the dissertation process. His knowledge, experience, and passion have inspired me to stretch my thinking, and to gain the necessary perspectives and skills to do my research confidently. He has provided ongoing support, encouragement and opportunities during my research on hope-action theory, which helped to build a future and desired career path for me. Second, I wish to thank Dr. Edgar Yoder, who not only provided me with knowledge of statistics but also empowered me to approach research through his sharing of his analytic knowledge. Although he has retired, he was still willing to be on my committee and guide me to the end of my doctoral study. Third, I thank Dr. Wesley Donahue, who made himself available for my research and helped to clarify my content with his rich experiences in academic research, industry consulting and entrepreneurship.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank other faculty members. This includes Dr. Ladislaus Semali and Dr. Judith Kolb, who saw my strengths and weaknesses and helped me to build a stronger me
in communication and critical thinking. I also wish to thank fellow Ph.D. colleagues Aileen Zaballero, Tutaleni Asino, Stacy Deshield, Cavil Anderson and Cyndi Corn. Without their encouragement, guidance, support and friendship, the doctoral learning journey would not have been completed replete with precious and positive moments. They provided me with a supportive learning cohort while I was at Penn State. I thank Carol Fantaskey, Jennifer McLaighlin and Laurie Heininger for their support. They made my life as an international student much easier.

I also wish to express my appreciation to my friends in Bay Area and in Taiwan, Dr. Yen-Ming Wu, Ken, Joy, Susan, Cynthia, Uncle John Fish, Crystal, Pat, Po-Hsiang, Bernard, church sister Rachael, Pyng, Teresa, Venessa and family bible study groups, ROLCC dance team and the ROLCC church. Without their prayers and emotional support, I could not have recovered and stood up after experiencing significant life encounters. These people also made it possible for me to complete my doctoral study.

I also need to thank my parents and granduncle Dr. Chester Tsai, grandaunt Ruth, aunt Vivian Chin and cousin Stephanie, who had faith in my Ph.D. dream. They never pressured me and always gave me unconditional love. A very special thanks to my beloved Abi, who always told me, “You can do it”, and gave up quality time with me to support the completion of my studies.

I also would like thank special friend Jenny Zhou, who was called back to the Lord. She also resumed her Ph.D. Her unwavering support and encouragement were so important as I decided to resume pursuing my Ph.D., especially when I faced critical moments in both study and life.

Finally, but foremost, I must express my appreciation to my Lord, Father and Savior. Without the wisdom, grace and patience that you provided throughout my journey, I would never have been able to overcome my fear, doubts and difficulties; regain confidence, hope and gifts; and realize and accomplish this opportunity to earn a Ph.D.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of Problem

There are many reasons why people decide to migrate from one country to another. Some migrations occur as a result of people fleeing prosecution, escaping war, or seeking better employment opportunities. Regardless of the reason, the common element is a desire for something better than what they already have. In the destination country, regardless of their reason for arriving, they have to find ways to survive. Some turn to entrepreneurship to make a living in their new country. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, immigrant entrepreneurs create about a quarter of new businesses in the United States. (Brin, 2018). The reality however is not all entrepreneurs’ activities are successful at bringing wealth, creating job opportunities, or accelerating the economy. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), 2 out of 10 new businesses fail in the first two years, 45% of them fail during the first five years and only 25% survive to 15 years or more. What makes these immigrants successful? Are there common competences, behaviors or characteristics amongst successful immigrant entrepreneurs?

Many researchers have studied entrepreneurs and immigrant entrepreneurs. Some have approached the subjects according to personality traits (Kerr et al., 2017; Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010; Yan, 2010); social competence (Baron, 2008, Baron & Markman, 2003; Hoehn-Weiss et al., 2004; Ismail, 2012; Lans et al., 2015); cognitive differences (Baughn et al., 2006; Carsrud et al., 2009; Palich & Bagby, 1995); physiological perspective (Blanchflower & Oswald, 1998; Brockhaus, 1982; Jensen & Luthans, 2002; Morrow, 2006; Segal et al., 2005; Sexton & Bowman, 1985; Sundararajan, 2010), and contextual factors (Bernhofer & Han, 2014; Brinckmann et al., 2010; Hmieleski & Ensley, 2007; Karimi et al., 2017). Most studies of entrepreneurship traditionally focused on the negative outcomes to discover what was wrong and from that to find out solutions fixing the problems and weaknesses of entrepreneurs; only a
few studies focused on positive angles. For example, Baron (2000, 2008), emphasized the importance of psychological factors that made immigrant entrepreneurs successful which included how entrepreneurs face challenges, failures, expectation events and decision making. Despite facing some failures and difficulties, entrepreneurs worked in situations that tended to be more unpredictable, complex and with higher pressures in finance and timeline situations. Successful entrepreneurs’ optimism (Baron, 2000; Busenitz & Barney, 1997; Roese, 1997) helps them to engage in high-risk activities and to focus more on identifying specific causes from their critical incidents. Jensen and Luthans (2002) and Morrow (2006) studied the relationship between hope and entrepreneurship. They found a significant positive impact of hope in the entrepreneurship process and successful entrepreneurs demonstrated higher scores of hope than others. However, there are few research studies focused on positive psychology and attributes related to the success of entrepreneurship (Morrow, 2006), and a recent study of reviewing existing literature about entrepreneurship of immigrants by Dheer (2018) also asserted the need to expand research on immigrant entrepreneurs because of those existing gaps. He discussed those gaps such as rigorous and scientifically-based analysis to address interpretation of how the nature, density, function and the geographic reach of immigrant networks impact the launch and maintenance of ventures by immigrant entrepreneurs, as well as the consequences of employment, entrepreneurial interactions and linguistic skills. He also strongly urged examination of differences that are explained by the intersection of perceptual, psychological and sociological influences from discovering how immigrants assess opportunities in ambiguous and sometimes contradictory situations, and how and to what degree, under those circumstances, they show alertness to opportunities. Furthermore, researchers need to understand entrepreneurial behavior to integrate the sociological framework that promotes the new venture creation phase into their theorization from micro-level viewpoint.

Importance of Immigrant Entrepreneurs
Immigrants play an important role among entrepreneurs. Looking at the increasing movement of people from their home countries to new host nations, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division (2015) reported a 50% increase in total global migration from 1990 to 2015. This huge movement has received a lot of attention from different disciplines, such as policy making, economics, psychology, sociology, and entrepreneurship. Some scholars have noted that the developmental situation of immigration has made positive contributions to the economic development of their host nations (Jibeen, 2011; Wadhwa et al. 2007). According to the most recent report from the New American Economy (2017), one in five entrepreneurs were immigrants. Between 2016 and 2017, in the United States, 28% of the population were immigrants and almost eight million American workers work for immigrant-owned businesses which contribute $1.3 trillion in total sales. Immigrant entrepreneurs (IE) are significant contributors to the U.S. economy and producers of employment openings. Thus while the importance of IEs is obvious, when looking at research on entrepreneurs, very little has focused on immigrant entrepreneurs (Dheer, 2018).

**Economic Contribution to U.S. economy**

Other studies of entrepreneurs’ demographics also showed a continuing increase in entrepreneurial firms, which has contributed to greater economic growth in the United States (Wong et al., 2005). According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2017) report, there are more than 582 million entrepreneurs in the world and 27 million of those are in the United States. In addition, The Kauffman Index reported that in California, there were on average 420 new entrepreneurs every month for every 100,000 adults; moreover, startup activity has continually increased and California was the top entrepreneur state, followed by Texas. Silicon Valley is in northern California, has a strong innovation culture, and has one-third of annual venture capital investment of $26-30 billion (Tareque et al., 2017). Entrepreneurs and startup companies provide employment to regional workers which improve local economic development and growth (Engel, 2014). Behind the high growth and domains of entrepreneurs
in Silicon Valley, research has shown that technology, money, talent, regional culture and dynamic government, the institutional environment, and other factors are the reasons for this ecosystem of entrepreneurship in an economy. (Bruton et al., 2010; Isenberg, 2008; Miller, 1999).

**Hope-Action Theory**

There are many studies exploring successful entrepreneurship and some show a significant relationship found between hope scores and the success of an entrepreneur. There is however little research about successful entrepreneurs or immigrant entrepreneurs impacted by level of hope. In order to discover a deeper understanding about the impact of hope, and understand how high hope thoughts led immigrant entrepreneurs toward success, one approach is the Hope-Action Theory (HAT) (Niles et al., 2019). HAT integrated Snyder’s (2002) hope theory, Bandura’s (2001) human agency theory, and Hall’s (1996) career meta competencies. There are seven hope-action competencies: (a) hope; (b) self-reflection; (c) self-clarity; (d) visioning; (e) goal setting and planning; (f) implementing; and (g) adapting, as well as environment factors, which interacted tightly together to develop and sustain higher hope thoughts of individuals (Niles et al., 2019). HAT allows the researcher to examine what competencies that high hope and successful immigrant entrepreneurs exercise during the entrepreneurial process especially when they face unpredictable challenges.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this proposed qualitative research study was to investigate what tactics successful immigrant entrepreneurs adopted to succeed in starting up their new entities in Silicon Valley as well as what tactics that they wished to have used during their entrepreneurial process. This study was targeted at the population of immigrant entrepreneurs who have successful startup businesses operating for at least three years in the Silicon Valley – an area leading in start-up activities in California and in the United
States. The researcher defined success as immigrant who has or had startups for at least three years, because 20% of new businesses fail during the first two years (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). The researcher anticipated discovering the traits of entrepreneurial experience of the startup stage, and what helped them to overcome and succeed past the first two years and be able to sustain in their third year. Research results will be utilized to design further immigrant entrepreneurial intervention programs to develop hope-action competency for nascent entrepreneurs including helping them to equip themselves with those competencies, maintain high hope levels and adapt strategies to face challenges during the initial years of starting a new business.

**Research Questions**

The primary intention of this study was to gain a perspective on implementing HAT-based tactics with experienced and successful entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley, targeting a group of immigrants who established their business in their new host country, the United States. To understand immigrant entrepreneurs’ successful experience in exercising HAT-based tactics in Silicon Valley, the following questions were asked in this study:

1. What HAT-based tactics, strategies, and tools did successful entrepreneurs adopt in their start-up and entrepreneurial careers?
2. What HAT-based tactics, strategies, and tools do successful entrepreneurs wish that they had applied?
3. What supporting environmental factors have been perceived by successful entrepreneurs in starting and maintaining their ventures?
4. What environmental factors do successful entrepreneurs wish they had in starting and maintaining their ventures?
Significance of the Study

The significance of this research was geared toward the investigation of the role and importance of the hope-action competencies of successful immigrant entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley, California. Throughout the history of research on immigrant entrepreneurs, many studies explored issues of IEs from various angles, which have been listed above in the statement of problem and some recent studies, which showed that the hope score has significant impact to entrepreneurs on the success of their new ventures. However, there was no study exploring and examining what competency that high hope IEs showed during the entrepreneurial process and led them to be successful. Therefore, this paper is specifically focused on the tactics based on hope-action competency that successful immigrant entrepreneurs utilized while they faced challenges during their entrepreneurial process by using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) method. From this doctoral research, the researcher hoped to find those tactics of IEs and to utilize findings to create some useful intervention projects to support and equip nascent phase entrepreneurs to develop needed competencies to increase or maintain hope levels which will positively affect their levels of success.

Definition of Terms

The following section defined key terms specific to this qualitative study which offered clarification of how the terms were used to avoid any unclear language and confusion.

**Career meta competencies.** The higher order skills and knowledge that are related to the management of self and career include self-knowledge, adaptability, tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty (Hall, 1996).

**Hope theory.** Hope theory has three components: a) agency thinking, b) pathways thinking, and c) goals and defined as one’s perception of their ability to envision and develop routes to attaining one’s goals (Snyder, 2002).
**Hope-centered career competencies.** These competencies are hope, self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting and planning, implementing and adapting (Niles et al., 2010).

**Human agency.** A number of core features that operate through phenomenal and functional consciousness include the temporal extension of agency through intentionality and forethought, self-regulation by self-reactive influence, and self-reflectiveness about one’s capabilities, quality of functioning, and the meaning and purpose of one’s life pursuits (Bandura, 2001).

**Immigrant entrepreneurs.** Those individuals, who immigrated to a new country, started a business (or businesses) and who employ themselves as well as those who employ others (Aaltonen & Akola, 2012).

**Pathway thinking.** The ability from one’s beliefs to plan ways to meet goals (Snyder, 1995).
The purpose of this research was to investigate what hope-action competencies helped immigrant entrepreneurs to be successful and what wish list items they wished to have which would have been helpful to their success during the start-up period. Recent research on immigrant entrepreneurs found they are still under-researched (Dheer, 2018). The challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs are various because they have different backgrounds of cultural, family, education and previous working experience. In earlier decades, more immigrant entrepreneurs were necessity entrepreneurs with lower-skills who were pushed to be self-employed due to the lack of opportunities and limitation of skills to be employed in the host countries. They usually started small ethically-oriented businesses because of financial issues (Borjas, 1986). A few decades later, in the twenty-first century, recent studies have found that more immigrants are opportunity entrepreneurs with higher-skills who are well-educated and skilled individuals. Those immigrant entrepreneurs are more likely to voluntarily leave their wage employment to start new careers (Hunt, 2010; Ndofor & Priem, 2011). Regardless of being forced or volunteered to start new ventures, immigrant entrepreneurs all left their home countries and faced life change but hoped for new opportunities in the new hosting countries.

The goal of this literature review was to review articles of IEs from two dimensions, explain contributions of IEs from history of economic development of the United States, to discover the challenges and opportunities of IEs in Silicon Valley, and to introduce Hope-Action Theory (Niles et al., 2019) which can be used to provide self-support when facing challenges while starting up new ventures. There was a focused section on discovering research about helping factors in the literature that were most relevant to this study: immigrant entrepreneurs, challenges for IEs, entrepreneurial phenomena in the SV, and the use of Hope-Action Theory to explain IEs. Also included in this discussion were some
considerations from HAT-related literature for overcoming career barriers as immigrant entrepreneurs. Finally, in Chapter Four and Chapter Five of this study, the researcher discovered what helping factors assisted hope competencies that were exercised by successful entrepreneurs in the Silicon Valley as well as their wished supports in each competency.

**Immigrant Entrepreneurs**

Immigration has been growing over the last few decades. The number of self-employed immigrants has increased in the United States workforce by about 16% since 2007, and almost doubled from approximately 9.9 million to roughly 17.7 million between 1980 and 2007 (Lofstrom, 2009). The difference of motivation to start new ventures between two types of entrepreneurship, necessity and opportunity entrepreneurship, were discussed in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Several decades ago, Kirzner (1979) stated that opportunity entrepreneurs started up a new business to pursue new opportunities, and most of them are high-skilled immigrants who were able to utilize existing resources and Barakat and Parhizgar (2013) also explore deeper based on Kirzner’s statement, they further disclosed those immigrants discovered opportunities by using their human capital. On the other hand, unlike opportunity entrepreneurs, necessity entrepreneurs choose to start their new ventures due to life conditions which required and pushed them to be able to survive in new hosting countries (Reynolds et. al, 2005), and most of them were unskilled or low-skilled (Block & Wagner, 2006).

Although having different motivations, human capital and social capital, and either by pulling or by pushing, immigrants became entrepreneurs in the United States, and both types of entrepreneurs have shown significant contributions to the U.S. economy. In 2002, USA Today reported that 29% of Asian food stores were owned by Korean immigrants and 30% of Asian nail-care salons were operated by Vietnamese, which showed lower-skilled immigrant entrepreneurs have made a major impact to create new small ventures in the United States (Chung & Whalen, 2006). The most recent report from the New American Economy (2019) website reported that nearly 20% of entrepreneurs were immigrants and the
employment opportunities created for American workers from immigrant-owned businesses were almost 8 million jobs, which generated $1.3 trillion in the workforce between 2016 and 2017. Moreover, in 2016, on the list of Fortune 500 companies, 40.2% of firms had at least one founder who was a first- or second-generation immigrant. Both types of immigrant entrepreneurs have been playing a significant role in the U.S. economy for centuries.

**Becoming Immigrant Entrepreneurs**

**Push Factors**

According to Kirkwood (2009) there are push and pull factors that drive people into entrepreneurship. Many research studies relating to what motivates immigrants toward starting their own business and being IEs state push factors and pull factors (Basu, 1998; Collins et al., 1995; Light, 1972; Masurel et al., 2002; Metcalf et al., 1996; Soydas & Aleti, 2015; Waldinger et al., 1990). Those two factors affect how immigrants choose to be regular employees or self-employees. Factors which pushed them to pursue starting their own business included lack of education and working abilities (Kloosterman et al., 1998), discrimination (Mata & Pendakur, 1999), loss of employment or fear of unemployment (Masurel et al., 2002; Panayiotopoulos, 2008) and social exclusion (Ram & Smallbone, 2003). When those push factors happened, more immigrants sought self-employment as an alternative to the unemployment situation; however, push factors also applied to the non-immigrant population. New immigrants needed to adapt themselves to the new hosting country’s culture. Due to acculturation, first generation immigrants often faced more limitations due to lack of education and working abilities, and discrimination which drove them to become entrepreneurs rather than paid employees (Kloosterman et al., 1998; Mata & Pendakur, 1999).

**Pull Factors**
Pull factors are another element that caused immigrants to choose to be entrepreneurs which meant they choose to be IEs because of opportunities or positive reasons (Barakat & Parhizgar, 2013; De Freitas, 1991). Pull factors include internal and external motivators. Internal motivations relate more to employment security and personal rewards including an opportunity for personal growth, self-fulfillment, recognition, excitement, and needs for higher levels of achievement, independence, freedom and autonomy (Langan-Fox & Roth, 1995; Robichaud et al., 2001). In contrast, the goal to obtain higher financial compensation was an external motivator for immigrants who tended to choose to become entrepreneurs in hosting countries (Langan-Fox & Roth, 1995).

Both pull factors and push factors were identified as motivators to immigrants enabling them to change their career from an employed working status to an entrepreneurial path. First-generation immigrants seemed to experience more limited opportunities in the mainstream labor market due to acculturation, lack of local education and because of lack of language proficiency (Soydas & Aleti, 2015). Despite the two factors, the desire to see greater independence, growth, profit, freedom, autonomy and working flexibility increased immigrants’ ambitions towards entrepreneurship (Arreghetti et al, 2014; Lerner & Hendeles, 1996; Shinnar, 2007).

Motivating factors of push or pull drove immigrants to choose to change their careers from workers to owners in their hosting countries because they either felt pressure or saw opportunities. Those two motivators sometimes were also continuous as challenges to IEs while starting, sustaining and scaling up their ventures. For instance, capital is an essential tool to start a new business but is also a motivator to push or pull immigrants to be entrepreneurs from different angles. Due to lack of capital resources, a report from the Centre for Enterprise and Economic Development Research (2000), IEs got capital from their own savings and from their families to start their new business. Start-up ventures enabled appropriate business functions to survive and keep a business sustainable with a good opportunity for success in the long-term. Research also states money is seen as IEs’ most significant challenge (Brenner et al., 2000; Fawcett & Gardner, 1994; Timmons, 1996; Timmons & Spinelli, 2009). It is more difficult for IEs to get loans in the financial market with lower credit and fewer years living in the host countries,
for example, as Holguin, Gamboa and Hoy (2007) pointed out was the case for Hispanic entrepreneurs in the United States.

**Hope-Action Theory and Immigrant Entrepreneurs**

**Hope-Action Theory**

Hope-Action Theory is a positive psychology approach to career development established by Niles, Yoon, and Amundson (Niles et al., 2010; Niles et al., 2019). HAT integrated Snyder’s (2002) hope theory, Bandura’s human agency theory (2001), and Hall’s (1996) career meta competencies addressed in his protean career theory and adjusted the three theories to provide a structural model of career self-management in the field of career development. There are seven competencies introduced in HAT and the Hope-Action Inventory (HAI) (Niles et al., 2010) for theory application was developed based on HAT. Scholars believe that using the HAT can reinforce individuals’ need for awareness to lead to effective career self-management, and create sustainable hope in career development. Those hope-action elements are: (a) hope; (b) self-reflection; (c) self-clarity; (d) visioning; (e) goal setting and planning; (f) implementing; and (g) adapting, as well as environment factors, which will be discussed separately by helping factors and wish-list items in the following literature review.

There are seven competencies of HAT, the center is hope that interacts with the other six competencies: self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting, implementing, and adapting as a mechanism that can sustain hope (Niles et al., 2011). HAT has demonstrated the impact hope had on different groups and there are case studies of successful educators in challenging times (Niles & Yoon, 2010), post-secondary students (Miles et al., 2015), military retirees (Luat, 2016), trained health professionals (Clarke et al. 2018), unemployed individuals (Amundson et al., 2018), and refugees (Yoon et al. 2019) who were sustained with hope.
Hope and Immigrant Entrepreneurs

Choosing to immigrate to a new country is a conscious pursuit of change. Immigrants who come to the United States to look for new opportunities with their hope, and, in many cases, some immigrants chase their entrepreneurial desires to take a part in the dream of owning their own ventures (Agius & Canizales, 2016; González & Campbell, 2017; Kwon et al., 2013). Hope is important to immigrants who decide to relocate and to start a new life in a new country as well as to immigrants who decide to transfer their jobs from paid employees to self-employees. Both decisions of relocation or employment changes are made because of foreseeing hopes and new opportunities in a new living environment or in a new career path.

