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Eyad Alfattal
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# GLOBALIZATION, INTERNATIONALIZATION, MARKETING, AND COLLEGE CHOICE: KEY FACTORS AFFECTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' MOBILITY

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A Dissertation

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

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by

Eyad Alfattal

June 2017

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Approved by:

Jay Fiene, Committee Chair, Education

Marita Mahoney, Committee Member

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ABSTRACT

While globalization, internationalization, and marketing in higher education were intensifying with an inexorable veracity, little was known about the strength of factors and the dynamics by which those factors that affect international students' mobility operated. Previous studies used different and overlapping theoretical models, and findings were inconsistent and, in some cases, contradictory. The objective of the present study was to investigate what influenced international students' choices to study at a comprehensive college in southern California, as well as, explore and propose a new combined conceptual model that could explain international students' cross-national mobility. A two-phase explanatory sequential mixed methods design was employed. The first phase was quantitative, where data on 52 observed variables was collected from 618 international students. Findings suggested that international students were motivated to leave their home countries most strongly by their desires for personal fulfillment. It was also found that the quality of the United States education, as well as, the college reputation of quality, were the most important variables that affected students' destination choices. Findings from Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) advanced a four-factor solution that consisted of Quality, Affordability, Access and Peace. Comparisons between population groups within the sample using Multivariate Analysis of Variance found that consideration of Access was more important to non-degree students. Conversely, Peace was more important to undergraduate and graduate students. Moreover, Peace was

more important for Middle Eastern students, while Affordability and Access were more important for Asian students. Finally, Quality was more important to male international students. The quantitative phase of the study was followed by a qualitative one that employed transcendental phenomenological procedures. In-depth interviews with 11 international students were conducted. Qualitative findings supported and explained quantitative ones. Furthermore, two additional common sources of influence emerged, Becoming Somebody and Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar. These, together with the four-factor domains identified by EFA, helped conceptualize the international student mobility model proposed in this study.

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I am grateful to the over 600 international students who completed the questionnaires and the 11 students who participated in the interviews for their time and the valuable information they provided for this study.

Last but not least, thanks to my dear family, who put up with a great deal during my study and composition of this dissertation. I owe all of them many thanks. Lara: You were born five months before I started my doctoral program. I was not able to be around you as much as I wanted for the first three years of your life. Haya: You are not little any more. I feel like I missed beautiful times we could have spent together. Rami: You may not know, but I was able to work

harder on my program because I wanted to set an example for you. I believe in you and I believe that you will be a person of distinguished success. Lina: I love you, and I appreciate your patience with me during my program studies and dissertation writing. Lara, Haya, Rami, and Lina: in the remaining years of my life, I will try to make it up for us, and I will give you all of me. Mom: I went to tears as I was writing this. I miss you so much and I cannot believe how I was able not to see you for three years. I was even not able to call you on the phone as often as I wanted. I wish I had the time. Dad: Who can believe that despite the war in Syria, and despite what you lost, you still funded me for my doctoral study expenses? Your love and dedication are beyond description. Dad and Mom: I love you and miss you so much. I do not think I would be able to match your care and kindness, but I learnt lessons about how to be a good parent.

# DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, my daughters Lara and Haya, my son Rami, my wife Lina, my mother Amira, and my father Ahmed.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

Anecdotally, at a conference on globalization and higher education in 2016, I asked a seasoned Middle Eastern colleague of mine about his views on international student mobility shifting away from the United States (U.S.). He said that destinations other than the U.S. had been able to create programs and services that were more attractive and responsive to international students' needs and aspirations. The following is a study that aimed at investigating factors that influenced international students' destination country and college choices. This chapter starts with discussing motivations for conducting the study through a statement of the problem. Next, the conceptual underpinnings that guide the investigation are discussed, and the purpose of the study is revealed. Finally, this chapter shares the research questions, the assumptions, the delimitations, and the definitions of the key terms used.

## Problem Statement

The continuing stream of articles reporting on the decline of the U.S. market share of international students was concerning (ICEF Monitor, 2016a; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). While the U.S. market share of international students was 37% in 1970, it dropped gradually to 14% in 2015 (British Council, 2015; Institute of International Education, 2016a). Much research confirmed economic, social, and cultural positive impacts of international education on our

increasingly interconnected global society (Alfattal, 2016b; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Elbeck & Schee, 2014). Nonetheless, as U.S. colleges lost their international student market shares, these colleges were missing invaluable opportunities for a larger role in shaping the global human cognition (Peters, Britton & Blee, 2008; Robertson, 1992; Spilimbergo, 2009), as well as vital urges to support the U.S. economy and their own educational and financial objectives (Lumby & Foskett, 2015). International students augmented the colleges where they studied as these students brought different and enriching cultural and educational experiences (Knight, 2004). Furthermore, international students were an important financial resource as these students brought foreign currency to the U.S., paid higher college fees, rented accommodation, and purchased considerable amounts of goods (Naidoo, 2010). Although the finances of colleges involved government grants, research grants, donations, and contracts (Paulsen, 2001); international students' tuition fees remained an important source of revenue (Eaton, 2013).

With the positive impacts relevant to international students in mind, U.S. colleges were motivated to recruit these students (Becker & Kolster, 2012). As such, U.S. colleges engaged in marketing activities since not only did they compete amongst themselves, but also they were challenged by their counterpart colleges from around the world (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Shah & Laino, 2006; Shanka, Quintal & Taylor, 2005). British colleges seemed to be the most successful in recruiting international students, who made-up over 24% of the total

number of higher education student population in the United Kingdom (U.K.) in 2015 (UK Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2016), compared to 4% at U.S. colleges in the same year (Institute of International Education, 2016b). British colleges' distinguished success in attracting international students might be partly attributed to the high mobility of European students and the U.K. proximity to this market (Foster, 2014). This was coupled by strategic initiatives including the European Transfer Credit System and Erasmus+ student exchange programs (Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, de Wit & Vujic, 2013). Australia, Canada, and the U.S. were more reliant on the Middle East and the Asian Far East, particularly China (Mainland and Taiwan) and Korea (Massey & Burrow, 2012). Australia and Canada were always fierce U.S. competitors and sought to improve their related services and regulations. Canada, for instance, adjusted its student visa regulation in 2014 to make it possible for international students to work on and off campus, during and after their studies without needing to go through any additional paperwork (ICEF Monitor, 2016b).

While international students' mobility and destination choice were of significant economic and educational impacts, the amount of academic research into related phenomena seemed inadequate, particularly in the U.S. context (Gong & Huybers, 2015). There was scarcity of research studies in the U.S. context that reported on factors that influenced international students' country destination and college choice compared to studies conducted in other major international education hubs, the Australian, the British, and the Canadian

contexts (Lee, 2008). The lack of research and the consequent little acumen resulted in U.S. colleges being engaged in competition-reactive promotional practices, rather than strategic planning and informed activities relevant to attracting the needed qualified international students (Bohman, 2014).

## Theoretical Underpinnings

Research into factors that influence international students' study destination choice employed three different theoretical models: the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the Push-Pull Model (PPM), and the Marketing Mix Model (MMM), (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975; Kotler & Fox, 1995; Lee, 1966). Originally proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), TPB attempted to put a framework for describing and predicting human intention and consequent behavior. The theory identified three domains affecting decision-making: (1) attitude to behavior or the beliefs of the consequences of actions; (2) subjective norms, which included behaving in a way that was accepted by others; and finally (3) perceived behavioral control (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). According to TPB, human behavior, including international college choice, was a result of the interaction of one's attitude to behavior and subjective norms, as well as one's self-perception of one's capabilities, perceived behavioral control (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975; Chen & Zimitat, 2006; East, 2013).

Conversely, the PPM evolved from migration theory where the aim was to explain reasons behind human cross-national movement (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). This model proposed that motivators for human migration were a

combination of pull factors, motivators to move to another country, and push factors, motivators to leave one's home country (Lee, 1966). These motivators related to variables such as differences between the economic and safety conditions between one's home country and their destination country. PPM combined propositions from the economic model (McDonough, 1994), the status attainment model (Bourdieu, 1991; Kallio, 1995), and social capital theory (Coleman, 1988). PPM suggested three levels of factors affecting international education destination choice: (1) factors behind students leaving their home countries, (2) factors resulting in the selection of particular destination countries, and (3) motivators to select particular college campuses (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011a).

Finally, while TPB and PPM evolved from behavioral and migration theories respectively, MMM built on marketing theory and research (Gajić, 2012). This model mainly drew on economic and rational choice philosophies (Becker, 1976), and proposed seven factor domains that correspond to students' needs and aspirations: program, process, people, place, price, promotion, and physical facility (Kotler & Fox, 1995). The fundamental difference between MMM and the other two models was that MMM focused on college controllable variables that affected students' college choice (Ivy, 2008). In other words, TPB and PPM provided frameworks that endeavored to explain the totality of international students' mobility phenomenon, whereas MMM concerned itself with choice factors that colleges could affect and control in order to create their desired

outcome. Nonetheless, unlike the other two models, MMM was developed for the analysis of domestic, rather than international, student college choice; hence, it did not incorporate variables such as those that were relevant to leaving home country or destination country selection.

## Purpose Statement

This study drew on the three theoretical models used in the literature to describe variables that influenced international students' study abroad choices, TPB, PPM, and MMM. The purpose was to explore and propose a combined framework that could explain choice variables through revealing their underlying factor matrix. A second purpose of the study was to contribute to the literature with a study that reports on the phenomenon at a comprehensive college in the U.S., a context that has been inadequately researched.

## Research Questions

While attempting to integrate propositions advanced by different theoretical models, this study was underpinned by one central line of inquiry aiming at investigating key factors that influenced international students' study abroad choices. From this central line of inquiry, a number of research questions (RQ) were posed within the study context, a college in the West Coast of the U.S., California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The first three RQs aimed at weighing the importance of international students' choice variables at three levels, leaving home country variables, selecting country destination variables, and choosing a particular campus variables. These were as follows:

RQ1: What are international students' ratings of the importance of variables that influence their decision to leave their home country and study abroad?

RQ2: What are international students' ratings of the importance of variables that influence their decision to select the United States of America as their study destination?

RQ3: What are international students' ratings of the importance of variables that influence their college choice?

The above three initial RQs were followed by one fundamental RQ that explored a factor matrix that could provide an explanation to the dynamics by which variables that influence study abroad choices operated. For this exploration, variables belonging to all three levels and posited by the different theory models were incorporated into the analysis. This question was as follows:

RQ4: What are key factors that influence international students' decision to leave home country, select the United States of America, and choose their particular college?

Answering RQ4 could provide a factor solution that would help with concepts relevant to strategic planning of international targeted marketing only if such factor solution was further examined for potential differences amongst population groups. Hence, a fifth RQ was as follows:

RQ5: Does the degree of importance of choice factors extracted in RQ4 differ across groups categorized by (1) gender, (2) home country region, and (3) level of study?

Finally, as the study engaged in a quantitative exploration of a study abroad choice model through RQ4, two additional RQs were posed in a second qualitative phase. The purpose of these further RQs was to seek data that would explain and validate the factor solution proposed in the first phase of the study, as well as possible differences between groups on these factors. These RQs were designed to inform a mixed methods discussion. They were as follows:

RQ6: What are common sources of influence that shape international students' decisions to leave their home countries and choose their country and college destinations?

RQ7: How do international students make sense of the findings of the first phase of the study?

It was anticipated that answering the above seven questions would help the college where the study was conducted, as well as similar colleges, understand international students' destination country and college choice motivators. This understanding could potentially assist in informing college programing and activities for increased success in attracting higher volumes of qualified international student applications and enrollments.

## Significance of the Study

The importance of this study stemmed from the context in which it was conducted and the theory exploration in which it engaged. The study was one of very few studies that investigated factors that influenced international students' study abroad choice in the U.S. While some literature related to phenomena in other contexts including the British and the Canadian; by 2016, scholarly activity in the U.S. context was able to produce only two studies that were published in peer-reviewed journals, Lee (2008) and Shah and Laino (2006). Those two studies were conducted years ago making it relevant to examine whether the propositions of those studies endured the test of time. Furthermore, both of these studies were conducted at research colleges, while the present study was conducted at a comprehensive college allowing this study to contribute for further understanding of the related phenomena.

As for theory exploration, previous research into factors influencing choice employed one of three theoretical frameworks from which factor variables were derived, TPB, PPM, and MMM. The present study was the first to incorporate variables described in all three models, while it explored a possible explanation of international students' choices in a single framework. Indeed, the analysis in this study was not concerned with testing whether there were leaving home factors or perceived behavioral control variables as these evidently existed; nonetheless, this study sought to question the latent dimensions of such variables.

## Assumptions

The study had three assumptions. First, the study assumed that the subjects in the study provided their views truthfully. This assumption was addressed by means of triangulation; the study employed mixed methods where quantitative data were collected through a survey questionnaire and qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. Qualitative data helped explain and validate the quantitative findings. Second, the study assumed that college programing and marketing strategies could be modified based on findings relevant to the understanding of factors that influenced choice. In other words, the study assumed that if one could ascertain the factors that influenced international students to choose particular study destinations, colleges would actually be able to modify their programs, services, and other marketing activities to accommodate for those factors. In fact, different colleges had different levels of institutional capacities and flexibilities (Altbach & Knight, 2007). As discussed above, this study employed a number of different theoretical frameworks one of which was MMM, which was described as, “a number of controllable variables that an institution may use to produce the response it wants from its various publics” (Ivy & Naude, 2005, p. 402). Hence, the objective of this study was to provide colleges with knowledge of variables and key factors that underpin international students’ mobility decisions, while the study left to colleges the assessing of which of those were controllable as per different colleges’ own contexts.

The last assumption of this study was that colleges, including their various stakeholders, were genuinely interested in attracting international students. Again, different colleges had different regional, national, and international objectives, roles, and constraints (Jiang & Carpenter, 2013), and colleges would perceive the value and the relevance of this study and its findings differently. Undoubtedly, educational, cultural, and economic worth of internationalization is wide-ranging and contextually dependent.

## Delimitations

Investigation into international students' mobility triggers was an extremely complex area (Rizvi & Lingard, 2000). These students came from all over the world and they studied all over the world. Not only did international students come to the U.S. from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and South America (inbound internationalization), but also U.S. students were international students when they pursued education in foreign territories (outbound internationalization). There had not been, and probably would not be, a single study that could reducibly account for such a phenomenon. Hence, the present study concerned only inbound internationalization, focused on choice factors, and collected data from a single college in the U.S. The purpose was to contribute to the already existing body of literature and potentially provide a methodology for replication by other similar colleges.

