

**Should I Stay or Should I Go? : East Asian international students' decision  
making processes about their migration intentions post-graduation**

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*Dedicated to my parents,  
who have provided me with unending love and support.*

## **Preface**

My family moved to Michigan in 1995 because the company my father works for had relocated him to the Detroit office in order to help him gain foreign business experience. We were under the impression we would be living in the U.S. for about three to five years and subsequently return to South Korea. Because of several unforeseen factors, my family's stay multiplied from three to nine to, presently, seventeen years. My parents always had in the back of their minds they would be returning to South Korea, and this desire only deepened with time. This year, my father's job has been relocated to headquarters in Seoul and my family is finally moving back home. In the midst of this arrangement, I have grown to love my life in the U.S. and yet I find it difficult to imagine a future where I would live so far away from them. This decision is not unique to my own situation, but also one many international students make. I wanted to understand what factors these individuals and upon reflection – what I – take into consideration when deciding where to live in the future. What is pulling me here to stay? What is pushing me to return? What do I value? What is driving me to make this decision?

## **Abstract**

Students from East Asian countries currently make up a majority of international students studying in U.S. colleges and universities. These individuals have the unique circumstance of deciding whether to stay in the U.S. or return to their native countries after graduating. Students must consider multiple factors and assign different levels of importance when ultimately forming their migration decision. In my study, I interviewed 21 students from China, Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea to provide insight into their decision-making processes. My findings suggest that while both men and women express desire to stay in the U.S. and find employment to help advance their academic or professional careers, the traditional gendered expectations of masculinity and femininity influences the length of time intent on staying. Men are likely to stay longer because they adhere to the expectations that they are more financially responsible and for being successful in the workforce. Women are likely to return earlier because they adhere to the gendered expectation that women are more financially and emotionally dependent on family, more concerned with marriage, and less able to adapt to different cultures. These findings indicate that the act of “doing gender” extends even in matters of migration.

## **Introduction**

Since the end of World War II, the U.S. has served as a central location base for the worldwide exchange of professional peoples (Cheng and Yang 1998). Professionals and international students were allowed in during the Cold War era to bolster U.S. efforts in advancing the fields of science and engineering (Cheng and Yang 1998). Meanwhile, the 1965 Immigration Act eliminated quotas set on Asian countries and opened doors for professionals and their families to take jobs in growing industries like technology, medicine, and engineering, (Ong and Liu 1994). From 1960 to 2000, the total number of international students has experienced an eightfold increase and between 1966 and 2000 the percentage of U.S. doctorate degrees obtained by foreign-born students increased from 23% to 39% (West 2010).

As a result of the increasing interconnectedness and globalization, the number of international students from Asian countries attending U.S. educational institutions has risen dramatically in the past decade; from 2000 to 2010, the total number of international students in the United States increased approximately 32%, from 547,867 to 723,277 students (“Open Doors 2011”). Of the top five nations to contribute international students to the U.S. in the 2010-2011 academic year, three were countries in East Asia – China, South Korea, and Taiwan (“Open Doors 2011”). International students contribute to the student diversity of U.S. educational institutions, and their presence is becoming more noticeable on campuses.

Several of my own friends and acquaintances are South Korean undergraduate international students. As graduation looms ahead, it was interesting to talk about our future plans. Many of them sought to return to their native countries after graduation to seek employment. They described how receiving a Bachelor’s degree from an U.S. institution gave them an advantage in the highly competitive employment process in South Korea. They

described how being educated in the U.S. increases ones English reading, writing, and listening abilities, all of which are highly valued skills that employers heavily consider when selecting job candidates. Many also wanted to return to their families, after spending several years away from home. Despite the obvious advantages of returning, some students expressed inclinations to stay in the U.S. after graduation with idea of living permanently in the U.S. Surprisingly some students who had spent the majority of their lives living in South Korea and had family and friends living there, indicated a desire to stay. One of my South Korean acquaintances even applied to the U.S. Green Card lottery in hopes of obtaining permanent residency but was denied because the lottery system only applies to individuals from countries with low rates of immigration to the U.S. (“Diversity Visa Program”). As I noticed this difference, I began asking some questions - what are some unique characteristics of these students? Do certain demographic characteristics influence their immigration decisions? If so, which ones have the largest impact? In light of these conversations, my research question *broadly* asks: Why do undergraduate international students intend to stay in the U.S. or to return to their home countries after graduation, and what are the different factors they considering when making this decision?

International students have a unique circumstance in that they can entertain the idea or the possibility of living in a different country. While most international students come to the U.S. with the intent of returning to their native countries, research finds that the majority ends up staying permanently, though this figure varies by professional areas of study (Hazen and Alberts 2006). From this evidence it is clear that many students change their minds during the course of their stay. Some have interpreted this trend as international students planning their education experience as a ticket into the U.S. to allow their permanent residency (Hazen and Alberts 2006). But research on migration intentions and student decision making reveals that this is not

necessarily the case; most students consider this decision very complex and take into account many different factors, the broadest categories being personal, societal, and professional (Szelenyi 2006).

Studying students' migration intentions is important because of its implications for the global brain circulation phenomenon. Understanding intent can provide insight into the decision-making processes of these individuals, which could consequently affect whether or not they decided to stay in their host countries or return to their native countries. Ultimately, this relates to countries' advancement in the modern age, in that these professionals have the significant capacity to contribute to countries' economies and academic pursuits, as well as promote diversity and global interconnectedness.

### **Literature Review**

I situate my research in the sociological literature on migration. The literature about migration is divided into two different perspectives – macro and micro. Research from the macro perspective examines general immigration trends among groups of people, while the micro level studies focus on individual experiences and reasons that influence people to migrate. Within the macro perspective, the movement of professionals and skilled workers among countries is referred to as the brain drain, or more recently the brain circulation phenomenon. International students play a major role in this, namely because a large proportion of this population is composed of professionals or individuals who carry the potential to become professionals. Meanwhile, the literature using the micro perspective regarding students' migration intentions is relatively underdeveloped. However, the existing research identifies important factors that affect individuals' decisions, using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Among these



research results, are conflicting findings on how gender affects migration. Therefore, I discuss research about gender and migration in the last section of the literature review.

### *Brain Drain Circulation*

Balaz and Williams (2004) refer to international students as “the only group who migrates primarily in order to enhance their human capital and, ostensibly, for fixed periods of time.” Due to their unique circumstance, examining factors that influence international students’ migration decisions and their decision making processes would greatly enhance our understanding of the global brain circulation phenomenon. The movement of professionals and international students has important economic and educational implications for the native and host countries of international students.

Previously, the movement of professionals and workers was referred to as brain drain/gain circulation, implying the loss and gain of human capital with regard to the native and the host country, respectively. However, this perspective has been refuted and generally replaced in the literature with the notion of brain circulation, suggesting that a net loss or net gain does not always occur, and that individuals’ migration and experiences in the host country can be transferred back to their native countries and produce benefits, especially for more under-developed countries (Pellegrino 2001, Saxenian 2005, Le 2008). In a survey of graduate students in the U.S., Szelenyi (2006) found that students consider a variety of migratory options after graduation, such as returning back home, staying the U.S., or staying for a few additional years and then returning home, thereby supporting the notion that the movement of professionals falls within the perspective of the brain circulation phenomenon. Furthermore, some students intending to stay in the U.S. post-graduation stated they would continue to focus heavily on

issues in their professional work that would benefit their home countries, whereas other students perceived their work as benefitting the world in a globalized sense (Szelenyi 2006). These dialogues indicate that students' sense of national boundaries and their position with respect to these boundaries are quite varied (Szelenyi 2006). With respect to the topic of brain circulation, Szelenyi's interviews (2006) show that the "question of who gains and who loses becomes muddled and dependent on what we mean by the concept of citizen contributions."

### *Micro-perspectives & Methodology*

A limited amount of research on students' migration intentions exists in the sociological literature. Though intent is no guarantee of future decisions and is only one aspect of the large migration patterns of professionals, it is still important to analyze intent in order to understand how students assess their migratory options. Intent is the first step in a process that leads to action, even if the future action may or may not be in line with one's original intent. The existing research about intentions has generally been divided into quantitative and qualitative methods, the former being more popular. Using quantitative methods in an understudied field is logical because methods like surveys can reach a greater number of people and, if designed well, can highlight important trends or correlations that can be generalized onto a population. Although this project focuses on international students educated in the U.S., the lack of research done on this particular sub-population makes it necessary to review other scholarly work conducted on international students educated in other countries.

Das' (1969) study was one of the earliest quantitative studies of student intent. Though the findings may not reflect student intent today, they can serve as a useful comparison as to how migration intent of international students changes over time. This study found students from

Latin American countries to be less inclined to live permanently in the U.S., whereas Asian students from developed nations are more inclined to do so (Das 1969). Based on the various responses of return intent, Das (1969) concluded that the impact of brain migration phenomenon on a country depends on the student's country or origin, or whether or not the country is developed or less developed. Johnson and Reget's study (1988) notes significant national variation with regard to graduate students' firm intent to stay in the U.S. Similarly, Alberts and Hazen's (2005) found that students from different nationalities differentially weight significant factors; students from less economically developed nations such as Tanzania described the better economic conditions influencing their decision to stay, while students from more politically-restricted countries like China described professional freedom as a significant influence in their decisions.

Survey studies highlighted significant factors correlating with migration intentions. A very recent survey of New Zealand international students studied migration intent with regard to returning to their home countries as well as to other countries. Soon's study (2012) identified six significant factors correlated with migration intent – the level of study, whether or not the individual was involved in the health-science discipline, the length of stay in New Zealand, work experience, initial return intention, and family's support of migration plan (Soon 2012). The first two factors, "education-related variables," both correlated negatively with the probability of returning home, but positively with moving to another country (Soon 2012). Meanwhile, students' initial intent to return and family support, which were both categorized as "personal and family-related variables," correlated positively with the intent to return home, but negatively with intent to move to another country. Meanwhile, Hazen and Alberts' (2006) study surveyed a representative sample of all international students attending a large midwestern public university

in the U.S. For these students, the prospect of a better job and career opportunities was the most significant incentive to stay in the U.S., while family and friends back home were significant factors for them to leave (Hazen and Alberts 2006). Both surveys similarly targeted the general populations without limiting by age, degree of study, or ethnicity. The studies also did not find gender to be a significant variable in relation to students' migration intent (Hazen and Alberts 2006, Soon 2012). Lastly, both support the notion that professional and career related opportunities act as pull factors that keep international students grounded in the host countries, whereas societal and personal variable acts as push factors that guide students home.

In contrast, a survey of Chinese undergraduate international students in a Canadian university identified gender as a significant variable related to students' migration intentions (Lu, et. al. 2009). For males, factors like family economic background and human capital – which includes the number of relatives present in Canada and the individual's level of participation in social activities – influence male students' intentions to stay in Canada (Lu, et. al. 2009). Meanwhile, female students' intentions of staying are affected by social and family related variables like the number of siblings in the family, the number of intimate Chinese friends in Canada, and the frequency of homesickness (Lu, et. al. 2009). Parental attitudes were strongly and significantly related to students' intentions for the majority of the sampled population. Yet, parental attitudes were more strongly associated with females than with males (Lu, et. al. 2009). The study's identification of gender as a significant variable could be due to Lu et. al's choice of using a specific sub-set of international students restricted by ethnicity and age. Furthermore, Hazen and Alberts' (2006) & Soon's (2012) studies took place in different countries, which may also help to explain the disparity in results.