Hope is one core construct in the field of positive psychology (Lybbert & Wydick, 2017; Martz & Livneh, 2016; Synder, 2002; Zhou & Kam, 2016). According to Snyder (2002), there are three elements to define hope: goals, pathways thoughts and agency thoughts toward desired goals. Hope thoughts are a capability to take a person via agency thoughts and to use those pathways thoughts to desired goals. A high-hope person is good at discovering alternate routes. Agency thought, such as using self-talk agency, which is the perceived capacity to use pathways to help oneself reach desired goals. The immigration process is filled with more challenges: documents, language barriers, culture adaptation, financial and human capital, etc. The experience of immigration certainly requires stronger willpower and higher hope of seeking new ways to start a new life in new hosting countries. Through their eagerness to leave for new adventures from their home countries, immigrants have shown positive characteristics of both agency and pathway elements of hope (Youssef & Luthans, 2003).

To start new ventures in hosting countries, many research studies stated IEs have to face more challenges than the non-immigrant entrepreneurs (Enow, 2010; Holguin et al., 2007; Pinkowski, 2009). Self-employed immigrants experienced significantly higher job stress from both frequently changeable and unpredictable work and living environments whereas non-immigrants entrepreneurs may only have entrepreneurial stress. Besides having long working hours, experiencing high levels of tension and
pressure, facing a high level of competition with local businesses, entrepreneurs also needed to adjust themselves to adapt and handle different strategies efficiently in new cultural environments (Baron 2008; Brenner et al., 2000; Xu et al., 2019). Immigrant entrepreneurs also reported themselves as undergoing higher job stress, suffering physical illness caused by mental stress, and experiencing social maladjustment and discrimination (Jamal, 1997; Poblete, 2018). According to Lazarus, Deese, and Osler (1952) stress happens when a certain situation hinders goal accomplishment. Snyder (2003) stated in his research that when pursuing goals and experiencing barriers, stress will transform into negative emotions which guides individuals’ entrepreneurial decisions and activities. Although emotion has positive or negative components, both may help and hinder entrepreneurial processes. In frequently changing entrepreneurship environments with high working stress, emotions may hinder making better decisions in the entrepreneurial process (Baron, 2008).

People who have a high-hope character tend to produce positive emotions when stressful challenges occur while they are pursuing their goals. Higher-hope individuals have more goal-oriented thinking, produce more positive actions and endure less negative emotions (Snyder et al., 1999). Immigrants who relocate to the United States bring hope and dreams of establishing their own business; however, when starting a new business in a new hosting country, they usually face challenges, obstacles, and barriers as they grow their business (Brenner et al., 2000; Fawcett & Gardner, 1994; González & Campbell, 2017). There are three components incorporated in Snyder’s hope theory, goals, pathway thinking and agency thinking, which drive individuals to cope flexibly and to alternatively reroute toward reaching their desired goal while facing challenges (Snyder, 2000; 2002). Hope theory concludes that through many pathways, hope plays a vital role in the accomplishment of goals. The discovery of hope is when an individual is aware of hope and recognizes its potential capacity for application. Hope theory refers to “individuals’ perceptions of their capacities to clearly conceptualize goals, develop specific strategies to reach those goals, and initiate and sustain the motivation for using those strategies” (Lopez et al., 2004, p. 388). Further, Curran and Reivich (2011) identified hope as essential to successful goal-setting, accomplishment and achievement.
The Elements of Hope-Action Theory

Self-Reflection

The first competency of HAT is self-reflection which “involves the capacity to examine one’s thoughts, beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and circumstances relative to one’s experiences” (Niles et al., 2010, p.103). This competency requires time and willingness from individuals to ask questions to themselves to reflect upon their experiences, feelings and thoughts. Self-reflection is very important for goal searching and setting processes (Niles et al., 2010). According to research about goal progress, one of reasons that people often fail about goal planning is lack of examining reflection on their real desires, thoughts and feelings when they set up their goals (Koestner et al., 2002). Self-reflection is the kick-off step in the HAT process that leads to the next competency, self-clarity.

Self-Clarity

Self-clarity occurs when people complete their self-reflection and develop answers from those questions they asked themselves, which is led by and linked with self-reflection. This process is a consistent effort; it is lifelong learning which is never completed (Niles et al., 2010). There are three major clarities happening in this stage: objective clarity, subjective clarity and life role clarity. While individuals take time to reflect on themselves from experienced circumstances, they enter the process of developing the ability of knowing themselves and to be ready to identify their goals. According to Hope-Action Competencies (HAC), objective and subjective clarity “provide useful information with regard to developing self-clarity as both dimensions of self-clarity are important for creating a hopeful vision of one’s future” (p. 104, 2010).
Immigrants bring their hope, energy and many of them an entrepreneurial desire to pursue their dream to establish their own new business (Agius & Canizales, 2016; Kwon et al., 2013) or because of some challenges they are pushed into the entrepreneurial process in order to satisfy their needs (Kirkwood, 2009). Hope seems to be a core competency of both pushed and pulled IEs that drive them to relocate to new countries or start up new ventures. While settling themselves in a new environment and facing new challenges and obstacles, the self-reflection competency helps them to take time out to examine the situations, thoughts, beliefs and behaviors (Niles et al., 2010). Then the second competency of self-clarity empowers them to clarify their current startup’s situation which can lead them to visioning future opportunities and identifying desired future goals.

Visioning

Visioning is one of HAC the competencies that involves two components, brainstorming future possibilities and identifying desired futures outcomes. The result of visioning is to find out as many options as possible (Niles et al., 2010). Individuals process visioning to determine possible career ideas and directions. Immigrants can apply this visioning competency to indicate many potential pathways in their lives they desire to have with the hope they bring with them to new countries. Furthermore, entrepreneurs envision their desired futures, recognizing opportunities of creating new ventures and committing strongly to make their projects happen is a typical mindset. It may take some time to process visioning, especially because most entrepreneurial visioning is used to create something innovative and that was nonexistent before (Schlange, 2006). From those discovered desired options, the next competency is to set up goals with a concrete plan and timeline to achieve those goals (Niles et al., 2010).

Goal Setting and Planning
This competency involves setting both long-term and short-term goals, then planning steps for action. Goal setting has been mentioned in many research studies; it encourages risk-taking and bolsters confidence to find ways and use abilities to reach desired goals (Schunk, 1985), effect individual actions and emotions toward achievement (Latham & Locke, 2006), and enhance positive thinking for future possibilities (MacLeod et al., 2008). According to Niles, Amundson, and Neault (2011) in Career Flow, setting up clear and specific targets which are workable and practical is very crucial in applying this competency successfully. Both concrete goal setting and planning are geared toward the next step, which is implementation of plans and achievement of goals.

**Implementing**

Niles, Yoon, Balin and Amundson (2010) stated “Implementing means taking actions that are in line with identified plans and goals” (p. 104), after brainstorming future possibilities, identifying desired futures, setting up goals and making plans. The next step of the HAC flow is to implement those plans and make actions to achieve desired goals. As plans have been implemented and more new experiences and circumstances will occur. Self-reflection and self-clarity competencies play their roles here to help individuals to reevaluate if the current goals and strategies are still workable or need to be adjusted so individuals will be flexible to face changes and adapt new goals and plans (Niles et al., 2010).

**Adapting**

In order to achieve goals, personal flexibility is crucial when individuals face barriers or challenges that are difficult to overcome. The higher level of ability of adapting to new information drives them to evaluate and create alternative routes toward goal achievement or discover new opportunities and new plans. However those competencies are all tightly integrated with hope; without hope none of this is possible. Researchers stated people with low levels of hope seem to avoid facing necessary tasks and
essential actions even though they are necessary to succeed in their desired outcomes (Snyder, 2002).

**Environment**

In HAT, continued interactions between the environment and the individual is important because it provides feedback to foster development of self-reflection, self-clarity, and maintain awareness of visioning, setting goals, implementing plans and flexibility to adapt changes that may or will occur and, when the environment changes, the need to identify other plans (Niles et al., 2010). Taking self-reflection competency as an example, people spend some time out to ask questions to themselves and to understand their thoughts, beliefs, feelings, behaviors and circumstances which results from interacting with their new surrounding environment. Research also shows the environment plays an important relationship with individual personality to experience success, personal development, career success and better performance (Holland, 1985; Walsh, 1974). An optimistic environment creates a positive social support system to enhance a persons’ active coping response of facing stressful events such as recovery from cancer (Friedman et al., 1992). In the entrepreneurial decision making process, the environment is a decision context which has shown influence in the level of effort engaging in entrepreneurial activities (Bamford et al., 2000; Dahl & Sorenson, 2012; Dorado & Ventresca, 2013). When entrepreneurs sense their initiatives will have a higher impact on the surrounding environment, the more willingness they will have to put more effort into sustaining innovation.

**HAT with Immigrant Entrepreneurs**

Hopefulness is an essential element for a person to foresee the future and be motivated to the desired outcome. Snyder (2002) described hope as “the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways” (p. 249). Each pathway is the route that individuals use to identify ways to achieve goals and agency thinking is the motivation and the
confidence that individual can complete the goals. Another component of hope that Snyder stated is the desired outcome or goal which is interdependent with agency thinking and pathway thinking that are helpful for envisioning goals, managing strategies and achieving goals. In the entrepreneurial field, motivation has been found to play a key role within the entrepreneurship process; people have more “tolerance for risk, perceived feasibility and net desirability significantly predicted self-employment intentions” (Segal et al., 2005, p. 42). Niles (2011) found that “self-reflection requires intentionality relative to asking important questions about oneself and one’s situation” (p. 174), which leads the individual to take time to examine oneself and one’s experience. Furthermore, self-reflection helps an individual develop self-clarity and to be able to gain more possible resources one needs to be alone with their thoughts on career planning. Some other researchers also stated during personal development that reflection on critical incidents develops valuable new understandings and insights, new perspectives and new ways of acting which also shows higher learning occurred during the entrepreneurial process (Gold & Holman, 2001; Mezirow, 1991; Toulmin, 1958). Entrepreneurs are facing more risks, challenges, unpredictable incidents, and discontinuous events. Therefore, maintaining a regular self-reflection process helps individuals to reflect on one’s own circumstances and understand if following the career direction they first considered is what they really need.

HAT is often used in individual career and human development research to identify how hope as the center with other six competencies enables persons’ better achievement in their life. Research studies include career development in challenging times (Niles & Yoon, 2010), post-secondary students (Yoon et al., 2015), military retirees (Luat, 2016), trained health professionals (Clarke et al. 2018), unemployed individuals (Amundson et al., 2018), and refugees (Yoon et al., 2019). In this study, the researcher identified how six competencies and the environment that immigrant entrepreneurs had propelled them to success of their startup businesses in Silicon Valley, California. Example practices of Hope-Action competencies that IEs use during the entrepreneurial process are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Example Practices of Hope-Action Competency
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hope-Action Competency</th>
<th>Entrepreneurial Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Journaling to develop an active dialogue with your inner critic (Hill, 2019).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td>Taking vacations (Patel, n.d.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-clarity</td>
<td>Minimizing chores or tasks and creating a regular routine (Koshy, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td>Creating and expressing vision and direction (Kingston, 2016).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting and Planning</td>
<td>Daily goal setting (Adams, 2016); time management and planning strategies (Morgaine, n.d.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing</td>
<td>Attracting top talent and hiring great partners (Kingston, 2016; Patel, n.d.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting</td>
<td>Developing a massive action plan, using a monitoring system and being flexible to change (Adams, 2016; Singh, n.d.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Seeking support from mentors or like-minded others (Campbell, 2017); listening to customers and responding to complaints (Patel, n.d.); setting company culture (Patel, n.d.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 3

Method

The purpose of this research was to explore factors related to Hope-Action Competencies that influenced the success of immigrant entrepreneurs in the Bay Area. In this chapter, the researcher explains the design, approaches, data sources, and procedures used in this qualitative study. A qualitative research methodology was selected for this study because it’s best suited to discovering and understanding participants’ experiences of events: as Creswell and Creswell (2017) indicated, “qualitative researchers use an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4).

Research Questions

The primary intention of this study was to gain a perspective on implementing Hope-Action Theory-based tactics with experienced, successful entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley, targeting a group of immigrants who established their businesses in their new host country, the United States. To understand immigrant entrepreneurs’ successful experience in exercising HAT-based tactics in Silicon Valley, the following questions were asked in this study:

1. What HAT-based tactics, strategies, and tools did successful entrepreneurs adopt in their start-up and entrepreneurial careers?

2. What HAT-based tactics, strategies, and tools do successful entrepreneurs wish that they had applied?

3. What supporting environmental factors have been perceived by successful entrepreneurs in starting and maintaining their ventures?

4. What environmental factors do successful entrepreneurs wish they had in starting and maintaining their ventures?
Research Design

A qualitative research methodology was used in this study. The researcher chose a qualitative method because “qualitative researchers use an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 4). Additionally, the objective here was to study and gain new knowledge from an analysis of events in order to better understand unknown histories and experiences and access deeper information that could not be conveyed through quantitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher sought to discover the experiences of entrepreneurs who migrated from other countries to the United States to establish their new businesses in the very competitive environment of Silicon Valley, California.

Qualitative research provides deeper insights into participants and more meaningful and harmonious connections to readers’ experiences (Hoepfl, 1997; Stake, 1978). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated, “If you want people to understand better than they otherwise might not, provide the information in the form in which they usually experience it” (p. 120). The collection of data using qualitative methods enables descriptions of phenomena from both the participants’ and researcher’s points-of-view. In this research, the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT) method was selected to discover different research questions. ECIT is developed from the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) which is a method that is used to investigate what hinders and helps in a personal experience or involvement of an activity (Butterfield et al., 2009). Because the researcher was interested in learning more about details of participants’ personal stories of challenging moments they faced before, and finding out tactics, strategies, tools and supports that they utilized to help them handle those critical incidents, CIT was a flexible technique that allowed the researcher to capture those individual experiences by following the designed interview protocol (Flanagan, 1954). It also allowed the researcher to gain greater and deeper understanding from asking participants to answer questions about moments where they experienced those HAT competencies during their earlier start-up stage.
Data Collection

The research objective was to uncover tactics, strategies, and tools used by and critical to participants in their successful development and establishment of a business. Further, the researcher obtained wish list items – that is, elements sought by participants that eluded them during the entrepreneurial process in Silicon Valley. The informed consent forms were sent to participants by email and they responded to agree to be involved in this research by email. Participants were identified from entrepreneurs’ social networking organizations and accelerators in the Bay Area. A snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants. Purposive sampling was used to identify immigrant entrepreneurs who were willing to provide insights from their experience and knowledge. The major data was collected from 18 recorded interviews on Zoom. Interviews were transcribed by using a translation function provided by Zoom.com. The individual identities were coded to maintain confidentiality. See Table 3.1 for a list of the participants.

Research questions posed to interview participants were framed as open-ended questions. The researcher used the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (Butterfield et al., 2009) to investigate the phenomenon about the concept of hope, as utilized in the HAT to measure how each competency’s impact was influential during the process of establishing a new successful business by IEs in Silicon Valley.

Table 3.1
Participant Coded Demographic information

<table>
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<th>No.</th>
<th>HAI</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<th>Years of Entrepreneur in Silicon Valley</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Type of Industry</th>
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**Enhanced Critical Incident Technique**

The enhanced Critical Incident Technique, according to Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, and Amundson (2009) is a research method utilized in psychological counseling based on the Critical Incident Technique developed by Flanagan (1954). CIT allows researchers to follow five steps in conducting qualitative study interviews and find insights during a clinical psychology counseling process (Butterfield et al., 2009). In order to identify the HAT-related helping factors and wish list items used by immigrant entrepreneurs, a qualitative research method was used as the main instrument in data collection. In qualitative research, data was collected through interviews, observations, and open-ended questions with the participant’s point of view as the center of attention. Data analysis occurred via inductive methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher used ECIT to collect qualitative data through interviews with pre-selected participants. Unlike the original CIT, ECIT has enhanced elements that include nine
credibility checks, contextual questions at the beginning of the interview, and questions about wish list items, an addition to helping and hindering factors from the original CIT (Butterfield et al., 2009). Those nine enhancements were “developed to increase the rigor and credibility of the ECIT” (Butterfield et al, 2009. p. 267). The ECIT also allowed the researcher to discover wish list items of competencies or factors that were not present in participants’ experiences, but those successful IEs wished to have and believed would have been helpful during those moments they handled challenging situations.

The ECIT method offers a more fully descriptive investigation into incidents, factors, and events that helped or hindered participants’ performance as well as wish list items based on their experience in specific situations. In addition, ECIT processes individual in-person interviews, which allows the researcher to obtain more data with higher comprehensible input from participants’ real-life experiences.

**Study Approval by Institutional Review Board**

The research proposal was reviewed and approved by the researcher’s doctoral committee, and the plan for this research study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at The Pennsylvania State University for review. To protect interviewees’ privacy, identities were kept in confidence and shared only if the participants were willing to reverse confidentiality. The proposal was approved on September 23, 2020.

**Screening Criteria**

This qualitative study focused on the population of immigrant entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley and aiming to discover helping factors that helps participants’ startups to face challenges in their early establishing stage toward success from the perspective of Hope-Action Theory. Therefore, the researcher’s screening criteria was American immigrants who completed their primary education include high school in countries outside of the United State who ran or run their business in Silicon Valley, an
area leading in start-up activities in California and in the United States. According to the Establishment Age and Survival Data survey which was conducted by Bureau of Labor Statistics in the year of 2019, 20% of new businesses fail during the first two years, therefore another criteria was targeting immigrants who own business that overcame the first two years start-up challenges, and survived and operated at least for three years. The purpose of this research was to investigate helping factors that helped individuals who had higher hope feeling therefore potential participants who have HAI score higher than national medium score 3.08 were selected. Participants were required to take a Hope-Action Inventory (Niles et al., 2010) with the research screening survey of pre-screening questions (Appendix B) to identify their hope score.

Sampling Strategies

The researcher adapted snowball and purposive sampling, and the HAI to recruit and identify participants purposively. Purposive sampling is a preferred method in qualitative research since it is not a probability sampling method, but a targeted one (Schwandt, 2015). The population sample for this study was narrowed from all entrepreneurs to immigrant entrepreneurs who have been successful in their startup businesses in Silicon Valley. Data selectiveness is a crucial element in research. The researcher used purposive sampling because it is a nonrandom technique that provides for the identification of people willing to share information from their experiences and knowledge (Bernard, 2002, Lewis & Sheppard, 2006). This method ensured that the sample picked was truly representative of the population being studied. Purposive sampling is a non-probability method – informants selected usually have better knowledge of the research topic. It is not free from bias like the true-random probability method but it is more convenient and able to get more depth of understanding than random techniques (Vidich & Bensman, 1954).

Since the target population was located in the Silicon Valley/Bay area, the snowball sampling technique also was used to identify more qualified candidates in the limited time available for this research. The snowball sampling method uses referrals to identify others with similar experiences that fit
the research purposes and is also called chain referral sampling. The method is suitable for use in a wide variety of research studies, especially when the research focus is about sensitive issues related to personal matters. A certain level of understanding and knowledge of the study topic aids in identifying and recruiting participants to the research (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

**Participant Recruitment**

The recruitment letter (Appendix A) for professionals was sent out to people who were either a startup founder or co-founder. First, the researcher sent out the recruitment letter via social networking connections. The researcher targeted some incubators and accelerators in the Silicon Valley which provide funding to startups. Those incubators include StartX, Plug and Play tech center, Y Combinator, and Berkeley SkyDesk, etc. The first positive response was received on September 29, 2020 from an immigrant entrepreneur. However, after communicating and learning deeply about her entrepreneurial experience, the researcher determined the volunteer did not fit the prescreen requirement of at least three years’ experience in a startup business. The first participant was recruited on October 2nd and received confirmation of interview on October 4th. The researcher also asked participants to refer to her potential professional candidates who had similar backgrounds with start-ups. There were total of 31 immigrant entrepreneurs who responded with their willingness to participate in the research, 27 of whom met the study criteria in screening survey, five prospective individuals did not have enough free time to attend the hourlong interview, three responders has less than three year experience as entrepreneurs, therefore there were 18 qualified participants who completed an interview for this qualitative research. After the prescreening process, the researcher selected 18 participants who are immigrants with higher than 3.08 HAI scores and had at least three years of work running a successful start-up business in the Silicon Valley to participate in the further research process by using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique, which will be explained in the following section.
Instrumentation

Screening Survey

For recruitment purposes, the researcher emailed a letter about volunteering to participate in this study and about HAI to potential interviewees. A questionnaire was used to initially screen volunteers who were immigrant entrepreneurs and had been successful in starting a business in the Silicon Valley. Questionnaires were adapted from HAI, which was developed by Niles, Yoon, and Amundson (2010). The target group of successful entrepreneurs who received their high school diploma outside of the United State was selected based on the belief that they would score high on hope competencies and that their self-reporting scores would allow us to identify their strengths. The screening survey is shown in Appendix B.