Relatedly, while this study engaged with the exploration of a factor influencing choice model, such a model might be only relevant to the context in

which the model was developed. A number of confirmatory future studies in other contexts would be needed before any of the theoretical propositions of this study could be generalized.

Finally, the researcher was a member of staff at the college where data were collected. This could affect the quality of the data since power relationships between the researcher and the participants in the study could exist. In order to reduce such potential power effects, during data collection, the researcher was dressed casually, and it was explained to participants that participation was voluntary, and that their responses were not intended to evaluate their college but rather to express their own opinions on reasons for their international education destination and college choice.

## Definitions of Key Terms

Whereas the next chapter of this dissertation expands on the concepts discussed, below are key terms used and their brief definitions:

Colleges: These were public, private non-for-profit and for-profit 2-year colleges, 4-year universities (comprehensive or regional campuses), and research universities (national campuses).

Educational advisors: These were school or college advisors at international students' home country educational institutions, who advised students on international education options.

Educational agents: These were companies or individuals who recruited international students to colleges and received compensation through fees they charged and/or commissions they received from colleges.

Globalization: This was the process by which national boarders no longer restrict the mobility, the exchange, and the development of goods, services, philosophies, ideologies, and humans (including skills and knowledge).

International students: These were individuals who left the political boarders of their home country to pursue degree or non-degree education in another country. In the U.S., and the context of this study, these were students on F or J visas.

Internationalization: This was the, "conscious effort to integrate and infuse international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the ethos and outcomes of postsecondary education" (NAFSA, 2011, p.1).

Marketing: This was defined in this study in a similar way to Davies and Ellison (1997a) as the analysis of the needs and aspirations of students and other education stakeholders, and the activities performed by educational institutions to satisfy those needs and aspirations in the purpose of promoting the reputation of the educational institution and increasing its pool of qualified student applications.

Non-degree programs: These were certificate and non-certificate, short-term and long-term college programs other than Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degree programs.

Study abroad: This was the act by which students left the political boarders of their home country to seek education and/or qualification(s) elsewhere. This includes non-degree and degree programs which are for longer or shorter periods of time.

## Summary

This introductory chapter started by illustrating the motivations of the study and articulating its problem statement. The U.S. global market share of international students was decreasing. Colleges had interests in attracting international students; nonetheless, and since little was known about factors that motivated international students' choices particularly in the context of the U.S., colleges were engaged in competition reactive practices rather than informed strategic marketing. The purpose of the study was to inform the college where the study was conducted, as well as, similar colleges, by reporting an investigation into international students' destination country and college choice. The study incorporated choice motivating variables derived from three different theoretical models. The objective was to account for a fuller understanding of the phenomenon and explore a combined factor model.

After the objectives of the proposed study and its central line of inquiry were discussed, this chapter advanced the specific RQs the study investigated. These sought to explore the underlying factors that influence international students' study abroad choices, as well as, the weight of factors and their variance across different population groups.

Finally, the key terms used in this study were defined, and assumptions and delimitations were discussed. It was suggested that colleges which had capacities and motivations to recruit international students might find the study relevant. In addition, it was advanced that the findings did not have generalizability powers beyond the context of the study. The study did not attempt to find universal answers, although it aimed at exploring a study abroad factor model that could be further investigated and possibly supported through future confirmatory studies in other contexts.

The following chapter of this dissertation shall situate the problem of the study within its context, while expanding on the topics of globalization, internationalization, and marketing in higher education. Furthermore, the theoretical models introduced briefly above are discussed in more detail; and relevant empirical studies are synthesized. Chapter Two below also incorporates a systematic review of the literature, where all studies that met specific criteria are reviewed and their methods and findings are reported. The third chapter discusses the researcher's epistemological orientation, the research methodology, the research design, and the data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, Chapter Four presents findings, and Chapter Five discusses practical and theoretical implications of those findings.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

> During the 1990s, the dominant discourses [relative to higher education administration] were around marketization and decentralization. While those themes are still important and have themselves continued to evolve, the first decade of the 21st century has also seen the strong emergence of internationalization as a key concept, an idea that has generated much of the strategic development and intellectual debate of an era.
>
> (Lumby & Foskett, 2015, p. 2)

Since the 1990s, and following the spread of free-market economies and neo-liberal economic views all over the world, the global direction taken by governments worldwide was favoring a near-universal participation in increasingly market-oriented, financially independent, higher education (Beck, 2013; Kwiek, 2004; Schuetze, Kuehn, Davidson-Harden & Weber, 2011). This trend was formalized by the establishment of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in January 1995 (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Herbert & Abdi, 2013). Relatedly, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) position papers advanced that higher education was best administered as a service in the market (Altbach, 2016; Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbly, 2009).

International students were viewed by higher education providers mainly as a source of revenue (Naidoo, 2010). According to the U.S. Department of Commerce (2016), international students contributed over $32 billion to the U.S. economy in 2014. The importance of these students not only involved the amounts of money they brought, but also related to the enriching cultural and social value they contributed to the host country (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Altbach & Lulat 1985). Knight (2004) claimed that colleges involved in recruiting international students achieved numerous benefits including international profile and reputation building; faculty, student, and staff development; and research and knowledge production. By growing the international student population, a host country's foreign policy primarily sought to build its human capital, knowledge economy, and develop strategic alliances with other nations (Beck, 2012; Edwards, 2007; Knight, 2004). In fact, Barack Obama, then President of the U.S., even advanced that the U.S. education and foreign policy should be involved with greater effort in recruiting quality international students, as well as, retaining these students in the country: "Are we a nation that educates the world's best and brightest in our universities, only to send them home to create businesses in countries that compete against us?" Obama asked during his speech on executive actions with plans to reform the U.S. immigration system (Redden & Stratford, 2014).

With the benefits international students bring in mind, a question was as follows: In today's higher education competitive global market, how could

colleges attract a larger number of international students to their campuses? The attraction of international students was the objective of colleges in an increasing number of countries around the world (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014; Ross, Grace & Shao, 2013). Australia, Canada, and the U.K. have been fierce competitors to the U.S. and studies of students' global mobility confirmed that the U.S. percentage of the total market share of international students was almost certain to continue to decrease (Becker & Kolster, 2012; Hudzik & Briggs, 2014).

The topic of the present study related to factors affecting international students' destination country and college choice, and required a review of globalization, internationalization, and marketing in higher education literature. Thus, this chapter starts with defining globalization and internationalization in education in order to highlight connections and distinctions between the two terms. Then, four major theoretical perspectives on globalization and internationalization of education are compared, while leading to the discussion of neoliberal and market orientations to higher education. One of the purposes of the discussion was to highlight challenges and opportunities in approaching higher education as a service in the global market. Next, this chapter presents theoretical models adopted in the literature for analyzing factors affecting international students' higher education campus choice. Afterward, a number of relevant empirical studies are reviewed with the objective of locating gaps in our knowledge of the phenomenon. Finally, in order to lead to the next chapter of this

study, Research Design and Methodology, this chapter concludes with restating the purpose and the central research question of the study.

## Unmuddling Globalization and Internationalization

There was much discussion into what globalization and internationalization at the postsecondary education level mean (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2003; Guoa & Chase, 2011; Qiang, 2003). There was even confusion in the literature between internationalization and globalization (Beck, 2013; de Wit, 1995). Globalization, as Spring (2008) argued, concerned the current reality relevant to the virtual impossibility for nations, societies, and communities to sequester themselves and their educational functions from their counterparts in the world. Information and knowledge were shared instantaneously through communication technologies (Casey, 2009; Held & McGrew, 2004). Held, McGrew, Goldblat, and Perraton (1999) defined globalization as, “the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness” (p. 2). Similarly, Anderson (2001) argued that globalization necessitated looking at the world as a whole since current human activities in different localities involved increasingly intensifying processes of transfer and exchange of products and services, as well as views, information, and knowledge.

Globalization, although it might not have been termed so, was not a recent phenomenon (Peters, Britton & Blee, 2008). Globalization as a term was first coined by Roland Robertson (Marginson, 1999); however, globalization, Herbert

and Abdi (2013) argued, started as early as human evolution since societies had exchanged knowledge and art, as well as, individuals had relocated and belonged to communities other than those to which they had originally belonged. Altbach and Lulat (1985) further posited that higher education evolved as a global phenomenon in the first place since, “foreign students were the norm not the exception” (p. 441). Knowledge production was a collective human activity, and studies by Altekar (1965) and Hess (1982) reported how the flow of international students and scholars could be tracked to Ancient times starting from as early as 600 BC. Students travelled the world in pursuit of knowledge from Byzantine, Chinese, Greek, Indian, Muslim, and Persian civilizations amongst others. In the 21st Century, students sought education primarily from Australia, Canada, Europe, and the U.S. (Chen, 2007). Mazzarol, Soutar, and Seng (2003) reported unprecedented rapid growth of international student mobility following World War II. The pressing concern of this century was not about the immergence of globalization as a singularity, but rather about the growing capacity, it possessed (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011; Carnoy, 1999; Lingard, 2009; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

While there were many dimensions to globalization, including cultural, social and economic, it was hard to study related phenomena without cognizance of the complex connections, interrelations, and interdependence of these dimensions (Beck, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2000; Robertson, 1992). For instance, education and its related learning and teaching undertakings were not only

relevant to the economic structures of their context, but also education reflected, produced, and reproduced cultural and social realities (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bowles & Gintis, 2002). Globalization was imposing interaction and remodeling of educations, as systems and individuals from different structures, relevant to diverse localities, engaged in exchanges. The dilemma of the status of our perception of knowledge and the role of education in society was unfolded by our limited understanding of possible future directions resulting from global exchanges (Agoston & Dima, 2012; Edwards & Usher, 2000).

Conversely, internationalization in higher education, as Knight (2003) posited, was, “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 2.). Hence, internationalization in higher education included activities such as; academic (student and faculty) mobility, program linkage and partnerships of institutions in different countries, satellite campuses abroad, international programs, and international research initiatives.

Internationalization in higher education had social, cultural, political, academic, and economic rationales (Altbach, 2002; de Wit, 1995). These rationales were classified by Knight (2004) into two levels: national and institutional rationales. National motivations included human resource development, strategic alliances between nations, commercial trade, nation building, and social and cultural building (Knight, 2004). These objectives were central in the government policies of three major hubs of international education,

Australia, Canada and the U.S. (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Chen, 2007; Guoa & Chase, 2011). Institutional rationales for internationalization in higher education, in contrast, included international profile and reputation building, faculty, student and staff development, research and knowledge production, income generation, and strategic alliances with partner colleges (Knight & de Wit, 1999; Knight, 2004; Qiang, 2003). An example of the positive impact of involvement in internationalization was noted by Elbeck and Schee (2014). The authors proposed that the U.S. was ranked 17th internationally for the quality of high school education while it was the first in doctoral studies. The authors explained that, “this remarkable swing in U.S. educational ranking from high school to university is in part due to the contribution of well-educated non-U.S. students who eventually make up a sizable portion of the scholars driving the preeminence of U.S. doctoral programs” (Elbeck & Schee, 2014, p. 45). The outstanding performance of the U.S. in doctoral studies aided by international scholars had national and institutional benefits. Not only were involved campuses building their local and international profiles, but also the U.S. was able to pioneer global technology and research activities.

Knight (2004), conversely, argued that different colleges had different levels of motivation to become involved in internationalization, as these were affected by factors such as the campus, “mission, student population, faculty profile, geographic location, funding sources, level of resources, and orientation to local, national, and international interests” (p. 25). An example of the different

motivational levels and orientations to internationalization was in California, in the U.S. California had two different four-year-and-above state college systems, the California State University system and the University of California system. While the former was focused on teaching, Bachelor's and Master's degrees, the latter had a primary research function, and consequently had greater motivation and capacity related to international activities. Furthermore, Jiang and Carpenter (2013) suggested that motivation and involvement in internationalization was not only relevant to a college's overall strategy and context, but also it was interdependent on different and sometimes conflicting stakeholders' interests and conveniences. For instance, within a single college, leadership may see international student marketing expense as an investment, faculty and staff may only perceive the added challenges of working with non-native speakers. (Jiang & Carpenter, 2013).

To conclude this section, the relationship between internationalization and globalization of education was proposed by Chan and Dimmok (2008), who saw globalization as the context in which internationalization occurred. In a similar vein, Beck (2013) claimed that one could not, "theorize internationalization without seeing how the economic, political and cultural dimensions of globalization influence[d] internationalization" (p. 45). Hence, an understanding of some theoretical perspectives on globalization in education was imperative.

## Theoretical Perspectives on Globalization in Education

Globalization drove and was driven by education in general and by higher education in particular (King, Marginson & Naidoo, 2011; Scott, 1998). Qiang (2003) and Varghese (2008) argued that despite the significant impact of globalization and internationalization on education, there had not been adequate philosophical work that sufficiently explained connected phenomena. According to Herbert and Abdi (2013) and Spring (2008), there were four competing and sometimes overlapping interpretations: (a) world culture, (b) world systems approach, (c) post-colonialist theory, and (d) culturalists.

The world culture interpretation, mainly advanced by Baker and LeTendre (2005) and Ramirez (2003), proposed that, as a result of the increased connectedness and interaction between individuals and nations, the different cultures of the world were amalgamating into one global culture (Kapitzke & Peters, 2007). For instance, approaches to mass schooling adopted in countries such as the U.S. were employed as models for national school systems elsewhere (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). Support for this approach was relative to the growing communicable global events such as the Arab Spring, as well as global social trends including fashion and fads (Herbert & Abdi, 2013; James, Cullinan & Cruceru, 2013). In education, an example of the world culture replacing local cultures was the utilization of the U.S. Credit Hour System and European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) in higher education

in the Middle East and Africa, among other locations (Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, de Wit & Vujic, 2013).

Relatedly, in the world systems approach, Wallerstein (2004) proposed that there were two main incompatible and unequal zones in the world. The ‘core zone’ possessed more capital and power and included countries from Europe, the U.S., and their allies, while the rest of the world was weaker and consequently manipulated. Herbert and Abdi (2013) argued that it was this understanding of the dynamics of global exchange that explained the idea of the clash of civilizations and the dominant, belief that ‘west was best’. Proponents of the world culture interpretation of globalization and the world systems approach advanced that political and educational systems, as well as individuals, in less developed countries, attempted to align with the West (Europe, the U.S., and their allies), which was made to be perceived as the best (Casey, 2009; Wallerstein, 2004).