Though significant correlations from survey data shed light on general trends within the population, in-depth qualitative research is necessary to understand what they mean, how students experience these relationships, and how they emerge and play out in everyday life. Hazen and Albert's survey methodology was quite different from those used by Soon (2012) and Lu, et. al. (2009) because the former team set up a focus group with a representative sample of international students to determine the content and types of questions that the survey should include, and their survey also included a space after questions for respondents to explain their choices. This study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods to allow for more in-depth answers (Alberts and Hazen 2005, Hazen and Alberts 2006). By comparing the survey and focus groups results', the researchers found that both findings reinforced the notion that professional considerations act as 'stay' factors and personal considerations act as 'leave' factors, and that students' decisions are often quite complex (2006). The results of the focus group finds that the decision making process and the influence of significant factors varied among different nations, and that students from more economically and politically stable countries based their migration intent more heavily on their personal preferences while students from countries that possess certain structural characteristics that would deter individuals from returning based their intent less on personal factors (Alberts and Hazen 2005).

My study broadly seeks to address the different factors international students consider when making their migration decisions, as well as to provide a deeper understanding into the decision-making processes. However, in response to Lu et. al's (2009) findings regarding Chinese undergraduates, I will also investigate whether or not gender plays a significant role in these students' decisions. My target population includes international students from China, Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, and South Korea. While these countries are typically grouped

together because their societies share similar Confucian values, I also understand that each country is different from another in their own unique aspects (Zhang et. al. 2005). Yet, for the purposes of recruitment and to finish the project within a limited period of time, my study will not be limited to residents of a single nation. Because these countries hold similar Confucian beliefs of hierarchy and patriarchy, I would expect people from the region to “do gender” in similar ways. In addition, focusing on students from the East Asian region is especially important because these individuals constitute the greatest proportion of international students in the U.S. (“Open Doors 2011”).

Furthermore, this project seeks to understand processes and meaning making for an individual’s decision, rather than to [test variables on a larger population. Qualitative study results also provide the opportunity to explore the wider variation of responses with regard to how gender affects students’ intentions. Lastly, it will be useful to conduct a qualitative study because the existing literature already contains several well-designed large-scale surveys.

### *Gender & Migration*

Gender is an important variable that both influences and is influenced by the migratory patterns of groups and individuals. Research on the intersectionality of gender and migration finds that migration has varying effects on gender norms and equality. For some women, migration allows for greater freedom and independence, as well as the opportunity to defy traditional gender roles upheld in their native countries because the migration processes itself challenge the immigrant’s beliefs, values, and customs (DeBiaggi 2001). Meanwhile, some women reconstruct gender norms in the host country, or they face more pressing structural

constraints and pressures like racial or ethnic equality such that the significance of gender relations is mitigated (Yu 2006, Parrab and Flippen 2005).

The experiences of East Asian women's immigration to different host countries reflect the variety of effects that migration can have on gender roles and norms. In a qualitative study of Chinese immigrant wives in the United States, the majority of the women re-created the traditional gender structure that would have been in place in China (Yu, 2011). The women also stressed the importance of maintaining a stable family in order to combat the stresses of structural and cultural differences that the family experienced during their transition to U.S. society. The author cites the U.S.'s "cultural leniency towards stay-at-home mothers" and the traditional Chinese Confucian values of hierarchy and family harmony to facilitate the adaptation of traditional gender norms in these households (Yu, 2011).

Meanwhile, a qualitative study of South Korean women regarding their reasons for migrating from Korea to the United Kingdom found that they described gendered experiences that motivated their desire to immigrate (Kim 2010). Most of the women described the potential benefits for their careers if they moved to the UK as having the greatest influence on their migration decision. They described how their desires to have a successful career could not be realized due to the gendered opportunities for employment and promotion within the Korean workforce (Kim 2010). The study also found that increased international travel and their exposure to United States and United Kingdoms' cultural media facilitated thoughts about the possibility of immigrating (Kim 2010).

These contrasting responses can be due to the fact that the two studies focused on different groups – the former on married women, and the latter on mostly unmarried single women. Furthermore, the reason for migration is also different – most of the women in the

former study immigrated to the U.S. because of their husband's work, while almost all of the women in the latter study moved to the U.K. on their own personal initiative and desire.

The women studied in this project will be both similar and different to the groups mentioned in these studies – similar because they will be from countries that share similar Confucian values, but different in terms of age and experience. Despite the sample differences, any significant findings that highlight differences in men and women will not only contribute to the literature of how migration generally itself is a gendered process, but also what specifically influences East Asian peoples migratory decision making processes.

While Lu et. al's (2009) project surveyed Chinese undergraduates studying in Canadian universities, I believe that this research's study results can be reasonably extended to the Chinese population in the U.S. This is because many Chinese international students cite the U.S. as their top choice destination, but cite the difficulty in obtaining a visa is as an important hindrance to these students (Chen 2007). Furthermore, I believe that Lu et. al's (2009) finding that gender plays an important role in Chinese undergraduates' migration decision can also be reasonably applied onto other East Asian international students' decision-making processes. Generally speaking, East Asian societies have all been deeply influenced by Confucianism, which emphasizes patriarchy, familial piety, and collectivist goals (Zhang et. al 2005). Typically, these Confucian values translate into inequality in the construction of gender ideology, in which male dominance is upheld (Zhang et. al, 2005). Gender ideology is indicative of individuals' gender socialization within these societies and these values can influence people's life choices (Zhang et. al., 2005). Several studies have noted the growing sense of gender egalitarianism within these cultures within the past decade or so, noting the increase in divorce rates, higher-education attainment rates among women, and the growing presence of women in the workforce in these



societies. Yang and Yen (2011) argue that rising divorce rates in South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan in recent years indicates young women's re-evaluation of traditional marital roles as housewives and mothers. They also note that in Taiwan in 1988, only 2.5% of women and 7.7% of men had college degrees, while the percentage in 2003 was 66.3% and 58.9%, respectively (Yang and Yen, 2011). In South Korea, the rate of women's participation in formal labor sectors had risen from 41.9% to 48.7% from 1981 to 1996 (Song 2001). Yet, these women's jobs are concentrated heavily in the food and service industries, which typically receive lower pay; there is significantly less women participating in professional and high-paying jobs (Song 2001). Furthermore, the rate of divorce among the three countries – South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, respectively – has risen from 0.6%, 0.53%, and 1.22% in 1980 to 2.4%, 2.43%, and 1.99% in 2008 (Yang and Yen, 2011). So while gender ideology may be evolving, it does not mean that divorce is no longer considered a taboo in these countries and is an option that women can choose without the fear of being stigmatized (Yang and Yen, 2011). Ultimately, while these societies have become more egalitarian in important branches of society, the underlying foundational values of Confucianism that uphold patriarchy still remain quite rooted in East Asian societies and cannot be ignored as an important bedrock of cultural values.

Based upon the findings from the literature review about gender and migration, I predict that gender influences differences in men and women's responses to migration intentions. Specifically, I predict that more men will express intentions to stay than women. I expect the primary reasons that male students want to stay are to advance their academic or professional careers. Similarly, women will also want to stay in the U.S. for the same reasons because of the increased opportunities for East Asian women to pursue higher education and employment

opportunities. Meanwhile, I predict that the main reasons women want to return to their home countries will be to be closer to family and friends.

## **Methods**

My research question asks why undergraduate international students from East Asian countries intend to stay in the U.S. or return to their home countries after graduation. The project will investigate the decision making processes of East Asian undergraduate international students and the various factors they consider when deciding whether or not to stay in the U.S. or return to their home countries after graduation. More specifically, I also look to see whether or not gender has a significant influence on students' intentions regarding their migration decisions.

To fill a gap in the existing studies, which are mostly quantitative, my study of decision-making adopts qualitative methods. Additionally, I want my research to examine whether or not Lu et. al's quantitative findings of Chinese undergraduate students' decision making processes about migration could be corroborated in students' responses from other East Asian countries (2009).

## **Sample & Recruitment**

Before conducting the study, I obtained IRB approval. To recruit participants, I sent out an email on two separate occasions with a brief description of my study to specific student organizations on campus that represented different East Asian cultures (Appendix A). These groups included the Chinese Students Association (CSA), Hong Kong Students Association (HKSA), Korean International Students Association (KISA), Taiwanese Students Association (TSA), and Japanese Students Association (JSA). I received a confirmation email from a student

representative from the Hong Kong Students Association and the Korean International Students Association, but not from the other student organizations. Additionally, I asked the first few participants to spread the word about my study and recruited a few more students through this snowballing technique. Lastly, I printed out flyers and posted them in large public buildings across the university's central campus (Appendix B). I also received permission to place my flyers in the Center for Korean studies. Interviewees received \$10 dollar VISA gift cards as compensation for participating.

These recruitment efforts yielded a sample of 21 undergraduate students. All participants were currently enrolled at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, a large mid-western public research university with a sizable international student population. The sample gender ratio was six men to fifteen women. All students identified among four East Asian nations as their countries of origin; three students from China, five from Hong Kong, eleven from South Korea, and two from Japan. The students' ages ranged from 18-23 years, with eight seniors, eight juniors, four sophomores, and one freshman. The average age was 20.5 years old. The average time spent in one's native country was 15 years and the average time spent in the United States was 5.5 years. Students majored in business, economics, biology, chemistry, psychology, international studies, math, and statistics. Nine students attended high school in the US. Three students also attended middle school, and one individual attended elementary school in the U.S. Ten students did not know their parents' income, and the median income range of the remaining eleven students was \$150,000 - \$200,000 U.S. dollars. Three students were either permanent residents of the U.S. or U.S. citizens. U.S. immigration status was not a factor that excluded individuals from participating because I adhered to this definition of international student as recognized by the Institute of International Education:

“Students who undertake all or part of their higher education experience in a country other than their home country or who travel across a national boundary to a country other than their home country to undertake all or part of their higher education experience.” (Institute of International Education, 2012).

Graduate students were excluded from this sample because I wanted to focus on younger students to better compare my results with other quantitative studies conducted on this population. Additionally, students from non-East Asian countries were not included to minimize variation in respondents’ backgrounds. The majority of international students attending U.S. academic institutions come from East Asian countries, so I believed studying this region would represent a larger proportion of the general international student population in the U.S., more so than had I studied students from other regions of the world. While China sends the greatest number of international students and Korea sends only half as many international students as China, more Korean participants were interviewed for the study. Also, while China sends nearly 25 times as many international students as Hong Kong, there were more participants from Hong Kong than China represented in the group of participants. These circumstances were most likely because I had active communication with the leaders and web-managers of the KSA, KISA, and the HKSA. Meanwhile, I received no response from the CSA, JSA, and TSA when I sent out recruitment emails. I believe this miscommunication stemmed from the fact that individuals in charge of communication for these student groups did not actively check their email accounts.

The interviews took place in study rooms in campus libraries. The participants filled out questionnaires for basic demographic information, which included the number of years spent in the U.S., where they went to school, their major, parental income, and age (Appendix C). They

were also required to sign a consent form as per IRB instructions (Appendix D). The interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed. After conducting the interviews, I wrote brief memos about the participants and noted interesting responses they presented during the interview. I made further notes on these memos when transcribing the interviews.