Hope-Action Inventory

The Hope-Action Inventory was designed based on the Hope-Action Theory, which has hope at its center and consists of six competencies (Niles et al., 2011). Furthermore, person-environment interactions are added to provide continual feedback from surroundings (Niles et al., 2019). HAT promotes seven essential competencies that collectively create and sustain hope, including self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting and planning, implementing and adapting, and environment. Niles et al. (2019) note that these “serve[s] as anchors for positive career construction as people encounter challenges or opportunities (both planned and unplanned) across the lifespan in an unpredictable and unstable world of work resulting from recent global economic crisis and changing employment trends” (p. 283). The HAI, which is based on the Hope-Action Theory, is designed as a 4-point Likert-type scale that is accessible to both researchers as they interpret results and to participants, as they provide answers. In addition, HAI has been validated by strong reliable evidence with samples of 1,120 individuals, including 382
undergraduate and graduate students in the United States (Niles et al., 2010) and 738 people from different nations (Yoon, 2017).

In this qualitative study, the researcher sought to discover the factors facilitating hope-action competency as it affects Immigrant Entrepreneurs’ success in the Silicon Valley and their wish list items – things that might have helped them in establishing their business and would have eased their path to success. Therefore, HAI helped the researcher to obtain scores on 7 subscales of hope competency and narrowed down the number of participants to 18 with higher scores which were higher than 3.08 points. Furthermore, the researcher elicited successful entrepreneurs’ perceptions of their previous experiences as these account for a comprehensive and retrospective records of events. After the pre-screening process, the researcher selected 18 participants who were immigrant entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley to become involved in the research interviews.

The research followed a series of steps. After the study had been reviewed and approved by his institution’s Institutional Review Board, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with selected individuals. The researcher emailed participants an informed consent form (Appendix C), and a detailed message with an access code and instructions for filling out the HAI online.

**Enhanced Critical Incident Technique Interview Protocol**

In this research, the interview protocol was designed using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique, as introduced by Butterfield et al. (2009). The ECIT is based on Flanagan’s (1954) Critical Incident Technique with nine additional credibility checks. The semi-structured interviews were cloud-recorded and transcribed verbatim for content analysis. Normally, the first interview utilizing ECIT gathered major data including in-person information on demography, experience and background, and situations that helped or hindered them, with descriptions of critical incidents, and wish list items. In this study, the supposition was that the selected participants were the most successful entrepreneurs from the first pre-screening sample, assuming that they had extremely high-scores for hope-action competency.
Scholars have found that highly hopeful individuals seemed to achieve positive outcomes in both their studies and their careers (Amundson et. al., 2013). HAI data point to participants’ strengths. The researcher then utilized the ECIT to interview them in person to confirm or reinforce suppositions from participants’ responses. The researcher intended to dig deeply to achieve an exhaustive list of critical examples of helping factors and wish list items from experienced successful entrepreneurs. It was hoped that this information would point to methods that would guide new entrepreneurs in improving their hope levels and their competencies when starting a new business and succeeding in Silicon Valley.

The second interview was designed to verify results from the first interview, which allowed the researcher to review and modify developed critical incidents and wish list items by obtaining further input from participants. The researcher delivered the second interview, cross-checking process, by emailing the 18 participants. The goal was to receive responses in two weeks. After the first interview, the researcher extracted and categorized the critical incidents and wish list items from the first transcript. Then the second interview was conducted to check the credibility of results. According to Butterfield et al. (2009), the second interview should dig deeper into participants’ responses. The researcher’s questions include three parts: (a) obtaining input on the helping factors and wish list items which were gathered from the first interview, (b) getting feedback of created categories according to the information the researcher gathered from the in-person interview, and (c) asking follow-up questions after the researcher examined and analyzed data of the first interview.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this research study was to identify hope-action competencies that helped immigrant entrepreneurs to be successful and the wish list items that would have been helpful to their success. A combination of purposive sampling and enhanced critical incident technique analysis were employed in this study. ECIT was used in gathering major data with details from in-person information,
including demography, experiences and background of participants, helping critical incidents, and wish list items.

Data analysis followed three main steps, as outlined by Flanagan (1954) and Butterfield (2009), and enhanced by Butterfield, Norgen, Maglio and Amundson (2009): (1) determining the frames of reference; (2) formulating the categories derived from grouping similar incidents; and (3) determining the level of specificity or generality to be used in reporting the data. After collecting interview transcriptions, raw data was organized using an inductive process and manually grouping similar incidents from the transcripts into two categories, helping critical incidents and wish list items. A manual method was used and all recordings were transcribed by using Zoom.com. Files were converted and imported into an online qualitative software application, Nvivo, to create the codes and identify statements that belonged to categories. Recordings were saved and protected in online folders in Box.com, divided and noted as separate interviews. The researcher used different colors to highlight texts that appeared as helping critical incidents (CIs) or wish list items. The researcher also highlighted strategies, tactics, tools and supports that helped participants to overcome those challenges and identify their wish list of supports. If some helping CIs and WL items lacked supporting details, additional information was sought during the second interview which is a cross-check by participants through emails and phone.

The aim of this study was to discover, from the HAT perspective, tactics that successful immigrant entrepreneurs applied when they faced challenging situations during the start-up process. Those data will be used to design competency development interventions and training programs for nascent immigrant entrepreneurs and will influence future research. After identifying CIs and WL items, categories were formed inductively according to HAT competencies. Documents from each interview on CIs and WL items were created while continuing to examine CIs and WL items to discern patterns, similarities, and themes. This document also was used to conduct credibility checks with individual participants. Once a pattern, similarity, or theme had been identified, a new category was formed with a new name. This process was repeated until all CI and WL items had been sorted, and categories had been created from the first set of transcripts. CIs and WL items identified during review of the second and the
third transcripts were fit, if appropriate, into the existing categories. If suitable categories did not exist, then new categories were created accordingly.

The process of ECIT data analysis is programmatic interaction among incident placing, category examining, and merging or separating existing categories. Butterfield et al. (2009) suggested ECIT interview transcripts analysis should be done by focusing on the stated research purpose and ensuring that 25% of the participants identify CLs and WL items in each category to ensure significance in results. The final step in creating categories is when the last 10% of interviews have been placed into existing categories. Then the trustworthiness process will begin by consulting with an ECIT expert (Butterfield et al., 2009).

**Trustworthiness**

Maxwell (1992) discussed the substantive validity in a qualitative study, reviewing the accuracy of an interpretation in one of his articles on qualitative research. The ECIT research method has nine credibility checks that provide solid validation (Butterfield et al., 2009). These nine checks are: audiotaping the interview; interview fidelity; independent extraction; exhaustiveness; participation rates; placing incidents into categories by an independent judge; cross-checking by participants, expert opinions; and theoretical agreement (Butterfield et al., 2009).

Creswell and Creswell (2017) emphasized the importance of observing established instructions to maintain interview fidelity. Researchers have more opportunities to capture participants’ words through audiotaped interviews. Interviews also provide researchers with access to more information through the participant’s words (Butterfield et al., 2005, 2009; Maxwell, 1992).

The second credibility check ensures interview fidelity. Butterfield’s research (2009) noted that emphasized the significance of ensuring that (a) the CIT research method is being followed when establishing research protocols; (b) the interviewer is avoiding asking leading questions or providing any hints to participants; and (c) the interview protocol is being followed. Furthermore, every fourth
interview transcription was reviewed by an expert using the ECIT method, who provided feedback needed for additional interviews.

The third credibility check is independent extraction. For 25% of the transcriptions, at least one external individual, separately from the researcher, reviewed and independently identified CIs and WLs in randomly selected interviews (Butterfield et al., 2009). When disagreements arose in certain cases, the independent individual and researcher discussed these and reached agreement. If some cases could not be resolved, then those CIs and WL items would not be used in any further coding process. The researcher communicated with a Penn State alumnus who utilized ECIT for his doctoral dissertation two years ago. The built categories and four transcripts were selected randomly and sent to an ECIT expert to review.

The fourth credibility check is exhaustiveness. As Butterfield et al. (2009) indicated, CIT interview data can be saturated by creating a trackable log of each interview to record how the definitions are being formed. Exhaustiveness happens as further interviews don’t produce any new CI or WL categories. A recording log is shown as Table 3.2.

The fifth credibility check is participation rates. Participation rates were determined by adding the number of participants with each CI or WL object grouping into categories, then calculating the different numbers of participants per group and dividing it by the total number of participants to determine the rate of participation. Borgen and Amundson (1984) asserted that 25% is the standard established as the minimum participation rate required establishing the trustworthiness of categories in the ECIT research method.

The sixth credibility check is the placing incidents into categories by an independent judge. In the process, the researcher asked an independent judge to place 25% of randomly chosen CI and WL items into the categories that would be generated by the researcher. An 80% or higher matching rate would be the target, which would show if the categories created by the researcher were trustworthy or not.

The seventh credibility check is cross-checking by participants. This was where the second interview occurred and after the first interviews had been analyzed and placed into coded categories. The aim of the second interview was to double check the interview perceptions of the interviewer and see
how well the defined categories fit the participant’s expectations. This process was conducted by
emailing participant categorized CIs and WL items, and following up with phone calls if necessary.
During the coded categories and transcripts was still being under an expert’s review, the researcher sent
emails to three participants with questions about some missing information, unclear response to protocol
questions and any other comments not mentioned. After the categories were completely identified, in
order to verify and agree on the extraction of categories and CIs. The researcher sent out emails to 18
participants for cross-checking to see if they agreed with the researcher’s reports.

The eighth credibility check is expert opinions. At previous checks, the categories were
continuously coded by the researcher and their credibility checked independently by an individual who is
familiar with the ECIT research method. In this process, all coded CIs and WL items categories were sent
to experts and they were asked: Do you find the categories to be useful? Are you surprised by any of the
categories? Do you think there is anything missing based on your experience? (Butterfield et al., 2005;
Flanagan, 1954, as cited in Butterfield et al., 2009)

The ninth credibility check is theoretical agreement, which had two parts as described by
Butterfield et al. (2009) and Maxwell (1992). The first involved the reading and recording of the basic
premises for the study. The researcher examined the academic literature in relevant disciplines to
discover if the conclusions were validated (see Chapters 1 and 2). The second part of the theoretical
agreement contrasted the categories with the related scholarly literature (see Chapter 5).

According to Butterfield et al. (2009), the CIs and WL items should be extracted first and in
groups of three in randomly chosen interviews (Flanagan, 1954). Therefore, researcher completed the
extraction of the CIs and WL items in group of three and followed the requirement of establishing a
viable category of a minimum participation rate of 25% to form final categories. Table 3.2 was created to
organize and manage the number of new categories developed and it had been updated after the first three
interview transcripts were extracted, and CIs and WL were categorized.

Beginning with the first three transcriptions, the researcher identified and highlighted any
manuscript that seemed to be helping CIs and WL items and was also later agreed by participants. This
process was repeated for all other transcriptions. Then the researchers started to analyze found CIs and WL items and form categories. The researcher created two nodes on Nvivo and labeled them as a helping factors and wish list items node. From hundreds of highlighted passages, the researcher patiently took those CIs and WL items then identified similarities and differences and placed them into labeled nodes. This categorized document was emailed to participants during the second interview for cross-checking credibility.

The researcher continued to identify and extract CIs and WL items and place them into existing categories or create new categories. There were 347 incidents extracted and reviewed. After comparing with other incidents, similar ones were merged. The final interview data was broken down into 234 CIs and 124 wish list items. Butterfield et al. (2009) recommended that 25% of the transcripts should be selected randomly for independent party review to ensure the credibility of ECIT. Therefore 4 of the 18 interview transcripts were randomly chosen to be reviewed and verified twice by experienced ECIT researcher who is the founder of a data security start-up and a Penn State Ph.D. alumnus. Due to work and time-limitation, this verifying process was modified and feedback of some disagreement was received via phone calls and email communication. The first verification showed some discrepancies between then expert’s extraction and the researcher’s. After discussions and modifications, the second verification showed 100% concordance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Extraction</th>
<th>Participant #</th>
<th>Date Categorized</th>
<th>New Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/19/2020</td>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>10/21/2020</td>
<td>All New Categories Emerged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/19/2020</td>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>10/21/2020</td>
<td>All New Categories Emerged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/19/2020</td>
<td>Participant 11</td>
<td>10/21/2020</td>
<td>All New Categories Emerged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/22/2020</td>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>10/24/2020</td>
<td>New CI:1 New: WL:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>New CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/26/2020</td>
<td>Participant 15</td>
<td>10/29/2020</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/26/2020</td>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>10/29/2020</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/26/2020</td>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>10/29/2020</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/3/2020</td>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>11/8/2020</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/3/2020</td>
<td>Participant 16</td>
<td>11/8/2020</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/3/2020</td>
<td>Participant 17</td>
<td>11/8/2020</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/10/2020</td>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>11/14/2020</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/10/2020</td>
<td>Participant 12</td>
<td>11/14/2020</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/10/2020</td>
<td>Participant 18</td>
<td>11/14/2020</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18/2020</td>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>11/22/2020</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/18/2020</td>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>11/22/2020</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18/2020</td>
<td>Participant 14</td>
<td>11/22/2020</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: CI = Critical Incidents; WL = Wish List Items*
Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter presents the result from qualitative data analysis undertaken using the method described in Chapter Three. The result was extracted by interviewing the 18 participants on critical incidents. The purpose of this study was to explore and identify the tactics, strategies, tools, and supports adopted by successful immigrant entrepreneurs who have or had start-up businesses for at least three years in Silicon Valley, from the Hope-Action Theory (HAT) perspective. In this research, the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (Butterfield, et al., 2009) was used as the main instrument in the interview process to discover which helping factors assisted immigrant entrepreneurs to be successful in starting their own business in Silicon Valley and be able to sustain the first three years. Besides helping factors that support selected immigrant entrepreneurs to handle difficult challenges, environmental factors that support them from their outside surroundings and wish list items that participants didn’t have access or had limited access to during the earlier stage of their start-ups were also collected during the interviews.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered by participants in this study:

(1) What HAT-based tactics, strategies, and tools did successful entrepreneurs adopt in their start-up and entrepreneurial careers?

(2) What HAT-based tactics, strategies, and tools do successful entrepreneurs wish that they had applied?

(3) What supporting environmental factors have been perceived by successful entrepreneurs in starting and maintaining their ventures?
(4) What environmental factors do successful entrepreneurs wish they had when starting and maintaining their ventures?

**Analysis of Finding**

The result of this study is based on interview data from 18 participating immigrant entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. The participants shared a common experience of immigrating to the USA after receiving their high school diplomas in their home countries and establishing start-up entities in Silicon Valley. All of their companies have successfully sustained for the first three years of business. All interviewees participated in this study voluntarily. From 18 interviews, 347 incidents were extracted and reviewed. After comparing with other incidents, similar ones were merged. The final interview data was broken down into 234 (67.4%) incidents that were helpful and 124 (35.7%) wish list items, indicating competencies that successful immigrant entrepreneurs have exercised to help them successfully start new ventures in their hosting country and also what they wish they had when they started their new ventures. Those incidents were categorized into 39 helping factors and 53 wish list items. This research aimed to identify which tactics, tools, strategies and supports those successful immigrant entrepreneurs with higher hope scores used during the early stages of their start-ups to help them overcome the challenges of the initial stages in their new hosting countries, from the perspective of Hope-Action Theory. During the pre-screening process, all voluntary participants took a 15-minute online survey with questions relating to demographic and Hope-Action Inventory to measure their hope scores, migrant, and entrepreneurial information. The purpose of this study was to find out how successful immigrant entrepreneurs used their competencies to help them succeed in their start-ups. Participants who scored higher than the national 50th percentile were selected to do further interviews. The average hope score of all 18 qualified participants was 3.68 which is close to the seventy-fifth percentile of the national hope score (3.7). The highest hope score was 4 and the lowest was 3.35. All selected participants have run at least one start-up company in
Silicon Valley for three years and had emigrated to the USA after receiving their high school diploma outside of the USA.

Participants’ Level of Hopefulness

Throughout each participant’s interview, transcripts of their successful entrepreneurial experiences were recorded; there were 234 incidents and 44 helping factors. All participants expressed that they felt hopeful when they started their new ventures. Self-rated scores using the scale of 0-10 from three of the participants was ‘8’ and only one was rated ‘6.’ The average self-rated score was ‘9’ which show high positive feelings. In addition, the 18 participants were asked to self-rate their feeling of hope for the future of their company. The average rating was 8, including three ratings of ‘10,’ two ratings of ‘9,’ seven ratings of ‘8,’ one rating of ‘7,’ three ratings of ‘6’ and one of ‘5’ because the participant left the company when it was acquired by another company. This data is shown in Table 4.1.

One example of a participants’ description of feeling hopeful:

The second start-up, actually, because I was thinking, hey, you know what, since, you know, the first one is sold. I was hopeful about the second one. It’s going to take off because at that time [in] 2007 when the market for digital signage, it’s about to go up. A lot of companies were about to use the product and the platform. For the second one I probably rate about ‘8’. (Participant 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>10 Scale of self-rate successfulness of achieving envisioned as an entrepreneur</th>
<th>10 Scale of feeling Hope when started the business</th>
<th>10 Scale of feeling hope of future of the company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Helping Factors (RQ1)

Participants reported a total of 234 helping incidents and associated tactics, strategies, tools, and supports that positively affected them when running their entrepreneurial business in the early stages of starting up in Silicon Valley in their new hosting country, the USA. These incidents were analyzed and categorized into 39 factors then divided into the eight competencies of Hope-Action Theory, all of which are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2.
Number of Helping Incidents, Overall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helping Factors</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Hope</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-Reflection</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Self-Clarity</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Visioning</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Goal Setting and Planning</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Implementing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Adapting</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Environment</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Helping Categories for the Hope Competency

Eighteen (100%) of the participants identified feeling hopeful and stated some tactics, strategies, tools and supports that helped them to maintain hopeful feelings during the early stage of their start-ups. All incidents were divided into factors related to HAT. Hope competency was one of the biggest categories, with 32 incidents that related to hope competency reported by participants. There were five tactics, strategies, tools, or support that helped them to be successful in the initial entrepreneurial stage of their business, as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3
Helping Categories for Hope

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactics, Strategies, Tools and Supports</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Clear Directions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Initial Team Composition</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Relevant Work Experience and Knowledge</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pre-Evaluation of Business Potential and workability</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Start-up Friendly Environment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clear Direction

Clear directions include having clear business goals, practicing model assumptions, forecast models, and knowing about current client and market trends. Out of all five categories of hope competency factors, clear directions had seven participants (38.9%) who reported that having a clear direction for their new business, developed by using model assumptions and forecast models to make sure clients and market needs were met, made them or the company feel more hopeful when they were trying to establish a new venture in Silicon Valley.

One participant stated:
I think we really knew how to make this kind of business and then so we can drive into the right directions. I would say think clearly and know what the business goal is. And I think just go for it, you will make it. I think having a clear business direction and model is the most important thing in the beginning. (Participant 4)

Another participant reflected on the tactics of having a clear direction that helped the business to feel hopeful when starting up. This person responded:

The market was also exploding beginning to become the video game market was really accelerating and its growth and because of all the new platforms that were coming up coming out. And then the new business model, like what they call the full plan business model…business model was actually invented in Korea, and I had a lot of experience. And so kind of know my direction of my company and know the market in the US was able to provide me. And that's what made me really hopeful that the company would do well here. Yeah, the gaming this view the video game was evolving from a product to a service before was a product if you finish the product and then you sell that product. It was becoming more of a service. And when you have a clear direction of wanting to do and do a service are super important. And I was able to kind of hone that skill, not only from my business model perspective, but also from a technical perspective. (Participant 6)

*Initial Team Composition*

Seven (38.9%) out of the 18 participants responded positively to hope competency and indicated that initiating team composition actually helped them to remain hopeful when starting up their new ventures. They mentioned business partners, technology partners, co-founders, and their team’s knowledge of the market and ability with technology as components that really helped them to feel hopeful in handling situations in the newly established stage of their business in Silicon Valley.

One participant stated:

The team that is really helpful gave me hope when I started the company. You rose on the experts in voices, have a technology co-founder, she’s really the expert in that area and has a business. I feel, she’s really sharp...I even though I’m not a first time CEO and have been with quite a few startups as an early employee or a founding team member... I mean, they all bring different things, each of us brings something unique and then critical to the table to get a product going, get a business going and then raise money from the piece. (Participant 13)

Another participant spoke about the importance of initial team composition, which made them feel hopeful:
Make me feel hopeful, because I always have a good team. I had some professionals like my partner, my co-founder. He’s very technical in the business. He probably is one of the best and then you know myself people and business development operation people, they are all very. We have a very cohesive team. So basically, when I travel for three, four weeks, I don’t have to worry because I think I can delegate to them. So I think that I have a very good team. So that is important to me. So I feel this. No problem. There is no problem we cannot conquer. (Participant 14)

**Relevant Work Experience and Knowledge**

Seven (38.9%) out of the 18 participants identified their relevant work experience and knowledge as factors that supported them to feel hopeful and handle situations successfully in the early years of new ventures, which are their experience of getting prospective customers’ acknowledgements, receiving banks’ finance possibilities and experience of essential technology of current market needs.