Similar to the world systems approach was the post-colonialist theory, as both held a critical perspective of power and manipulation, although the latter addressed the matter from an economic perspective and interpreted globalization as an extension of European Imperialism (Chen, 2013; Majhanovich, 2013). According to this theory, the rich-poor dichotomy did not diminish after World War II nor after the ‘extinction’ of colonial empires (Abdi, 1998; Kim, 2012). For Olson (2006), instead the world was controlled by unequal and unfair relationships between wealthy and poor nations resulting in wealthy nations becoming

wealthier and poor nations becoming poorer; while some nations expanded their human and economic capitals, others were impoverished and drained. Global relationships were managed with pre-formulated political and economic agendas that were constructed to bring further gains for those who were already in power and already rich (Kim, 2012; Tobin, 2004). Advocates of post-colonialist theory into globalization, such as Abdi (2006), Olson (2006), and Tobin (2004), had been raising red flags as they witness the spread of the Western schooling system in other parts of the world. For them, this schooling was, “exploitive of the majority of humanity and destructive to the planet […] instead education should be more progressive so as to liberate and empower the masses” (Herbert & Abdi, 2013, p. 6). Resistance to domination was constantly attempted by disadvantaged nations and individuals, yet it was suppressed and squashed (Abdi, 2006).

Finally, the culturalist interpretation was advanced by Spring (2008), who stressed notions relevant to globalization in education other than human capital. These were comprised of propositions relevant to theology, Freirean liberatory education, critical and progressive methodology, and democracy (Edwards & Usher, 1998; Spilimbergo, 2009). Culturalists, such as Herbert and Abdi (2013), valued the diversity of ‘educations’, forms of knowledge and perceptions, and understandings and interpretations of the world. Hence, education went beyond the notion of equipping individuals with knowledge and skills and took place as a result of diverse sets of acts and for numerous purposes (Edwards & Usher,

1998; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). Although culturalists saw that there was a ‘hierarchy of knowledges’ privileged by power (Herbert & Abdi, 2013, p. 9), they believed that, by the interaction and exchange between the local and the global, there were valuable benefits for the advancement of education and consequently the betterment of human kind (Byun, Jon & Kim, 2013; Byun & Kim, 2011). Abdi (2006) and King, Marginson, and Naidoo (2011) argued that benefits were for advantaged and disadvantaged populations although the distribution of gains was not consistently equal.

## Approaching Higher Education as a Service in the Global Marketplace

Much of the debate within globalization and internationalization of education theories discussed the phenomena within the constraints of human capital and its diversity and capacity building (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2008). Bauman (1998), and Burbules and Torres (2000) argued that this discourse was influenced mainly by notions advanced by neoliberalism. Furthermore, Beck (2013) illustrated that even the newer internationalization concepts of global ‘knowledge economies’ and ‘knowledge societies’, which were advanced mainly by Altbach and Salmi (2011), Egron-Polak and Hudson (2010), Kumar and Chadee (2002) and Marginson (2010), emerged from the neoliberal socio-economic model. In a similar vein, Schuetze, Kuehn, Davidson-Harden, and Weber (2011) proposed that neoliberalism and globalization – including its consequent increasing higher education internationalization activities – were tied

to each other, as they happened to spread around the world around the same time in history.

According to Ambrosio (2013) and Davies and Bansel (2007), neoliberalism concerned the reconstruction of the philosophical underpinnings and economic mechanisms through, and by, which education functioned in society in a way where individuals, rather than the state, were more responsible for pre-dictated outcomes. In this sense, education was approached as a private good rather than public responsibility, as neoliberalism shifted the obligation of making education work from the state to the citizens of that state. An important aspect of neoliberalism was that it involved privatization so that individuals owned and administered educational institutions and hence were held responsible (Apple, 2004; Davies & Bansel, 2007). The rule of the state here was to set guidelines that regulated accountability while the state was able to reduce funds allocated to educational services (Ambrosio, 2013). Critics argued that claims of value made by neoliberal thinkers were not supported by evidence from empirical research, as individuals' interests could be different from the society as a whole (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2008). Furthermore, specific social groups, normally middle and upper classes, were advantaged by neoliberal systems while social and educational equity were not supported for challenged or disabled populations (Ambrosio, 2013; Au, 2011). At the international level, Altbach (2002, 2004), Altbach and Knight (2007), and Beck (2012) noted that underdeveloped and developing countries might not have enough potential to actively or equally

engage in a free trade context; such countries were likely to become consumers rather than providers or equal partners. For Herbert and Abdi (2013), the perception of education as a commodity for sale in the global market was ‘not palatable’. Furthermore, Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2008) argued that neoliberal systems had been attempting to commercialize the processes of learning and teaching, while education should have been approached as a civic engagement.

Contrariwise, proponents of neoliberal and market orientations to education believed that neoliberal economies designed policy and practices to be focused on outcomes and quality enhancement through market freedom; quality improved through competition as only schools perceived as good survived (Davies, Gottsche & Bansel, 2006; Szekeres, 2010). In addition, neoliberal systems produced entrepreneurial and responsible individuals and schools who were able to compete in global markets (Burchell, 1996; Clark, 1998). Maringe and Gibbs (2013) argued that due to the current global economic conditions, “[…] the university has had to embrace the technologies of the market and consumerism; strategic planning with its emphasis on mission, vision and value, matching resources to opportunities and of course marketing” (p. 4). Except for the case in some affluent Western European countries, much of higher education around the world was increasingly involved in entrepreneurial revenue generating activities and marketing (Childress, 2009; Eaton, 2013).

In fact, marketing was often a source of suspicion to educationists; it could easily be linked to commercialism and selling, and was regarded as a perversion of educational values (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995; Hayrinen-Alestalo & Peltola, 2006; Lauder & Hughes, 1999). It was not, “an uncommon misconception that marketing [was] little more than advertising and selling” (Ivy & Alfattal, 2010, p. 131). Marketing, however, was not necessarily so as it was a multi-value process and not merely about selling and promotion (Kirp, 2003; Wright, 2014). The concept of marketing involved, “identifying the nature of what [was] required by the clients [students and other stakeholders] and then ensuring that the school gave ultimate priority to supply that product [program or other services] and maintain its quality” (Davies & Ellison, 1997a, p. 4). In a similar vein, Alfattal (2010) and Ham and Hayduk (2003) proposed that marketing higher education was about satisfying the needs of higher education customers, students, faculty, parents, and other stakeholders, while higher education sustained its quality and values; otherwise, higher education institutions would not, in the long run, and under normal globally competitive conditions, survive and prosper.

Bagley, Woods, and Glatter (1996) and Brown and Baker (2013) argued that the market had the force to improve education since one of the intended benefits of increased competition and choice was to motivate schools to develop a closer relationship with students and become more responsive to their needs. Similarly, Davies and Ellison (1997a, p. 2) maintained that it was important for schools to realize that they did not exist on an educational ‘desert island’, and

that all schools should already be involved in marketing because every school had a reputation and that reputation had to be managed. Regini (2011) posited that the market was not an actor that positively or negatively affected education and its quality, but rather the domain in which different stakeholders interacted and performed exchanges. The author stated the following:

> The market […] can never be seen as an actor, but rather as an arena in which some HE [higher education] actors may behave following a different logic of action than those typical of either the state or the academic communities: namely, a logic based on their convenience to enter an exchange relationship and on the consistency between instruments and goals.
>
> (Regini, 2011, p.2)

Neoliberalists believed that the state and the academic community were not agenda free and did not necessarily act for the best interests of all citizens (Brown, 2013; Coaldrake & Stedman, 2013; Paulsen, 2001). Marketing education, nonetheless, helped provide the context in which social interests were negotiated and fulfilled by society (Brown, 2011; McMahon, 2009). Marketing in education was the means of communication between the school and its various publics; that is, marketing was the means of transaction between those who provided and those who received education (Davies & Ellison, 1997b; Regini, 2011). This built on the highly cited definition of marketing higher education provided by Kotler and Fox (1995). They saw education as a service of which

marketing was, “the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with a target market to achieve organizational objectives” (Kotler & Fox, 1995, p. 6). This definition assumed that free exchanges had the potential of increasing choice and improving quality, while being engaged in studying and responding to the needs and aspirations of students and other education stakeholders.

With the increased choice and competition in the global market, together with reduced state financial support, colleges needed to find ways in which they could be the campus of choice for full fee-paying international students (Dee, 2010; Edelstein & Douglass, 2012; Knight, 2006; Lumby & Foskett, 2015). Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) argued that, “most educational institutions now recognize that they need to market themselves in a climate of competition that for universities is frequently a global one” (p. 8). While there are some uncontrollable factors that determine how effective a particular college was, there were also controllable factors that influenced colleges’ international student recruitment success (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002a; Naidoo, 2010).

### Models for Analyzing Factors Affecting Students’ Study Abroad Choice

Theories within international students’ destination country and college choice engaged in the description of two different problems, decision-making process and factors affecting choice (Bohman, 2014; Simoes & Soares, 2010; Wilkins, Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2012). Research on decision-making processes claimed that students went through a number of stages before they

made their final decision to study at a particular campus. These included need recognition, information gathering, prioritizing, and selection (Alfattal & Ayoubi, 2012; Cubillo, Sánchez, & Cerviño, 2006; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Kerin, Hartley & Rudelius, 2007; Maringe & Carter, 2007). However, theories on factors affecting students' choice mainly advanced the PPM and the MMM models to explain the phenomenon (Shahid, Shafique & Bodla, 2012). In some of its versions, PPM combined notions from the decision-making process into its factorial propositions (Chen, 2007). In comparison, MMM focused on college-controllable variables affecting students' choice of particular college campuses (Ivy, 2008). A less employed model was the TPB, which is discussed within the review of empirical research findings section below.

The Push-Pull Model

PPM was originally used in migration studies to research the reasons behind human cross-national movement and resettlement (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). The model was first introduced by Lee (1966), who proposed a theory that divided motivators for human migration into pull factors (motivators to move to a destination other than one's home country) and push factors (motivators to leave one's home country). Push factors could be negative or positive in nature. For instance, one's home country might have a poorer infrastructure or economic system, negative push factors; or their country could encourage its citizens to travel and work abroad, positive push factor (Lee, 1966). An example of a positive push factor was that which was employed by

countries such as Turkey, where national compulsory military service was waived for individuals who traveled and worked abroad for a specific period of time. In contrast, pull factors, the author proposed, involved better economic, social, cultural, and/or security conditions a destination country offered. An application of PPM to international student mobility was McMahon (1992), who explored reasons behind international students' flow from developing countries to the U.S. McMahon analyzed political, economic, and cultural push-pull factors and compared these domains between international students' home countries and the U.S. The author claimed that there were correlations between home country and host country conditions; home countries had educational 'weakness' compared to host countries; and international students mainly came from countries with 'weak' yet internationally involved economies (McMahon, 1992, p. 476).

PPM was adapted to serve the study of international students' choice and decision-making process to study abroad. Studies like Neice and Braun (1977), Cummings (1984), Lee and Tan (1984), Sirowy and Inkeles (1984), Agarwal and Winkler (1985), Cummings and So (1985), and more recently Chen (2007) and Wilkins and Huisman (2011a) contributed to the development of a three level PPM. The first level concerned reasons behind international students' decision to leave their country and study abroad. The second was relevant to why they chose a particular country as their destination. The third and final level of PPM attempted to analyze the motivators for selecting particular campuses.

PPM in its current shape was best viewed as a combined model; it was built on a number of smaller models. One of these was the economic model that saw the decision to enroll in a higher education program as an economic investment (McDonough, 1994). In this model, students tried to maximize the cost-benefit of their campus choice and tried to, "[…] acquire perfect reliable information and select a college rationally" (Ruby, 2007, p. 16). The use of this model alone for the analysis of student motivators for decision-making, Kallio (1995) argued, was insufficient since a student's decision was also affected by other factors including family and access. Thus, a second model on which PPM drew and addressed some of the gap in the economic model was the status attainment model (Bourdieu, 1991; Sewell, Haller & Ohlendorf, 1970). This model incorporated factors relevant to students' family social status or condition, interactions with peers, and school environment. The status attainment model advanced that a student's choice was shaped in part by their access and the surrounding social expectation and pressure, and it rejected, "the assumption that students and families [were] rational decision makers" (Ruby, 2007, p. 17). PPM, hence, attempted to have a stronger explanatory power by merging the economic and the status attainment models into one more comprehensive model.

The combining nature of PPM led to the recognition of three stages in students' decision-making process while students selected their study destination: (a) predisposition or motivation, (b) information gathering, and (c) choice or final decision (Chen, 2007, p. 275). These three stages were borrowed

from marketing literature, see Kotler and Fox (1995), and built on previous and widely cited work by Hossler and Gallagher (1987), who advanced that students first go through a predisposition stage where they have motivation and intention to study higher education, then students search for possible options, and finally students choose a campus as their final destination. How these three stages interact with the different choice motivators suggested by Chen (2007) are demonstrated in Figure 1 below.

In Figure 1 below, Chen (2007) introduced his Push-Pull Synthesis Model, the most recent version of the model as of the date of this study. This model, the author claimed, borrowed its rudiments from econometric models, marketing models, information-processing models, as well as social capital and creative capital theories. Based on these models and theories, the author proposed that while international students decided to study abroad and chose their country and campus destination, students were influenced by, “three domains of factors – Student Characteristics, Significant Others, and External Push-Pull Factors” (Chen, 2007, p. 273). Student Characteristics were student’s socio-economic condition, social capital, creative capital, academic ability, and personal preferences. Significant Others included family, friends, alumni, sponsors (employers, government, or other), and professors. Finally, External Push-Pull Factors were the positive and negative forces that affect choice; i.e. factors that attracted or indisposed students to particular countries or campuses. These

included the academic quality and economic and political ties between students' home country and host destinations.