The interview questions covered a variety of topics. Participants were asked about how they came to study in the U.S, and their feelings about coming to the U.S. The interview moved on to how individuals felt about their overall experience living in the U.S., including their most positive and negative memorable experiences in the U.S. Participants were then asked about their intent to stay in the U.S. or return to their native countries and how they ended up with their decision. The subsequent questions explored different factors deemed important in influencing migration decisions, such as family, friends, professional opportunities, and employment prospects. The interview ended with hypothetical questions that explored individuals' perspectives on gender, such as their prediction on whether more international men or women would stay and why, and if they would change their migration decision had they been the opposite gender (Appendix D).

I identify myself as a Korean-American, so I am of the same ethnicity (Asian) as all of my participants. I believe this shared ethnicity made it more comfortable for my participants to open up about their experiences in the U.S., - especially negative ones – and their future plans. Although I am not an international student, I did not reveal this information to the participants. One participant asked me if I was an international student after we finished the interview. I responded by saying that I was not, but that I had friends and many acquaintances who were and that was one of the reasons why I pursued this topic for my research.

To make students feel as comfortable as possible during the interviews, I dressed casually and made sure to introduce myself and give a brief description about the research project before starting the interviews. At the end, I asked if they had any additional questions or concerns regarding the study. I was occasionally perceived to be a graduate student, but I made sure to clarify this to the participants who asked. At the end, I asked them how they felt about the interviews, students replied that it was “fine”, that “it wasn’t as bad as I thought”, or they “liked talking to [me].”

Two male participants, however, felt some discomfort when responding to a question about gender roles. They tempered their responses to me, a woman, by saying “I know this is sexist” or “I know this is unfair.” One participant kept interrupting himself while speaking about the topic of gender, and it was obvious that he felt flustered answering the questions. To quell his anxiety, I assured him that there was no judgment, that the interviews were confidential, and encouraged him to express his opinions freely.

The interviews were analyzed using the NVIVO qualitative software to develop and organize codes. I began by writing down some general themes that I had encountered when transcribing the interviews and from my initial memos of the participants. I went through each transcript and tagged sections that related to these codes. While doing so, I also created several new large codes and sub-codes that provided more detail about the highlighted section. I wrote a memo for each of the large codes, with the sub-codes included, noting interesting responses and relating these back to my main research question. For the second round, I reviewed the transcripts again and added sections to the codes and sub-codes created during the initial round. For the third round, I discarded some codes I believed did not help to answer my research

question of why some international students intend to stay in the U.S. or return to their home countries, and what factors affect international students' migration intentions.

The study's main limitation is that the results cannot be generalized to a broader population because of the small sample size and self-selection bias, as this was a voluntary study. Despite this issue, I believe that the stories and descriptions from conversing with individual students allow for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of their views on migration and the reasoning behind their decisions. Furthermore, I created the questions that were asked in the interviews based on my reading of the current literature on the topic. Therefore, this may have restricted some aspects that the individuals thought were important to their decision making process but were not addressed during the interview.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *General Findings*

Students' migration decisions did not vary significantly when categorized by their four countries of origin. Their stories and experiences were not colored by their experience as students from a particular country, but rather their status more broadly as international students. The interviews did not contain enough content that would differentiate, for example, a Chinese student's experience from that of a Japanese student's.

In the introduction, I predicted that a greater proportion of men than women would want to stay after graduation. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. In fact, most students – regardless of gender - expressed a desire to stay in the U.S. and work after graduating. Among the male participants, all six wanted to stay in the U.S in the short term. Among women, thirteen students wanted to stay in the U.S. and two wanted to return to their home countries

immediately. However, there was a substantial difference in the number of years men and women intended on staying in the U.S. after graduation; men wanted to stay longer than women. The length of time males intended on staying ranged from 10-30 years. Only one male student expressed a firm desire to return to his native country, but the remaining five either expressed a firm desire to stay in the U.S. or expressed ambivalence about their long-term future plans. Meanwhile, women expressed a variety of responses with regard to how long they wanted to stay. Among the fourteen women wanting to stay, three envisioned staying permanently in the U.S., ten intended on staying for an average of 3-5 years and then returning to their native countries, and the remaining woman wanted to stay for at least five years and was undecided about whether to stay or return afterwards. Only one woman intended on returning to her home country immediately after graduating.

Overall, the answers students gave to the question of whether they would stay or return after graduation were not exclusively to stay or to return, but rather a combination of both staying and returning. Their responses were layered and complex, describing several different stages of their future life plans. While it is important to note that most students expressed intent on staying in the U.S. in the short term, the more interesting data is the difference in the responses of men and women with regard to the average amount of time each group allotted to staying in the U.S. The gendered messages and expectations that both men and women hear, internalize, and repeat can help to explain the differences in the findings.

Generally, men are more likely to stay because they adhere to the normative cultural expectations that both genders hold about how men should behave and what types of roles they should assume. Norms that participants expressed described men as being more responsible for supporting their future family, being financially secure, and striving to achieve a successful



career. Both men and women held these beliefs. Thus, if the stories from participants unanimously suggest that the U.S. offers more competitive salaries and career advantages to individuals, it makes sense that men would express desire not only to stay, but also to stay for a longer period of time. In doing so they would have ample time to build a career, attain a professional degree, or both. Both genders also suggested that men are more independent and can adapt to different cultures better than women. Given these characteristics, men are not restrained by other people's expectations of where to live or work, and can therefore can be more open to various ideas about their future plans.

However, the fact that women want to stay in the U.S. for a shorter time can be explained in light of society's expectations and norms for women. Both men and women expected the latter group to be more financially and emotionally dependent on family, more concerned with marriage, and less able to adapt to different cultures. In light of these expectations, it makes sense women would want to return earlier to their home countries to be with their parents and return to the culture in which they are more comfortable. However, for women intent on staying in the U.S. for the foreseeable future, the length of time and subsequently their feeling more comfortable in U.S. culture rather than the culture of their native country was a primary factor in their decision to stay. Yet, these women also felt guilty about ignoring their family's expectations for returning to their native countries.

#### *Similar Responses to Pros & Cons of Staying & Returning*

The data support my hypothesis that men and women would both express the desire to advance academic or professional careers as the main influencing factors for staying. Although men and women differed with regard to the types of responses and the number of years intent on

staying in the U.S., there were also many similarities as to why students wanted to stay after graduation. Men and women commiserated on the difficulty of finding a job in the U.S. as an international student and described the various career advantages gained by working in the U.S, which was the most significant factor for their staying after graduation. They also shared similar positive perceptions of the U.S. working culture and negative impressions of the working culture in their home country. They discussed the openness of U.S. culture, and described wanting their international experience to be worth their time and money.

One of the most common stories international students told was about the difficulties of finding employment in the U.S. Most students experience this because they are neither U.S. citizens nor permanent residents. This reality is even more significant given that the vast majority interviewed planned on working in the U.S. after graduation. The most common theme that resonated was the difficulty of finding companies willing to sponsor visas for international students if hired. Participants described experiences of attending the Career Expo, or friends who went, only to find out that a limited number of companies were willing to sponsor individuals to obtain a visa status. One man described his disheartening experience when he attended the expo and found that “out of the five pages worth of companies listed on the handout, only like a fifth of those companies said that they would consider sponsoring students.” Another male student described this difficulty as being a “daily stress” in his life, finding the U.S. immigration policies to be “hostile” to international students. They understood why companies would not be as eager to hire international students, because if other students had the same qualifications as they had, it would be logical for the business to choose an employee who would not require sponsorship.

Despite the harsh realities of becoming employed, most students described wanting to be employed in the U.S. The gap between reality and expectation highlights students’ firm desires

to overcome these barriers and achieve their goals. What aspect of having a job in the U.S. would drive individuals to undertake a task they themselves acknowledge to be very challenging? Working in the U.S. seems to confer some significant advantages on behalf of individuals, enough to drive them to pursue something that is not easily achieved with their immigration status.

All students wanting to stay in the U.S. described how the experience of working in the U.S. was advantageous for pursuing their careers in their native countries. A commonly cited reason for staying was that U.S. companies paid a higher starting salary than international companies. Having international work experience made individuals more competitive than other applicants in the job market of their respective native countries. Students described how employers like to see international working experience on peoples' resumes, and one woman described that having a job would be "a check plus." When I asked students why employers would consider this experience as beneficial, they explained how individuals could "get a taste of how the big companies here in the U.S. work so that you may actually bring that system back to the country."

Furthermore, individuals believed that having work experience in the U.S. provided them with more leverage when negotiating terms of employment. For example, one woman described how she would be able to receive a better offer from the company in her native country if she decided to go back after a few years. The ideal situation, she described, would be "to find a job [in the U.S.] then have the company send me to Hong Kong if they had offices there." Having worked in the U.S., she would "be more competitive and have a better advantage than other people in Hong Kong" and therefore be less worried about the "chances to climb up" the corporate ladder so that her position would be "more stable." In addition, other alumnae who are

working in Hong Kong told her that if she worked in the U.S. than she would “get a better salary package.”

Another reason that students saw working in the U.S. as worth pursuing was because of their understanding of the U.S. working culture. Students had very favorable perceptions of the atmosphere, describing it as more “chill and relaxed.” One woman described how there would be better work life balance and pregnancy leave benefits in the U.S. than in Korea. Both men and women described how U.S. companies allowed for greater flexibility with regard to one’s working schedule and less overtime and being called into the office on the weekends. Both men and women also described how U.S. companies would be more open to varying opinions, and how there was more camaraderie among the co-workers and between the co-workers and the upper-level managers.

These came in contrast to the negative descriptions about working environments in their native countries. Students described how competitive it was to find employment, and that it was more difficult to climb up the corporate ladder. They also described how employees would get fired more easily, work longer hours, and be called in to the office on the weekends. Students disliked the rigid hierarchy and submission to upper management. One male participant even went so far as to equate the corporate hierarchy in Korea to “the plantation with the slaves in America” in that “employees are exploited and all this dirty work is included as an employee.”

Because the students’ average age was 20.5 years and were all currently undergraduates, I did not expect students to have had any significant work experience specifically tailored to the jobs they wanted to pursue in the future. Some described having interned during the summer at specific companies, which would rightly influence their impression and expectations of the working culture. Others built their impressions based on stories they heard from upperclassmen

or international student alumnae who were either working in the U.S. or in their native countries. However, some students either had no working experience or experience that was not relevant to the future career one had in mind. Instead, students had developed certain expectations typically without direct experience and were using it to justify their decisions to stay and work in the U.S.

Unsurprisingly, students' favorable impressions of the U.S. working culture echoed their thoughts of the U.S. culture as a whole. Students cited these positive experiences as one of the other reasons why they wanted to stay. Their stories conveyed themes of the culture being more open and friendlier to strangers when compared to the culture in their home countries. One man described how people in the U.S. "make eye contact and say 'Hi' to people they don't even know on the street and you would never do that in Korea." Meanwhile, a male student recalled a story of how he conversed with a taxi driver in Boston and that he felt as if "the taxi driver and me were friends during the taxi ride but in Hong Kong it's like the driver is the driver and the passenger is the passenger and there's no interaction." Another aspect students liked about the culture was the freedom to express their opinions or personalities without judgment. One woman explained how "American culture is very liberal and I can do what I want." One Korean woman felt that "it was very freeing...to not consider other peoples' opinions as much." The other commonly cited aspect was their chance to experience more diversity and interact with other cultures they would not have otherwise had a chance to. A Korean male recalled his experience taking a course about racism and how he was able to meet students from other racial backgrounds. He described how listening to these diverse stories and experiences expanded and challenged his existing perspectives about various races. He reflected on the fact that he would have never had such opportunities if he had been raised in Korea because it is an ethnically homogenous country.