One participant said:

For example, the one that we are doing right now is because when we are in Silicon Valley. Most of the restaurants are very close and very near. So that’s why when I tried to make this business model successful, we needed to see if we have…like very talented chefs and experienced engineers. I think I had knowledge as an experienced engineer, and can set up the process, new process. So I think we need to have some people that I really know how to make this kind of business and then so we can drive into the right direction. So I had experience and I thought about tactics and strategies. I can think clearly and know what is the business goal and plan. (Participant 4)

Another participant spoke about how the prior relevant work experience created hopeful thoughts when starting up their business:

My past experience set me up to feel hopeful and toward success basically. So I think… first of all, I'm a very open-minded person. So I’m pretty fast to new skills and new technology and I'm pretty alert about what the market needs…I think my strongest experience is sales. So I like to say I was a real estate agent before and I sell homes and before real estate. I was in the marketing department…I mean, sales has always been my strength. So, even back in, I think my first entrepreneurial business was import/export business. At that time I was in college and I was starting to like a poor guy like handbags and beautiful like… You know, in school, and now the business was a country until I was in marketing, always [at] an IT company. So the business, I was in, I didn’t make a lot of money but I didn’t lose money either, you know, so I think, well, I think, look, there’s things I will never doubt if I want to do something. First of all, you have to
look at yourself. You can ask, okay, if there’s anything that you can go back to if the business is not going to be successful. So for me, I feel like it’s okay because I have my skill set. If I don’t want to, I never thought I can’t do business, right but you have somehow if I couldn’t do it always had a skill set to go. Go back to work in a corporation or go back to real estate. (Participant 16)

**Pre-Evaluation of Business Potential and Workability.**

Seven (38.9%) out of the 18 participants mentioned that when they started their new ventures in Silicon Valley, they either talked to investors they knew to get professional feedback and understand if their business had potential, read news to learn about the current market, surveyed if their initial prototype met the market needs or if the new business idea was workable with new technology.

A participant said they were feeling hopeful:

Yeah, I think it was user feedback. So prototyping has been the one where we started prototyping pretty early in the beginning. Get a version of the product out and show it to people, possibly users, to see how they would like it. That gives us more hope or more ideas about the potential market of our product...Sometimes you have to explain the product to people a little bit too much because there’s a big gap between what we were making and what users were. So that was another big part, we had to educate people and then make them use the product sometimes. We like people [who] are not afraid of failures as much. So the rate of experimentation is pretty high and [we’re] not afraid to pre-evaluate our product. (Participant 3)

**Start-up Friendly Environment**

Over 27% of participants stated that the friendly entrepreneurial environment in Silicon Valley helped them feel hopeful to start a new company. It helped them gain easier access to talent, business partners, investors, and related start-up communities. In addition, there was more access to connections with senior friends from colleges such as Stanford, which enabled them to have them as mentors to provide practical advice.

One participant shared:

I will say I feel hopeful in the first year that the best help I had was some mentors. Some senior people and they’ve been very helpful, providing encouragement and also providing the device. I
think that’s very useful. So, I came out with a vision but I did not have experience, in terms of how to find the investor. How to find the money? How to find a business connection? And so [in] my initial stage I had a very good advisor right, so those were very helpful I think besides the practical help, because those people that are used to and they can give very practical advice...I know that even from school when I was in Stanford right and pursue my Ph.D. and here it some seniors. So the networking, I think as an entrepreneur or anybody who wants to start a company, your networking is very important. You want to get some of the good people around you so that you could receive some helpful inputs. They are your mentors. (Participant 1)

Helping Categories of Self-Reflection Competency

Seventeen participants identified some tactics, strategies, tools and supported self-reflection mechanisms that helped them in starting a new venture in Silicon Valley. There were 35 responses to 36 incidents divided into five tactics, strategies, tools, or supports that helped them successfully in the self-reflection process, which helped them in the initial entrepreneurial stage of their new business, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4
Helping Categories of Self-reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactics, Strategies, Tools and Supports</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Listing down thoughts</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to friends, mentors, coaches,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experts in the field and other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs to verify and organize</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thoughts and ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Talk to VCs and customer to get</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Understanding market needs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reading books and watching videos</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Listing down thoughts

Twelve (66.7%) participants acknowledged that listing down thoughts helped their self-reflection
process when they started up their own business. Those strategies, tactics, and tools included listing thoughts either on paper, Excel spreadsheets, PowerPoints, Google slides, whiteboards, or in their mind; identifying pros and cons, and using SWOT and other graphics, and applying some tech tools such as Roam Research and Notation.

A participant stated that sorting out thoughts, recognizing self-, peer- and mentor-identified opportunities helped a lot in finding ways to start a new business:

When I turned 30, I was very scared. There’s the first time all the experience I find out all my friends turned to man. And I’m still a boy. Recognition of honesty to myself while I won’t do something about it and I will just be in the right place at the right time. I wasn’t showing the right person or not good. I thought a lot about what were my options and how I should do to achieve as a responsible man without a higher degree like my friends. I asked myself a lot of questions, thought about options and realities...I didn’t list down my thoughts on a paper, but was all in my mind. I was able to organize my thoughts...it all came from positive self-reflection and recognition of who I am and knowing that I need to excel. (Participant 5)

One other participant identified putting thoughts on either whiteboard, PowerPoint or in an Excel spreadsheet helped a lot to organize rough ideas and come out with some concrete business ideas during the self-reflection process:

Literally whiteboard why like you still see there is a whiteboard. I have it here. I like to put stuff on it like thoughts in my mind and I just sat down, and put it on a whiteboard talking about what my mission is. I know I can visualize it. But before you, it's just like I know I want to do something, but I just don’t know what it is. I kept writing and writing and that’s when I was like yeah, that’s what I want. I want to help people build financial security through real estate investing, and what’s better than starting from the first home all the way to building an investment portfolio. So the whiteboard was the one that really helped me do self-reflection, and also helped me later to create that vision in the beginning when I started my business and till now. I’m not just use whiteboard, I would say, is an action of few things I have to say, not just whiteboard and Excel spreadsheet, obviously. And also, I do PowerPoint and lastly I had coaches before as well. (Participant 9)

Another participant spoke about technology tools that their company used to assist the self-reflection process:

For self-reflection...yeah, I have a lot of writing. So there’s a tool called Roam research. It’s a network cartoon where you basically put down your thoughts. Write down your thoughts and you link it to various other ideas or thoughts that you had. And over time, what you have is a graph of your different thoughts. .. I think that's been really helpful for me, if you're asking for one tool. I
think Roam research has been the most important tool in the past. Maybe eight months to ten months so yeah I would say the other tool is Notion. Like they call it note taking tools or writing tools, Notion and Roam research, you put your thoughts down on the sheet and what you do is essentially a clear mind. You write them down and that gives you some clarity and then you basically go around organizing or networking them right, so you’re linking one thought to some other idea that you had. And trying to find a connection between them then you find connections between your own ideas in a weird way right, and then you get new ideas from that. Oh, yeah...Which constantly shapes up and there’s a point when you have enough clarity to start on that project or a product. So it’s not an isolated one time process, just part of your daily routine.

(Participant 12)

**Talk to People to Verify and Organize Thoughts and Ideas**

Nine (50%) participants shared how they found talking with friends, founding team members, mentors, coaches, experts and other entrepreneurs helped them to do self-reflection in the early start-up stage. After talking to other people about their entrepreneurial ideas, they were able to clear out some blind spots, organize their thoughts, recognize their own strengths, identify better directions of business and related resources, and learn about product feasibility.

One participant discussed the positive influence from discussing ideas with other entrepreneurs:

Obviously [it] helps a lot to talk to other people who succeeded, like other entrepreneurs and get any feedback they have on it, [If] it’s a good idea or not. It’s very easy to fool yourself. But the idea is fantastic, though. I guess for me. I'm very reliant on what other people think and say it’s not. I don’t think a lot. I mean, there’s some entrepreneurs who like to say I’m going to do this my way. Talking to them also helped me to brainstorm more and think more realistically.

(Participant 8)

Another participant mentioned that working with a coach helped increase their ability of doing self-reflection:

I work with an NLP coach, Neuro Linguistic Programming. I don’t know whether it’s unique in the Silicon Valley or not, but working with those coaches to work on myself and develop my human skills. It has been very valuable to my self-reflection. When I was losing my company and had to step down for six months...It motivated me and they helped me see things from a different perspective. I’ve got plenty of motivation. But sometimes, you know, when you are so focused you become myopic like you become so focused that you don’t see. You know you’re here, you’re looking here, but you’ve got this entire if you can have people that remind you to do this. That was the coach’s support, to guide me to think about what happened and what is next.

(Participant 10)
**Talk to VCs and Customer to Get Feedback**

Seven (38.9%) participants identified the tactics, strategies, tools and support they used during the self-reflection process included reaching out to VCs, stakeholders and customers to get feedback on their innovative products or services.

A participant talked about how important it is to receive feedback from customers and prospective customers, which helped the company to self-reflect about its business model and product marketability:

The hardest part of starting a company, it’s really testing that business model and the customer, you know, finding the right adopters. Right, actually it was the hardest part. Because if you can find early adopters then you can start to get some feedback earlier. I will say that that always comes down to people. Connect with customers who might have problems and need your products. You can test your audio to receive immediate and valuable feedback to help design better products...I think there’s this part of you that knows why sometimes you bring in seed money right. You bring in money not just for the money but for the value that you can provide to customers. That your angel investors can help you find the adopters who can provide the feedback that you need. To identify and also to reflect during the process which direction you should go. (Participant 11)

**Understanding Market Needs**

Five (27.8%) participants reported the mechanism of self-reflection they utilized understood market needs. Those strategies included researching the market and customers’ needs; conducting surveys through professional social network platforms or organizations to get more information about the business and business forecasts.

One participant noted constantly evaluating and learning about market needs helped the company to do self-reflection when starting their new venture:

What tactics or strategies? I think that tool knows the market needs. I think we’re entrepreneurs. Our sense of what the market actually plays a very good role, I saw a lot of because I had experience before. I also handle the angel fund or incubating fund. So I know a lot of people when they are trying to be an entrepreneur actually in their vision is not clear. They kind of beautify their future without doing self-reflection. So they didn’t really see the future, they think Okay, this, this will happen. But actually that’s not the case. So for me, I think through my
operation I do kind of modifying from time to time, because before I just wanted to be a consultant, so I will just like when I saw those brokers, they were introduced, both parties and then they earned income. So that’s the first step. Once I am successful unless that the next step is, okay, what do I need to do to make it better? I don’t want to be just the broker or the consultant. Right. I wanted to be involved...I evaluated the market on a weekly basis. We had meetings every week and discussed the market needs. (Participant 17)

**Reading books and watching videos**

There were two participants who acknowledged that reading books and watching videos related or unrelated to their field helped them to ask questions to themselves and organize thoughts. Although only 11.1% of participants’ responses used these two tools to help them to do self-reflection, it still can show two tools that stimulate some entrepreneurs’ self-reflection process.

One participant noted that reading lots of books to learn successful founders’ stories motivated and maintain a habit of self-reflection was very helpful when under pressure during the initial years of starting up their new business:

To me most importantly in not only care for my team themselves, [but] also their family, you know, so I think...You probably know I read a lot of biographies, I always tell my team that what kind of leader that I want to be, is the founder for Hershey’s Chocolate because they are literally a family. His team is just like my families, and I definitely don’t want to be that type of leaders, I read about other founders. I know I will never be Bill Gates nor Steve Jobs, because of my personality...To me, reading a lot helped me to reflect and find out what leader I am and how to do business well. (Participant 16)

**Helping Categories for Self-Clarity Competency**

Fifteen participants identified several helping factors that helped them and the company to crystalize their focus and the company’s mission, vision and values. Those responses included 20 incidents and 21 factors which were categorized into four tactics, strategies, tools, or supports which are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5
*Helping Categories of Self-Clarity*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactics, Strategies, Tools and Supports</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication with Founding Team</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigating Markets Needs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting, Finance, Business and</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Startup Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial and Error Experiments to get</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Communication with Founding Team**

Eight (44.4%) of the participants believed that communicating with the founding team helped them to crystalize their or companies’ focus. Some tactics and strategies they utilized were to frequently talk to co-founders and founding teams about the company’s vision, mission and values to keep everyone on the core founding team on the same pace and page in the early stages of starting up their business.

One participant spoke about how communication with their team helped to focus on company vision and values:

But in order to focus, what I look at is my collaborators. Sometimes I tend to not want to focus and I want to keep open to all the possibilities. Sometimes I have to learn to walk away from the wrong customers. So my team members are very important so that we can agree and help each other get to the right focus. We all watched the signals of the market, watching the signals from customers to see which one is producing repeatable success. And that’s what we should focus on. (Participant 15)

**Investigating Market Needs**

Seven (38.9 %) of the participants were confident that investigating market needs by talking to potential users or learning from customers was very beneficial to verify their business objectives. In addition, participants mentioned that using past professional experience related to new start-up businesses to investigate needs of the current market helped them to crystallize their business focus.

A participant shared:

A lot of things that we can compete with are convenience and services locally to the customer
wants. Well, a lot of customers depend on us for service. So once they have issues they call us and we get there right away and we find the problem for them to be a soft issue. So that’s how we can survive. We don’t survive by bidding price wars online. We provide service to the customer. We’re also in support of older systems with other technologies. We look at what our competitors have, [and] buy and stock some products then clean up the market. Later on, we investigated what [the] customer needs and provided solutions; mostly we received lots of requests from customers. So we know what your customer wants. (Participant 18)

**Accounting, Finance, Business and Startup Knowledge.**

Six (33.3%) of the participants believed that by learning and developing knowledge of accounting, finance, business models and practicing writing start-up business proposals helped them in the stage of crystallizing their focus and companies’ missions.

One participant was asked about what helped in the crystalize company’s focus including mission, vision, values, etc. The response was:

Use different tools. I mean, we use the startup manual from Steven Levy, the Business Model Canvas is something we did. It kind of helps us think it’s just something. [We] just need different frameworks to help to put thoughts together and help us to crystallize. One other very good one was just writing the application for Y Combinator helped really focus on answering all those questions from YC is a great exercise to help crystallize vision and mission. I mean with start-ups that’s the thing you can do, of course, with start-ups whenever you really want something. It’s going to suck all the other things are going to be terrible as opposed to what the company is going to give you. Lots of things are going to be broken. But you have to get like one or two things right and do them really well for them to stand out so well that people are willing to overlook all the other broken things. You have to make that you talk about focus is that basically like know what are those one or two things that you’re really going to knock it out of the park because this is the inside where of course any big company can build what you built? Does the factor of it or any other team could do it so you have to really know those two things? And it’s hard to know what that focuses on. That’s like the whole exercise. (Participant 3)

**Trial and Error Experiments to get feedback**

Four (22.2 %) of the participants indicated three incidents where they did experiments quickly during the early stage of their start-ups that helped them to embody their companies’ focuses. Those strategies included quick trial and error demonstrations of their prototypes and setting up short-term experimental projects and demonstration days so they could get feedback from potential users, customers,
and investors.

A participant mentioned that the company set up many quick and short-term projects and experiments. Each team worked through various product designs and development processes, then presented their prototype on demonstration days which helped all initial start-up teams to get a clear focus of what ideas worked and what ideas didn’t:

We figure out the way that I’ve it in the companies and the way that I’ve completely succeeded is to have a demo day. This is what we’re going to demonstrate together on this date. Just like a short-term goal of all teams in three months’ time [to] demonstrate new creations. And then to have everybody come to invite a bunch of people to come on that demo day and to take a look at what we did. Demo day is a better way to crystallize our focus. Everybody is the same, like what we are trying to build. It’s very hard. It’s very hard to focus on a deal. Because, whether it’s a big company, a small company, you get a team of people together. It’s really hard to get them on the same page, doing the same thing right. For example there were a couple of challenges, one was for engineering-based projects. It is often like making something lonely and disconnected from others. Demo day forced individuals [to] work with other engineers and colleagues from non-engineer backgrounds. They will work much harder. And if you force them to basically say, look, I need this thing by this day you know they have a different motivation to it because they’ll hit that data, like I told you we can’t hit it on that date. (Participant 8)

Helping Categories for Visioning Competency

Fourteen (77.7%) of the participants indicated 22 incidents where they envisioned the possibilities of themselves and their companies during the early stage of starting up their new ventures. Those incidents were categorized to five tactics, strategies, tools and supports that participants utilized to help them increase their visioning competency, as shown in Table 4.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactics, Strategies, Tools and Supports</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Seeking feedback from customers,</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>investors and partners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Awareness of market trends and needs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Writing down thoughts and</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
possibilities
Understanding what other entrepreneurs did when they faced similar situations
4
3
16.7%
3
12.5%
Exploring possibilities of working with different talents
5
2
11.1%
2
8.3%

**Seeking feedback from customers, investors and partners**

Eight (44.4%) of the participants recognized that they used survey, user data collection, calculated return of interest (ROI) and got suggestions from prospective customers to help their visioning step in the early start-up period. Those tools helped them to brainstorm future possibilities and identify desired futures.

A participant shared his thoughts on tools that helped him and his company to envision the future possibility of the company:

Our tool, as in, are you asking for a tool that we use? So generally, a technique that we used starting from user feedback or questions that are generated in the process side and you start with the question, whether you came up with yourself or a user asks you a question about your product and then that triggers the different reactions and brainstorming is one of the outputs of that, right where you take up a question and then we go around. What can happen if we do this or what can happen if you do that? Essentially, there’s a lot of research going on. Like how introspection works, how reflection works and stuff when we keep talking to people and everyone has a different technique. That’s kind of going in a wide range right brainstorming, then we bring in all the data we sit together and we’re like, okay, this is how people are using it. This is what we were mentioning. What reflection should look like, and where do we converge and then what other ideas can we bring that can match our vision with what people expect and kind of bring them together. (Participant 12)

**Awareness of market trends and needs**

Eight (44.4%) of the participants asserted that keeping awareness of market trends and needs helped them to identify future possibilities of their service and products. They mentioned some strategies and tools that they used to help them such as reading the news, talking with venture capitalists and potential partners and also their past experience to help them sense market trends and identify desired
A participant spoke about her approach to visioning:

You know, based on market signals and how customers are getting the ROI from your product, you can extrapolate into how many more customers there are like that, and how big your company can be. Or you can look at what you have and see [how it] can be applied to another market so you can grow in a different market. Once you’ve focused and conquered one, and so that gives you a lot of possibilities which then leads to a lot of positive outlook. I think that opens up possibilities. For example, we put it on one game right on Facebook and we saw how customers were just grabbing it and doing surveys and getting virtual currency. And so that made it possible for us to go to the other games and repeated the look at the number of games. So we literally saw in real time people taking offers for the first time we put it out there...And so then we said, well, where? Where else is this other than Facebook? And then we looked at the iPhone and we saw the growth of games there so we realized the possibilities of bringing this over to iPhone and that gave us hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue. I mean, we saw the results; actually the early results were a good indication. (Participant 15)

**Writing down thoughts and possibilities**

Three participants (16.7%) mentioned that writing down thoughts and possibilities helped them to envision the future.

One participant shared that:

Well, I think that’s combined with knowledge and your vision right, so for example when I have a project coming I will put [down] the steps that need to be done. But then when I put [down] a step I will make sure I am okay if I complete the first step, then what will happen to next step. So it’s just like you go through that, even before it’s really happened right, so you go through each step just practice as [if] it’s already happened. And then to kind of reviewing what has to be done. And then, of course, once you have that too, let’s say you from step one to step two is past. It’s always a different possibility, right. No, you have to make sure of all the possibilities you have in your strategy for that. So, for example, let me give you an example. So we have developed land. So then when actually they have endangered species. Right, so they have a little, little turtle. That’s cute, but they have you know like anyways in danger, which is eternal…I have to hire a bio and environmental specialist. So, they can use either GPS or how they can monitor it in terms of where they go. And, you know, make sure once we build a station, they won’t have an impact on this terminal. We used all I mentioned, listed down all processes step by step, reviewed all possibilities and what needed to be done. (Participant 17)

**Understanding what other Entrepreneurs did when they faced similar situations**

Three participants (16.7%) recognized that when they were envisioning future possibilities what
helped them was to understand other entrepreneurs’ experiences in similar situations. They mentioned:

It really helped me to see the future possibilities; I studied a lot of successful stories in related fields and learned what they did. Such as reaching magazines, audios, videos, news, and attending some organizations. Organizations like professional organizations and then you learn everything so that way you can know what’s going to happen or what will come because we are always cutting edge. We are always more advanced than other people were, always I think because we have a vision and we know what’s coming. So, that’s Number One. So to me, is that I think we, we always have a vision even like my investment business. I always see what we’re going to be three years from now, so that is very important. And then we also chat and bounce and what’s currently happening with the industry and then found a business that you always chat at the market. What’s going on with the market? So, but, after all, you can’t just have a vision. You have to be able to execute it. (Participant 14)

Reading about what other people have done. What people who have succeeded and really have a girl who failed and that wasn’t what did it. What did you think was the reason behind it? Its people who I’m not sure are a lot of people who actually made mistakes. What are they happy to be quite open about like what happened, you know, I found when I needed to envision a future possibility, I read something that helps me to envision, and picture, and see future possibilities. (Participant 8)

**Exploring possibilities of working with different talents**

Two (11.1%) of the participants indicated that they were able to outsource talent to other countries, which helped them to be able to see future possibilities in the earlier startup stage with limited funding resources.