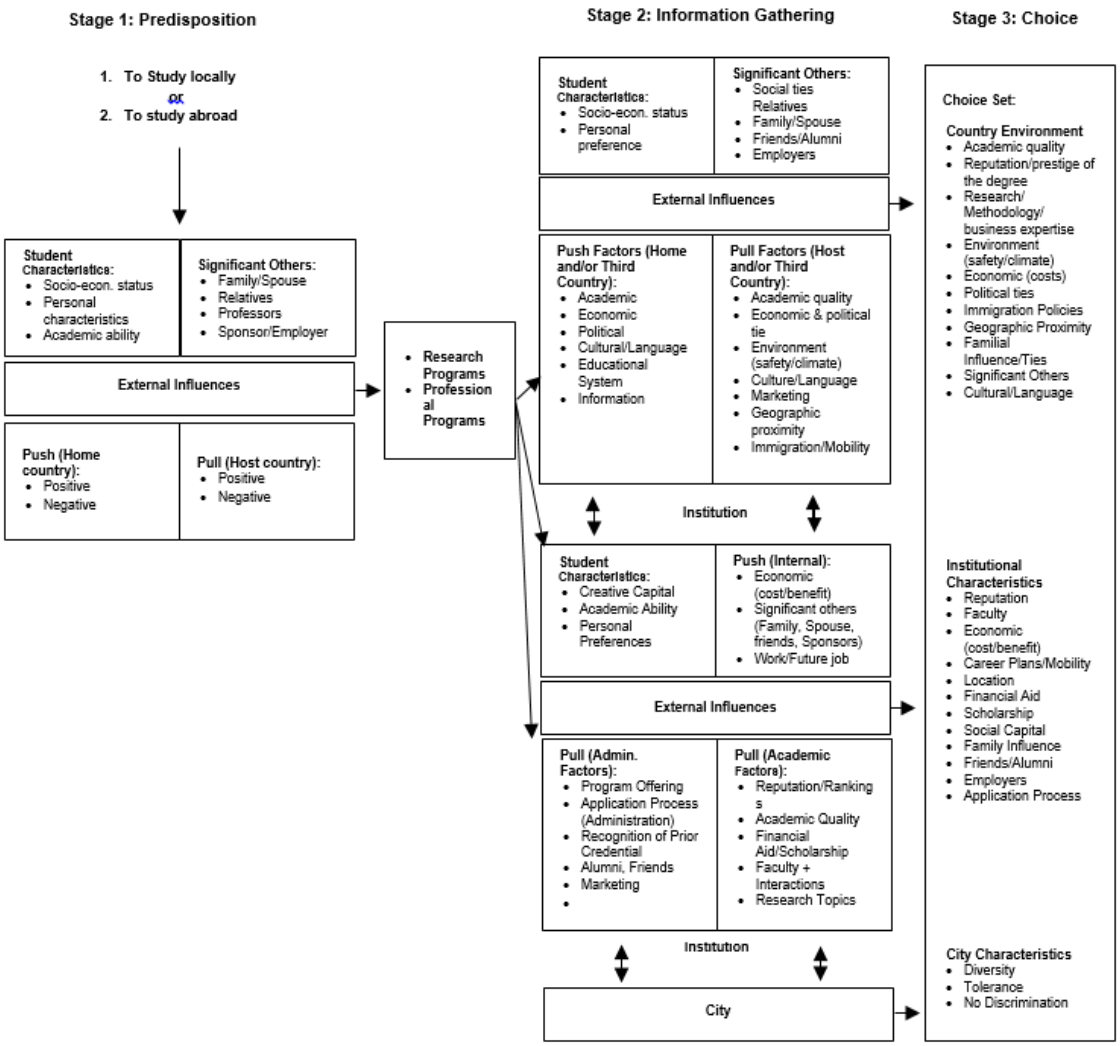


Figure 1. Chen (2007) Push-Pull Synthesis Model

To summarize simply, the PPM was a multi-level and a multi-stage framework for the analysis of students' motivations and decision-making process

of enrolling at a campus for international education. The model considered how students selected their country and campus destination as they went through three stages of making their decision, motivation, information gathering, and final choice.

The Marketing Mix

While PPM evolved from immigration theories, MMM was conceptualized as a tool for the analysis of students' college choice from a marketing perspective. In fact, the common feature of all marketing definitions was the investigation of customers' needs – requirements and desires – and the satisfying of those needs (Ivy & Naude, 2005, p. 409). The analysis of customers' needs was often done through a marketing tool referred to as MMM (Coleman, 1994; Ivy, 2010; Ratiu & Avram, 2013). MMM represented the base of strategic marketing plans as it not only reflected customer needs, but also constituted, "a number of controllable variables that an institution may use to produce the response it wants from its various publics" (Ivy & Naude, 2005, p. 402). In other words, MMM was a strategy model, with a set of controllable elements available for an institution to shape its offerings to students, as well as shape students' reaction to those offerings (Filip, 2012).

MMM used for services, including education, was different from that used for tangible products. The analysis of the needs of product consumers was traditionally conducted using a 4Ps model originally proposed by McCarthy (1960): Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. These four Ps corresponded to a

more customer-oriented mix proposed more recently by Lauterborn (1990) namely the 4Cs: Consumer needs, Cost, Communication, and Convenience. An even more recent theory of MMM was advanced by Kotler (2012), who proposed four Ps again: People, Processes, Programs and Performance. The unifying element of all of these suggested mixes was that they provided parameters that could be controlled with the aim of creating a more favorable consumer response to the products offered (Harvey, 1996; Ratiu & Avram, 2013).

Conversely, the services sector addressed its different nature by using a 7Ps approach (Filip, 2012; Ivy, 2008; Palmer, 2001). A highly cited education-specific MMM was Kotler and Fox's (1995) 7Ps: program, place, promotion, price, process, physical facilities and people, Figure 2 below. The "program" component was all the programs and services that the institution made available. Kotler and Fox (1995, p. 277) claimed that program was the most basic decision an educational institution made as it (1) established the institution's identity, (2) positioned the institution vis-à-vis other educational institutions in the minds of customers, and (3) determined how customers would respond. For instance, colleges might decide to offer more graduate degrees or engineering degrees; hence brand themselves in the minds of students, and position themselves in the higher education market in comparison to their competitors. Frolich and Stensaker (2010), Maringe (2006), and Palmer (2001) proposed that colleges should start with identifying students' program needs in terms of content, level, and duration as the first step of campus strategic planning. Hollensen (2003)

further suggested that program development was best managed as a collaborative function where students, faculty, college administration, and other stakeholders were involved in defining, designing, piloting, and refining programs. For Filip (2012) and Wilkins and Huisman (2011a), a college's foremost aspect of differentiation from other campuses, as well as key source of attraction, was the presence of programs that correspond to students' needs and aspirations, while possessing a recognized level of quality and reputation.

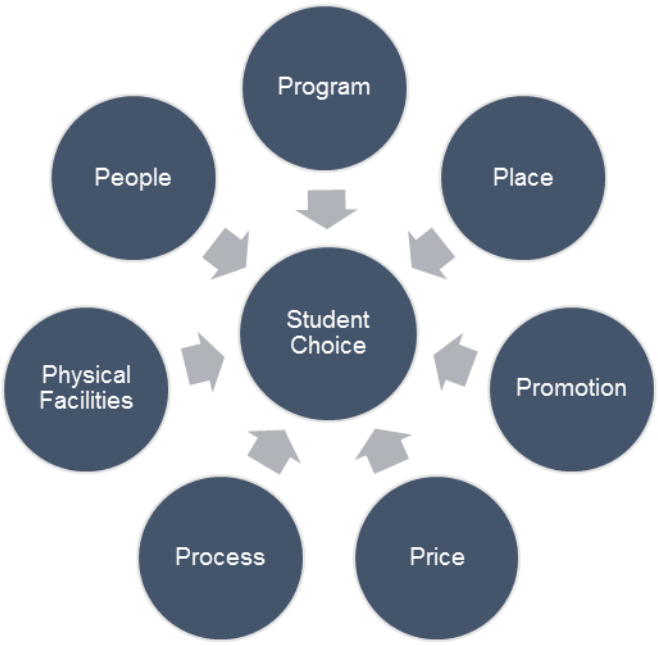


Figure 2. Kotler and Fox's (1995) Education Marketing Mix Model

The "place" element of MMM referred to, "the system of program delivery" (Kotler & Fox, 1995, p. 335); that is, the making of education available and accessible in terms of time and physio-geographical distribution of the teaching

and learning. The simple example of this component of the marketing mix was providing students with choices such as different campus locations, full-time, part-time, and online learning. Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010) and Singh, Schapper, and Jack (2014) proposed that place had a primary role in students' choice since different campus locations provided city/urban settings, as well as (un)suitable campus and surrounding cultures for international students. Furthermore, a subcomponent of the place mix was relevant to the language spoken in the country within which a college campus was located, as some colleges were advantaged by being situated in English speaking countries (Davies & Trystan, 2012). Finally, it was worthy of noting that due to the advent of transportation and communications technology, colleges were no longer confined by national borders. Not only were there online programs (Chau, 2010; Mazzarol & Hosie, 1997), but also a number of entrepreneurial Western colleges, such the University of Wollongong, established international branch campuses in foreign countries including the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Qatar, and Singapore (Wilkins, Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2012). These campuses provided students with a Western college education, while students could remain in their home country and could save travel time and financial expenses (Wilkins, Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2012; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012).

The third component of MMM, "promotion", was all the methods that institutions used to 'speak' to their target publics to convey the intent, the educational offerings and activities, and the benefits of their programs (Kotler &

Fox, 1995, p. 349). These methods included advertising, sales promotion, public relations, publicity, personal selling, and promotional materials. In the international marketplace, personal selling, for instance, took place in international education fairs where college representatives – and sometimes, state organizations – explained the benefits of their campuses and exercised communication skills to recruit international students (Findlay, 2011). Filip (2012) maintained that, “in order to reach a specific target audience, educational institutions [could] appeal to different communication techniques” (p. 915). In the situation of international students, colleges employed communication channels including campus website design and optimization, lead generation, education agents, and international education fairs (Jiang & Carpenter, 2013; Zhang & Hagedorn, 2014). The increased dependency on technology in today’s globalized world resulted in the Internet and college websites serving as the primary channel of communication between the college, students, and other stakeholders (Biltor, Rankin & Schrass, 2000; Palmer, 2003; Wilkins & Epps, 2011). Studies such as Singh, Kumar, and Khanchandani (2015) and Sandvig (2016) suggested that students were becoming more reliant on Google search, Facebook social media, and mobile messaging, as these became students’ preferred information seeking and communication channels.

The “price” component of MMM was a key factor as students paid different fee levels at different institutions (Kotler & Fox, 1995, p. 309). The importance of price was stressed by Ivy and Naude (2005), who noted that pricing had a direct

impact on revenues, and more importantly, “it also affected perceptions of value and quality” (p. 405). That is, students tended to associate higher prices with education quality and degree prestige (Wilkins, Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2012). Pugsley (2004) and Wilkins, Shams, and Huisman (2013) argued, nonetheless, that repeated global economic crises and the consequent drop in people’s purchasing power made costs of education a major factor of college choice for students and parents. Furthermore, the price component of MMM was normally associated with tuition, although international students additionally took other price subcomponents into consideration in making their study destination choice (Chen, 2007; Choi, Nieminen & Townson, 2012). These included the availability of scholarships, availability of work-study arrangements, living expenses on and around campuses, flight, and other international travel expenses (Perna, Orosz, Gopaul, Jumakulov, Ashirbekov & Kishkentayeva, 2014).

By “process”, Kotler and Fox (1995, p. 287) meant the management of the process of enrollment and the processes of teaching and learning. This component of MMM included the selection of the teaching methods adopted, and the organization of social activities at the institution. Ho and Hung (2008) and Palmer (2001) claimed that process was usually the most flexible and immediate aspect of education services for college administration to affect. For instance, while developing new programs or establishing international campuses normally required years of planning and execution, the review and restructuring of application and admission processes could be done in a relatively short period of

time (Ho & Hung, 2008). Palmer (2001) advocated the importance of process since it shaped much of students' college experience and interaction with the college. For Gajić (2012) and Palmer (2001), process affected students' choice before enrollment through effective communication and admission processes, involvement during college experience through providing relevant teaching, learning, and other campus activities and services, and consequently students' satisfaction with their choice during their programs and after their graduation. Process was the venue through which colleges could demonstrate the quality of their education and other services, as well as build their campus' reputation and brand (Kotler & Fox, 1995). Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003), Guoa and Chase (2011), McGill and Helms (2013), and Yuan (2011) argued that international students required much support from colleges during their international education experience especially in the application, admission, and orientation processes.

The "physical facilities" component was how the institution was physically shaped (overall appearance, decoration, and furniture), the teaching and learning equipment provided, and other student and staff facilities including libraries, car parking, cafeterias, and chatting areas (Kotler & Fox, 1995, p. 331). Physical facilities were the context in which colleges were able to demonstrate the tangible aspect of their offerings (Filip, 2012; Gajić, 2012). While some students physically visited campuses before they made their choice, others depended on campus websites, brochures, videos, and other material (Ivy, 2008). International students aspired to be educated in modern settings, and they normally depended

on college websites and other media to build their perception of the quality of campus physical facilities, while they were in their home country (Altbach, 2011; Padlee, Kamaruddin, & Baharun, 2010; Shah & Laino, 2006).

Finally, the “people” component of MMM was the administration, faculty, and staff of the institution through which the customer’s relation with the institution was managed, and the program was delivered (Kotler & Fox, 1995, 277). Ivy and Alfattal (2010), Davies and Ellison (1997b), Kotler and Fox (1995), and Ivy (2008) promoted the importance of the people component of MMM, and argued that quality and motivation of the staff, faculty, and administrators, were the most crucial factors for successful marketing. The importance of people ensued from the fact that the “people” of an educational institution – to a great degree – “[…] determined the institution performance capacity” (Drucker, 1990, 113, cited in Ivy & Naude, 2005, p. 403), and consequently built the, “[…] institutional cultural capital”, the ability to attract applications through reputation (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001, p. 10).

Another subcomponent of the people mix noted in the literature was the “other students in the institution” (Edwards & Whitty, 1997, p. 34). The importance of this factor stemmed from the fact that the presence of students of (dis)similar religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds in a college might affect the choice of prospective students. In addition, Perkins and Neumayer (2014) noted that not only were other people on campus important, but also the presence of an immigrant population around a college campus was likely to help

disseminate information about the campus internationally, as well as helped new international students apply, move, and settle. Another dimension of the people mix was discussed by Bodycott (2009), Padlee, Kamaruddin, and Baharun (2010), Pimpa (2005), and Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman (2012). These studies argued that people, including international students' family and friends, had considerable influence on students' destination country and college choice. Bodycott (2009), Bodycott and Lai (2012), and Choi and Nieminen (2013), for example, proposed that traditional Confucian values were held by many mainland Chinese parents, who had considerable amount of control over their children' education decisions and career plans.

Kotler and Fox (1995) conclude their 7Ps discussion by proposing that each P of the marketing mix played a crucial role on its own in students' selection of institution; however, the importance of each P and the importance of different subcomponents within those Ps were varied between different educational settings. A demonstration of the varying level of importance of the marketing mix components and the dynamics by which these components interacted was Ivy (2008). In a study on the process of students' selection of college program, the author examined the validity of the tradition the 7Ps marketing mix advanced by Kotler and Fox (1995). Ivy conducted a single cross sectional study of over 500 Master's of Business Administration (MBA) students studying in South Africa where he investigated attitudes and importance of the various marketing tools within the mix. Using principal component for extraction of the factors, with

Varimax rotation, Ivy suggested another 7Ps MMM: Premiums, Program, Promotion, People, Prominence, Price, and Prospectus as follows.