When asked to recall one of the most positive experiences or episodes in the U.S., the majority described the education they had received. Their impressions of the educational experiences reflected the themes expressed about the general culture – openness, more communication, and freedom to express one’s opinions. Students enjoyed the greater communication and interaction they had with their professors, which they described as different from schools in their native country. A woman described how “most Chinese professors have their own business to do and they are not as warm hearted or time to talk with their students.” A woman talked about how the discussion section time at the university was quite different from her experience in which “the teacher just speaks to the students and the students just shut up and take notes.” Furthermore, some students stated they felt their professors were more knowledgeable in that they related topics to personal experiences or current events, instead of merely relating information from the textbooks during lecture. These attitudes about the U.S. education system can be particularly influential for the individuals intending to stay and pursue further education after their undergraduate career. However, for the individuals wanting to eventually return, these positive aspects do not provide enough weight to persuade them to stay in the U.S.

While students experience various pros and cons of studying abroad, attending a U.S. educational institution is a considerable long-term investment for *all* international students that families finance out of pocket because they are typically ineligible for U.S. financial aid and scholarships. Studying abroad, with the intent of finding a job in the U.S. to advance one’s resume, is risky because of the difficulties associated with finding a job as a non-U.S. citizen or non-resident. Having invested a significant amount of time and money in their educational endeavor, some men and women expressed the sentiment that returning to one’s native country

without working in the U.S. would be considered a waste. They wanted to reap any potential advantages that having stayed and studied in the U.S. would bring. A woman described how she expected her “undergraduate school to be worth the cost of coming to study here” which translated to her acceptance into a “good medical school.” A male student explained that if he returned to Korea without working in U.S. that “there would be no point” in his experience studying in the U.S. Another woman also expressed a similar idea, stating that she wants to stay in U.S. and find a job in order to “get my money’s worth” because she “spent so much money here [in the U.S.] on tuition.” Another woman went so far as to state that it would be “unfair” for her to return to Korea without first working in the U.S. because she would have to “compete with the same students who attended Korean universities” and that she “should have an advantage because I came to the U.S.”

How might this perspective relate to students’ migration decisions? If individuals believed their study abroad experience would be useless had they immediately returned after graduation, they would obviously be more inclined to stay. This attitude also reveals individuals’ attitudes towards their international experience. Instead of viewing their time abroad primarily as a way to expand culturally or gain greater knowledge about the world, some students undertake this experience as a calculated personal investment in the hopes of obtaining a desired ‘return’. This might include earning a degree from an academic institution, improving one’s English skills, or getting a job in the U.S. to boost their resume to become more desirable in the job market. Therefore, these individuals are less likely to stay because of cultural preferences.

### Gendered Responses: Men

As mentioned previously, students wanting to stay in the U.S. described the various advantages gained by working in the U.S. and the positive and negative working cultures of the U.S. and their native countries, respectively, as reasons for why they would stay. While all men expressed a desire to stay in the U.S. for at least 10 years, one firmly wanted to eventually return to his home country, another firmly wanted to stay in the U.S., and the remaining four expressed uncertainty about their future plans. The gendered expectation that men should be successful in their careers and more independent influenced male participant's migration decisions.

However, this gendered understanding of men's migration decisions is only part of the whole decision making process. Obviously, all men do not stay *only* to advance their career or earn greater opportunities in the future because they adhere to male gendered expectations. Individuals also take into consideration culture, friendships, and personal preferences. However, the idea that men must earn money and advance their careers to support their families plays an important role in shaping men's migration decisions. It is interesting to view the information in this framework, because it helps us to understand why individuals make the decisions they make, what the norms they hold are, and how these norms influence their life choices.

### *Firmly intent on returning*

Steve's primary reason for returning after 10-15 years was his fondness for his native country. While he enjoyed many aspects of U.S. culture, such as the openness and chance to interact with people from various backgrounds, he felt he belonged more in Korea because he could "blend in." He also cited time in the military, in which all able-bodied men are required to serve two years, as an experience in which he gained a greater appreciation and stronger bond to



his country. Yet, he was willing to delay returning for a significant period of time to pursue a doctoral degree and afterwards become employed in the U.S. for the advantages when he eventually returned. He described finding a job in the U.S. to be very important, and it was unlikely that he would change his mind about his migration decision. Furthermore, his dad also suggested he get a Ph.D. because “it would be a benefit when getting a job later, so that advice weighed heavily on my decision.” (Figure 1.1)

Steve’s motivation to stay can be understood given his gendered expectation that men are “more responsible for a family’s financial circumstances.” We can understand why he has decided to prolong his stay in the U.S. and subsequently delay returning to Korea when we listen to his expectations about gender. Having internalized the idea that men should be the primary breadwinners of the family, Steve’s migration decision reflects a situation that helps to fulfill his role. Had he been a woman, he would “worry a bit less about absolute financial independence.” When I asked if he thought which gender of Korean international students would be more likely to return, he said that more women would be likely to return to their home countries because women are “more emotional and fragile.” This implies that men should be more concerned about financial independence and again, reinforces his beliefs about what men are expected to do.

#### *Firmly intent on staying*

Rob’s primary reason for staying was his appreciation and fondness for the U.S. culture, coupled with his dislike of Korean culture. Compared to the other men, his reasons for staying weighed heavily on cultural preferences. Though Rob had lived in the U.S. for only three and a half years, he truly appreciated the openness of the U.S. culture and educational system. Meanwhile, he found the Korean culture too capitalistic and catered to the interests of the

wealthy, which he was not. Furthermore, his decision to stay in the U.S. and attend law school was reinforced by his likeness of the U.S. culture. He expected to subsequently work in the U.S. after graduating law school, intending to stay “for at least 30 years.” He stated it was really important that he stay in the U.S. and it would be unlikely that he changed his mind (Figure 1.2).

He described that he is very close with his parents. Yet despite their closeness, he explained how his parents “don’t have any say” in his overall life decisions and that “they know it.” While they “give me [him] ideas and stuff, but they don’t really suggest anything and it’s mainly just my [his] own decision.” This attitude shows his migration decision does not involve parental influence. Because he likes the culture, he stays here; because he does not like the culture in Korea, he does not want to go back. He loves his parents and describes them as being close, but his preference to stay has greater weight on his migration decision. Ultimately, the advantages of culture and attending law school in the U.S. outweigh the other factors that pull him back to Korea like his parents. If not, his migration decision would have been different. When asked if his migration decision would change had he been a woman, his migration would change from staying in the U.S. to returning in order to find a job because “female students are easier to fill up the bottom positions in companies because they usually work for only like two to five years and get married and quit” and because “women want to be near their families unlike men.” He also believed Korean women would be more likely to return for reasons similar to why his migration decision would change had he been a woman. From this attitude, we can assume he feels less pressure to get married, stay in the workforce, and live near his family. Men do not feel that they have to take factors like marriage and family into heavy consideration when making their migration decisions, whereas women must. Rob’s decision to stay for his personal preferences and his career decisions reflects this attitude.

## *Uncertain Men*

While all men who expressed uncertainty wanted to stay for either professional degrees or career advantages, their uncertainty stemmed from a variety of factors. For one man, his uncertainty resulted from his feeling like he did not belong to any one country. For others, they thought more globally about where to work. Meanwhile, another man's uncertainty was a consequence of negotiating different pushes and pulls.

Tom's primary reason for staying in the U.S was to gain a career advantage. He described men as having "to earn more money and take care of the family more so we have to think about more stuff...like jobs and income." Using the pronoun we to include himself and other men, Tom adheres to this expectation of men having to be the primary breadwinner of the family. His migration decision to stay in the U.S. to find a job post-graduation "because it's a boost to my [his] resume and a boost in my prospects" directly reflects this expectation. Furthermore, he also believed Korean women would be more likely to return because "women want to see their parents and want to live with their parents so they would go back." Although his parents live in Korea, he does not feel pressured to move back. In fact, he felt that his parents also wanted him to stay "in order to get something out of this total experience." When pressed about what they would want him to obtain, Tom described that his parents meant for him to get a job in the U.S. So not only does Tom adhere to his internalized expectation of what it means to be a man, but he also hears this same expectation from his parents. Like Tom, other men also described their parents expressing similar sentiments about advising them to stay in the U.S. Why might parents be more inclined to suggest to their sons to stay rather than their daughters? This is because parents also hold gendered expectations and impose them onto their children. These suggestions influence men's decision to stay in the U.S. rather than return immediately. However, Tom and

other men stated the possibility of returning home if unforeseen, extreme scenarios occurred. These circumstances included: “if my dad lost his job,” “if my parents got into a bad accident,” “if my family got sick or something extreme happened,” and “if my family becomes broke then I would have to support them.” The fact that only these types accidents would compel men to return additionally reflects that men are unlikely to change their minds about staying in the U.S.

Tom’s uncertainty about whether to stay or return also stems from his feeling of not belonging to any one country. Having lived in Indonesia and Korea for a significant amount of time, he does not feel tied down or feel an allegiance to any country. Despite spending two years in the Korean army, and unlike S, he felt it was more like “going to jail and coming back.”

Blake, a male student from Hong Kong wanted to stay for at least ten years to gain the career advantage and his likeness for the openness of U.S. culture. His parents “advised me [him] to stay here [in the U.S.]” and he describe how his parents were “understanding of my [his] career path and are really supportive of me [him].” His dad and his uncles who are in management in Hong Kong also encouraged him to stay “because they know what type of applicants companies in Hong Kong are looking for” and wanted him to be a competitive job candidate. His family clearly wants him to succeed in the work force, and like Blake they also believe working in the U.S. confers significant advantages. While Blake does not explicitly say that he believes men to be the primary support for his family, he talks about how if he were a woman, he would be more concerned with family and “not need to focus as much on career as I do right now,” and that “females need to think about marriage and stuff so going back to Hong Kong to marry Hong Kong guys would be a good idea.” From his expectations about women, we can infer some expectations he holds about what characteristics one must possess to be considered male. His attitude reflects the belief that men should be more concerned with career

and less concerned with family and marriage. Supported by various family members, his decision to stay embodies gendered expectations of what it means to be a man.

Blake's uncertainty stems from the fact that he felt a pull to eventually return to Hong Kong because of his family, but that he also really enjoyed the U.S. culture. When asked about his ideal living situation, he devised a situation in which he would spend six months in the U.S. and Hong Kong. In short, he created a situation perfectly balancing both the push and the pull. His circumstance reminds us that while I discuss that gendered expectations influence men to make migration decisions that helps them to fulfill these norms, men also consider other factors like families in their decision making processes. However, men and women give different emphases to these factors.