One participant stated that when they found talent outside of the USA, they could lower costs to help them discover more possibilities for their desired goals:

Silicon Valley has been super expensive and we had limited money funding. So one particular event with one of our colleagues – he volunteered to go back to Shanghai. At that time, Chinese engineers were a lot less expensive than Silicon Valley and they are also very talented...more easily to get profitable by burning the money less slowly. Then we were able to make more high-potential, you know, good software development progress, especially in the early days, mobile phones had many, many different operating systems. (Participant 2)

**Helping Categories for Goal Setting and Planning Competency**
Seventeen (94.4%) of the participants indicated 26 incidents while they were doing their goal setting and planning in early startup stages. One participant stated that he didn’t have any helping factors to support his goal setting and planning because his goal was to survive and support his family. Seventeen participants’ specified tactics, strategies, tools and supports they used to help them to identify future goals and develop steps for achieving those goals were divided into five methods: financial tools and forecasting tool; goal setting process and tools; goal oriented decision making and communication; engaging partners and vendors into goal setting and coaching, as shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7  
Goal setting and planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactics, Strategies, Tools and Supports</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Financial tools and forecasting</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Goal-oriented decision making and communication</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Goal setting processes and tools</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Engaging partners and vendors into goal setting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Coaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Financial tools and forecasting**

Eight (44.4%) of the participants specified that using financial tools and doing forecasting helped them to set up business goals and plans. Those tools included estimated products sold, indicated with the Manheim Market Report, calculated recurring revenue and return of interest, and used accounting run way to zero and set up sales.

A participant discussed the important relationship between doing forecasting of product sales, estimate related resources cost, monitoring how long their funding will run out and setting up goal and plans:
Let me give you an example, we ran out of money before we planned it right because we overestimated. We had to take a loan. We realized the number of goal settings is product specs on a function, right; we need to set the product goal right. We got our vision, what, when you do by reality when they actually do it. We thought anything related to the product, right, the cost of the retail price of the channel; the prospects, that’s one thing. Goal setting right, I’ll come back to that second goal setting coming back is financial. And let me bring that up. One is product sales, marketing price and revenues, all is about finance. So we learned the lesson and compromised. We put our target growth technically, also the resources required. So I came up with more realistic goals and plans. (Participant 5)

Another participant mentioned the importance of future forecasts from their accounting team to set up goals and plans to achieve those goals:

We still want to know how much we need to sell to keep the doors open. And I think the goals are very much driven by the numbers. So we do, we basically got the accounting team. And again, that future forecast that we did the modeling, and one of the things that kind of makes me happy and makes me sad. At the same time, one of the reports regenerated is runway to zero dollar day. It’s an accounting principle called runway to zero dollar day which is basically based on the sales figures and the costs, etc. And how much money is in the bank. They tell you how many days until your company is at zero dollars. From there we identify the future goal, and then also try to do some plans including how we cut costs, change shipping and packaging. (Participant 10)

**Goal setting processes and tools**

During the interviews, five (27.8%) participants disclosed about the goal setting process and tools that were used, about what strategies helped them set goals and the plan-setting process. Some process tools they mentioned included road maps, objectives and key results. Some used case studies, planners, and the backward design process.

One participant explained how case studies helped his company to see their goal was possible to reach by designing a good plan:

Be able to have products and then start selling before Christmas. Okay, so we have about five months. Because the latest we have to start selling is a month before Christmas. We have to be really focused on who are we going to sell it through, who is our target. Right, without a use case we’re going to be like everywhere. Oh, I’m going to sell it to 18-year-olds. I’m going to sell it to 25-year-olds. I’m going to sell it to like 40 or anyone wants to buy, but you can’t do that because we don’t have enough money to market to everyone. Right, so we’d use cases, you kind of see it ‘okay if I want to target say 18 to 25’. How many people are actually targeting? Do they have plan? Do they have the necessary ingredients for my product? So those use cases can kind of help me to point, to funnel to smaller categories. We end up thinking of actually elderly. (Participant 7)
**Goal-oriented decision making and communication**

Six (33.3%) of the participants specified that goal-oriented decision making and communication with the team includes making sure everyone is on the same page of the plan and understands the goal and founders show how to do it step-by-step.

A participant responded and stated she was a very goal-oriented leader, so during the goal setting and planning process, she made sure decision making and communication occurred to help achieve the company’s vision and values:

In the beginning, usually, you know, I have few ideas of goals setting right and then I often have weekly team meetings with my upper management, the core team. And then we just want to make sure that, you know, during the meeting we brainstorm how we set goals correctly and then, you know, there's always an aside track. Right. So you want to get there. There’s other issues that will come up that you never thought will happen, that will slow you down or sidetrack you, but because I was very goal-oriented. For most of my business, everybody can be measured on what really to make sure was taken on the goal so weekly review is we can leave the meeting to review the plan line. (Participant 14)

**Engaging partners and vendors into goal setting**

Five (27.8%) of the participants mentioned that they engaged with their manufacturing partners and option of distribution channels, and considered numbers of signed contracts and potential customers to help them set up future goals and plan steps for achieving those goals.

One participant asserted that focusing on the number of contracts helped them to set a goal for the second round of fundraising:

You know, I think, for our start-up it’s really all about revenue because you have heard of the word ‘cash is king,’ right? You know, it’s all about cash flow. You know how much money you have, and how much money you need to generate not to be a company or life. So no matter if [they’re] long-term goals or short-term goals, we need to show VC the numbers of customers. I think that goes you set a very much focus on what the VCs are expecting at the stage of growth. So I thought if we’re not just taking angel investment in the first stage. So we did our goals setting of reaching the numbers, revenues, so signed contracts were all about it. Yes. Contracts...We also utilized some ideas from manufacturing partners and during our planning we considered their suggestions...but we still kept our own business model. (Participant 11)
Coaching

One participant asserted that a coach helped him develop soft skills of expressing disagreement with co-founders and the founding team and was able to identify goals and develop plans. It was very crucial to them in the early stage of starting their business together. He mentioned:

Practically speaking, the issue is more the disagreements among the cofounders someone wanted to go laugh with. Someone wanted to go right, someone big pictures were aligned, small pictures were not, or the other way around, right. So, how to converge a clue to co-founders is a more practical challenge. I want to say I faced it...learned soft skill set in communication. I mean, I had to talk to some coaches, you know. [They] don’t necessarily know the answer better, but you know a lot of times when a person is emotionally attached to it, they can give you a better suggestion on how to talk to people. (Participant 13)

Helping Categories for Implementing Competency

Eighteen (100%) of the participants specified 24 incidents during their implementing plans in the early start-up stages. Some tactics, strategies, tools and supports they stated they used to help them to identify future goals and develop steps for achieving those goals were divided into four helping categories: team composition and teamwork, project management tools, customer endorsement, and product development, as shown in Table 4.7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Team Composition and Teamwork</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Project Management Tools</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Customer Endorsement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Product Development</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Team Composition and Teamwork
Nine (50%) of the participants shared that a talented team, teamwork with clear structures to make decisions, team management, a team having the same goals and using a team from their home country really helped them to implement, monitor and evaluate their business in the early starting process.

One participant stated that his initial founding team members helped a lot when they implemented their plans:

When you start a company, the first thing you got to think about is who is on the team. Yeah. What kind of people join you right and you need to recruit a very good team right and study from the founding of the initial small team. My initial team was friends and friends’ friends, who had similar education and cultural backgrounds, and very talented. Our communication was good when making decisions. Because we came from Taiwan, we were able to support each other when we extended our business to Taiwan and China. (Participant 1)

Another participant asserted how he recruited a talented team from his home country that helped him to solve a situation that involved a delay when implementing his first product in the USA:

When we implemented our plans, I think putting together a very strong technical team was what was really helpful. Getting actual designs and plans into actual products, and implementing actual features. It was really difficult to hire server engineers. We were, we had really good client engineers, but server engineers. And they’re difficult to find because their readings are needed on all sorts of different products. And so we were having difficulty finding a good server engineer. So we opened up an office. And so, I was able to convince some of the people that I’ve known in the past in Korea to work for us in the USA. Our products were a few months delayed, because of a lack of engineering talent on the server side. Then Korean team moved and helped us unblock a lot of things that the guards would launch...Was very important I think, without that it would have been very challenging to be able to meet our timeline. And the talented team helped us to catch up and implement our plans. (Participant 6)

**Project Management Tools**

Seven (38.9%) of the participants shared that project management tools such as Slack, Monday.com, engineering management, portfolio management, two-way communication tools, Google Sheets, EPICS (Task boards for individual work), and Agile helped them to comply with plans and manage implementing processes.

One participant highlighted that project management tools were helpful to implement their
company’s plans collaboratively:

We used some project management and collaboration tools. Say like Monday.com and Slack. So I can assemble with manufacturing right even though we are on their schedules. They will give you an okay, hey you know that the manufacturing is going to take six to eight weeks. Some manufacturers will tell you, eight to ten weeks, but for us as the customer, we don’t want to hear that, we want to see if we can shorten it to really six weeks or really eight weeks, we don’t want it as evaluations. Right. So the way I do it, is I try to understand in terms of the manufacturing process, what the processes are from end to end, from start to begin, from beginning to end. These tools helped a lot. (Participant 7)

Another participant shared other tools he has been used in his start-up company to help manage project plans implementation:

Essentially what we use is a technique called Agile agenda. It’s a software delivery system. So essentially we have like a task board. We come up with large-level system goals. We call them EPICS, and from epics we come down to like individual tasks or a user story, and what we would like to achieve. And then we basically started doing them. When we had more people, we could break down tasks, and these two tools helped teams to track and manage projects. (Participant 12)

**Customer Endorsement**

Four (22.2%) of the participants mentioned the importance of reputation and clients’ referrals to increase their success with implementing their project plans.

A participant disclosed how she built up her reputation which helped her implement plans to reach her goals:

The reality is, in commercial real estate it’s like 70% 60-years-old Caucasian males, and when I started doing commercial real estate, people just didn’t believe me as a female. I knew I needed to build up my reputation otherwise they didn’t give me any time. After I narrowed down ways to gain business, I went for my hardest destination; [it] was a CCM which took me four years with all family responsibilities. At the same time, unlike others who use cold calling to build their business, unlike them I started to build up my reputation. So when people see me, they understand who I am. So I focus on the techniques more marketing instead of calls. I started teaching and I started doing some investment workshops or I was doing a lot of volunteering in our association. I wrote a lot of blogs and on social media about the quality of real estate services. I created all kinds of online profiles so people can find me easily online. Again, I did interviews with local social media, radio, newsletter, and magazines. My high well-known reputation later on helped me to reach the company’s goals efficiently. (Participant 9)

**Product Development**
Three (16.7%) of the participants indicated that continuing to develop products helped them to implement their plans to reach their long-term business goals.

One participant shared that in order to maintain quality and satisfy her clients, she needed to consistently know what were the needs and trends of the market. Then she and her team modified or developed new products to grow her business:

For our industry [it] is to implement curriculum and strategy and how to utilize people right, and their experience and knowledge. For us, the most important is a curriculum, whether it is critical and able to satisfy the people’s needs in this region right or in this neighborhood, per se. Also it helps to grow schools. And these things have to be identified and then you get to be some, like I said, talking to parents and reading what markets trends [are]. If we don’t develop our curriculum based on what families need, then we will not be able to grow our business and will get replaced. (Participant 16)

**Helping Categories for Adapting Competency Category**

All participants shared a total of 32 incidents where they needed to make some adjustments to their original plan or goals for better results in the early start-up stages. The tactics, strategies, tools and supports they mentioned they used to help them to be adaptable and stay current while not losing their focus was divided into five helping categories: finding alternative strategies, lead team to have a mindset of change, resource management alignment, adherence to original goals, and receiving ongoing feedback from investors and customers, as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

*Helping Categories of Adapting*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactics, Strategies, Tools and Supports</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Resource management alignment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding alternative strategies based on environmental change</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lead team to have mindset of adaptability to the new situation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adherence to original goal, vision and mission</td>
<td></td>
<td>Receiving feedback from investors and customers constantly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resource Management Alignment**

Eight (44.4%) of the participants indicated many times when they had to make some changes in their plans, they managed and aligned resources within their companies to help them make adjustments and adapt to new situations but still kept focused on achieving their business goals.

One participant talked about gathering and managing a company’s resources:

I will say, I kept on the vision by watching around me and what I have can help solve the situation. It is very easy to feel depressed if you lose track, so I always look at the goals. Otherwise when you are stuck into the hole you only see the narrow surroundings and then you don’t see the hope, you don’t see the help which helps you already. For example, there’s one point of time I let go of people because we don’t have enough finance. And then we were trying to secure some investment money or a promise coming at the last moment, the investment management coming you know, when we were trying to expand the business. We try to get more money and try to shoot for an even bigger goal. However, we had to make changes due to lack of funding. I looked up all [the] companies resources including reports from [the] accounting team, market forecasts from [the] sales team, and employee profiles from human resource team. I had to reorganize that information and found better solutions to make necessary changes. (Participant 1)

**Finding alternative Strategies based on Environmental Changes**

Seven (38.9%) of the participants stated that watching signals from the market, learning different resources to secure down payments, finding different ways to sell products, and reading books or articles to quickly learn better practices helped them make changes quickly and finding alternative solutions when needed.

One participant spoke about doing various experiments and exploring alternative methods which helped her to adjust her original plan, but still reach her original business goals:

You always have to watch the signals that are coming from the marketplace right, so you might
bring out like in one company. We thought that a particular platform was the killer platform, right. Oh, actually, the big example of this is the offer of story rights. Our idea was actually to have a Myspace widget and in this widget, we would put in these offers and you could make a poster. You as an individual could come in and make a poster and put it on a social network...so the virtual currency was they were earning points for doing affiliate offers and these points could then be exchanged for a real world gift. So we built that and we raised money for that, and actually launched it and then we saw the numbers were kind of happening, but they were kind of slow. We focused on virtual currency but we realized that the velocity wasn’t there, and the original model. And so we experimented and found the velocity in a different model using the same product. We were able to make a judgment that this is where the velocity is, this is where we should go. The other difference was instead of Myspace, we focused on Facebook. Facebook had just opened up its platform and we made a bet on Facebook, because that’s where we ran the first experiment...Yeah, and do a lot of alternative ways. This was an experiment, and it might have failed, then we’d have to go back and do another experiment. So until you find the right velocity in your plan you have to maybe try out a few things and not be afraid to fail. (Participant 15)

**Lead team to have mindset of adaptability to the new situation changes**

Seven (38.9%) of the participants stated they were confident when faced with challenges and they needed to make changes to their original plan. There are some strategies, tools and supports they used, including, maintaining the founding team’s understanding of the situation and ability to make an effort to think about solutions together; showing confidence by learning about financial information from the accounting team; and showing the team how to use a growth mindset to detach from old products or unworkable ideas.

A participant mentioned when she had to adjust their original plans, she found it helpful to keep all teams understanding the situation and to together think about possible solutions. She also showed her teams how to face the situation with confidence and make quick changes. Those strategies helped her team to adapt well to challenges along the way of her entrepreneurial business:

We had to have a huge meeting with the accounting team and core founding team. I think a lot of companies and a lot of people, I know I did, really underestimate what an accounting team can do for you. So I had to show others what was the situation, and the best way was through numbers. When the time we faced the challenges about selling channels. We now suddenly went wholesale right, so if you want to buy these products you can buy wholesale and we need to pivot. How we explain technology because if I sit here and explain and say to you, you know, its vibrational frequency energy medicine, you will not understand. So I showed the team our situation by numbers, and we discussed possible solutions, although I already had few ideas in mind. I was
confident also because I already got financial data from the accounting team. I wanted to show them it’s okay to pivot and [that] we need to have a flexible mindset to be able to adapt to any future challenges. (Participant 10)

Another participant also shared:

So originally we had an idea of doing which machine that was going to do like a spring in a certain way. However, I found teams [became] addicted to their projects if they worked on it for a long period of time. It became harder to throw away some non-profitable products. So I started making a three month proof drive and demo. On the demo day, all teams decided what are the top three ideas or products to continue. I showed them some products I designed that I also had to throw away. This is how I lead my team to have a mindset of adjustability, especially when we are working in a start-up, fast paced environment. (Participant 8)

**Adherence to original goal, vision and mission**

Six (33.3%) of the participants disclosed their adherence to their original goals, vision and mission by constantly discussing with the small core team by reviewing, listing them somewhere visible in the office helped them to make adjustments in tough times.

One participant mentioned how he was to address the company’s original goal often:

We always keep focusing our original goals and vision. We want to deliver delicious food. We are trying to keep our original and what we try to deliver to the consumer. So that’s the goal. We never changed, but we were on a path where we might need to change to change the interface. So the interface changed from vending machine to home delivery and to the later on. The focus never changes, delicious food is the most important thing and the machine or the sales channel is just a method to get, you know, engage with the consumer. So we try to do different types of hardware, but main goal is the food itself. So that’s why we don’t lose any focus. (Participant 4)

**Receiving feedback from investors and customers constantly**

Four (22.2%) of the participants reported that constantly collecting users’ data and feedback from customers and investors helped them to adapt to new plans successfully if they needed to adjust original plans.

A participant spoke about his experience:

I’ll give you one example that way. I have to write. So I told you we were pivoting, the company
at one point. So I talked to my investor about a worry, I was never as you know that the investor said ‘hey, you know, a start-up never even started until you have your first pivot. So this happens every day. So don’t worry about it.’ So even that advice and feedback made me feel much better. It definitely helped me to stay focused even when I needed to modify some plans...after the first pivot, I always reminded myself to ask investors for feedback when I needed it. Believe me; they also want you to ask them for help and advice. (Participant 13)

**Helping Categories for Environment (QR3)**

Eighteen (100%) of participants shared 34 incidents about how environmental support helped them in becoming successful entrepreneurs. Those environmental factors included people, policy, technology, and social change, etc. Based on participants’ responses, all incidents were divided by similarity into six different categories, as shown in Table 4.10.

**Table 4.10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment Tactics, Strategies, Tools and Supports</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Start-up friendly environment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Support from family, personal relationships, coaches, mentors and religious groups</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Business-related personal and family background</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Technology</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Travel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Unemployment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Start-up friendly environment**

Ten (55.6%) of the participants specified that the friendly environment in Silicon Valley helped them to get more access to business resources, networking, and talent. Additionally the encouraging atmosphere to entrepreneurs helped them to not be afraid to try, and ask for feedback about their ideas.
and products. These factors helped them to be able to start new businesses successfully even though they were immigrants to the USA.

One participant shared that the entrepreneurial environment had a positive impact on his success:

I was in the right supportive environment. There was nobody judgmental in my environment, like living in Silicon Valley where taking risk, failing or succeeding is an everyday occurrence. It’s not looked at [as] something crazy, like if I was in a more conservative, get a job, and do this job for 50 years kind of environment. And to be adventurous and then in being in Silicon Valley where you have like the lawyers, the VCs, the team members and other entrepreneurs, accelerators, incubators and all kinds of things to help you think through ideas and help you mentor, coach you. I think that’s really contributed to me trying to do this and then having some measure of success. (Participant 15)

Another participant also believed that an encouraging surrounding was very helpful:

Silicon Valley, [is a] start-up-friendly environment. I think it’s both that you get the personal connections and potential users’ feedback. For example, I needed a talented industrial designer to make one of our camera mods and I knew someone here. Maybe back home or somewhere else. I may not know enough people to kind of make that prototype. Right. But over here, you are always exposed to very different kinds of people, all creators. The opportunities to collaborate are much, much higher here in Silicon Valley. Another example, I’ve been in Bangalore, India, and I’ve been here in the USA. For me, building a product from ground up is much easier here. Just because of the culture of the place right, experimentation is accepted and failure is also accepted. It’s not as bad. You know when you’re trying something people are more positive towards it. (Participant 12)

Support from family, personal relationships, coaches, mentors and religious groups

Seven (38.9%) of the participants recognized their success as entrepreneurs had been strongly impacted by support from people surrounding them, including family, personal relationships, coaches, mentors and religious groups.

A participant shared how important it was to receive support from her family:

Well, I think families [are], most important, important element, you know, for my success. I say definitely my husband, my parents and my kid; they have to understand that I work long hours. My day has not stopped at five o’clock. My day stops like 11 p.m. or 12 a.m., so they have to bear with me. My parents helped me to cook so I don’t have to worry about dinner and stuff. Because they live pretty close to me…My husband also helped a lot with household stuff and our kid while I was not home. (Participant 16)
**Business-related personal and family background**

Five (27.8%) of the participants believed the business-related background of their family and spouse helped them to be successful entrepreneurs.

One participant believed that his family background helped him become a successful serial entrepreneur:

> Well, I think I have to say it’s the way I grew up. Both my parents are serial entrepreneurs. Actually, a lot of my family relatives [are]. I mean, I grew up in Indonesia, we are Chinese, and they could do business. You know it started with small motorcycles selling door to door, and then becoming a store and one store becoming a store to start becoming a factory, this kind of stuff. I learned when I was a kid how to be persistent and to adapt really quickly. (Participant 7)

Another participant also asserted that the business-related background of her husband helped her a lot in building the business successfully:

> My husband was successful in a corporate setting. He used to work before. And then the last job behind was a nest lab. You know, they sold to Google. I mean, he’s [been] exposed to finance and accounting. So he had been helping me with a business strategy, future budgeting, and campus expending plan. So his support, definitely with his professional knowledge, is very helpful. (Participant 16)

**Technology**

Five (27.8%) of the participants asserted that there are many new technologies useful to increase potential of designing new products and providing services under tough natural environments. Also, new business support platforms helped them to handle non-technology work when they started to structure a new company. Those helping factors include web 2.0, tools for operation, accounting and human resources, technology such as robots and artificial intelligence. These new technologies helped them in building their business successfully.