1. Program was the range of electives and majors.
2. Prominence was faculty reputation, ranking within league tables, and online information.
3. Price was payment arrangement, tuition, flexible tuition approaches, and program duration.
4. Prospectus was the hard copy of the campus catalogue mailed directly to students.
5. People was face-to-face tuition, personal contact, and open days.
6. Promotion was press advertising, publicity, and electronic marketing.
7. Premiums included accommodation, modules, exchange programs, computer facilities, residential requirements, and class sizes.

These 7Ps were evidently different from the traditional 7Ps, which, as Ivy (2008) argued, might not be the best way to approach marketing MBA programs. The three distinct and independent elements revealed by the author's factor analysis were (a) a new "program" mix with different subcomponents from those in the traditional 7Ps mix, (b) "prominence" which was viewed as the second most important mix by the author's subjects and which was not sufficiently accounted for in other Ps models, and (c) "prospectus" which was also not described in previous marketing mix models. The author's analysis concludes that the marketing mix was best approached as a dynamic tool that might need to

have different structure and distribution of components and subcomponents to suit different settings and different audiences.

## Systematic Review of Empirical Research Findings

Having discussed prominent theoretical models that explained international students' destination country and college choice, the following summarizes empirical studies. Internationalization scholars, including Azmat, Osborne, Lo Rossignol, Jogulu, Rentschler, Robottom, and Malathy, (2013); Gong and Huybers (2015), Lumby and Foskett (2015); Ross, Grace, and Shao (2013); To, Lung, Lai, and Lai (2014), noted that despite the importance of the phenomena related to factors affecting international students' college choice, there was only limited empirical evidence available, which was varied in its quality with very few studies based on sound theoretical frameworks. The following is a systematic review that set criteria for studies included (Krathwohl, 2009; Creswell, 2012a; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). While arguments from qualitative research were incorporated into the theoretical discussion above, the following was dedicated to quantitative and mixed methods research findings. The review below summarized all studies on factors affecting international students' choice that were published in peer-reviewed journals, and that were found through ProQuest, EBSCO, PsycINFO, and Sage Journals platforms. The search for studies that met the criteria above was conducted over a three-month period from February to April 2015.

The review below follows a contextual/chronological organization method to summarize previous studies (Creswell, 2014; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). It is organized by context, i.e. countries where studies were conducted and limited to the five main English speaking international student host countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K., and the U.S. The logic for organizing studies by context was motivated by the argument that the demography of international students – and the consequent cultural, behavioral, and personal traits of those students – were different in different host countries (Beck, 2013; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). Contexts are ordered alphabetically; and within contexts, studies are reviewed chronologically as per their dates of publication. In the situation where more than one study within the same context have the same publication date, studies are arranged alphabetically as per the authors' names. Finally, in the process of locating literature, the search found some studies that researched the phenomena in more than one context or investigated prospective students who had not decided their country and campus destination. These studies were grouped under the title "studies on more than one or undefined contexts", and are reviewed last.

Studies in the Australian Context

The most research-intensive context found was the Australian. Five relevant studies were identified, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002b), Pimpa (2005), Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor (2005), Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010), and Gong and

Huybers (2015). Some of these studies were funded because the Australian government saw the advantage of gaining market share (Findlay, 2011).

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002b) studied factors that motivated students' destination country and campus choice. The authors collected their own data and additionally used data from four earlier studies that had been conducted from 1996 to 2000 on behalf of Education International, of the Australian Department of Education. Those studies had used questionnaires that were back-translated into the native language of participants and had employed convenience-sampling techniques. Questionnaires had been distributed to prospective international students from Taiwan, India, mainland China, and Indonesia aspiring to study in Australia. The total sample size for the four studies was 361 students from Taiwan, 152 from India, 689 from mainland China, and 404 from Indonesia, a total of 1,606 students. To collect their own data, Mazzarol and Soutar distributed the questionnaire to international students studying at twelve Australian colleges. From these, 879 usable questionnaires were returned and used in the analysis making the gross total sample size of the study 2,485 subjects. Questionnaire items asked subjects to mark their opinion on factors affecting their choice as "important" or "unimportant".

Using PPM theoretical model, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002b) found that their subjects were mainly motivated to study in Australia because they perceived Australian education to be of better quality than education in their home countries. The second most important motivator for their subjects to select

Australia was the desire to learn more about Western culture. At the campus selection level, the three most important factors were reputation/quality of campus, willingness of the campus to recognize subjects' previous qualifications, and expertise of campus faculty and staff. Discriminant rating function analysis indicated three variables that were negatively associated with students' choice. These were the campus use of 'superior technology', the campus being known to subjects before, and the campus advertising and promotion (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002b, p. 88).

The second study found in the Australian context was Pimpa (2005), which employed MMM. The author conducted a study on marketing Australian colleges to international students coming from Thailand. Pimpa's study investigated ten factors influencing these students' choice of campus: college reputation, program, instruction, job opportunity, facility, faculty reputation, safety, fee, agent recommendation and alumni. The author collected data using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that was completed and returned by 150 Thai students. These students were surveyed during two Australian education fairs in Bangkok in 2003 and 2004 after students had submitted applications to study for undergraduate and graduate degrees at Australian universities. Using descriptive statistics and ANOVA test to identify differences in means, the author claimed that the most important factor underpinning Thai students' choice of international education destination was college reputation followed by the quality and availability of suitable programs. Other important factors affecting choice in

Pimpa's study were teaching quality, employment during and after study, and campus physical facilities. The least two important factors were agent recommendation and alumni. The author highlighted that lowering the admission requirements might assist campuses in temporarily increasing their number of international students; however, in the long run, accepting unqualified international students diminished the reputation and perception of quality of these campuses (Pimpa, 2005).

Another study found in the Australian context was Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor (2005). The purpose of Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor's study was to investigate the major reasons behind international students' choice of an Australian college located in Perth, Western Australia, as their study destination. A survey design through questionnaire was employed. The questionnaire was paper and pencil and had been piloted with a group of students before it was distributed. The questionnaire asked for demographic information, as well as the one most important factor affecting students' choice. The six factor options were: (1) proximity to home, (2) quality/variety of education, (3) cost of living, (4) friends study here, (5) family recommended, and (6) safe place. Data were collected from 297 subjects studying at the same college in Australia; 59% were female, with mean age of 23.9 years. Subjects mainly came from Malaysia 32%, Singapore 23%, and Indonesia 18%. In addition, the majority of subjects were studying for a degree in commerce, 62%, and were in their final year of study.

Descriptive analysis of the data in Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor's (2005) study showed that the most important factor was proximity to home, followed by quality/variety of education, then cost of living. Correspondence analysis was further applied to data in order to transform tabulated numerical data into a graphical display. Analysis showed significant differences between student groups and some of their motivations to select their study destination. Students from Singapore were more likely to choose Perth on a combination of proximity and quality factors, whereas Malaysian students' choice would be influenced by a combination of safety and quality factors, and Indonesian students' choice would be affected mainly by proximity and familiarity (Shanka, Quintal & Taylor, 2005).

Next, a study on location selection criteria and preferences by international students in the case of two Australian colleges was Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010). The authors approached the phenomenon from a service marketing perspective and tested key constructs proposed in an earlier work by Canterbury (1999). The authors' study had a number of objectives one of which was to understand the overall factors that influence international students' choice of Australia as a destination country, the choice of states within Australia, and students' choice of the two particular Australian colleges, one on the East Coast and one on the West Coast, where the study was carried out. The authors employed survey methodology through a paper and pencil questionnaire distributed to undergraduate and graduate students studying for commerce and business degrees. 200 questionnaires were distributed and one 190 usable

questionnaires (95% response rate) were completed and returned. 49% of the sample consisted of students from Thailand or Malaysia aged between 21 and 24. The questionnaire had three items investigating choice factors: One item was on the reason for selecting Australia, the second was on the reason for selecting the state within Australia, and the third was on the particular campus chosen. Participants were asked to mark only the one most important choice factor for each of the three items.

Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010) results showed that there were some differences between students' studying in the two different locations. Students in the East Coast campus chose Australia mainly because of its quality of education and safety. These students also mainly chose the state because it was recommended to them by other people, and they chose the particular campus because of its quality of courses. Conversely, students studying at the West Coast campus chose Australia because it was recommended to them, and due to its low cost of living and proximity to their home country. They also chose the state because it was recommended and it had low cost of living, and they chose their particular campus mainly because of its prestige and image. The responses of the two groups were analyzed using Chi-square test to examine if there was statistical difference between the groups, yet analysis did not produce any statistically significant results (Abubakar, Shanka & Muuka, 2010).

The last study found in the literature on the Australian context, Gong and Huybers (2015), researched Chinese students. The specific purpose of Gong

and Huybers was to identify the key factors underlying Chinese students' international education destination choices. Taking a mixed method approach, Gong and Huybers employed discrete choice experiment method where focus groups were used to explore and inform the development of the survey instrument. There were two focus group interviews for about 100 minutes each and were conducted with a total of 17 Chinese students who were newly enrolled at two Australian colleges in 2011. The purpose of selecting newly enrolled students was to obtain data from subjects who had recently gone through the experience of choice decision-making. The questionnaire instrument was developed in English then was translated into Chinese and consisted of multiple scenarios each consisting of two college options with different attributes, students had to mark their choice for each scenario. There were eleven attributes which were relevant to student visa and possible immigration regulations, safety, language needs and admission requirements at the host destination, education quality, and climate. The questionnaires were in paper and pencil format and were distributed to 459 students in Qingdao and Zibo cities in mainland China during five information sessions for prospective international students. A total of 308 usable questionnaires were completed and returned, a 67% response rate. These were 45% female students and were aspiring to study for bachelor's, 8%; Master's, 54%; and PhD, 38%; in science, engineering, and social science programs.

Findings from Gong and Huybers' (2015) focus groups were generally consistent with the literature as subjects voiced issues relevant to student visa, quality and ranking of the college, and costs of study. Contrary to findings in some other literature, nonetheless, subjects thought that word-of-mouth referral and proximity to home country were not important. Furthermore, focus groups revealed an additional factor that affected students' international college choice, "years needed to learn the language spoken" (Gong & Huybers, 2015, p. 9). Students said that they did not choose to go to countries like Germany since colleges might use English as the language of instruction, yet students would still need to learn German for their everyday life in Germany. According to the authors, this factor was never previously studied in PPM or other relevant literature. As for the quantitative findings, comparisons for socio-demographic specifications and choice attributes found some significant coefficients, yet overall comparisons for interactions failed to confirm any specific models. Nevertheless, all attributes except for immigration sponsorship were found to have significant effect on choice. Descriptively, the most important factors affecting Chinese students' choice were safety, ranking, and costs respectively (Gong & Huybers, 2015).

Studies in the British Context

There were three studies found in the context of the U.K. First, Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) conducted a study on international marketing of British education researching international students' perceptions of the importance of

the 4P marketing mix: price, place, promotion, and product. The study employed exploratory mixed methods approach to the research question and surveyed subjects through interviews, as well as structured and unstructured questionnaires. Data were collected from a total of 62 international students studying at a British college. Subjects were studying in non-degree, undergraduate, and graduate programs, and they were from developing countries, 56%, and developed countries, 44%. Descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the qualitative ones were applied. Binsardi and Ekwulugo findings from the interviews and the questionnaire showed that the most important factors behind students' choice were relevant to price and product mixes. These were education standards/recognized qualification worldwide, ease of college admissions and of immigration procedures, and ease of finding employment during and after the study (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003).

The second study in the British context was Wilkins and Huisman (2011b), which investigated the criteria used by international students to make their choice to study at one particular college in the U.K. While employing PPM, the particular purpose of the study was to investigate international students' selection criteria, as well as explore these students' attitudes toward international branch campuses, British colleges opening branches in international locations such as Malaysia and Hong Kong. The authors developed a questionnaire instrument through 'pre-study' interviews with 12 international graduate students studying at

a research-intensive college in the U.K. (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011b, 72). The questionnaire consisted of 35 items and employed five-point Likert scales. Items were organized in three groups: (1) decision to study overseas, (2) choice of country, and (3) choice of institution. Wilkins and Huisman employed convenience sampling techniques and collected data over a three-week period in 2010 from 160 subjects, 47.5% female; and 37.5% from mainland China, 25% from Europe, 13.1% from India, and 24.4% from other countries. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Components with Varimax rotation, and MANOVA to compare groups.

Wilkins and Huisman's (2011b) descriptive findings showed that while much of the literature has been using PPM, push factors had minimal influence compared to pull ones. Subjects in this study were motivated to study abroad by their belief that an international education experience would increase their employability perspective, as well as their English language skills. Subjects chose the U.K. also because they wanted to improve their English and because they perceived British higher education to be of high quality. Finally, students selected their particular campus because of its ranking, quality of program, and faculty expertise and reputation. As for results from factor analysis, findings suggested five broad factors that could be termed quality, convenience, language development, value for money, and attractive location to study and live. Comparison between groups with regard to the five different broad factors identified showed some significant difference between groups separated by

gender and country of origin. Compared to male, female students significantly place more importance on quality, and for Chinese students, English language development factor was significantly more relevant to explaining these students choice in comparison with European and Indian students (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011b).

The most recent study found in the British context was Foster (2014). This study aimed at exploring Brazilian students' attitudes to study at British colleges. More specifically, the purpose of the study was to investigate key factors involved in Brazilian students' decision-making about the choice of study at a British college, as well as, the perceived barriers and enabling factors for such choice. The study employed PPM and an exploratory sequential design within mixed methods approach aiming at providing convergence of results while learning from the qualitative phase, through focus groups, to build the quantitative instrument. Findings from the qualitative phase suggested that the questionnaire consisted of nine important/unimportant items or factors affecting choice and barriers to select a British college. The questionnaire was distributed to languages and applied linguistics students at three highly ranked Brazilian universities. A total of 117 usable questionnaires were returned and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings suggested that the most important factors for choice were improving English language, followed by experience of study abroad, and opportunity to undertake research at the graduate level. The least important for Brazilian students in this study were making international friends, higher paying

jobs upon completion, and chances to get a job in the U.K. Barriers were mainly related to costs and distance of the U.K. from Brazil (Foster, 2014).