For the remaining two men who were uncertain about their future, Frank and Dan, their primary reasons for staying were to find a job, and to obtain a professional degree, respectively. Unlike Tom's uncertainty, which was the result of feeling like he did not belong anywhere, these individuals' uncertainty had a more optimistic tone. They were uncertain about their future plans because they viewed themselves more globally. They initially wanted a job in the U.S. and build their career because "it is easier to find a job where I'm living right now than somewhere else." They did not feel obligated to return to their country not because they felt they did not belong, but because they wanted to get the "best job." Dan, a male Japanese student, described eventually wanting to "just live in a big city, like Hong Kong, Singapore, London, Dubai, Tokyo, or even one of the bigger cities here [in the U.S.]." Frank, a male Chinese student, stated he could not "decide what city I [he] want to go to unless I get the job I want." For these men, it was important they stay in the U.S., but they went on to talk about how their job location was "not super important." For both men, the fact that their families both lived in their native countries did

not particularly influence their migration decisions. This was because “males are less dependent on their families” and so he did not feel a strong pull to return to be with their parents. These attitudes reflect the societal understanding of traditional masculine characteristics of independence. Adhering to this belief, both Dan and Frank do not feel pressured to return after graduating, and these ideas reflect themselves when they say they are uncertain about what to do after initially staying in the U.S.

The finding that men are likely to stay because of their traditional gendered understandings of what it means to ‘be a man’ is, has been so far, based on my interviews with men. However, women also expressed the typical gendered assumptions of masculinity that the men themselves described. Women believed men should pursue a career that pays well and is prestigious. Additionally, women believed men could adapt to different cultures better, which was an idea none of the men expressed. Women believed men should pursue certain industries and live in the U.S. to pursue their career and be financially stable. One woman, who was uncertain with her decision to attend medical school, said that if she were a man she would have to be “less indecisive” and “feel more obligated to be accepted because as a man I think career is important.” Women expressed how men should take jobs or put themselves in circumstances that would allow them to earn more money:

- “guys feel more pressure to find a high paying job to support their family, and they pursue business”
- men should do something more practical like finance so they can earn a lot of money instead of psychology”
- “the income here [in the U.S.] is higher than in China so it gives you more financial security and men need to provide for their families.”

- “you get paid more in America than you get paid in Korea. So men would prefer if the pay was better in Korea, but they go where the pay is better.”
- “as a man I would be more obligated to do grad school because once you get out of grad school your paycheck becomes a lot higher, like around \$100,000.”
- “if I were a guy I think my parents would expect me to have a successful career – like they would expect me to have a ‘gorgeous’ or prestigious job”
- “males might stay more than girls because males are expected to support their family more than females”

Women also believed men to be more independent and to adapt to the culture more easily:

- “men are more likely to stay in America because men are more independent and they don’t want to stay with their parents”
- “men are more likely to stay in the USA because they are easy to adapt to the culture because it is easier to talk to the Americans about football and sports and male things”
- “males are better at assimilating to new cultures”
- “if I were a male I would be more independent and more decisive so I wouldn’t really listen to my parents and I would decide my decision. I would have a bigger say in my decision.”
- “men really like the culture in America”

These stories reflect a cultural discourse that is gendered – that men should be the primary breadwinner, should be more independent, and more adapted to culture. From all this data, we find that men hear a cohesive story from other men, women, and their parents that they should follow these expectations. Upon realizing them, men internalize and make life plans

around these attitudes. This helps us to understand why male participants unanimously expressed wanting to stay in the U.S. post-graduation, why some of their parents encouraged or pressured them to stay, why they unanimously thought more men than women from their own native countries would be likely to stay, and why they were less likely to change their minds about their decisions – unless extreme unforeseen circumstances arose. We can understand why men make the migration decisions they do when we listen to what they think about how men and women should behave. East Asian society generally places greater pressure on men to succeed than women, and this understanding manifests itself in people’s migration decisions. These findings ultimately relate to the sociological theory of “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman, 1987). According to this concept, all individuals in society follow socially constructed ideas of what it means to “be” a man or woman (West and Zimmerman, 1987). These ideas are reinforced when we interact with others and when others assess individual behavior as being masculine or feminine (West and Zimmerman, 1987). In this study, men “do gender” when they make migration decisions about their future.

Accordingly, the next questions to ask and answer are: what are the societal expectations of women? How do these expectations differ from those of men? And ultimately, how do women shape their migration decisions based on these attitudes?

### *Gendered Responses: Women*

Fourteen out of the fifteen women interviewed for this project expressed varying levels of intentions with regard to staying in the U.S. after graduation. Like men, these women wanted to stay for the advantages conferred by gaining working experience. However, while men were either firmly intent on staying or uncertain, women expressed various levels of intent with regard



to staying. The different levels of intent expressed could be because a greater number of women were interviewed than men. Women's migration intentions can be categorized into four different sub-groups: stay here for a long time, stay here temporarily and go back, go back immediately, stay here then uncertain about the future.

Three women were firmly intent on staying. Their primary reason for staying was their feeling more comfortable with U.S. culture (Figure 2.a). They had lived in the U.S. for approximately ten years on average, attending both middle school and high school. These women had unique circumstances, in that unlike other international students who attended boarding school or lived with host families, these individuals lived with their families while in the U.S. During this period of time, they did not return to their home countries, unlike other international students who would typically return during school breaks. In doing so, these women felt that they had a "cultural mindset that is closer to an American mindset." Harriet, a Japanese woman, felt that she "could vacation in Japan, but because most of my education has been in the U.S. and I'm used to the social life here and stuff, I don't feel 100% comfortable in Japan." Two women were U.S. citizens, and one was a permanent resident. As stated previously, participants were not excluded on the basis of U.S. immigration status. At the time of the study, the women were considered to be international students because their current permanent place of residence was in their home countries.

The women expressed a dislike for the culture of hierarchy in their native countries. Having spent their formative years in the U.S., they felt they had closer friends here, which played an important factor when making their migration decision. Although their parents currently lived in their native countries, their migration intentions were to stay in the U.S. and find employment, and hopefully live in the U.S. for the foreseeable future. Yet, they also

entertained the possibility of returning if they were not able to find employment in the U.S. for a while after graduating, citing that having a proficient use of the English language made them competitive job applicants in their native countries. For example, one Korean student, Jane, talked about how “Korean people have to take this test called the TOEFL that tests how good you are at English and there were studies that showed that people with higher TOEFL scores get jobs in better companies. A lot more than other people who have like good GPAs or other stuff....so this obsession with English is really a big thing.” Harriet, a Japanese woman, described how “a lot of big Japanese companies like bilingual people especially because English is hard for Japanese people. So being bilingual is a really important skill that companies look for – so if I’m not as competitive [as a job applicant] in America then I’ll definitely have more of a chance in Japan because I can speak English and have an education in the U.S.”

One interesting aspect of their migration decision that differed from men’s responses of staying for a long period of time was feeling guilty about being away from their parents. One woman described how her parents gave her “the pity card” about living in the U.S. instead of living in Korea, and how “they want [her] there [in Korea] and see them every weekend.” She felt that “my parents should play a really big factor in my decision because they are my parents,” and then went on to discuss how she would visit them often or that they could come and stay with her for a while as a way to mediate her wanting to stay in the U.S. and her parents’ desire to be close to her. Another Japanese woman stated how being near her parents is “something that [she] should consider” and a reason why the option of returning was a “back-up plan” if she failed to find employment within a reasonable period of time. In contrast, some male participants described how their parents, who lived in their home countries, had advised them to stay in the U.S. to benefit their career. One man even went so far as to describe feeling guilty about

returning immediately after graduation to this home country because he felt his parents would be disappointed in his inability to find a job. Why might parents of daughters want them to return but parents of male students want them to stay? Why might daughters feel guilty about not returning but sons feel guilty about returning? This can be explained in light of the fact that society, which includes parents, place different pressures on men and women to succeed in the work force. On average, East Asian society expects men to be more successful and concerned with jobs, which can help to explain why male international students responded more adamantly about staying in the U.S. after graduation to develop their careers. Meanwhile, on average, society expects women to be more concerned with and influenced by relationships and families, which helps to explain why even women who feel more comfortable in the U.S. culture would entertain the idea of returning in order to be closer to family.

However, most women reported they wanted to stay here temporarily then return to their home country. These women wanted to stay temporarily, on average for three to five years, and subsequently return to their home countries. The average range of the number of years women wanted to stay was three to five years, while men on average wanted to stay at least for ten years. Their primary reason for staying was to advance their career for when they eventually returned to their home countries, which was discussed in the similar responses section. As for reasons for returning to their home countries, I had predicted in the introduction that these women would state their desire to be closer to family as one of the most important factors influencing their return. The interview responses support this hypothesis.

Parents played an important role in women's decision making processes about migration. On average, women characterized parental influence on their migration intentions as a 7.5, on a 1-10 scale, with 10 being very influential and 1 being very not influential. This value was

significantly greater than the average value of men. Parental influence acted as a pull on international students to return, rather than a push to stay in the U.S.

Catherine, a Chinese woman, described her plan to attend medical school in the U.S. because “medical schools are great in America and they provide the best medical education.” Subsequently, she would practice medicine in her native country or surrounding countries like Australia or Singapore, instead of the U.S., because those places were closer in distance to her parents. She felt pressured to attend a good medical school in the U.S. her parents have “paid a lot of money for [her] undergraduate schooling so they want it to be worth the money”, but she also felt that her parents wanted her to be near them. She described her parents as wanting her to “graduate as soon as possible because they want me to be in Korea near them.” In a similar situation, another Korean woman described her intention of being employed in the U.S. to “gain more opportunities” when she returned. However, she also described that her parents “just want [her] to come back to Korea and live with them” and that she would want to return to Korea because her “family is there in Korea.” A woman from Hong Kong described how she wanted to stay to either gain working experience before applying to an MBA program, or attend law school. However, she would “stay for a while and go back because of my family....because they’re in Hong Kong that’s why I want to go back and I want to share my life with them even though I don’t talk much about my life with them at least we are at the same place...that’s pretty important.” For Stacey, another Korean woman, wanted to first attain a Master’s degree and find a job doing chemistry research or working for a chemical company, but eventually return to Korea “knowing how much my parents want me next to them, I think staying close to my family is very important to me.”

These episodes reveal that women want to find U.S. jobs. Had this not been the case, I would have expected fewer women wanting to be employed in the U.S. in order to gain a competitive advantage. However, women not only experience pressure to find employment, but they must also negotiate parental pressure to return to their native countries when making their decisions. When describing how important it was that they stay in the U.S., the answers ranged from “somewhat important” to “very important,” while among the men it was unanimously “very important.” Understanding that women take their parents’ desires into consideration, this variance in answers regarding how important it is for them to stay in the U.S. makes sense. Therefore, in balancing these two different pushes and pulls, these women devised a migration situation attempting to appease the expectations they have of their career and their parents’ expectations of returning (Figure 2.b). However, these women were not being reluctantly forced to return to their native countries against their will. These women knew that their parents wanted them to return, and they also wanted to go back for their parents.

For three women, parental influence played a more significant role in shaping their migration decisions. One woman talked about wanting to get a job in the U.S. to gain a leg up in Korea’s competitive job market, but described how her parents did not want her to work in the U.S. because they missed her back home. She went on to say further that “if I get a job here in America but my father tells me not to go, then I will not go.” Another Chinese woman also expressed a similar scenario where “if my parents want me to come back after graduation immediately then I will go back.” Also, in describing the role her family played in her decision to return, she talked about how she was very “influenced by my dad who makes the decisions in my family because he makes the money and he’s the most powerful and he’s the head of the family.” These women did not feel resentment or disappointed that their intentions to stay might

be prevented by their parents' decisions about their life plans. Instead, they described it as "okay" because they eventually wanted to return anyway. Although they all reported wanting to find a job in the U.S. after graduation, it was only "somewhat important" that they stay in the U.S. One Chinese woman described how "if I have it [a job] then it's good, if not then it's okay too" For these women, it was not surprising to find that they adhered to this attitude, considering that their parents factored significantly into their migration decision.