A participant stated:

> There’s just so much infrastructure that was built. I don’t think I could start this kind of company. I started five or 10 years ago. Some other businesses help start-ups to manage like your payroll system, so that you don’t have to do anything, which is great. Like a giant system, like SAP, or you have things for handling all your finances and invoices. Those technologies are structured to
start companies. You know, I don’t know about non-tech. (Participant 3)

**Travel**

One participant mentioned taking time-off and going on a trip helped her to re-group and be able to think through mistakes and challenges to become a successful entrepreneur:

When I was forced to step down, I looked at my emotional health and my mental health. My spiritual health, how I wanted and then you go through the state of if everything was taken away from me. I would ask for help. And I’ll say this is my situation, what would you recommend. And someone would say something and certain things will work and certain things at that moment. So I traveled to Mexico and actually spent two weeks in the desert with a shaman. During the trip, I started to focus on myself, not the business. I thought, what is that I want. To me it’s a process of self-awareness and it’s also a process of learning. I was able to find my way back from the original crushed emotion. When I was away, I realized that nobody even knew I went away. But when I am in the business, I had to be doing the 16 hours until I drop dead, but actually I don’t need to. I think learning to take time off from work helped me a lot to get to this point. (Participant 10)

**Unemployment**

One participant spoke about how her past experience of being laid off and the need to achieve financial stability for family drove her to think about what business to invent, and how to keep the business sustainable. She commented:

What has helped me to become an entrepreneur and push me to be successful was actually I lost all hope as an employee, to work as an employee. Because I personally had been laid off twice, and I felt like I was just owned by a company that I worked for many, many years and long hours, but then they let you go with no emotion attached. So I was very adamant. I'm just going to be on my own and I have to create a sustainable business that I can manage. I got laid off in L.A. as analysts before I became a real estate agent. If I didn’t get laid off, I probably would still work under brokers. Because I wanted to get out from this whole financial struggles with my family. (Participant 9)

**Wish List Items (RQ2)**

Participants reported 124 incidents and 53 wish list items, including tactics, strategies, tools and supports, that if they had or they had exercised during their early startup stage would have positive
influence on their entrepreneurial success. These incidents were analyzed by HAT and categorized to 54 wish list items, all of which are presented in Table 4.11. There were only six wish listed items which were viable and which were indicated by more than 25% of participants. They are shown in Table 4.10.

Although other wish list items were not mentioned by over 25% of the individuals, the researcher thinks they were still valuable to share in the research finding.

Table 4.11
_Wish List Items_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wish List items</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Hope</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-reflection</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Self-clarity</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Visioning</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Goal setting and planning</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Implementing</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Adapting</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Environment</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10
_Wish List Items of each Competency_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAT Competency</th>
<th>Tactics, Strategies, Tools and Supports</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reflection</td>
<td>Ways to get direct input and feedback from experts and entrepreneurs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting suggestions and advice from experienced entrepreneurs, mentors, and advisors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Clarity</td>
<td>Attending networking events and conferences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>More technology supports</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing</td>
<td>Communication and management skills</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting</td>
<td>Leading change</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eleven (61.1\%) of the participants expressed a desire to increase their hope in their early start-up stage if they had some tactics, strategies, tools and support. Seven participants stated they already felt highly hopeful and didn’t discover what they wished to have to feel more hopeful when they were trying to establish new ventures in Silicon Valley. Participants who mentioned wish list items specifically stated more academic education, legal advisors, start-up toolkits, cultivating connections and feedback with friends, leadership toolsets, joining the start-up career earlier, experienced mentors, being more patient about new products, spending more time on understanding and supporting tech work. Consequently, they thought those additional factors would increase their feelings of hope in the early stages of their new businesses.

One participant shared his desire to go back to school to learn more about what he needed to start a new business and manage people:

I wish I could go back to school and learn more about humans and stuff. I was too busy to do it. Really didn’t have time because I needed to support my family’s financial needs. I think, if I could get more education, I would advance my knowledge, create social networking and learn more about how other large companies do [things]. I may feel more confident and know how to utilize more resources to help my start-up. (Participant 18)

Another participant discussed how beneficial it would have been to have a legal advisor involved when he started his own business:

Like I mentioned, I’m not worried about what they say. I was very hopeful already. So even if they say ‘no,’ I will still continue to do what I planned. But I think there’s one thing that if I can choose to again I will choose a legal advisor. Because we were trying to do some innovations and then this is very important to apply to IP or, you know, a registered trademark or something. Those are kind of like a contract...in the beginning we didn’t really pay attention to a lot of contracts. Though in the end, we actually spent more money to clean up the mess. So if we want to start again, I think the ego will be very important for the start-up, especially if you want to know how to make a really good product and you want to prevent someone [from] copying you. You want to have a very good strategy at the very, very beginning. (Participant 4)

Eleven (61.1\%) of the participants commented that getting some tactics, strategies, tools and
supports with self-reflection mechanisms would have been helpful when starting their entrepreneurial
career. Specifically, they mentioned having ways to get direct feedback from researchers, experts and
other entrepreneurs, coaches, listening skills, tools to collect ideas and write down thoughts. The
participants said those supports would be a quite beneficial to them to do self-reflection.

A participant shared her thoughts on using platforms or online tools to get more feedback might
have helped her with self-reflection:

The second company, one time, we needed to do some adjustments; we just didn’t do enough
early research on the platforms that are acceptable to buyers. But we have much better tools now
for this binary search that I know where to look. It’s much more to the platform; we wasted a few
years doing the wrong thing. An actual proper research and there are many more tools available
now that I know about. So I would do that. Like doing direct input or direct feedback. Those are
much easier to get now and they were in the past. And so you should have done a lot more of it in
the past, we did not use it and that led us to make some wrong decisions. So now going back, I
would use that a lot more. (Participant 15)

Another participant expressed her wish to have therapy or a coach to support her self-reflection
mechanism:

Wish to do things like therapy, executive coaching like having that kind of support, but I didn’t
think that was necessary but I think it is definitely helpful because part of starting a company, you
need to be as much as you can, yourself hundred percent. So there’s a lot of inner work of how
you show up. [You] need to self-reflect. Like being aware of your intentions to how you behave
and how that affects people, and especially as the lead... Yeah, and sometimes you don’t know
it’s just you need the feedback to know how you’re coming across, me sometimes just want to. At
least my style is like achieving the goal and taking them directly, you need to take people along
with you on the journey and take time explaining and if you don’t display. I skip discussions just
to get things done. Clearly sometimes it could kind of upset people, because we don’t know what
you’re doing. I think you overlook the contributions of everyone else if you just think, you know,
you’re looking because experts outside our team might help me to reflect more and better at
leading, directorship. (Participant 3)

**Wish List Items for the Self-clarity competency**

Eleven (61.1%) of the participants felt that they wished they could have had more tactics,
strategies, tools or supports to help them or their companies to crystallize their focus and the companies’
missions, visions and values. Participants spoke specifically of more suggestions and advice from
experienced entrepreneurs, mentors and advisors, securing large amounts of funding, listening skills and
feedback loops, using mind mapping software, and prayers.

One participant expressed her wish of having a mentor or experienced entrepreneurs who she could regularly consult:

A mentor or somebody with a lot of experience doing what I was doing. Having a weekly or regularly check-in when I first started. I think if someone had said to me, um, you’d need to start, these are the skills you need, and these are the skills you’re lacking from the very beginning. That would have made it easier when I needed to be clearer about what I should focus more on. Then I wouldn’t have reached a crisis point, [and] got kicked out of my own company. (Participant 10)

Another participant mentioned that she wished she raised more funding at the beginning of her business:

I wish I had. Well, I think at the beginning. I also fall into the same path as a lot of young people today, you know, because I don’t know if it’s good or bad if I start over again. I probably do the same thing, but I think before it depends on the funding. OK, I will say if, at the beginning, I will find enough funding that probably will make my company grow faster, right and I could. I don’t want to do Step One and Step Two; maybe I can go directly to Step Three. The reason being is, again because my special industry. So I will, at the beginning, do a lot of smaller projects. If I have secured large funding then I can more crystalize those projects and didn’t worry about legal fees. So I will spend $300,000 for example, for this project and this project. So if you asked me what I wish to have to help me clarify the company’s mission, focus, the quick answer is yeah I should find more investment funding and then to start my projects. (Participant 17)

Wish List Items for the Visioning competency

Fourteen (77.8%) of the participants believed it would be helpful to their process of envisioning future possibilities for them and their companies. Many participants offered ideas of attending networking events and conferences, managing talent acquisition, getting more feedback from customers, raising enough funding, using mind mapping, building experience and knowledge of starting up a business, managing time, having good mentors, having marketing analysis tools, and getting licensed. They believed these tools, strategies and tactics would benefit them when brainstorming future possibilities and identifying their desired future during their early start-up stage.

A participant expressed that attending social events such as conferences would help him to be more conscious of opportunities:

For the future possibilities and kind of envisioning the future, I wish I would have, maybe that I
would have paid more attention to kind of the technological advancements and new technologies that are coming out, and things that are changing, attending more social networking events to learn about them. I didn’t pay attention to it, and I didn’t realize some new opportunities in the gaming space of social media. And there were actually many useful conferences and things like that. I wish I would have attended those more, and always have paid more attention to that information that could be early in terms of implementing these new things. (Participant 6)

Another participant discussed how he felt talent acquisition and management would be very helpful to him to be aware of future opportunities:

The level of a software development is actually later I found out is rather go against relying on China for developing or like we basically managed against the Silicon Valley trend because we were more like outsource talents to China 18 years ago. Which are now good Silicon Valley companies, basically just like Google, or whoever the core is developed in here and tools, maybe is few developed off shores. What I wish, I wished I combined all those developments both in Silicon Valley and overseas, though. Because we found it was very hard to manage overseas talents later. They become a chase of money rather than being really, really competitive. Silicon Valley being competitive, [there] is a lot of talent here. I would say 80% should be here and 20% go overseas. But we went over 50% and even more overseas. That spread was very hard to manage quality. We stocked, we didn’t know how to inspire teams and engage them. Later we expanded to Europe, different time zones, managing became more difficult until we hired a VP of HR. She helped us look at the problem then used their capacity. I remember there was a book called ‘Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.’ She used it to align teams in Silicon Valley, Shanghai and Europe. We were working hard, but we are still not profitable. So, that time that we do need people to align everybody in the world. So we can picture possibilities and believe there’s a future to the company. I would say, really, the talent, human resources, management skills, I wished we had them earlier, so we would identify more possible futures earlier, and didn’t struggle with those situations and cost more. (Participant 2)

Wish List Items for the Goal setting and planning competency

Twelve (66.67%) of the participants stated they wished they’d had more support when they completed their goal setting and planning. Specifically, they mentioned hiring a good operations officer, local management team, legal team and chief financial officer, learning from other seniors, advisors, and entrepreneurs, making mitigation plans, and having the same gender coach.

One participant shared:

Yeah, I wish I had hired like a CFO or finance person and also an HR person earlier at the beginning. That’s something that I kind of didn’t think was really important. But then later on I realized that, you know, financial planning is actually super-important and also having a HR person who can kind of help with not only hiring, but help with creating the company culture is also very important. At the beginning [I]was kind of like why bother, you know, [with] finance or HR person. But I think a lot of people. Now, I mean I don’t you know those two things are quite
important...That will help financial modeling, projections and burn rate, is very important in setting goals and making short-term or long-term plans. Also understanding and being able to communicate to your investors and to your employees. (Participant 20)

Another participant talked about a mitigation plan:

Our goals were pretty ideal, but we didn't correctly identify them under what conditions those goals would not be met, external factors and didn’t put them down well enough. I think it’s important to have the premises laid out a lot clearer. I wish I had a mitigation plan so I would not make my plan too ideal, and think more about factors outside to set up goals and make better plans accordingly. (Participant 8)

Wish List Items for the Implementing competency

Thirteen (72.2%) of the participants expressed wish list items they thought could help them to take action toward completing their goals. They discussed their wish to have better skills and ways to recruit talent, technology, team building and employee engagement, extra and sufficient funding and learning from other successful CEOs about how they run their companies.

One participant discussed technology:

Good prototyping tools, I wish. I think that prototyping was a little difficult earlier on, but nowadays there are a lot of no-code solutions. And good prototyping tools like sigma frame, where you can quickly prototype the user interface tools right. And then you look at the notion and air table. Those are great no code solutions for building your data. So if you have an idea or product feature you can quickly prototype and see how it works and everything. So it used to take a longer time earlier. I wish they could improve further and earlier so I can make products, much faster and [have a] faster feedback cycle. Helping our implementing plans process faster and [be] more efficient. If that feedback is say a few hours, you can create more things faster, but if the same feedback is a few days or a few weeks, your ideas start dying because they don’t compatible. There’s too much time to kind of see a prototype and good feedback from that. (Participant 12)

Another participant shared about employee engagement:

So along the way, you know, be having more ceremonies. I think it was hindsight; we could have done more in my opinion. But those kinds of things that would have, I would say, I wish I could have done even more that could be anything. It could be going out for drinks, going out for lunch or giving people a small gift to build more engagement and bonding with employees. Hey, first customer trial we won the first customer trial we raised the money. Oh, we got this support right. All those going to have the execution because people wanted to see it along the way...how to implement those clearly, I mean, you have a goal and then say, ‘hey guys working hard towards that.’ It just happens. Once you achieve that you shouldn’t have more sorrow, with no celebration so that when you do the next time there’s no motivation. That’s what I meant to say okay, this is a lesson for me to learn, personally. I think potentially it’s more an issue for people from mainland
China. Because people are more kind of less kind of celebrating the kind of style that’s what I observed...I wish I had it, should have a lot more. (Participant 13)

Wish List Items for the Adapting competency

Eleven (61.1%) of the participants felt they could have had more tactics, strategies, tools and supports to help them when they needed to modify their action plans in order to reach their goals. Specifically, five of them mentioned leading change by knowing needed knowledge, possibility of change from investors and networking, managing team support, being more conservative and using tools to get enough data to build confidence to make changes. Four participants listed communication and management skills including using personality tests, learning talking in employee’s languages, and maintaining communication with employees. Three participants talked about hiring and recruiting enough talent, and two people thought having sufficient funding would benefit their adapting ability when they needed to adjust their original plans.

A participant discussed knowledge of learning change:

Opportunity with Black and Decker to design a wall brand of laser tools for them, they just gave us the product specs and [the] function was designed according to that, and we did not take the risk of raising and not plan another sound of money to do more than suck up 80% of our resources to do that. So we did not expand our own product line. And if we raise more money and get diluted, a little bit. We could have maybe gone through the whole 12 months with Solomon Smith Barney later. If it goes public in 2000, they will move it to other opportunity movements by the end of 1999...I wish we were confident to expand our product lines. Then the acceleration is shorter with higher return. Of course, it's always high risk, and I didn’t have knowledge and wasn’t confident enough to lead the change. (Participant 5)

Another participant spoke of skills to organize plans and manage teams:

It was the organization [and] managing skills. Right, because I’m not Alex and a big picture person. I’m not the most detailed organized person. No, I wish I had that kind of skill to work with my team better, and be able to manage them and plan out the steps better, everybody has to move when they have when I’m changing. You know, so I definitely think about management and organization skills. That’s why our people want more organized management. (Participant 16)

Wish List Items for the Environment competency (RQ 4)
Seventeen (94.4%) of the participants expressed their desire from the outside environment to help them become successful entrepreneurs. Specifically, four participants spoke of knowing how to hire needed talent, and another four wished to learn from experienced entrepreneurs, VCs, and advisors. Three people mentioned start-up toolkits, courses and accelerators, and attending more social networking. Two entrepreneurs wished to have coaches, two others wished to have a co-founder, and another two people wished to have famous influencers in their companies. One participant wished he had experience in another start-up company and another said that friendly visa regulations would be very helpful to him to become a successful entrepreneur.

A participant expressed two wishes, start-up education or toolkits and virtual conference technology tools that she thought would be very helpful to become a successful entrepreneur:

I wish there were some organizations that really provide start-up education, I mean, when you become a small business, you need to learn from technology to accounting, bookkeeping, everything right? There was one, I went there and tried to figure out, I met with the people there and tried to figure out. I even asked to meet with a mentor; I would like to have a mentor to mentor me. But I didn’t get too far with them. I felt like I was very frustrated. The fact that we didn’t have enough school education to teach people how to become an entrepreneur. Another is technology, it was disappointing because being a mom, and you weren’t able to just leave the house. Let me go to classes is kind of like, I wish this virtual thing was available back then, that would have been very helpful for networking, too, so I could have more opportunities to do networking even though I had kids at home. (Participant 9)

One other participant believed having co-founder in the beginning of his start-up business would be helpful:

So if I want, if I think back, I wish I could have co-founders, they have at least you have a co-founder, that’s better. Because you can have somebody who shares with you...two eyes is better than the one eye...So somebody can put this on the back, watching for you, but unfortunately I was just a sole founder. So I think with some partners that will help with the situation…And then I got help from the senior people and then I started, and they got the business by talking to the CEO, so I got older resources myself right then. I started to recruit people to join me, my friends. But those are not my co-founders. They don’t have authority or something. Even though the initial team. I recruit and I give them. I do give them a lot of stock. But I couldn’t give them a co-founder, like share equally with me right, because I am still running the company right. I give them the stock option, more than very generous, more than any start-up company could give it to them in terms of percentage. They are my friends, and then they felt how come they are so different from me. So one thing I think could be helpful if I have a partner or co-founder, which will definitely help me. That’s why a lot of successful companies are not just by one person right. (Participant 1)

Another participant shared his wish of visa regulations for professional immigrants:
I still wish visa rules were a little easier; they’re still not easy. But I hope in the coming few years they get easier and people like us can create new things in a more easier way, and not [have to] go around legal barriers to start a company and stuff. Something I think a lot of immigrants would start companies if it was easier to start a company being [an] immigrant right. I think right now this is because of visa restrictions. A lot of us are not able to create as much value as we would like to. I hope that changes in the coming few years. Yeah, because I think you get a lot of smart folks from other countries coming into the USA right. If you give them an opportunity. Basically pretty smart, some of the smartest guys in the country, you know, they can obviously do better things here. (Participant 12)

Summary

This chapter explained successful immigrant entrepreneurs’ experiences of starting up new ventures in Silicon Valley from the perspective of Hope-Action Theory. All information gathered from the 18 participant interviews offered a better understanding of how individual participants exercised seven competencies during their entrepreneurial career and what tactics, strategies, tools, and supports they utilized to help them. Their reflections on how they faced related challenging moments and what helped them to practice those competencies are elements to explore the factors that have impacts on successful immigrant entrepreneurs with higher hopes in a new hosting country. Their individual observations on relevant entrepreneurial moments and what they wish to have during those moments provided some potential information to prospective immigrant entrepreneurs. These experiences of being a hopeful and successful immigrant entrepreneur in Silicon Valley are both informative and inspiring, and provide a beneficial outlook about what to do, where to find help, how to approach and who to ask when considering starting up a career as an entrepreneur in a new hosting country.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Hope is one element that drives immigrants to relocate to new countries as well as when a person pursues a new career such as entrepreneurs. This research used the perspective of Hope Action Theory (HAT) and the method of Enhanced Critical Incidents Technique (ECIT) to seek an extended study about entrepreneurs specifically focused on immigrant groups in Silicon Valley. In doing so, results elaborate on what HAT-based helping factors were adapted in the participants’ start-up career, what HAT-based wish list items they applied, what supporting environmental helping factors they received and what supports they wish to have to build their new ventures successfully and keep feeling hopeful.

Discussion

This qualitative study of participating immigrant entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley indicated several significant findings from participants who shared practical experiences of helping factors in demonstrating hope and action competencies in their early start-up stage. In addition, wish list items that participants believed would be beneficial to exercise those competencies better were included. Those helping factors include tactics, strategies, tools, and supports adopted by participants when individuals demonstrated seven HAT-based competencies: hope, self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal-setting, planning, implementing and adapting, and also consistent interactions with the business and personal environment.

First, all participants shared some common descriptions of indicating existing helping factors that helped themselves or their companies be hopeful when they were trying to establish new ventures and maintain a business successfully in Silicon Valley. Those helping factors were apparent from the transcripts of the interviews when they used the same competency, but they might face different critical
incidents and challenges. Helping factors supported them to perform HAT competencies and keep their high hopes when starting up their own business in Silicon Valley. The analysis of participant responses also indicated some significant findings related to wish list items that individuals did not have access to during starting a new venture.

Second, the result of participant response rate of helping factors was higher than the wish list items. The number of categories of helping factors was lower than the wish list items however the viable helping categories, which had over 25% participation rate, was higher than the wish list items categories. This finding shows there were more common tactics, strategies, tools, and supports utilized by participants. On the other hand, interview data revealed that participants had less similarity of wish list items.

Third, the analysis of helping factors discovered 17 participants who utilized all HAT-based competencies in their early start-up stage while they dealt with some crucial obstacles and only one participant didn’t have a response to goal setting and planning competency. This high response rate result of performing HAT competencies that kept a hopeful feeling was in agreement with the response of two 10-scale survey questions about individuals’ feeling of hope when starting up their new ventures. This was scored nine in average and also aligned with their feeling of hope about their companies’ futures which was on average a score of eight. Research data of the higher hope score of participants was congruent with the literature pertaining to the positive relationship of hope and entrepreneurial business. Jensen and Luthans (2002) and Morrow (2006) studied the relationship between hope and entrepreneurship. They found a significant positive impact of hope in the entrepreneurship process and successful entrepreneurs demonstrated higher scores of hope than others.