Studies in the Canadian Context

Two studies were found on the Canadian context, Chen (2007) and Massey and Burrow (2012). In a study on East-Asians studying internationally for graduate degrees at Canadian colleges, Chen (2007) investigated the process of decision-making and factors influencing these students' choice of country and campus destination. More specifically, the three purposes of Chen's study were (1) to understand the process of deciding to undertake overseas graduate studies, (2) to develop a framework to explain the factors influencing international students' choice of a Canadian graduate school, and (3) to assess the strengths and dynamics of the factors influencing the enrollment decision. The author employed explanatory sequential mixed methods where the author used triangulation to look at the agreement and disagreement between data sets, and put the data into a more comprehensive explanatory framework. The study was conducted within the 2003-2004 academic year and consisted of a quantitative phase where quantitative data were collected through surveys and a qualitative phase where interviews were conducted. Paper-based survey questionnaires were mailed directly from two Canadian universities, The University of Toronto and York University, to a total of 450 international graduate students. 140 surveys, 31%, were completed and returned. The recruitment of the interview participants was via self-selection, as interview participants were asked in the

questionnaire whether they would be interested in participating in an in-depth interview, and 23 subjects participated. Both college campuses were in Ontario, which hosted the largest number of East-Asian international students at all levels. In the sample, students from mainland China represented 67% of the total respondents, Hong Kong 4%, Japan 13%, Korea 11%, and Taiwan 4%. Half of the respondents were enrolled at the doctoral level and the rest at the master's level. Thirty-two percent of the respondents were between 21 and 25 years of age, 47 percent were between 26 and 30, and 21 percent are over 30 years of age. 22% of the respondents were enrolled in arts and humanities, 27% in business, 7% in education, 34% in engineering and science, 2% in law, and 6% in medical and health.

Chen's (2007) findings contributed to the PPM model adopted in the literature for studying international students' destination selection. His Synthesis Model (Figure 1, page 37 above) drew on the factors of student choice defined in the education marketing literature and incorporated the process models of Hossler and Gallagher (1987), Neice and Braun (1977), Mazzarol and Soutar (2002b), and Florida (2002). Chen's (2007) findings suggested that international students are pulled by the academic reputation of campuses and the cultural and demographic environments within and around campuses; the subjects in the study based their selection criteria on the perceived high quality of Canadian graduate programs that have competitive cost and provide safe, culturally diverse, and tolerant environments. Conversely, results showed that subjects

were pushed from destinations other than Canada, such as the U.S., due to difficulties in obtaining visas to study in those countries.

Another study in the Canadian context was Massey and Burrow (2012). This study investigated factors that influenced international students' decision to participate in exchange programs between their home country campuses and Canadian campuses. The two specific research questions concerned (1) the main influences and sources of information students used for making their decision, and (2) the primary motivators for students to participate in exchange programs at a Canadian college. Massey and Burrow employed a survey design through a questionnaire consisting of demographic items and five-point Likert-type rating scale items. The instrument was adapted from an earlier study by Kitsantas (2004) and was designed to examine primary influences and decision criteria for college choice, as well as to investigate how students gained awareness of the host college. A hard copy questionnaire was distributed to 340 international students and eventually 187 usable questionnaires were collected. The sample was 54% from Europe, 31% from Asia, 12% from New Zealand, and 3% from other countries. More than half of the sample, 58%, were business students and were in their third year of undergraduate study. Female students were 58% and male were 42%. The study reported descriptive statistics and inferential ones, Chi-square test, Cramers V, independent *t* test, and one way ANOVA.

Massey and Burrow's (2012) results showed that students participated in exchange programs in Canada mainly due to cross-cultural motivations, as well as to improve their career prospects. The least important factors were related to personal, social, and academic motivations. Subjects primarily sought information from the host college website and former exchange students. Comparisons between student subgroups suggested that female students were more likely to consult their home college study abroad office in addition to other information sources. Results also showed that students selected their campus destination mainly based on the country where it was located. Reputation, course offerings, and academic program factors followed location with no significant differences between subgroups.

Studies in the New Zealand Context

Two studies were found in the New Zealand context, one by Joseph and Joseph (2000) and the other by Warring (2011). Joseph and Joseph (2000) employed survey methodology to investigate Indonesian students' perceptions of college selection criteria. The authors used an instrument that was initially designed for New Zealander students then was modified based on feedback obtained through focus groups with Indonesian students. Eventually, the instrument consisted of 17 items and included demographic subjects' attributes, as well as five-Likert scale items that requested subjects' opinions on the importance of factors that would constitute subject's perception of a quality higher education campus. 200 questionnaires were distributed to five randomly

selected high schools in Indonesia. 110 usable questionnaires were returned producing a 55% response rate. The authors found that not only were their subjects' college choice influenced by a college's reputation, but also subjects saw campus resources and the existence of a study conducive environment almost as important. In contrast, in Joseph and Joseph's study, the least important factor for college choice was peer and family influence, followed by cost of education.

The second study in the New Zealand context, Warring (2011), was focused on investigating the extent to which word-of-mouth was an influential factor in international students' college choice. The authors conceptualized word-of-mouth as opinion-leading – giving advice – and opinion-seeking – seeking advice – communication actions (Flynn, Goldsmith & Eastman, 1996), which allowed them to collect data using the five-point Likert scale questionnaires consisting of 12 items. Questionnaires were distributed to international students, as well as, domestic students and staff comparison groups at a New Zealand college. The total sample size was 929 and a *t*-test and ANOVA were employed to compare groups. The study results suggested that there was no significant difference between international and domestic students with regard to opinion leading acts. Moreover, compared to domestic students, international students were significantly less reliant on opinion seeking in their college choice. Warring further compared three international student subgroups: Chinese, Indian, and Pacific Islander international students. Comparison showed that students from India

were significantly more likely to be involved in opinion leading acts than Chinese and Pacific Islander students. In addition, Indian students were significantly less likely to seek information compared to the other two groups.

Studies in the United States Context

There were two relevant studies found in the context of the U.S., Shah and Laino (2006), and Lee (2008). Shah and Laino (2006) examined whether there were differences between international students coming from different countries with regard to their expectations from a U.S. college education. The study employed the expectation construct of the framework of service quality measurement originally proposed in the work of Brown, Gilbert, Churchill, and Peter (1993) and Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1993). Shah and Laino used a questionnaire consisting of 25 items requesting demographic data, as well as a five-point Likert scale for subject's views of the importance of destination college attributes. Questionnaires were made available online and were additionally distributed through international education agents, as these agents were approached by prospective international students. Out of the total 441 completed questionnaires, there were 295 usable ones from six different countries: 116 from Germany, 60 from Thailand, 49 from Indonesia, 28 from Singapore, 16 from Taiwan, 14 from Malaysia, and 12 from Hong Kong.

Findings from Shah and Laino's (2006) descriptive analysis contradicted much of the previous research, as it showed that the most important three motivators for subject's choice were on campus jobs offered, scholarships

offered, and campus grounds were well maintained respectively. The least important were well-qualified faculty, emphasis on academic excellence, and staff and administrators were easily accessible. The data were also subjected to factor analysis employing Varimax rotation that produced five factor clusters: (1) assurance/reliability, (2) empathy, (3) responsiveness, (4) campus tangibles, and (5) student resource tangibles. On all these five cluster factors, analysis of variance produced significant difference between the groups. Overall German students had higher expectations on all factors except for campus tangibles. The most important factor for German, Hongkongese, and Thai students was empathy, for Indonesian and Malaysian responsiveness, for Singaporean students assurance/reliability, and for Taiwanese both types of tangibles, campus and resources, equally (Shah & Laino, 2006).

Moving to the second study in the U.S. context, Lee (2008) approached the question of factors affecting international students' college choice from a college access perspective; the author synthesized propositions including those of Kotler and Fox's (1995) econometric model, Sewell and Shah's (1968) status attainment model, and Chapman's (1984) and Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) stage models. Lee's (2008) study employed case study design and had an exploratory purpose. Data were collected from one large public research college in the Southwest region of the U.S. The total international student population at that college at the time of the study was about 3,000 students. Surveys through questionnaires were sent to international students who had subscribed to a

listserv, 2,569 students; and 501 students participated, 19.5% response rate. Participants were 45% female, and came from nine different regions, 56% from Asia, 10% Europe, 11% Latin America, 3% Africa, 3% Middle East, 2% North America. The survey employed a questionnaire originally designed for domestic students, and consisted of 29 open-ended and Likert-type scale items, some of which were relevant to factors affecting choice. In addition to the questionnaire, 24 subjects, 14 female and 10 male, participated in interviews that sought more in-depth information. Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially using ANOVA and *t* test to compare subgroups, and thematic coding was used to analyze interview data.

Lee's (2008) findings from the qualitative and quantitative data were consistent. Quantitative analysis suggested that students (over 50% of respondents) primarily depended on the Internet, campus brochures and advertisement to collect data about programs. The remaining sources of information were less important, friends 36%, school counselors and teachers 14%, family members who had studied abroad 13%, and agents and agreement with home country college 4%. Comparison between groups found that male students significantly relied more on friends as a source of information. In addition, students from East Asia and Canada significantly relied more on the Internet, brochures, and advertisements. Lee's study investigated six factors affecting choice; the order of importance was as follows: (1) college reputation, (2) tuition, (3) availability of work/assistantship, (4) other financial assistance, (5)

availability of a program of interest, and (6) campus ethnic and cultural diversity (Lee, 2008).

Studies on More than One or Undefined Contexts

The review of the literature found some studies that investigated factors that influenced prospective international students' destination choice in general without a defined host country. These were Bodycott (2009), Perkins and Neumayer (2014), and Wang and Ho (2014). Furthermore, there were studies that investigated or compared the phenomena in more than one host country, Chen and Zimitat (2006) and Gatfield and Chen (2006).

The first study found, Chen and Zimitat (2006), attempted to understand Taiwanese students' decision-making factors with regard to selecting Australian and U.S. colleges. Using TPB, their study investigated the motivators for these students to study abroad. A survey was developed as a research instrument. Data were collected from 518 high school students in Taiwan. The study claimed to validate the theory using multiple regression tests that demonstrate, "the power of the belief-based variables to predict intention and behavior" (Chen & Zimitat, 2006, p. 96). The authors stated that their study was the first to use TPB originally proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), which, they claimed, was a valid model for exploring the motivations of international students in selecting study abroad destinations. Ajzen and Fishbein's theory, which was descriptive and predictive of human behavior, identified three domains affecting decision-making. These were: (a) attitude to behavior or the beliefs of the consequences

of actions, (b) subjective norms, which included behaving in a way that is accepted by others, and finally (c) perceived behavioral control, which was the, “belief about [the] level of control and capacity to fulfill behavior” (East, 2013, p. 219). These three domains shaped intention and consequently behavior, Chen and Zimitat (2006) argued.

The findings of Chen and Zimitat’s (2006) study were that Taiwanese students’ intentions to study abroad were interdependent on the three domains of TPB; however, intention was mainly shaped by students’ attitude to behavior. In other words, Taiwanese students believed that there was a great value for a study abroad experience; hence, they made the decision to leave their country and travel for education. Taiwanese students selected Australia as their destination country because they believed that in its strong economic power and high quality education system. In contrast, students who selected U.S. institutions were mainly influenced by family and friends (Chen & Zimitat, 2006).

A study on international students’ consumer behavior was Gatfield and Chen (2006). This study was similar to that of Chen and Zimitat (2006) in its use of planned behavior theory. Gatfield and Chen (2006) used the multi-attribute TPB proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), and it explored the differences in behavioral motivations of Taiwanese international students aspiring to study overseas at colleges in Australia, the U.K., or the U.S. Gatfield and Chen’s study was undertaken in four stages: (1) an exploratory qualitative phase in which the variable constructs were determined through 12 interviews, (2) an examination of

constructs developed through an expert panel, (3) quantitative survey through questionnaires, and (4) qualitative explanatory phase. After the two initial phases, the quantitative instrument developed collected background information on subjects and employed a seven-point Likert-assigned format that aimed at measuring 20 variables on attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The questionnaire was composed in Mandarin and was back translated into English. It was administered to Taiwanese students in two formats: paper-based 80% and an electronic version via the internet 20%. The total completed and useable questionnaires were 518, and data were tested by means of factor analysis and multiple regression.

Gatfield and Chen's (2006) results were generally consistent with the proposed theory and findings in the literature. For Taiwanese students, the economic performance of the host country was the most important factor underpinning choice. Factors related to improving job prospect upon completion and academic research activities in the host country followed. The least important choice factors were word-of-mouth, tuition, and program length respectively. Factor analysis suggested three solutions after oblique rotation that confirmed relationships consistent with TPB, attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis showed that while the literature suggested that mainland Chinese students were strongly influenced by subjective norms relevant to parental control, the analysis of the data collected from Taiwanese students in

this study indicated that this was not the most important factor. Comparison between subjects aspiring to study in the three different destination countries suggested that as U.S. colleges had well-established perceived images affecting factors relevant to students' attitudes toward behavior, these colleges could invest more in subjective norms. Australian and British colleges, conversely, could focus on attitudes towards behavior and attempt to communicate the value of their education through media (Gatfield & Chen, 2006).

Another study that was conducted on the destination choice of international students aspiring to study abroad was Bodycott (2009). The author built on PPM with the objective to compare and further the understanding of motivators and strength of motivators behind mainland Chinese students' and mainland Chinese parents' choices. The study employed convergent mixed methods design and sought qualitative data through focus groups and quantitative data through a questionnaire using a two-phase strategy. While the questionnaire was focused on factors affecting choice, focus groups consisted of parent and student volunteers who participated in the questionnaire and additionally aimed at eliciting information on the decision making process. Data were collected during international education exhibitions and school seminars in three mainland Chinese cities, Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. There were 25 parents and 25 students who participated in the focus group phase and were interviewed in five groups, each consisting of five parents and five students. Interviews were conducted in Mandarin, and a questionnaire instrument, built on a review of the

literature consisted of items on information sources and 24 four-point scale items, was composed in Mandarin then was translated into English. A total of 251 parents and 100 students completed and returned the questionnaires and the groups were compared using ANOVA.

Results from Bodycott's (2009) study on Chinese parents and students were generally different from findings of other research in the literature. The author contributed this to the considerable differences between parents and students' rating of the importance of factors influencing choice; ANOVA produced significant differences between parents and students on all factors that attract and influence decision making about study abroad destinations. As for information gathering about study abroad options, both parents and students thought that international education exhibitions and friends, or friends followed by the Internet, were the most important sources of information. However, parents' most important factors underpinning choice were employment prospects upon graduation, social and emotional support services, and range of program availability respectively. For students, the order was on campus accommodation, range of program availability, then English speaking environment. Contrary to findings in other research, factors such as academic reputation, tuition, fees and other costs, and geographical proximity to China were not important to the mainland Chinese parents and students in this study (Bodycott, 2009).