Only one woman was firmly intent on returning to her home country immediately after graduating. Her primary reason for returning was to prepare to attend medical school in Korea (Figure 2.c.). Her other reasons included wanting to be near her family and in the culture where she felt more comfortable. In her particular situation, her career aspirations and desires to be with family and culture were aligned in the same direction – to return.

Finally only one woman, Rebecca, expressed full uncertainty about whether to stay or return after finishing graduate school in the U.S. She enjoyed the education system here and also appreciated the diversity of psychology research that was conducted in the U.S. In Hong Kong, she described that "most people focus on natural science research and social science in Hong Kong are emerging" and that doing research in Hong Kong would be "boring after a while because I'm just researching in one area." However, her decision to stay or return after graduate school "changes a lot." The main factor pulling her back to Hong Kong was her family, and she knew that her "parents obviously want me [her] to return" (Figure 2.d.).

Rebecca's response is similar to what women who wanted to stay temporarily and then return said, in that career advantages act as a pull to stay in the U.S. and that parental influence acts as a push to return. Her response differs from those of others, however, in that her desire to

conduct psychology research in the U.S. is considered equally as important as her desire to be with her family, and that her career aspirations are not aligned with her parents' wishes.

Meanwhile, Rebecca's uncertainty differs from the uncertainty two men expressed in the previous section. While hers stems from the equal weight given to career and parental influence, the men's uncertainty stems from the different job opportunities that might show up in their future and the fact that they see themselves as global participants, not necessarily tied down to any one particular country. Again, we see that women are more concerned with parental influence, while men are less so.

### *Women's Gendered Expectations*

Women's migration decisions reflect some gendered expectations. As suggested above, women were more likely to consider parents as an important factor in their migration decision, which supports the traditional that women care more about family. Furthermore, the expectations women have of women is important to the issue of migration decisions because the values people hold and the ideas they have of gender roles can shape what life choices they make and why they make them. Overall, women believe they are more influenced by culture, that marriage is important, and that they are less responsible for financial circumstances. These expectations exhibit the traditional gendered expectations of femininity.

Women believed it was important to get married and have a family, as evidenced by these interview excerpts: "females want to go back and live with their family and get married", "females want to go back and live with their family and get married", and "females want to get married and have families." When asked whether or not these same expectations applied to the women themselves, ten women responded that it was currently only a minor concern when

making their migration decisions because they were still young, and it was too early to be planning for that far in the future.

With regard to culture, women found women to be “more influenced by culture”, that “female international students can’t bear with living in America”, and that “women are not open to other people.” One Korean woman described how “women are more attached to things, and we miss home and miss friends more and we are more emotional.” When asked whether this characterization of women applied to her migration decision to stay temporarily then return, she stated it was applicable. When asked if her migration decision would change had she been a man, she replied “yes it would change and I would just stay here because if I think like a man I feel like I would be less attached to things than a woman, and I would have to pursue my career more aggressively or something like that.” These attitudes reflect the traditional gender norm that women are more emotional than men, and ultimately adhering to these norms plays an important role in shaping one’s migration decisions.

On the topic of employment and financial circumstances, some women believed there was “no strong need for women to pursue studying or a career,” and that “women can marry guys and live off them.” In response to whether or not their migration decisions would differ had they been men, several women said their decisions would change. A Chinese woman felt she would probably feel “less indecisive” about attending medical school because men “need to provide for their family.” Similarly, a Korean woman described how she would feel “more obligated to go do grad school” rather than pursue a masters, which takes less time to complete, if she were instead a man “because your paycheck become a lot higher, like around \$100,000.” This attitude implies that she believes that men are expected to earn more money than women, which adheres to the traditional gendered notions of masculinity and femininity. A woman from



Hong Kong described how she would have pursued “something more practical” had she been a man. A Chinese student described how she would have pursued a “gorgeous or prestigious job” if she were a man. These attitudes reveal not only women’s expectations of masculinity, as was discussed in the previous section, but they also conversely reveal their ideas of femininity.

How do these attitudes affect the decision making process of one’s migration? These values define the different pressures women feel and take into consideration when making life decisions. If an individual believes it is more of the man’s responsibility than a woman’s to take responsibility for a family’s financial circumstance, then she might not have as great a desire to stay in the U.S. to gain a career advantage. If a woman believes that women can rely upon men to act as the primary breadwinner of the family, then she would feel not as pressured to stay in the U.S. If an individual believes women are more emotional and less able to adapt to cultures, then it would be more likely that she returns to her native country. Ultimately, if an individual holds certain expectations and believes these apply to her, she makes choices about where to live and what to do on the basis of these norms.

Surprisingly, when asked about whether their migration decisions would change had they been the opposite gender, two women stated their decisions would not change because they were a “tomboy” or “like a guy.” Did these attitudes mean both women were actively resisting gendered stereotypes? In fact, these women exhibited traditional gender norms of masculinity and femininity when describing what it meant to be a tomboy: “being a tomboy means that I am more independent, strong minded, and able to adapt to the new culture well” and “because I am like a guy I am more independent and need less emotional support.” However, they felt the gendered norms of masculinity applied to them more than the norms of femininity. So how did these attitudes impact their migration decisions? Surprisingly, their intentions did not vary

significantly from those described by other women who did *not* identify themselves as tomboys. Both women wanted to stay in the U.S. temporarily after graduation and subsequently return to their native countries. Furthermore, parental influence and the fact that their parents lived in their home countries were the biggest pulls for their returning. Yet, both women believed that more men than women who were international students would be likely to stay after graduation because they thought men would want to make more money and because it is easier for men to adapt to U.S. culture. A disconnect exists in their responses to these two questions – while they believe they are like men and they believe that men are more likely to stay, they themselves want to return after temporarily staying. Not surprisingly, none of the male participants described themselves as being like women. The fact that women can freely describe themselves as being like men indicates that male characteristics hold a sort of greater power or are better characteristics to have ascribed to oneself. Accordingly, the fact that no man described himself as being like a woman indicates that female characteristics are devalued. These attitudes can be understood in light of the fact that masculinity is generally more rigidly constructed than femininity (Kimmel 2000). That it is more acceptable for women to be like men, but not as acceptable for men to be like women, demonstrates the inherent inequality with regard to socialized gender role construction.

The finding that more women want to return to their native countries, immediately or after first temporarily staying in the U.S., because of their internalized expectations of traditional gender norms has been, so far, only based on interviews with women. Unsurprisingly, men also adhered to the traditional notion of femininity that women supposedly care more about being married, are less concerned about finances, and are more emotional and less independent. These are some of men's expectations of women:

- “females get married and quit their jobs”
- “it’s better for females to be in Korea because they have to get into the marriage market, like blind dates and introductions”
- “in the traditional sense girls start to think about marriage and they have think about what would happen to them”
- “women want to see their parents and live with their parents”
- “males are less dependent on families than women”
- “[women do] not need to focus as much on career”

All the men who talked about marriage mentioned that women would want to return to their native countries to get married. Men stated that “it would be convenient” to be in their native country, which implies they suppose women will marry a co-national counterpart. A Hong Kong male talked about how “Hong Kong women want to marry Hong Kong guys so they may move back to Hong Kong.” These attitudes reveal that these men generally expect women from their country to marry a co-national individual. It is also interesting that men frequently discussed marriage as an important factor women hold important. Yet, during the interviews with women, they did not consider marriage to be a particularly significant factor at this stage in their lives because they believed it was still too early to be thinking seriously about marriage.

Both men and women’s expectations of women are similar in that they hold the traditional gendered notion of femininity – women should get married, be more concerned with relationships, and are more emotional, among other characterizations. Furthermore, none of these characterizations were related to one’s success in her career or financial earning potential. Ultimately, how do men’s expectations of women relate to women’s migration decisions? The stories reveal that like men, women similarly hear a cohesive story from society about what

women are thought of and expected to do. However, men and women hear quite different stories. Identifying these differences helps us to understand why men and women make different migration decisions.

## **Conclusion**

Studying international students' migration intent contributes to the broader phenomenon of "brain circulation." By determining which values and factors these international students find important and use to shape their life plans, we can better understand why individuals stay or return. Their migration decisions affect countries because they not only contribute to the diversity of individuals within that nation, but also contribute to countries' advancement in the modern age, in that they have the capacity to contribute to the economy as skilled workers. In learning their decision-making process, countries wanting to boost their skilled worker population can use this information to develop policies facilitating this process.

The majority of international students expressed intent on staying in the U.S. after graduation to find a job. Both men and women expressed similar responses with regard to certain topics like the difficulties in finding employment as an international student, the advantages gained by working in the U.S., the positive and negative perceptions of the U.S. working environment and the working environment in their home countries, respectively, the openness of U.S. culture, and a mindset of "getting something back." The findings reveal that while peoples' migration decisions are based on their personal preferences and individual career aspirations, broader societal norms also influence their decision-making.

The most significant finding from this study reveals that gendered expectations affect students' migration decisions. Because men are expected to uphold the societal notion of being

the primary breadwinner, they are more inclined to stay in the U.S. to advance their career. Meanwhile, women these days are not only expected to contribute to the work force, but must also consider parental wishes. Furthermore, women are viewed as being more emotional and involved in relationships, and therefore expected to return. These expectations lead women to create a scenario in which they temporarily stay in the U.S. but eventually return to their home countries to live there permanently. Of course, these claims about gender differences do not imply that men only care about their careers and women only think about families. While both genders consider each of these factors, the findings suggest that men and women place different amounts of weight on various factors. While migration decisions are personal, they are also structural in nature because individuals' choices both reflect and reinforce gender norms their societies value. Given these results, it would be a logical next step to determine the level of gender equity in the globalization of the brain circulation phenomenon.

This finding directly supports a survey of Chinese undergraduate students' migration intentions that was conducted in Canada. Researchers found that male Chinese students were more influenced by career-related factors, while female Chinese undergraduate students considered emotional and family-related factors (Lu, et. al 2009). Not only do my results reinforce their survey findings, but they also identify the framework of gendered expectations to help explain why these differences exist in migration intent. The researchers explain how their results can be considered in Canadian immigration policies that aim to retain the international student population in order to build up their skilled worker population (Lu, et. al. 2009). However, the implication that gendered expectations influence migration decisions may suggest that men will stay in Canada more than women if policies designed to retain international students' are applied.

Perhaps the conclusion that gendered norms and expectations affect migration decisions is not so surprising and novel, given that East Asian countries rank quite low on the World Economic Forum's 2012 Global Gender Gap Index (Global Gender Gap – World Economic Forum). This study captures the magnitude and scope of gender-based disparities in 135 different countries, evaluating gender discrepancies in terms of economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment (Global Gender Gap – World Economic Forum). China, Japan, and Korea ranked at 69<sup>th</sup>, 101, and 108 among all countries. Taiwan and Hong Kong were not included as individual nations (Global Gender Gap – World Economic Forum). Furthermore, in the 2010 Corporate Gender Gap report, Japan identified gender norms and cultural practices as the most problematic barrier to women's rise to positions of leadership in companies (Corporate Gender Gap – World Economic Forum). While China and Korea were included in the study, the country profiles were not included in the report because of the difficulty in obtaining responses from the companies, which appears to have stemmed from sensitivity around the topic and business culture norms (Corporate Gender Gap – World Economic Forum). The extent to which more men work than women, more men hold ministerial and parliamentary seats, men are paid more than women, and other variables, gives us insight into these societies' norms and values regarding gender. Given these differences, it is not very surprising to find that gendered expectations also play a role in men and women's migration decisions.