Fourth, the interaction between the participants and their environment affected individuals’ feelings of hope. Three participants showed lower scores of five and six of feeling hopeful about the future of their companies, which were directly influenced by surrounding environmental limitations and changes. One participant shared her feeling of lower hope compared to the beginning of the start-up stage, because she didn’t like the new organizational structure and working environment. She just separated
from the company after it got acquired so she only rated five for the future of the company although her original answer was eight. The second participant shared his concern about the new visa regulation which made him insecure about the future of his entrepreneurial business and he rated it as a six compared to his higher hope feeling, which was rated nine. The third participant mentioned that because of the current pandemic situation, he had to shift all business to online so he had less margin therefore he rated the company future five out of ten scale although his business was already in its ninth year. Those unsupportive environmental conditions affected individuals who felt less hopeful about their business future, which was in agreement with previous studies that stated the environment plays an important position with individual career success and better performance (Walsh, 1974; Holland, 1985). Other studies spoke about the influential level of the environment when engaging in entrepreneurial activities and the decision process (Bamford et al., 2000; Dahl & Sorenson, 2012; Dorado & Ventresca, 2013). Kloosterman and Rath also mentioned the regulatory constraints had shown a high impact in facilitating and opening the opportunity and willingness of immigrant entrepreneurship (Kloosterman, 2013; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001).

There are elements that make this research unique and demonstrate its contribution to understanding the success of immigrant entrepreneurs from the perspective of HAT. Those tactics immigrants entrepreneurs used when they demonstrated HAT competencies helped them to successfully handle critical challenges in the early business stages as well as helped them to remain hopeful in their start-up ventures. Second, entrepreneurs are considered a difficult access population for qualitative study because they have an extremely packed and busy schedule to conduct an at least hour-long qualitative interview. Therefore, this qualitative research data is valuable to the field. Third, although participants were recruited from various industries and country backgrounds, this research analysis still found commonality of tactics, strategies, tools, and supports that helped participants to start new entities as well as displayed those helping factors that occurred across different competencies. However, the results show individual desires of wish list items were very not alike which may be affected by various elements, industry, nationality, gender and etc. Fourth, those collected data show continuous interaction with
people’s surroundings to receive support, advice, feedbacks and resources which was very important because it crossed all practices of the seven HAT competencies.

**Helping Factors**

There were 28 helping categories that met the 25% participation rate to be considered viable factors in this research. Those categories were created under the seven competencies of HAT were as follows: (1) Hope competency: clear directions, initiate team composition, relevant work experience and knowledge, pre-evaluation of business potential and workability, and a startup-friendly environment; (2) Self-reflection competency: listing down thoughts, talking to friends, mentors, coaches, experts, and other entrepreneurs to help them organize thoughts, reaching to investors and customers to get feedback, and understand market needs; (3) Self-clarity competency: communication with the founding team, investigation of market needs, and knowledge of account, finance, business, and start-up; (4) Visioning competency: seeking feedback from customers, investors, and partners, and awareness of market trends and needs; (5) Goal-setting and planning competency: financial tools and forecasting, goal-setting process and tools, goal-oriented decision making and communication, and engaging partners and vendors into goal-setting; (6) Implementing: team composition and teamwork, and project management tools; (7) Adapting: finding alternate strategies based on environmental changes, lead the team to have a mindset of adaptability to new situation changes, resource management alignment, and adherence to the original goal, vision, and mission. Seventeen participants adapted those tactics to support them in performing seven hope competencies and constantly interacted with the environment which helped them establish their start-up ventures and successfully deal with tough times. Some scholars stated in their research on multiple groups about the positive impact of exercising HAT competencies to build up and sustain individuals higher hope feeling to enhance their careers and handling challenging times (Clarke et al., 2018; Niles et al., 2011; Niles & Yoon, 2010; Yoon et al., 2015; Yoon et al. 2019). The benefit of using
those competencies and the ability to keep feeling hopeful was illustrated in comments made by participants:

I think to keep feeling positive, hope is very important to do start-ups. There are so many ongoing changes and challenges, many are unexpected. Learning from experienced people, getting some advice, and searching resources is helpful. You know we tend to only concentrate on what we are doing especially when doing innovation, engineering design stuff. I found talking to someone who is experienced and had a similar background as me helped me to keep feeling hope about my start-up ideas and creations. I know what I am doing is making sense. (Participant 8)

We all need that. Not only blind hope, maybe in the very beginning. I did feel very hopeful, I think everyone, and entrepreneurs feel very hopeful to invent their start-ups. But there are many things to need to do to make the business work. Knowing what resources I have, knowing the market, where customers, products, finance, plans, and resources. I consistently reflect, change, and change plans...Start-ups are a quick and rapidly changing environment. I need to know what customers need, what products work, can it be executed and a lot of stuff so I know what I am doing and feel hopeful to continue my company. I am positive about future of business. (Participant 5)

**Environment supporting factors**

The four environmental supporting factors appeared in the research were a startup-friendly environment; support from family, personal relationships, coaches, mentors and religious groups; business-related personal and family background; and technology. All participants asserted support they perceived from surroundings and outside environment were crucial to them in starting and maintaining their ventures successfully in Silicon Valley. Early studies stated person-environment relations play an important role in the individual experience of success, personal development, career success, and better performance (Holland, 1985), and a supportive and positive environment enhanced persons’ active coping response of facing stressful events (Friedman, et al., 1992). This echoed the result of the study that 66.6% of the participants responded that a startup-friendly environment supported their success. Support from personal circles including family, personal social groups, professional groups, coaches and schools were also strongly mentioned and contributed to participants’ success in the process of building up their new businesses. For immigrant self-employment, the family not only helped as social capital but they created more value of human capital (Sander & Nee, 2006). Many other research studies also explored receiving
either financial or social support from family and social circles had a significant positive effect on the success of entrepreneurial activities reported by seven individuals with nine shared critical incidents (Edelman & Manolova, 2016; Ferina et al., 2018;). In addition, successful entrepreneurs have more support from family and external personal networks to help them leverage resources which contributed to entrepreneurial success in the early emergent stages (Newberta et al., 2013). Those researchers’ findings support factors identified in the study. Additionally, some participants shared business-related family and personal backgrounds, and technology also helped them sustain positive attitudes when they faced some obstacles and later became successful immigrant entrepreneurs. These helping factors shed additional light on other environmental supports that can be benefited to early start-up immigrant entrepreneurs to handle challenges without giving up on their dream of creating a business.

**Wish List Items**

The six wish list items categories which met the 25% participation rate to be considered a viable category included: (self-reflection) ways to get direct input and feedback from experts and entrepreneurs; (self-clarity) getting suggestions and advice from experienced entrepreneurs, mentors, and advisors; (visioning) attending networking events and conferences; (implementing) more technology supports (adapting) communication and management skills, and leading change. Results show that participants desired to increase their social capital included being more active in social networks, discovering more channels to receive suggestions and feedback from experienced people to help them in the process of self-reflection, clarify objective and life roles as well as brainstorming and identify future possibilities which led to keeping their hope feeling toward success in their business. When asked about those items they desired to receive to help them or their companies to envision the future possibility of themselves or companies in the past, five participants talked about attending networking events and conferences. One response was:
For the future possibilities and kind of envisioning the futures. I wish I would have gone to more professional social events, conferences, and paid more attention to the kind of technological advancements and new technologies that are coming out and things that are changing. People talk about potential stuff, future ideas there, but I didn’t pay much attention. (Participant 6)

Some literature said immigrant entrepreneurs faced more obstacles when they first started their new high-tech venture in recognizing opportunities than most non-immigrant entrepreneurs (Hart & Acs, 2011). For instance, limited language proficiency may hinder their ability to recognize opportunities or face discrimination to access some local key social institutions and to network with regional venture capital to receive financial supports (Borjas, 1999). However the importance of interacting with local social and professional networks to immigrant engineers to increase their opportunity and vigor to start their technology business in Silicon Valley was also addressed by Saxenian (2002). Regional social networks and professional associations exchanged information, knowledge, skills and capital from experienced entrepreneurs, peers, mentors, and investors to immigrant entrepreneurs to enter entrepreneurial business and guide them to success in Silicon Valley. Studies also found connecting with local social communities built social trust, led to positive feedback loops and increased social capital, all of which were important to successful entrepreneurship (Putnam, 2001; Kwon et al., 2013). Therefore, those wish list items identified by participating immigrant entrepreneurs echoed scholars’ discoveries about immigrant entrepreneurs’ challenges to access and embed actual and potential resources through the networks although participants and other scholars all advocate the importance of social capital and feedback loops during the start-up process.

This research study’s findings revealed that immigrant entrepreneurs with higher positive attitudes in starting and maintaining their hope feeling in building their new ventures successfully in Silicon Valley is a complex concept involving the individuals, social networks, technology and the environment. Specifically, entrepreneurs employed tactics, strategies, tools, and supports that participants adapted to demonstrate the seven HAT competencies. When they faced critical incidents, they seek out and received help from the outside environment to help them in becoming successful entrepreneurs.
Another wish list items were what they intended to have but they had limited or no access during starting their new business in Silicon Valley.

The helping factors pertaining to the individuals’ human capital which included knowledge, experience, skills and habits, those attributes could be used as precursors to individuals starting their own business as well as odds to cultivate a higher level of HAT competencies and further help them in operating business successfully in the host countries. Social network help would be utilized in improving understanding of circumstances, brainstorming possibilities and identifying desired futures, exploring resources and emotional supports. Both human capital and social capital assisted in starting ventures in a positive manner, clarifying objectives and roles, and monitoring and evaluating the implementation of plans. Technology improved the process of setting long-term and short-term goals and making plans, as well as implementation of project management and product development. The helping factor of the startup-friendly environment would help immigrant entrepreneurs in wanting to put their ideas into practice, feeling hope to start new ventures, and maintaining a high level of hope to succeed.

The wish list items related to individuals can be used to enhance communication skills, leadership, knowledge of start-ups, confidence of adapting changes, skills of hiring and managing suitable talents, and the ability of organizing and implementing plans. The social networking wish list items would help in fostering a feeling of hope, investigating and recognizing opportunities, preparing sufficient funding and wanted outcomes, and increasing entrepreneurial success. The technology related wish list items could be utilized to manage organizational functions, searching for potential employees, creating prototypes, improving communication and enlarging connections with other entrepreneurs virtually. The wish list items of the environment may open more opportunities to immigrant entrepreneurs to access more resources not limited to their original ones.

Finally, the discovery of those helping factors and wish list items from those successful experiences helped understanding what tactics, strategies, tools and supports utilized by those successful immigrant entrepreneurs with higher hope attitude used to achieve success. Saxenian (2002) mentioned there were few resources for immigrant entrepreneurs to conquer language boundaries, find cross-cultural
partners and manage business relationships. The findings of this study identified some human capital (i.e., language), social capital (i.e., access to regional supporting opportunities), technology (i.e., prototypes) and environment (i.e., startup friendly) factors to assist with enhanced HAT competency which would help individuals to establish and retain their hope to face and overcome obstacles and toward the preferred result of successful immigrant entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley.

**Synthesis**

The researcher followed the conceptual framework of this study to investigate helping factors that impacted on individual demonstrated HAT competencies and how they kept hopeful thoughts during the early critical start-up stage to help them overcome challenging moments on the road to success in their business. In the literature review in Chapter 2, immigrants relocated to new countries and initiated their ventures with hope of different desired futures (Youssef & Luthans, 2003), however immigrant entrepreneurs encountered more challenges than non-immigrant counterparts during the startup process (Borjas, 1999; Enow, 2010; Hart & Acs, 2011; Holguin et al., 2007), even in the high demand entrepreneurial area, Silicon Valley (Saxenian, 2002). Although all entrepreneurs had obstacles, some individuals still keep hopeful thoughts and feelings to start their new ventures and to improve their companies’ future. In some literature mentioned, hope involves interaction between different ways of thinking about the future with associated behaviors and knowing that difficulties can be overcome (Lynch, 1965; Reading, 2004) and high-hope individuals generated positive emotions and actions to achieve their challenging goals even under certain degrees of stress (Snyder et al., 1999). Successful entrepreneurs showed their hopefulness helped them focus on determining reasons for critical incidents they faced and undertook risky activities (Segal et al., 2005). Moreover, the positive impact of hope contributed to entrepreneurial success was revealed in other research (Jensen & Luthans, 2002; Morrow, 2006) and a later study of Hope-Action Theory (Niles et al., 2019) reinforced individuals’ hope competency for creating sustainable hope in leading a successful career. Those competencies could assist individuals to
develop and maintain the core of higher hope even though they faced unpredictable challenges, thus helping factors that immigrant entrepreneurs utilized to support them on each HAT competency affected their successful entrepreneurial experience.

**Crosslisted Helping Factors**

All participants in this study expressed their high hopes when they started new ventures and most of them kept their hopeful feeling for the future of their companies. They shared experiences when they used the seven competencies: self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting and planning, implementing, adapting and their initial hope to face critical moments, what helping factors supported them in the process and to stay positive toward their success. Although their industries and personal backgrounds were varied, some tactics, strategies, tools and support they used to help in each competency and to grow their ventures were in common. In the research results, cross-competency helping factors were also found, as shown as Table 5.1. Those crosslisted helping factors that participants utilized crossed different competencies to help understand what were most frequently used personal strategies, tactics and tools, and what were most sought after were supports from outside the environment. There were eight synthesized helping factors crosslisted more than once: feedback from outside of company; team composition; awareness of market needs; communication within company; startup friendly environment; listing down thoughts; business related knowledge; and technology. Seven of them were listed across two or three competencies, and one, the most used one was disclosed among all seven HAT competencies was to receive feedback from people outside of the company including experienced friends, mentors, coaches, experts, investors, customers, other entrepreneurs and manufacturing partners.

Table 5.1. **Crosslisted Helping Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CL-HF</th>
<th>Competencies</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Feedbacks from Outside of</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Crosslisted Wish list Items

Unlike analysis results of helping categories from this research which had more commonality, wish list items data showed more variability even though within one competency category. Besides those eight viable categories, there were other 45 wish list items that the research subjects wanted to help them use hope competencies and develop entrepreneurial success. However, those data were mentioned by less than 25% of participants, which is under four interviewees in one competency, so they were not viable categories according to ECIT interview principles. Butterfield et al. (2009) suggested ECIT interview transcripts analysis should be done by focusing on the stated research purpose and ensuring that 25% of the participants identify crosslisted wish list items in each category to ensure significance in results.

Analysis results varied across all seven competencies and environment factors. Some wish list items categories which were found crosslisted which included: *learning from outside experienced people including entrepreneurs, advisors, friends, and investors* was stated strongly by 10 (55.5%) of the participants across hope competency, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting and planning, implementing, and environment; *Sufficient funding* was discussed by five (27.7%) of the individuals among four competencies which were self-clarity, visioning, implementing, and adapting; *Human Resources function of hiring and talent management* was mentioned by eight (44.4%) of all interviewees over four
competencies included goal-setting and planning, visioning, implementing and adapting, and also environment support; Communication skills were indicated by seven (38.8%) of all participants in three different competencies which was self-reflection, self-clarity and adapting; Star-tup knowledge, such as toolkits, crash courses, and prior experience, was recognized by five (27.7%) of the individuals who crosslisted three categories including hope, visioning, and environment; Social networking was stated strongly by eight (44.4%) of participants in their wish list items of hope competency, visioning competency and environment; Technology was recognized by six (33.3%) individuals as their desired support in both implementing competency and environment category; Leadership skills were also mentioned as a desirable strategy by seven (38.8%) of interviewees among three competencies which was hope, implementing and adapting.

Although those crosslisted wish list items can’t qualify to represent each competency of HAT and environmental factors, it still shows participants have the same desire when performing different competencies and wish to receive the same support from their surroundings to maintain their hopeful feeling and their new ventures successfully, as shown in Table 5.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wish List Items</th>
<th>Competency</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning from outside experienced people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Human Resource Practice (hiring and talent management)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and Listening</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient Funding</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-up Knowledge</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first synthetic wish list item which was found across five competencies and from the environment was to learn from outside experienced people, including hope, self-clarity, visioning, goal-setting and planning, and implementing competencies. Researchers mentioned in a study related to Chinese and Indian entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley that mentoring and providing resources from older generation immigrant entrepreneurs played an important role in support and guiding nascent start-up owners through the risky process of building a new technology business in Silicon Valley (Saxenian, 2002) and providing trust, shared information, contacts and increased building professional relations with host communities (Kotkin, 1992; Portes, 1996). The second cross-listed wish list item is better human resources practice. Participants mentioned it in visioning, goal-setting, implementing, adapting and environment. They specifically emphasized ways of hiring needed talent and managing talent in various situations during the early start-up stage. Castanias and Helfat (1991) and Williamson (2000) stated that human capital was a crucial element for early entrepreneurial processes toward their future success and recruiting and managing talent will prevent companies from creating competition from resigned employees (Sauermann 2017). The third wish list item was social networking which was indicated by eight participants among the three competencies. In this study, social networking was focused on cultivating connections by attending networking events, conferences, and developing information and feedback loops. A participant shared their wish of participating in more social networking to help them find the newest innovative ideas, mobilize local information and identify future possible opportunities. Saxenian (2002) discussed immigrant engineers going by social and professional networks locally to help them learn more needed information, skills, and knowledge from other professions to discover their opportunities and capabilities in becoming entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. The fourth wish is communication and listening skills. Seven of 18 participants wished they had better communication skills and/or listening more to help them doing self-reflection, self-clarity and the adapting process in their
earlier entrepreneurial stages. Some participants shared because of their background as engineers, they tended to be focused more on their own innovation but not on communication or listening to others (Participants 2, 5, 13 and 20), therefore when they started their companies, communicating with and listening to the co-founder, team and employees were not easy skills for them. Many research studies discussed the importance of effective communication in dealing with others, developing business relationships, building trust and negotiating opportunities which is a key component in entrepreneurs’ success (Baron and Markman, 2000; Odewale et al., 2019). Some participants wished to have more effective communication and better listening skills with their partners and employees so they would align desired objectives clearly and have better discussions with the co-founder to make decisions and receive more real feedback and needed support during the starting up stage of their businesses. Bradley, Baur, Banford and Postlewhite (2013) stated that communication was the foundation of collaborative processes that were built by a team and the quality of communication was crucial in all stages of establishing teamwork-related tasks (Fransen et al., 2011). Communication may also bring out conflicts, and four participants mentioned they still wished to have better skills to manage communication and listening habits to reduce negativity that prevented employees from sharing ideas and inspiration especially when facing some challenging situations and had to make adjustments to their original plan because they were seeking support from the team and co-founders to work together to adapt quickly. Edmondson, Dillion, and Roloff (2007) found a team with better communication developed higher trust and willingness to report troubles than covering them up, which created positive conflict and led to discovery of errors, development of a healthy teamwork process, provided proper solutions and successful results (Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2008). Later research by Makhul and Hsaun (2011) affirmed that communication skills strongly contributed to entrepreneurial success. The fifth wish list item was leadership. In this research result, participants wished to have better leadership skills to help them in situations such as engaging employees better, leading teams to deal with challenging moments and handling complex people issues. This desired wish appeared in three HAT categories including hope, adapting and implementing, and was mentioned by seven participants. Leadership challenges and their important effect on team performance and team
formation has been disclosed in some studies (Fransen et al., 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2008; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002).

**Implications**

Based on the findings and understanding the helping factors and wish list items from this qualitative exploratory research, the following implications are recommended to immigrant entrepreneurs, workforce education development practitioners, policy makers as well as researchers in immigrant entrepreneurial or Hope Action Theory fields.

**Immigrant entrepreneurs**

Immigrant entrepreneurs’ contributions to the U.S. economy had shown significant impact and also on creating employment. The need of discovering general and common understanding of immigrant entrepreneurs was addressed by Sundarajan and Sundarajan (2015) who discussed there was still limited synthesized understanding of what truly drives immigrant entrepreneurs. Dheer (2018) mentioned in his paper of reviewing existing literature of immigrant entrepreneurs found there was little focus on some important concepts of immigrant entrepreneurship such as resources organized to start and sustain a venture was pointed out. This qualitative study analysis concluded that eight synthesized helping factors disclosed the most used tactics, strategies, tools and supports by interviewed immigrant entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. Those helping factors supported them in handling difficulties and overcoming challenges well during the early start-up stages which can also be adapted by nascent immigrant entrepreneurs or those who have been facing difficulties in starting their new ventures. In addition, in this research participants identified and categorized other helping factors that specifically helped them in performing seven competencies of the Hope Action Theory which helped individuals to maintain a higher hope feeling during challenging early business initiation processes. According to many researchers, hope has a
significant positive relationship with the entrepreneurship process, moreover, entrepreneurs who have higher hope and positive feelings tend to have a more successful path in their start-up ventures (Jensen & Luthans, 2002; Morrow, 2006) but there is little research about positive attributions toward the success of startups (Morrow, 2006). Therefore, those HAT competency categorized factors provide a pioneering guide to immigrant entrepreneurs who have experienced or suffered with lower hope for their new initiatives to regain their positive thoughts and help themselves to discover better practices, resources, opportunities, implementations or needs for change to support their business toward better development and growth. Another area that could benefit from a better understanding of what desired factors that participating individuals disclosed is to consider more awareness and self-development plans for business founders, co-founders and founding teams. This research also discovered wish list items that participants indicated they wished they could have to support them in practice for each competency and to interact with the surrounding environment. These findings provide valuable information on what was often ignored but crucial factors that might drive the immigrant's own business toward better success and in early critical years.