Moving to Perkins and Neumayer's (2014) study, the authors here situated the problem of factors affecting international students' choice and mobility within

PPM, as well as a geographic theoretical framework, while drawing on a world systems approach to globalization. The authors employed cost and benefit analysis that was more commonly used in labor immigration research, and they looked at student flows while linking source countries to host countries. While examining if international students' mobility had spatial determinants, some of the factors that Perkins and Neumayer discussed were relevant to topics such as human, social, and cultural capitals, as well as the political orientations, historic human movement, and relationships between sources and host destinations. The study used a secondary data set obtained from UNESCO and was comprised of numbers of international students sent and received around the world. Data were analyzed using multivariate, quantitative techniques with annual number of college students as the main dependent variable. Explanatory variables were: (1) college quality measured by World University Ranking and Academic Ranking of World Universities indices, (2) democracy, colonial link, and political regime type in countries based on a typology proposed by Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr (2011), (3) spatial proximity by kilometers between source and host countries, (4) languages, (5) number of immigrants from source countries in host countries, and (6) gross domestic product in source and host countries.

Perkins and Neumayer's (2014) findings revealed that international students were affected by a significant gravitate to countries where colleges had high-ranking positions in international ranking indices. Furthermore, international students were significantly more likely to come from non-democratic countries

and study in democratic ones. Other findings of the study were relevant to associations between colonial link, geographic proximity, and languages; English language was found to be a significant factor in inviting student mobility (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014).

Finally, a study by Wang and Ho (2014) examined the market positioning and the selection of destination countries for music students from Taiwan. The authors noted that while the U.S. had historically been Taiwanese students' preferred destination, many of these students started choosing to study in different locations. "Although the USA is still the most popular destination country for overseas Taiwanese students, in recent years increasing numbers of students are choosing other destinations" (Wang & Ho, 2014, p. 4). To this end, the purpose of the study was to identify the key factors that influenced Taiwanese music students' choice, to calculate the relative importance of the factors affecting choice, and to determine the relative market competitiveness of seven destination countries: Australia, Austria, mainland China, France, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S. The authors formulated a three-part questionnaire to survey the views of students: The first part requested subjects' demographic data, the second was 12 pairwise items, and the third was a cross table of the destination countries and the nine factors where subjects marked countries that had adequate resources for each different factor. Questionnaires were distributed to 200 Taiwanese students majoring in music at five colleges in Taiwan. 142 questionnaires were returned and used in the analysis, with a 71% response

rate. Data were examined using Analytic Hierarchy Process and correspondence analysis for calculating the relative importance of factors and the market-positioning map respectively.

Findings of Wang and Ho's (2014) study showed that the academic dimension was the most important overall factor compared to the economic and the living dimensions. More specifically, the study revealed that the most important factor was teacher quality, future job prospects, and college prestige. The least important were years for graduation, travel convenience, and cultural adaptation. Correspondence analysis results showed that countries compared were clustered in three market positioning orientations. The first was the mainland Chinese and was relevant to tuition and other costs, the second was the Japanese and concerned convenience and cultural adaptation, and the third was other countries, which were perceived to be focused on the academic dimension: teacher quality, curriculum design, campus prestige, and consequent job prospects. The analysis showed that the U.S. was still leading the market but it was closely followed by other countries including Germany (Wang & Ho, 2014).

Summary of Empirical Research Findings

The above review of empirical research findings presented the aims, the theoretical models adopted, the research methodology employed, the populations surveyed, and the results of 19 studies that investigated factors affecting international students' college choice. There were five studies conducted in the Australian context, three in the British, two in the Canadian, two

in New Zealand, two in the U.S., and five in undefined or in more than one context. Findings from these studies were only partially consistent; other than “quality/reputation of the program” and “after graduation career prospective” factors, there was little agreement in the literature. Furthermore, some studies such as that of Shah and Laino (2006) in the U.S. context, contradicted the majority of the remainder of research by suggesting that “quality/reputation”, for instance, were not important factors affecting college choice.

Not only were there contradicting findings, but also the review of the literature showed that studies had different scopes of focus and theoretical underpinnings. While some studies were concerned with either country level factors or campus level ones, other studies reported on both. In addition, studies used different theoretical frameworks: MMM, PPM, and TPB theoretical models. The inconsistent findings could be explained in part by the inconsistent theoretical frameworks, research methods, and instruments used.

Table 1. Summary for Three Most Influential Choice Variables

| | Variable | # Studies | Studies |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Quality of education/program | 6 | Mazzarol and Soutar (2002b); Pimpa (2005); Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor (2005); Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010); Wilkins and Huisman (2011b); Chen and Zimitat (2006) |
| 2 | After-graduation employability prospective | 5 | Wilkins and Huisman (2011b); Massey and Burrow (2012); Gatfield and Chen (2006); Bodycott (2009); Wang and Ho (2014) |
| 3 | College reputation | 4 | Lee (2008); Pimpa (2005); Chen (2007); Joseph and Joseph (2000) |

Table 1 (Continued). Summary for Three Most Influential Choice Variables

| | Variable | # Studies | Studies |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Improve English | 4 | Wilkins and Huisman (2011b); Foster (2014); Bodycott (2009); Perkins and Neumayer (2014) |
| 5 | Safety | 3 | Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010); Gong and Huybers (2015); Chen (2007) |
| 6 | Campus ranking/prestige | 3 | Gong and Huybers (2015); Perkins and Neumayer (2014); Wang and Ho (2014) |
| 7 | Work during/after study possibility | 3 | Shah and Laino (2006); Lee (2008); Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) |
| 8 | Tuition | 3 | Lee (2008); Gong and Huybers (2015); Chen (2007) |
| 9 | Reputation/expertise of campus faculty and staff | 2 | Mazzarol and Soutar (2002b); Wang and Ho (2014) |
| 10 | Availability of a suitable program | 2 | Pimpa (2005); Bodycott (2009) |
| 11 | Study abroad/cross-cultural experience | 2 | Foster (2014); Massey and Burrow (2012) |
| 12 | Opportunity to conduct research | 2 | Foster (2014); Gatfield and Chen (2006) |
| 13 | Economic power of host country | 2 | Chen and Zimitat (2006); Gatfield and Chen (2006) |
| 14 | Location/Proximity to home | 2 | Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor (2005); Massey and Burrow (2012) |
| 15 | Ease of admission/immigration procedures | 1 | Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) |
| 16 | College recognizes previous qualifications | 1 | Mazzarol and Soutar (2002b) |
| 17 | Scholarships offered | 1 | Shah and Laino (2006) |
| 18 | Well maintained campus grounds | 1 | Shah and Laino (2006) |
| 19 | Cost of living | 1 | Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor (2005) |
| 20 | Recommendation/word-of-mouth | 1 | Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010) |
| 21 | Degree recognized internationally | 1 | Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) |
| 22 | Campus resources | 1 | Joseph and Joseph (2000) |
| 23 | Study conductive environment | 1 | Joseph and Joseph (2000) |
| 24 | Family and friends | 1 | Chen and Zimitat (2006) |
| 25 | On campus social and emotional support | 1 | Bodycott (2009) |
| 26 | On campus accommodation | 1 | Bodycott (2009) |
| 27 | Democracy in host country | 1 | Perkins and Neumayer (2014) |

Table 1 above summarizes and lists variables that were found to be the most influential factors affecting students' choice in all studies reviewed. The table also calculates if one factor was found important in more than one study.

## Conclusion: Summary and the Proposed Research Question

This chapter has synthesized literature while drawing links between four main concepts within higher education; namely globalization, internationalization, marketing, and international student destination country and college choice. It was highlighted that higher education in almost all countries was increasingly becoming more financially-independent, market-oriented service sector. In part, this was a result of governments around the world which were embracing neoliberal economic systems that freed states from providing education for their populations and delegated this task to the citizens themselves. Proponents advanced that self-sufficient higher education was attainable and operative since higher education providers would need to compete in a free market and consequently engage in improving educational quality and bettering the conditions of their services. Higher education in the U.S. was not an exception; public funding was decreasing and colleges were finding themselves needing to engage in a greater number of entrepreneurial activities. One of these activities was the recruitment and enrollment of fee-paying international students. These students paid higher tuition, as well as purchased and paid for additional services at and around the campuses where they studied.

The recruitment of international students, however, was not an effortless endeavor. Not only did colleges within the U.S. compete with each other, but they also competed against other colleges globally. Australian, British and Canadian campuses were aggressively recruiting international students in the past years, posing considerable competition to colleges in the U.S. Furthermore, new competitors were continually emerging. Among these was People's Republic of China, with its ambitious higher education internationalization plans to dominate global higher education and claim a substantial share in the international student market.

With the conditions imposed by neoliberal economies and the competitive higher education global market described above, scholars investigating internationalization of higher education engaged in finding out about international student college choice and its related phenomena. Questions such as how and why international students choose particular countries and particular campuses as their study destination were investigated. The main objective of this literature review was to summarize the theoretical models used in research into factors affecting international students' college choice, as well as report on findings from relevant empirical studies.

Research into international student college choice engaged in two germane areas of inquiry, namely international student college choice decision-making process, and factors affecting these students' choice. Work on decision-making process found that in the process of choosing an international campus

and destination country, students go through at least four stages. These were need recognition, information gathering, prioritizing, and selection. Conversely, most research into factors affecting international student college choice employed two different theoretical models: PPM and MMM. While PPM evolved from migration theory, MMM built on marketing research. The fundamental difference between the two models was that MMM focused on college controllable variables that affected international students' college choice. In other words, PPM provided a framework that endeavored to explain the totality of international student mobility phenomenon, whereas MMM concerned itself with choice factors that colleges could affect and control in order to create their desired outcome. MMM attempted to provide a framework for the analysis of students' desires and aspirations with the purpose of providing colleges with direction on how to satisfy students' needs, and consequently affect student college choice positively. Other than MMM and PPM, two studies found used TPB. This theory was similar to PPM as it attempted to explain the entirety of international students' mobility triggers. Table 2 below lists the models used in the studies reviewed.

The literature review set criteria for study inclusion and analyzed a total of 19 empirical studies. According to these studies, the most important factors influencing international students' college choice were program related. These factors concerned program quality, reputation, ranking, prestige, and after-graduation employability. The studies reviewed also showed that next to

program, a strong factor domain that influenced international students' choices was place. International students favored colleges in English speaking countries in locations where they believe they would gain rich cross-cultural experience, while at the same time, these students felt safe on and around their campuses.

Table 2. Theoretical Models Used in the Studies Reviewed

| Model | Studies |
|---|---|
| TPB | Chen and Zimitat (2006); Gatfield and Chen (2006) |
| PPM | Mazzarol and Soutar (2002b); Gong and Huybers (2015); Wilkins and Huisman (2011b); Foster (2014); Chen (2007); Bodycott (2009); Perkins and Neumayer's (2014) |
| MMM | Pimpa (2005); Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010); Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003); Shah and Laino (2006); Lee (2008); Wang and Ho (2014) |
| None | Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor (2005); Massey and Burrow (2012); Joseph and Joseph (2000); Warring (2011) |

The review of the literature suggested that there were some gaps in our knowledge relevant to international student destination country and college choice phenomena. While the U.S. was a major international education destination with the largest number of international students, there were only two relevant studies published in peer-reviewed journals on this context, Lee (2008) and Shah and Laino (2006). Probably, the lack of research was due to U.S. colleges and scholars' belief that international students were easily attainable

whenever U.S. colleges had recruitment intentions. This assumption was challengeable and not supported by recent international student global mobility statistics published by the United Nations. Statistics showed that the share of U.S. colleges of this market was continuously declining against Australian, Canadian, and British campuses, amongst other competitors. It was time U.S. colleges and internationalization scholars had invested more research that could help provide a better understanding of the phenomena, and help provide informed guidelines for U.S. colleges that were interested in receiving international students.

The available two studies on the U.S. context were not conclusive. Shah and Laino's (2006) sample consisted of students who came from seven countries of origin, Germany, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. We did not know if students from other countries of origin had similar degrees of factor influences on their choice. In fact, findings from Shah and Laino's analysis contradicted much of the other research on other contexts: It showed that the most important motivators for college choice were on campus jobs and scholarships offered, while the least important were well-qualified faculty and academic quality. Since program factors were found among the most influential in contexts other than the U.S., an objective of this proposed study was to engage in assessing Shah and Laino's propositions.

Similar to Shah and Laino's (2006), Lee's (2008) study had its limitations. It was an exploratory case study and used secondary data that was originally

collected as part of a campus quality survey; there were only ten items in the data that reported on choice factors. Furthermore, although comprising of 501 participants, Lee's sample was not balanced as it consisted of 56% international students from Asia, 25% from Europe, 11% from Latin America, 3% from Africa, 3% from the Middle East, and 2% from North America. Having in mind that over 20% of international students studying at U.S. colleges were from the Middle East in 2014-2015 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2016a), a study that would seek to obtain a more representative sample was needed.

Finally, both studies found in the U.S. context, Lee (2008) and Shah and Laino (2006), collected data from research (or doctoral) campuses. We did not know if students who select to study at other types of U.S. colleges made their enrollment decision while being affected by factors in a similar manner to students in research institutions. Consequently, the research question (RQ) that concerned key factors that influence international students' destination country and college choice was not responded to in full.

RQ: What are key factors that influence international students' decision to leave home country, select the United States of America, and choose their particular college?

The preset study was conducted in a comprehensive, teaching-focused college (Bachelor's and Master's degree focused campus) with the purpose of contributing more to our knowledge and providing more insight into international student choice phenomena. The study avoided a pitfall much of previous

research had fallen into, where data were collected from international students during international education fairs before they lived their choice experiences or data were collected during international students' study abroad probably years after those students experienced choice. The next chapter of this dissertation, discusses the specific research questions, as well as, explains the research methodology and the design employed.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A widespread statement attributed to the theoretical physicist Albert Einstein is that, “If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research” (cited in Hawken, Lovins & Lovins, 1999, p. 272). While study and dialogue on epistemology and effective truth seeking procedures are ongoing processes (Audi, 2011; Turri, 2014), this chapter describes orientation, position, and procedures used to answer the research questions.

Having reviewed literature relevant to international student destination country and college choice and having discussed relevant theoretical frameworks in the previous chapter, the following presents the methodology and research design of the study. First, there is a summary and restatement of the key elements of this study: the problem, the purpose, and the central question of the study. Second, this chapter describes the setting of the study, California State University, San Bernardino. Next is an overview of the literature pertaining to the paradigmatic and methodological principals of the study in the purpose of advancing the rationale for selecting the study research methods and design: explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative procedures, validity, and ethical considerations are discussed.