With this knowledge, it would be useful for future migration researchers to focus simply on gender and gendered migration experiences. Having set up this study initially to identify significant variables that could affect migration intent, I devised my interview questions to touch upon a variety of factors. Therefore, honing the questions asked to participants in order to

thoroughly investigate only one variable – gender – would help to provide deeper insight into gendered expectations with regard to migration.

Another project, which would require greater resources and a greater time commitment both on the part of investigators and participants, would be to conduct a longitudinal study of male and female international students. While studying migration intent is important in providing insight into individuals' decision-making processes, it would be useful to know whether or not undergraduates actually followed through on their described intentions. It would be interesting to see whether or not gender differences exist with regard to how closely people do or do not adhere to their intentions. More specifically, it would be useful to measure the proportion of men and women who found jobs as international students after graduation, especially since almost all the students interviewed wanted to find a job in the U.S. despite the rigorous challenges of finding employment without residency or citizenship. Would men be more likely than women to follow through with their intent of staying? How much of the variance between actuality and intent can be explained by gendered expectations, and how much can be attributed to external circumstances? These would be interesting questions to investigate through this project.

Other studies could expand the focus of gender to include other nationalities and ethnicities. This would help determine whether gendered expectations affecting migration intent applies to East Asian population, but also among other populations such as students from other regions of Asia, from Europe, Africa, or the Middle East. This would help identify what the gender differences are among various regions, and whether or not those differences affect migration of students. Or perhaps in some regions, would other extenuating factors be of greater significance in determining students' migration intentions?

While the difficulty in finding employment as an international student that interviewees repeatedly expressed is not surprising, I feel that all sociological research should strive to expose the concerns and experiences of the studied population. U.S. academic institutions dedicate time and resources to help its domestic students, yet there does not seem to be as strong a support for its international students in this area. Universities and colleges should be more cognizant of the fact that this particular subset of its student population wants to find jobs in the U.S., and have even greater difficulty doing so than its other students. International centers at respective institutions should be more involved at career fairs, and host workshops or events aiming to help students become cognizant of the employment situation and giving advice specifically tailored to their unique situation.

Additionally, international students themselves should also be more aware that U.S. immigration policies do not allow the employment process to be easy. Several students described making the decision to come to the U.S. very rapidly, over the course of only a few weeks. Students, and their families who are supporting them both emotionally and financially, should have realistic expectations before dedicating a significant period of time and money for their study abroad experience, which may not easily produce the desired 'return' on their investment.



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*Appendix A: Email Prompt*

Are you an undergraduate student?

Are you an international student (permanent residency outside the U.S.)?

Are you from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, or Taiwan?

If you've answered yes to all three questions, please consider sharing your experience of immigrating to the United States! This interview will ask you questions about your immigration experience, as well as your migration intentions in the future.

The interview is expected to last around 45-60 minutes.

A \$10 gift card will be provided as compensation.

To schedule a time to meet, or if you have any questions, please send an email to [umichmigrationstudy@gmail.com](mailto:umichmigrationstudy@gmail.com).

Thank you!

Are you an international student (current permanent residency outside U.S.)?

Are you currently an undergraduate student?

Are you from China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Japan?

Participate in an interview about your immigration to America!



**Time Required: ~ 45 min to 1 hour**  
**Compensation: \$10 Gift Card**

For more information please contact:

- [UMICHMIGRATIONSTUDY@GMAIL.COM](mailto:UMICHMIGRATIONSTUDY@GMAIL.COM)
- IRB #

<a href="mailto:umichmigrationstudy@gmail.com">umichmigrationstudy@gmail.com</a>
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*Appendix C: Pre-Interview Questionnaire*

- a. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Country of Origin
- e. Years residing in Native country
  - i. Less than or equal to 5 years
  - ii. Greater than 5 to less than or equal to 10 years
  - iii. Greater than 10 to less than or equal to 15 years
  - iv. Greater than 15 to less than or equal to 20 years
  - v. Greater than 20 to less than or equal to 25 years
- f. Years residing in U.S.
  - i. Less than or equal to 3 years
  - ii. Greater than 3 to less than or equal to 6 years
  - iii. Greater than 6 to less than or equal to 9 years
  - iv. Greater than 9 to less than or equal to 12 years
  - v. Greater than 12 to less than or equal to 15 years
  - vi. Greater than 15 to less than or equal to 18 years
  - vii. Greater than 18 to less than or equal to 21 years
- g. Class Standing/expected date of graduation: \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Major/Minor: \_\_\_\_\_
- i. Parental income
  - i. 0 – \$50,000 USD
  - ii. > \$50,000 USD – \$100,000 USD
  - iii. > \$100,000 USD – \$150,000 USD
  - i. > \$150,000 USD – \$200,000 USD
  - ii. > \$200,000 USD

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study**  
**Migrational intent of East Asian international students**

**Principal Investigator:** Young-Min Cho, University of Michigan Undergraduate Student  
**Faculty Advisor:** Karin Martin, Professor of Sociology, Director of Undergraduate Studies – Sociology, University of Michigan

**Invitation to participate in a research study**

You are invited to be part of a research study that seeks to understand the factors affecting the migrational intentions of East Asian international students.

**Description of subject involvement**

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to participate in an interview regarding the topic of migrational intent.

**Benefits**

Although you may not directly benefit from being in this study, others may benefit because this research will add to the scholarly literature regarding migration and international students.

**Risks and discomforts**

There are no risks associated with this study because the data collection is completely anonymous and the topic is not sensitive.

**Compensation**

Upon completion of the interview, the participant will receive a \$15 Starbucks gift card. If the participant wishes to stop the interview, he/she will receive \$15 Starbucks gift card.

**Confidentiality**

We plan to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify you. There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the research is done safely and properly, including the University of Michigan, government offices or the study sponsor, [**Karin Martin**].

To keep your information safe, the researchers will [**destroy all recorded data and transcripts upon publishing the results of the study**]

Also, if you tell us something that makes us believe that you or others have been or may be physically harmed, we may report that information to the appropriate agencies.

### **Storage and future use of data**

The data or specimens you provide will be stored **[in a secured laptop]**

The researchers will retain the data/specimens for **[one year]**

The researchers will dispose of your data/specimens by **[May, 2013]**

The data/specimens will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study and will not contain information that could identify you **[because upon publication of the study, the data will be destroyed].**

### **Voluntary nature of the study**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to withdraw early, **[you will decide whether or not the data collected can be used in the research].**

### **Contact information**

If you have questions about this research, including questions about scheduling or your compensation for participating, you may contact **[Young-Min Cho, [ymcho@umich.edu](mailto:ymcho@umich.edu), or Karin Martin, [kamartin@umich.edu](mailto:kamartin@umich.edu) ]**.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 540 E Liberty St., Ste 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933 **[or toll free, (866) 936-0933], [for international calls include the US Calling Code 1 and the exit number for the country of origin XXX+1+734-936-0933], [irbhsbs@umich.edu](mailto:irbhsbs@umich.edu).**

### **Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

*I agree to participate in the study.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



*Appendix E: Interview Questions*

1. How did you decide to come to the United States to pursue your education?
  - a. How did you feel about coming to the U.S.?
  - b. How long did you intend to stay when you first arrived in the U.S.?
2. What do you like about living in the U.S.?
3. What do you dislike about living in the U.S.?
4. What have been some of the most positive episodes during your educational experience in the U.S.?
5. What have been some of the most negative episodes during your educational experience in the U.S.?
6. Do you intend to stay in the U.S. or return to China/Korea/Taiwan/Macau/Japan/Hong Kong after graduation? Why?
  - a. Do you intend to go back immediately after graduation?
  - b. Do you intend to go back to China/Korea/Taiwan/Macau/Japan/Hong Kong after a few years of working experience?
  - c. Do you intend to pursue professional or career plans for a significant amount of time in the U.S.?
7. How did you make your decision? [How will you make your decision? How are you thinking about your decision at this point in time? Who are you talking to about this decision? Why is it a hard decision?]
  - a. Who did you consult or speak to about your decision?
  - b. When did you make this decision?
  - c. When did you feel strongly that this was the right decision for you?
  - d. Was there a particular experience that made you want to come to the United States?
  - e. [If not responding – in an ideal situation and everything went the way you wanted it to go, what do you imagine your migration situation would be in 5/10 years?]
  - f. [If want to stay in U.S. after - How important is it that you stay in the U.S. after graduation?]
8. How do you feel about staying versus going? Why?

- a. What's chance that you think you will change your mind about your decision once you graduate?
  - b. What do you feel are some of the greatest factors pushing you back to your native country or pulling you to stay in the U.S.?
9. Family
- a. Do you have extended family in the U.S.? Are you particularly close to them?
  - b. How close is your relationship with your parents?
  - c. How close is your relationship with your siblings (if any)?
  - d. How do you think these relationships have affected your migration intentions?
  - e. What does your family want you to do?
  - f. What do they say about this issue?
  - g. What advice do they give you?
  - h. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being very influential and 1 being not very influential, how would you rank your parents influence on your migration decision?
10. Friends
- a. What do your friends want you to do?
  - b. What do they say about this issue?
  - c. What advice do they give you?
  - d. Does some of the advice vary?
11. Post-undergraduate educational/professional opportunities; Employment prospects
- a. Do you wish to pursue future education or develop your career in the U.S. or in your native country?
  - b. Do you think there are certain advantages or disadvantages in pursuing your career in the U.S. or in your home country?
12. How do others make this decision
- a. Do you think that more male or female China/Korea/Taiwan/Macau/Japan/Hong Kong international students are more likely to stay? Why do you think that might be the case?
  - b. If you had been the opposite gender, do you think your migration decision would have been different? How would it be different? Why might it change/not change?