Workforce Education Development Practitioners

The results of wish list items from this study led to some areas and needs for workforce education and development. Practitioners in this area of immigrant, immigrant entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship education program may consider developing professional and mentor programs to utilize those results to help immigrant individuals, employees, and professionals who plan to start their entrepreneurial careers to equip themselves better and maintain their positive thoughts in new countries. Those programs may include developing leadership in the new culture, multicultural communication and listening skills, social networking in new communities, cross-cultural hiring and talent management, and fundraising in foreign countries, but suggested topics are not limited to these. There are also opportunities to design professional development programs by using these research findings to assist individuals to restore hope by practicing
those competencies, especially for those who are in the earlier stage of start-up but need guidance or neglect resources surrounding them to look outside of their former strategies, tactics, and tools, then reach out appropriately for new supports to help build their entrepreneurial business successfully.

**Policy Makers**

Immigrants’ impact on economic and entrepreneurship have attracted the attention of scholars (Dheer, 2018), and many researchers noted that immigrant founders play an important contributors to hosting countries’ economic development and decreased unemployment (Kerr 2013; Wadhwa et al., 2007). Nevertheless, scholars discovered immigrant entrepreneurs have more challenges to access local resources and networks than native-entrepreneurs (Enow, 2010; Holguin et al., 2007). In addition, more research also stressed the immigrants’ unfavorable circumstances and their ethnicity may cause barriers to access local resources to start and develop their own new ventures in host nations (Baron et al., 2018; Bates & Robb, 2013; Carter et al., 2015).

In California, the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development provides many resources and programs to help local small businesses innovate and to access capital, markets, networks and other resources through The California Office of the Small Business Advocate, however none of them are focused specifically on the immigrant entrepreneurial community, so support from the state government in this area is lacking. Hence, the generalizability in this research analysis may provide beneficial insights to policy makers to consider the need of establishing entrepreneurial business support programs specifically for immigrant communities.

**Hope-Action Theory**

Although HAT (Niles, Amundson, & Neault, 2011) was developed by integrating three theories, Snyder’s (2002) hope theory, Bandura’s human agency theory (2001), and Hall’s (1996) career meta
competencies, and it also has revealed its importance in applied some groups such as educators, students, military retirees, health professions, refugees and unemployment individuals. However, application of HAT is still limited as well as understands of how HAT can be exercised to establish and remain individuals’ hope feelings while even facing difficult challenges. This research discovers the composition of team and communication within team play crucial roles in a startup earlier stage specifically in hope competency, self-clarity and implementation, in addition, friendly start-up environment and receiving feedback from outside of company also appeared positive effect to immigrant entrepreneurs across six competencies except implementation. The most recently HAT research for organization development (OD) by Yoon (2002) stated the potential of utilizing HAT in OD practice may benefit from personal level hopefulness to collaborative level and furthermore toward escalate public hope organically. Therefore, HAT may consider the results of this research and also able to be applied not only in personal micro level but potential practice can be also utilize to the meso-level (team) and furthermore to the macro-level in different organization setting.

**Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

This qualitative research study had some limitations. The population in the study was limited to immigrant entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. Although the recruiting letter was sent out to various entrepreneur groups and individuals, volunteering respondents were mostly Asian. Only 11% of the research participants relocated to the United States from non-Asian countries. Therefore the result of this research to recapitulate all immigrant populations in their entrepreneurial practices in Silicon Valley is limited. The future replication of this study in other immigrant communities is needed.

Although 31 entrepreneurs expressed their interest in volunteering in this study and 27 entrepreneurs met the research criteria of migration and higher hope, the participants’ rapid and busy daily schedule and the pandemic environment had made their working schedule more packed and harder to commit to participation in the study. While scheduling the hour-long interviews, the researcher found it
was difficult because of the business founders’ hectic schedules. Therefore, the researcher was able to interview 21 participants but three participants’ experience were not longer than three years as entrepreneurs, and so ended up with 18 completed interviews for the dataset. Most of the interviews completed were between 60-75 minutes, four were completed in two separate interviews due to the participant’s limited time and only two were over two hours with more rich inputs from participants. The limitation of participating time in the interviews may have had an impact on the results.

The researcher used Enhanced Critical Incident Technique method to collect interview data from immigrant entrepreneurs in the Silicon Valley; however the researcher had no previous experience in conducting qualitative study using ECIT. Due to lack of experience in the process of collecting data, there may be omissions in the interviews and analysis of important data. The researcher used the qualitative software application Nvivo to analyze collected transcriptions, but because of unfamiliarity with this software, some information may be discounted during analysis.

Another limitation to consider is the sampling group of this research. Participants were recruited in a broad scope of immigrant entrepreneurs but not specifically focused on certain industries. Although participants’ backgrounds were diverse with eight different sectors represented, experience of certain industries may cause them to respond in ways that they faced in their specific business environment. Therefore, future research may consider to either focusing on one industry or on comparison of two industries in order to investigate and discover deeper information.

Another limitation of the study may be the research framework that researcher selected. Hope Action Theory as a structured approach which might limit participants’ response to helping factors and wish list items from thinking about wide-open scenarios and providing creative ideas. In future research, it would be desirable to replicate the same study without using HAT, and compare similarities and differences from this research. In addition, due to the nature of the structure of HAT, this research only aimed to discover helping factors and wish list items and eliminate hindering factors. Hence, in future research, it will be valuable to entrepreneurs and researchers to identify hindering factors as well so that they can avoid those negative influences.
One future research recommended would be to collect richer stories of successful entrepreneurs by using a narrative approach. According to Caine (2013), in a narrative inquiry, stories are not just a medium of learning, development, or transformation, but also a life. In narrative research, participants will be encouraged to discuss their lives and experiences in detail with an aim to reach a deeper understanding. Another future study could develop behavioral anchors based on the critical incidents shared for each of the factors. This can allow immigrant entrepreneurs to understand to what extent they are exercising the enabling strategies and tactics and their environments are supportive. Furthermore, discovering the behavior anchors behind each factor may help researchers and practitioners to develop a mechanism contributing to hope-action competence and to assess the impact of them.

Conclusion

The statement of problem in Chapter 1 noted the lack of research on positive psychology and attributes related to the success of entrepreneurs and the important role that immigrants play among entrepreneurs in the USA. Along with the conceptual framework, this study’s findings will bring more awareness and supportive practice of building and maintaining hope personally and extend its impact to handle critical start-up situations. Also understanding how HAT competency helps individuals to keep their high hopes and further affect their business success in host countries could create more sustained immigrant-owned businesses and help to grow the local and national economy which would then reduce unemployment. During interviews, some participants shared their positive feedback of reviewing their start-up experience via different angles of HAT and it reminded them of some strategies they had used and suggested some tools they hadn’t explored but would be beneficial to them and their companies. In addition to essential helping factors, the framework looked at environmental supports which also kept individuals’ immigrant entrepreneurs’ hopeful core intact and impacted their business success. The findings related to environmental supports contained social networks and technology. Start-up friendly environments help provide access to more social networks as well as technology such as the internet,
virtual conference platforms and social media to provide more opportunities to connect with family, friends, other entrepreneurs and business related professionals.

A positive attitude and a feeling of hope was related to immigrant or entrepreneurs’ success may have been done in other research but investigating the HAT competency and helping factors associated with them showed that successful immigrant entrepreneurs kept their hopes up during the tough early start-up stage, which was unique. Therefore, this research finding uses HAT to examine how immigrant entrepreneurs succeed in creating their new ventures with hopeful feelings can bring out more angles to understand the relationship of success with hope for future research and furthermore provide an outlook of HAT competency and wish list items to immigrant entrepreneurs community, workforce education and development practitioners and policy makers to design better support for immigrants to survive and thrive in their entrepreneurial pathways.
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Appendix A

RECRUITMENT LETTER

My name is Hsin-Ling Tsai, and I am a doctoral candidate with Workforce Education and Development at Penn State University. I am conducting important research about what tactics adopted by successful immigrant entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. This research will involve approximately 15-25 entrepreneurs who have successful startup experience in Silicon Valley and who are immigrants to the United States. You are contacted as someone whose experience may be valuable to this study. What you will share with me will become part of the study. Those information will help nascent immigrants who want to establish their new venture to develop needed competencies and to increase their successful rate as immigrant entrepreneurs. My dissertation advisors are Dr. William Rothwell and Dr. Hyung Joon Yoon, and I will be working under their supervision on this research dissertation.

Perspective Participants

For this study, I am inviting participants who:

● are immigrant and entrepreneur
● who has successful experience in starting up a new business in silicon valley
● would be willing to participant in a one hour interview

If you are interested in having your voice involved in this immigrant entrepreneurial research, please click on this link [the link with Example https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9t4ym4qil27UJG7j] and complete the demographic survey. We will randomly select 15-25 participants ensuring maximum diversity in terms of geographic location, professional identity, age, gender, etc.

Here is a tentative timeline of the study with approximate time required to complete each survey:

● First Interview: October-November 25 (60 minutes)
● Second Interview (credibility check): February 15-March 10 (20-30 minutes)

If you have any questions, please reach out to Hsin-Ling Tsai (hut129@psu.edu).

Also, if you know any colleagues who are immigrant entrepreneurs and can provide valuable input for this study, please feel free to invite them to the survey by forwarding this email to them.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Hsin-Ling Tsai
Appendix B

SCREENING SURVEY

Thank you for agreeing to answer this short questionnaire and the potential to participate in my study. I am a doctoral candidate at Penn State University and conducting a research study entitled “Tactics Adopted by Successful Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley: A Hope-Action Theory Perspective”. The purpose of the questionnaire is to obtain 15-25 participants to participate in the case study. Your participation will involve answering a survey, a one-to-one interview with me, expecting to last approximately one hour. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim with your permission. To extract your interview I will assign a code to maintain confidentiality. After data analysis and results are written, the recordings will be erased upon completion of the study.

Instructions
- Please answer the questions as accurately and honestly as you can; there are no right or wrong answers.
- Please answer all items. If you find there is no answer that is most fitting to you, please select the response that fits you best.

1. Demographic questions:
1.1 Were you born outside of the United States? Yes or No
1.2. Is/was your startup company in Silicon Valley? Yes or No
1.3 What is/was your role in the startup company? Founder or Co-founder
1.4 Did your startup company sustain business after the first three years? Yes or No
1.5 Does this company still operate? Yes or No
1.6 How many entrepreneurial entities you have/had? 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or More
1.7 Will you be willing to answer a 10 minutes web-based questionnaire? Y or N

2. Hope Action Inventory Scale
- Please click to this website: https://hopecenteredcareer.com/hai. Your Key to access the inventory is XYZ122

Questions of HAI questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Definitely False</th>
<th>Somewhat False</th>
<th>Somewhat True</th>
<th>Definitely True</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am hopeful when I think about my future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I think about things that have happened to me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I can describe who I am.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>I often dream about my future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I set deadlines to complete my goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I keep myself focused so</td>
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<td>Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I am willing to try new experiences that might help me to achieve my goals.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>I believe my dreams will come true.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I often think about how my situation affects me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I can list at least five things that I am good at.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>I often envision my future 2, 5, or 10 years from now.</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>I often list things that I need to do to reach my goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I work hard to meet my goals even when there are distractions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I am open to change that might improve my chance to reach my goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I think positively about my future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I think about how my personal experiences influence my decisions in life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I am clear about who I am.</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>I often imagine possible future events in my life.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>I make a list of things that I want to complete.</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>I take the next steps to meet my goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I am open to making changes to my plans when necessary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>In general, I stay hopeful even when I face difficulties in my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I think about how my life experiences have influenced me.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>I know what I like and dislike.</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>I spend time thinking about what will happen in my future.</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>I plan for my future.</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>I take action once I have clear goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I am prepared to make changes if the situation changes.</td>
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Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research Topic: Tactics Adopted by Successful Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley: A Hope-Action Theory Perspective

Introduction: The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

Research: Hsin-Ling Tsai, graduate learner, under the direction of Dr. William Rothwell and Dr. Hyung Joon Yoon in the College of Education at Pennsylvania State University has invited your participation in a research study.

Study Purpose: The purpose of this research is to investigate what tactics helped immigrant entrepreneurs to be successful and what wish list individual entrepreneurs wish to have which may be more helpful to their success. Through the face-to-face interview I hope to find practical competency in Hope-Action Theory (HAT) and develop further career intervention programs for nascent immigrant entrepreneurs in initiating new business in Silicon Valley.

Description of Research Study: There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study, nor are there any costs for participating in the study. The information you provide will help me understand what competencies help while you start a new venture toward success. This interview is anonymous. No one will be able to identify you, nor will anyone be able to determine which company you work for. No one will know whether you participated in this study. Nothing you say on the questionnaire will in any way influence your present or future employment with your company. Information will be disclosed only in a case where you agree to appear your information to the public.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose to participate in this study, the first step is to answer the Hope-Action Inventory, a web based, 10 minute, questionnaire and a 60 minutes in-depth semi-structured interview and a follow up contact.

If you say YES, then your participation for the interview will last for 60 minutes via PSU.ZOOM. Approximately 15 subjects will be participating in this study in Silicon Valley.

During the interview, the purpose of the study will be explained and you will be asked to describe your experience and provide examples of tactics that impacted your start-up process in an open-ended question format. This interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed and given code number to ensure confidentiality. The recordings will be erased upon completion of the study.

Voluntary Consent:
Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by Hsin-Ling Tsai, 814-777-1013.

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Office of Institutional Review Board, through 814-865-1775 or email: IRB-ORP@psu.edu

This is for explaining the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form, you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study.

_________________________  _________________________  ________
Volunteer’s Signature      Printed Name                  Date

_________________________  _________________________
Email Address              Phone Number
Appendix D

INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

TACTICS ADOPTED BY SUCCESSFUL IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS IN SILICON VALLEY:
A HOPE-ACTION THEORY PERSPECTIVE

ECIT Interview Guide

Participant #: ___________________                Interviewer Name: ____________________

Date: _________________________                 Interview Start Time: ____________________

Introductory: Thank you for participating in this interview. Before we proceed, I want to be clear that
during the interview, you may choose to disclose or not to disclose any information, depending on how
comfortable you feel. You may also request to take a break during the interview.

1. Contextual Component

Preamble: I am exploring ways that lead immigrant entrepreneurs’ success in Silicon Valley. The
purpose of this interview is to understand helping and hindering factors affecting your
achievement in establishing new ventures. The purpose of this interview is to develop
recommendations to guide nascent immigrant entrepreneurs through the lens of Hope-Action
Theory, which involves key elements such as hope, self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal-
setting and planning, implementing, adapting, and the environment. There will be one follow up
interaction via email, phone call or meeting.
a. What is the business(es) that you established?

b. When do you start your new venture?

c. What vision had you in mind when you first started a business?

d. How have you been doing in terms of achieving the vision?

2. Scaling Questions

On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is the most negative, 5 is neutral, and 10 is the most positive,

a. How do you rate successfulness of achieving what you envisioned as an entrepreneur?

b. Howful were you about the venture when you were starting up?

c. How hopeful are you now about the future of your company/creation?
3. Critical Incident Component

Transition to Critical Incident questions:

a. I am going to start by asking you to think about what factors helped you most in establishing and managing a new venture as an immigrant entrepreneur in Silicon Valley applying Hope-Action Theory, comprised of hope, self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal-setting and planning, implementing, adapting, and the environment.

i. What made you and/or the company be hopeful when you were trying to establish a new venture in Silicon Valley? (hope)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Factors &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?....”)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it help? Tell me what it was about...that you find helpful?)</th>
<th>Example (What let up to it? Incident. Outcome of incident.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

ii. What self-reflective mechanisms were helpful in starting a new venture in Silicon Valley? (themselves and the company) (self-reflection)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Factors &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?....”)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it help? Tell me what it was about...that you find helpful?)</th>
<th>Example (What let up to it? Incident. Outcome of incident.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
iii. What helped you and the company to crystallize your focus and the company’s mission, vision, values, etc.? (self-clarity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Factors &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?...”)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it help? Tell me what it was about...that you find helpful?)</th>
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</table>

iv. What helped you and the company to envision the future images/possibilities of you and your company? (visioning)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Factors &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?...”)</th>
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</table>

v. What helped you to identify future goals and develop steps for achieving them? (Goal Setting and Planning)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Factors &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?...”)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it help? Tell me what it was about...that you find helpful?)</th>
<th>Example (What let up to it? Incident. Outcome of incident.)</th>
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</table>
vi. What helped you/company to successfully implement the plans toward achieving the goal that you had? (Implementing)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Factors &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?....”)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it help? Tell me what it was about...that you find helpful?)</th>
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</table>

vii. Think about a time when you made an adjustment to the original plan or goal for better results. What helped you to be adaptable to stay current while not losing the focus? (Adapting)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Factors &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?....”)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it help? Tell me what it was about...that you find helpful?)</th>
<th>Example (What let up to it? Incident. Outcome of incident.)</th>
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</table>

viii. What factors in your surroundings (people, policy, technology, societal change, etc.) have been helpful to you in becoming a successful entrepreneur in Silicon Valley? (environment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Factors &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?....”)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it help?)</th>
<th>Example (What let up to it?)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wish List Item &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?....”)</td>
<td>Importance (How did it hinder? Tell me what it is about...that you find helpful?)</td>
<td>Example (In what circumstances might this be helpful?)</td>
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b. Summarize what has been discussed up to this point with the participant as a transition to the next questions. We have talked about factors (name them) that have helped you in establish your entrepreneurial career. Are there other factors that could help you during starting a new venture in Silicon Valley that you did not have access to?

i. What do you wish you had and you think would have made you (more) hopeful when you were trying to establish a new venture in Silicon Valley? (hope)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wish List Item &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?....”)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it hinder? Tell me what it is about...that you find helpful?)</th>
<th>Example (In what circumstances might this be helpful?)</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

ii. What self-reflective mechanisms you wish you had that would have been helpful in starting an entrepreneurial career in Silicon Valley? (self-reflection)
iii. What do you wish you had to help you/company to crystallize your focus and the company’s mission, vision, values, etc.? (self-clarity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wish List Item &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?....”)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it hinder? Tell me what it is about...that you find helpful?)</th>
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iv. What do you wish you had to help you/company to envision the future images/possibilities of you and your company? (visioning)

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</table>

v. What do you wish to have to help you to identify future goals and develop steps for achieving them? (Goal Setting and Planning)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wish List Item &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?....”)</th>
<th>Importance (How did it hinder? Tell me what it is about...that you find helpful?)</th>
<th>Example (In what circumstances might this be helpful?)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vi. What do you wish to have to help you to take action toward completing your goals? (Implementing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>vii. What do you wish to have to help you while you need to modify your action plans in order to reach your goals? (Adapting)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. What supports do you wish to have from outside environment to help you to become a successful entrepreneur in Silicon Valley? (Environment)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wish List Item &amp; What it Means to the Participant (“What do you mean by?....)</td>
<td>Importance (How did it hinder? Tell me what it is about...that you find helpful?)</td>
<td>Example (In what circumstances might this be helpful?)</td>
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Note: Repeat the above question until the interviewee runs out of ideas.

5. **Summary of the Incidents**

   **Note to the interviewer**

   Summarize the incidents and with list items that were reported. It is important to refocus the interview at the end to make sure that you have understood the factors that have been put forward. This will also help when it comes to transcribing and so on.

6. **Demographics Component**

   a. Age  
   b. Sex  
   c. Original Nationality  
   d. Marital status  
   e. Parental status  
   f. Years of immigrating in the United States.  
   g. Years of residence in Silicon Valley  
   h. Primary Language  
   i. Education Level  
   j. What school of Highest degree  
   k. Number of years as entrepreneurs  
   l. Title of current company
m. Type of industry
n. How many startups including the current one

Note: Repeat the above question until the interviewee runs out of ideas.

7. Summary of the Incidents

Note to the interviewer

Summarize the incidents and wish list items that were reported. It is important to refocus the interview at the end to make sure that you have understood the factors that have been put forward. This will also help when it comes to transcribing and so on.

8. Demographics Component

a. Age
b. Sex
c. Original Nationality
d. Marital status
e. Parental status
f. Years of immigrating to the U.S.
g. Years of residence in Silicon Valley
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i. Education Level
j. What school of Highest degree
k. Number of years as entrepreneurs
l. Title of current company
m. Type of industry
n. How many startups including current one
VITA

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President
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Menlo Park, CA

EDUCATION

Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
- Ph.D. in Workforce Education and Development, 2021

University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT
- Master of Science in Elementary Education, 2007
  Emphasis: Teaching English as Second Language

Providence University, Taichung, Taiwan
- Bachelor of Science in Accounting & English Literature , 2002

REPRESENTATIVE WORK EXPERIENCE

STEAM & Education Consultant, Khan Lab School, Mountain View, CA
Education Consultant, Avenues the World School, NY
Mandarin Learning Guide, Imagination Lab School, 4200 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, CA
President, Family Box Edu, 1101 Johnson Street, Menlo Park, CA
Co-Founder, InnoEd Corp., 1228 Cedar Street, Palo Alto, CA
Language Specialist, AltSchool, San Francisco, CA
International Headhunter, Freelance, Bay Area, CA

AWARD

3rd Annual Penn State Idea Pitch Fund, awarded by Smeal College of Business (2009)
Educator of the year, Middle School Education, City of Taichung (2004)
Graduate Award: Best Collaboration, awarded by Providence University (2002)