**Table 1.**

<b>Men's</b> Expectations of <i>Men</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “men are more responsible for family’s financial circumstances”</li><li>• “men consider a few more factors than women in terms of the future”</li><li>• “men are more independent in the emotional sense and less fragile”</li></ul>
<b>Men's</b> Expectations of <i>Women</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “females get married and quit their jobs”</li><li>• “it’s better for females to be in Korea because they have to get into the marriage market, like blind dates and introductions”</li><li>• “in the traditional sense girls start to think about marriage and they have think about what would happen to them”</li><li>• “women want to see their parents and live with their parents”</li><li>• “if I [a man] were a woman I would have to get married soon, and at that age my parents would put pressure on me to get married”</li></ul>
<b>Women's</b> Expectations of <i>Women</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “girls can marry guys and live off them”</li><li>• “females want to go back and live with family”</li><li>• “females want to get married and have families”</li><li>• “girls are more influenced by culture”</li><li>• “women aren’t open to other people and it’s hard to make friends”</li><li>• “there’s no strong need for women to pursue a career”</li></ul>
<b>Women's</b> Expectations of <i>Men</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “men have responsibility of supporting the family”</li><li>• “men should do something practical”</li><li>• “men should be less indecisive”</li><li>• “for men it’s easier to talk to the Americans about football and sports and male things”</li><li>• “men are more independent and don’t need as much emotional support as women”</li><li>• “men are really independent and strong minded. They can make important decisions, take care of themselves well, and adapt to the new culture well”</li></ul>

**Figure 1: Men**

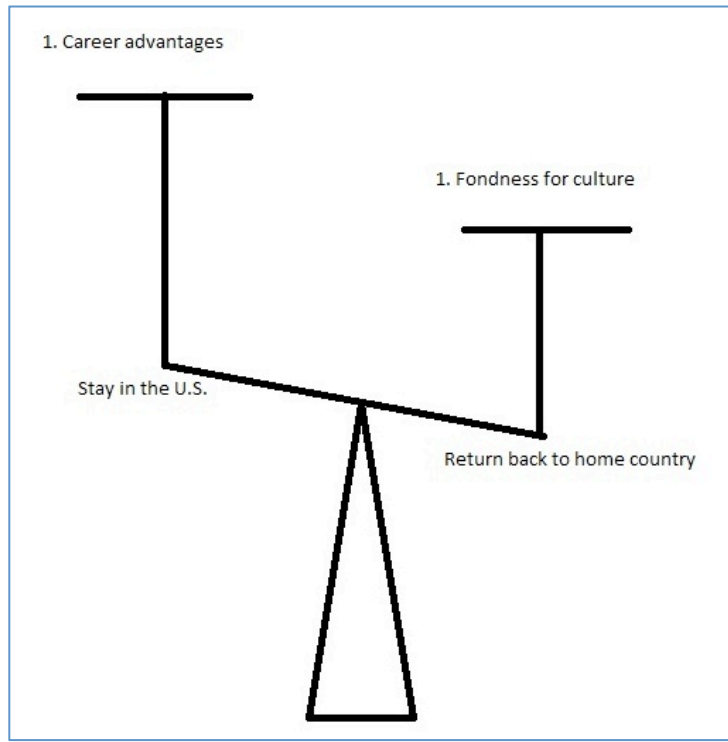


Figure 1.1 Main factors for man wanting to stay in the U.S., then return to home country.

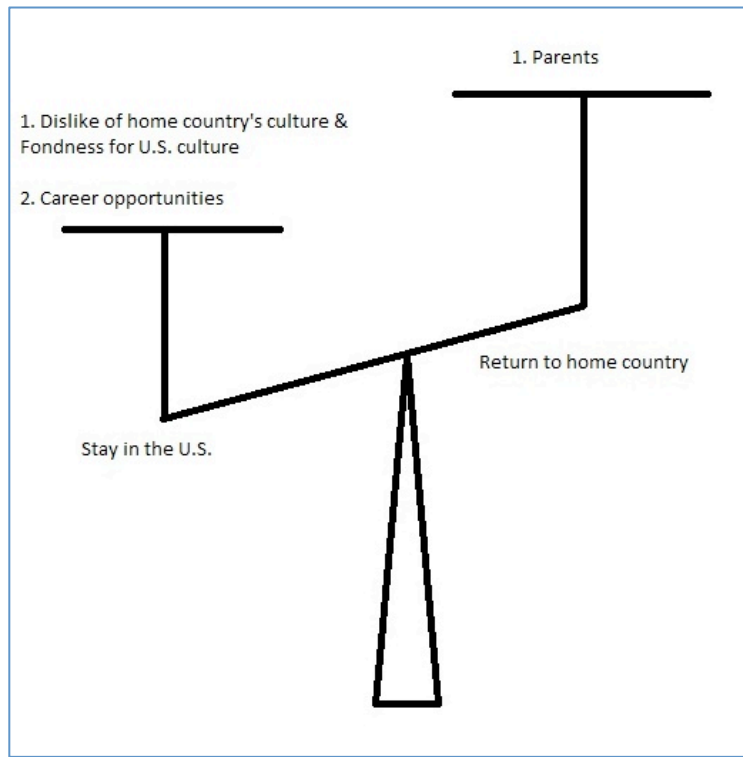


Figure 1.2 Main factors for man wanting to stay in U.S. permanently

**Figure 2: Women**

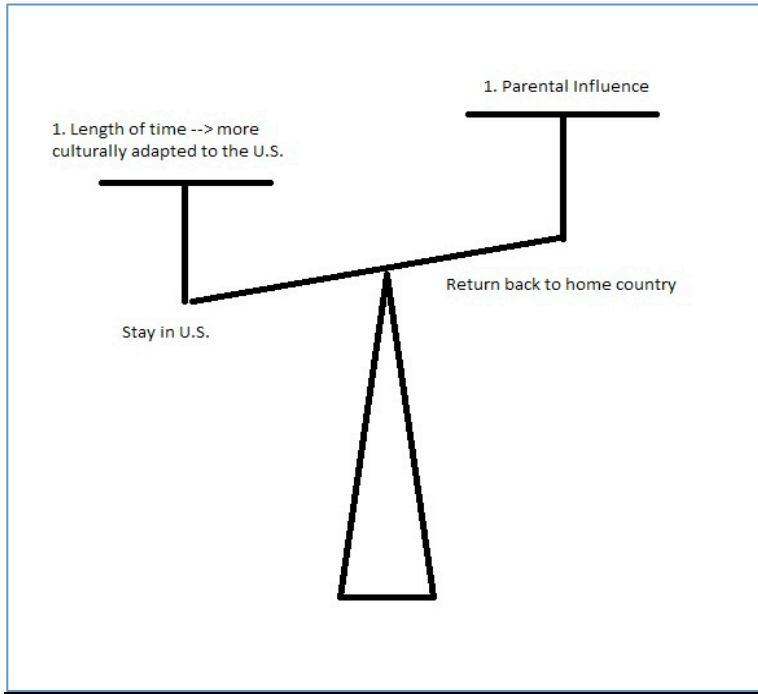


Figure 2.a. Main factors women firmly intent on staying consider when making their migration decisions.

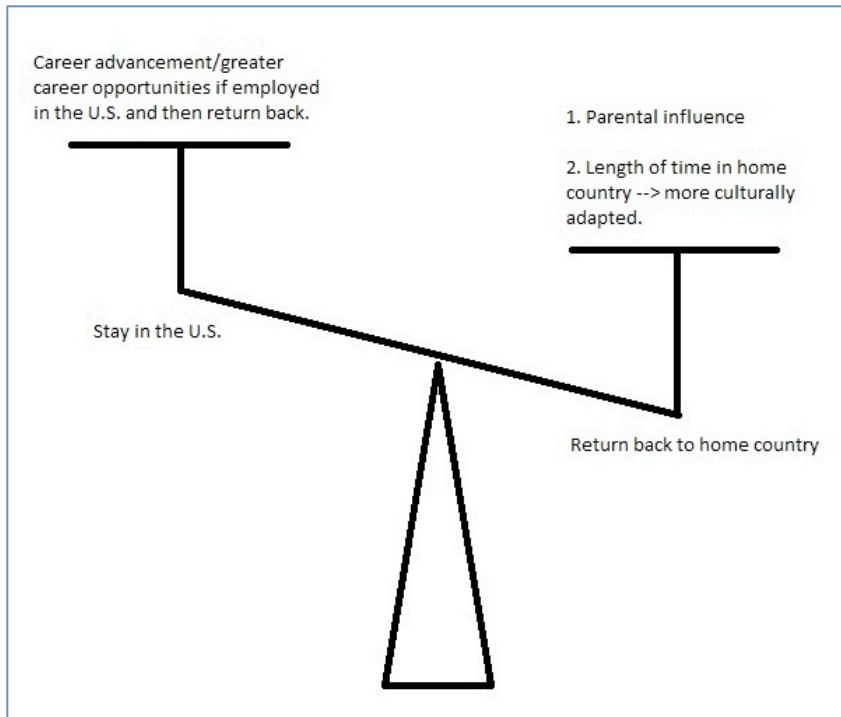


Figure 2.b. Main factors women who want to stay temporarily then return consider when making their migration decisions.

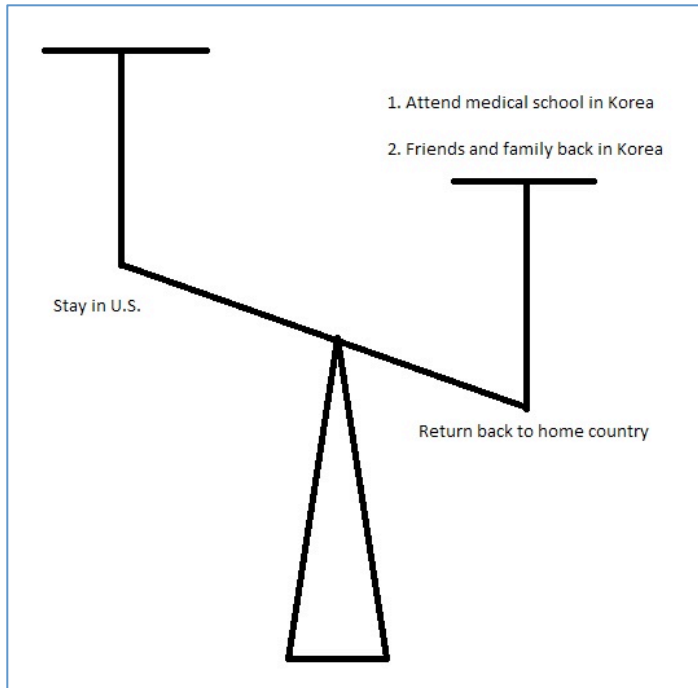


Figure 2.c. Main factors woman who wants to return immediately to home country.

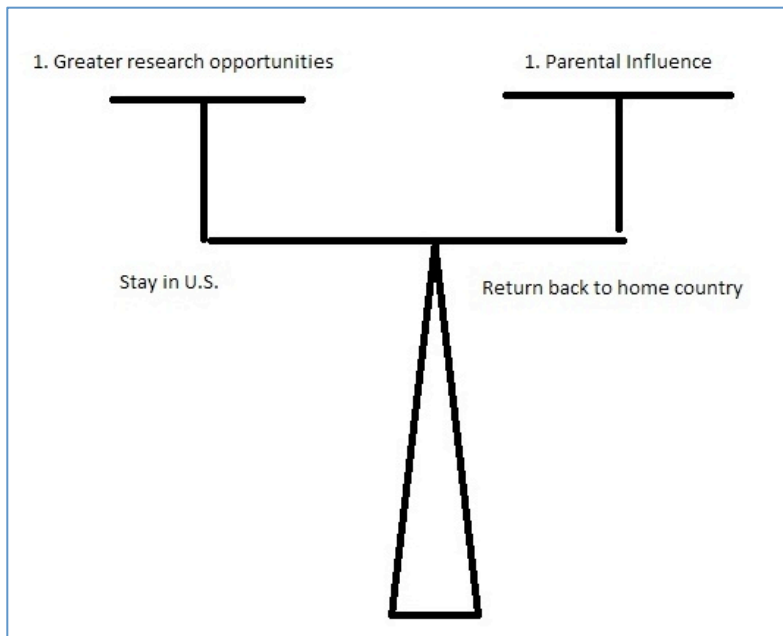


Figure 2.d. Main factors women who are uncertain consider when making their migration decisions.