## The Problem, the Purpose and the Central Research Question

In a presentation at the 2015 International Education Symposium, John Winslade of California State University, San Bernardino employed Gilles Deleuze's concept of 'lines of force' and described the unavoidable direction of colleges for greater involvement in internationalization. One of these commotional forces was globalization conceded by advances in technology, transportation, and their subsequent cross-national human mobility (Casey, 2009; Held & McGrew, 2004; Spring, 2008). Through technological advances, such as the Internet, knowledge production became a human endeavor with scholars engaging in knowledge sharing and cross-border research projects (Altbach & Lulat, 1985; Herbert & Abdi, 2013). While transportation technologies including ships and planes participated in globalizing the world, the Internet had a more significant impact as it sped up communications (Altbach, 2016). Other lines of force were relevant to the market orientation and the neoliberal context within which higher education existed in the 21st Century (Ambrosio, 2013; Schuetze, Kuehn, Davidson-Harden & Weber, 2011). There were continuing cuts in public funding, which were forcing colleges to develop a stronger involvement in marketing and entrepreneurial activities (Maringe & Gibbs, 2013; Wright, 2014). These activities included the recruitment of fee-paying international students (Gong & Huybers, 2015; Naidoo, 2010).

Increasingly, colleges were looking for ways to attract more international students to their campuses (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbly, 2009; Naidoo, 2010).

International students enriched campuses with the diverse cultures and educational experiences they brought with them, as well as paid higher tuition fees (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Altbach & Lulat 1985; Knight, 2004). Nonetheless, attracting qualified international students was not an easy business. In recruiting these students, not only did colleges in the U.S. compete against each other, but also counterparts in other major study abroad destinations such as Australia, Canada, and the U.K. (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014).

While colleges were motivated to recruit international students, little was known about factors that influenced these students' choice (Gong & Huybers, 2015; East, 2013). Azmat, Osborne, Lo Rossignol, Jogulu, Rentschler, Robottom, and Malathy (2013) suggested that more theoretical work into international students' choice motivators, and more empirical studies into these students' mobility triggers were needed. Ivy (2008) proposed that when there was lack of insight into the dynamics of student choice, college marketing activities became reactive to competition rather than informed strategic planning. In a similar vein, Bohman (2014) advanced that colleges had high levels of motivation to attract international students; however, academic work into related theory and practice was not enough to help understand how colleges could influence these students' enrollment decisions.

The majority of previous studies in the area of international student choice used the TPB, the PPM, or the MMM to analyze international students' motives to leave their home country and travel abroad for education (Ajzen & Fishbein,

1975; Chen, 2007; Kotler & Fox, 1995). None of these theoretical models, nonetheless, seemed adequate enough for colleges to fully understand related phenomena. On the one hand, TPB reported mainly on attitudinal behavior consequent of study abroad decision while ignoring many college level factors that influenced such decision; the model focused on destination country and told very little about what motivated international students to select particular colleges (Gatfield & Chen, 2006). Similarly, PPM originated from migration theory (Lee, 1966), and it reported on factors that were beyond a college's control, such as political relations between sender and host countries, sender country economic and educational conditions, and host country proximity to sender country (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; McMahon, 1992). What if a college might be informed with insights from the TPB and PPM as to the purpose of identifying relevant international student markets? It is however unlikely for a college to have the power to control many of the factors that were reported on in TPB and PPM. In contrast, MMM focused on variables that could be controlled by colleges with the purpose of attracting a bigger volume of qualified applications and enrollments (Coleman, 1994; Ivy & Naude, 2005). While colleges might perceive MMM relevant, this model disregarded many international education factors; it was originally developed for the analysis of domestic students' needs and aspirations (Filip, 2012; Ratiu & Avram, 2013). This study assumed that international students' needs and factors that influence their college choice were not identical to those of domestic students.

In addition, this study assumed that factors that influenced international students to leave their home country, select their destination country, and choose a particular college could best be derived from TPB, PPM, and MMM together. Hence, one of the purposes of the present study was to explore theory, built from work done in these three models. The central question of this study was as follows: What are key factors that influence international students' study abroad choices?

Another purpose of the present study was to contribute to the ongoing discussion in the literature and knowledge of the phenomena related to international students' destination country and college choice. The systematic review of the literature discussed in the previous chapter revealed the paucity of research on the U.S. context. By the time this investigation was conducted, there were only two studies published in peer reviewed journals reporting on factors influencing international students' choice of U.S. colleges: Lee (2008) and Shah and Laino (2006). Both of these studies collected data at research colleges and provided possibly irrelevant insights to other types of higher education institutions. Relatedly, both studies' samples were disproportionate with international student population demographics in the U.S. at the time of this study. For example, while students from the Middle East made up over 20% of international students in comprehensive colleges' population in 2014-2015 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2016a); only 3% of Lee's study sample was from the Middle East. Furthermore, these students were

absent in Shah and Laino's sample. The present study attempted to bridge some of this gap. It collected data from a sample with a different proportionality to that which already existed in previous studies; and it was conducted at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), a comprehensive college (bachelor's and master's college).

## Study Setting

Opened in 1965, CSUSB was a medium size comprehensive campus located in the Inland Empire, southern California. The campus served approximately 20,000 students of the total California State University (CSU) System student population of nearly 500,000 students. The CSU system, called the California State University and Colleges before 1982, was the largest college system in the U.S. and was engineered by the Master Plan for Higher Education in California that was developed by California State Department of Education and translated into the Donahoe Higher Education Act of 1960. The Master Plan created a coherent, collaborative system that combined exceptional quality with broad access for students. It defined three segments of public higher education, each with its potential to achieve excellence within its particular set of responsibilities: (a) community colleges, (b) CSU System, and (c) University of California (UC) System. The Master Plan as adopted in 1960 and amended in subsequent legislative reviews divided research and educational responsibilities amongst these three segments as follows.

a) Community colleges admitted any student who was capable of benefiting from instruction. They provided academic and vocational education for the first two years of undergraduate study (lower division) in addition to developmental instruction, English as a Second Language courses, adult noncredit instruction, community service courses, and workforce training services.

b) CSU System, twenty-three college campuses, selected from the top one-third of high school graduates and provided undergraduate and graduate education through the Master's degree, including professional and teacher education. CSU faculty's primary task was instruction rather than research, and CSU was authorized to award a doctor of education in educational leadership degrees, while other doctorates needed to be awarded jointly with a UC campus or an independent institution.

c) UC System, ten college campuses, selected from among the top one-eighth of high school graduates, functioned as the main state center of academic research, and provided undergraduate, graduate and professional education. UC was given exclusive rights in public higher education for law, medicine, dentistry, and Ph.D. degrees.

(University of California Office of the President, 2016)

Consistent with the Master Plan, CSUSB offered one doctoral degree (Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership) and over 70 Bachelor's and Master's degrees in addition to credential and certificate programs. These were offered through six CSUSB colleges: College of Arts and Letters, College of Business and Public Administration, College of Education, College of Natural Sciences, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and College of Extended Learning. CSUSB programs were accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in addition to other specialized accreditations such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Educating (NCATE) for the College of Education and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) for the College of Business and Public Administration.

Furthermore, CSUSB ranked the second-safest among all thirty three public universities in California. It was listed among the best institutions of higher education in the western U.S., according to The Princeton Review, Forbes and U.S. News and World Report, in their respective annual rankings. Finally, CSUSB prided itself on holding the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, with Distinction. This was the highest federal recognition a college could receive for its commitment to service-learning and civic engagement (CSUSB Website, 2014, November 24).

CSUSB leadership was assumed at two levels: the CSU system level and the campus level. The CSU was governed by a Board of Trustees whose members were appointed by the governor. The Trustees appointed a chancellor,

who was the chief executive officer of the system. CSUSB president was the chief executive officer of the CSUSB campus. The Trustees, the Chancellor, and the Presidents of CSU campuses developed system-wide policy, with implementation at the campus level taking place through broadly based consultative procedures. Elected representatives of the faculty from each campus form the Academic Senate of the CSU recommended academic policy to the Board of Trustees through the chancellor (CSUSB 2012-2014 Bulletin of Courses, 2012).

## Methodology

Different methodologies are suitable for different settings and different types of research inquiries (Creswell, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). In this section, the methodological framework of the present study is described including a brief discussion of the chosen quantitative and qualitative approaches. Finally, the rationale for the mixed methods is presented.

### Quantitative v. Qualitative Paradigms

The two dominant paradigmatic research orientations to inquiries in social and behavioral sciences were the quantitative and the qualitative (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003). The quantitative approaches held positivist or post-positivist assumptions where the world was viewed as an objective reality. In quantitative approaches, the purpose of the researcher was to deductively find out about phenomena with the tenacity to generalize findings, predict, and prescribe (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012; Vogt, 2007). In contrast,

qualitative approaches were more constructionist or interpretivist, and they acknowledged the complexity and subjectivity of construing the world, as they believed that there was no single reality (Freebody, 2003; Merriam, 2009). Qualitative approaches used inductive reasoning allowing data to emerge more freely, and qualitative researchers stepped into the phenomena to observe, record, and describe with as few predetermined assumptions as possible (Creswell, 2014).

Devine and Heath (1999) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) noted that there was a continual debate, and sometimes polarization, over the rigor and value of the qualitative and quantitative paradigms. Advocates of the qualitative paradigm challenged the absolute truth of knowledge and criticized the belief that it was possible to be unconditionally certain of claims relevant to human behavior (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Proponents of quantitative approaches, nevertheless, saw little and sometimes no use of research that could not help understand the rules of the world and what could be predicted and scientifically quantified by means of experimental studies and statistical tests (Fink, 2016).

Yet despite criticism and inherent weaknesses, each research paradigm had its strength (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003). Some aspects of the relevance of the qualitative approaches were their ability to study situations in-depth in their contexts, describe complex phenomena, and report dynamic processes (Mason, 2002; Maxwell, 2013). The strengths of the quantitative paradigm, however, were relevant to (1) the relative objectivity of the

data collected, (2) the convenience offered by the consistency of quantitative data, (3) the ability of quantitative tests to analyze sizable amounts of data and provide precise inferences, (4) the still dominant perception of quantitative data and findings as more conclusive and authoritative, and (5) the possible generalizability of quantitative findings (Gorard, 2001; Hoy, 2010; Martin & Bridgmon, 2012; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Research methodology literature toned down the oppositeness of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Johnson, 2014; Thomas, 2003). While it was referred to as 'the war of paradigms' in the 1970s, Creswell (2014) advanced that, "qualitative and quantitative approaches should not be viewed as rigid, distinct categories, polar opposites, or dichotomies", since they were best viewed as 'different ends on a continuum' (p. 3). Research may be located at different positions within such a continuum, central, towards qualitative, or towards quantitative (Newman & Benz, 1998). This view of combined approaches, as Hesse-Biber (2010) and Morse and Niehaus (2009) advanced, was strengthening the position of mixed research methods, which normally resided in the center between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Mixed Methods

According to Morse and Niehaus (2009), it was then generally accepted that mixed methods provided a better understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone. Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2012) posited that, "quantitative and qualitative data could be mixed for the purpose of

illustrating a more complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 78). Hence, rather than rejecting either worldview, mixed methods integrated the two fundamental ways of thinking about social phenomena allowing researchers to investigate situations in-depth, as well as have relative generalizability powers (Creswell, 2014).

While mixing methods was advantageous, carrying out robust mixed methods studies was laborious. Caruth (2013) asserted that mixed methods approaches and designs were more time consuming and challenging as they required researchers to have good knowledge and skills in quantitative and qualitative research. Thomas (2003) proposed that mixed methods might be selected over either quantitative or qualitative approaches only if needed. According to Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala (2013), the research should have one or more of the following six purposes to be involved in mixed methods:

(a) Complementary: The research would benefit from collecting data about an experience through different instruments.

(b) Completeness: The researcher(s) hoped to account for more complete representations of experiences or associations.

(c) Developmental: The research needed to build a quantitative instrument through a first qualitative phase.

(d) Expansion: The researcher(s) wanted to clarify on unexpected or questionable findings of a prior method.

(e) Corporation or Confirmation: The researcher(s) might want to evaluate the trustworthiness of findings or inferences gained from one method.

(f) Compensation: The research wanted to account for the weakness of either or both approaches.

The compensation, confirmation, expansion, completeness, and complementary purposes were referred to as ‘triangulation’ in much of the mixed methods literature (Johnson, 2014). Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2012) defined triangulation as, “a measurement technique often used by surveyors to locate an object in space by relying on two known points in order to ‘‘triangulate’’ on an unknown fixed point in that same space” (p. 75). The developmental purpose of mixed methods, conversely, combined triangulation and the design of a new research instrument.

Epistemological and Methodological Rational

The present study adopted a mixed methods approach to investigate its research questions in an attempt to combine a more complete understanding of the phenomena, have some generalizability power, as well as triangulate its findings. It held some constructionist views although it leant more towards post-positivist epistemological assumptions. The researcher believed that a single, objective reality was challengeable as there were multiple realities represented by living participants’ perspectives. However, when there was access to a large sample of a population, as was the case in the proposed study, quantitative data

were able to provide precise inferences about aspects of a reality common amongst participants.

In addition to a pragmatic epistemological worldview, the nature of this study suggested the suitability of mixed methods. The central research question of the proposed study concerned factors that influenced choice, which fell under the broad category of market research, an area with strong quantitative orientation. While processes were best researched qualitatively, weight and interaction of factors were most suitably assessed by means of quantitative tests (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016; Muijs, 2011). Kotler (2012) suggested that studies into factors affecting ‘consumer’ choice could collect quantitative data with the purpose of predicting how change in those factors affected the intensity, frequency, and/or volume of consumer decision to purchase goods or services. However, the use of only quantitative approaches might be inadequate in the context of this study due to two main reasons: (1) the nature of education choice as the subject of investigation, and (2) the nature of international students as the population to be surveyed.

First, the study of marketing education was too complex to yield itself easily to the testing of predetermined theory and assumptions (Kirp, 2003; Maringe & Gibbs, 2013; Williams, 2013). Previous education marketing research was heavily influenced by the business literature where most of the studies investigated products or services that were of a simpler nature than education. Marketing a doctoral program, for instance, was evidently unlike marketing a

chewing gum brand, a product, or even a hotel resort, a service. Bohman (2014), East (2013), and Ivy (2008) noted that much of the research in the field of educational marketing was characterized by ideas, suggestions, guidance, and research strategies that were founded on marketing models taken from non-educational settings.

Second, within its already inherently complex field, marketing education, the present study embarked upon an even more convoluted area as it involved the research of questions pertinent to international students. Studies related to international students were more exigent than those focused on conventional students, as the former type of students brought with them additional sets of cultures and consequently diverse ideologies, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, habits, and behaviors (Holt, 1998; Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). These additional variables were likely to affect international students' decision-making and selection of their study abroad destinations (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012). Although the present study was not an investigation of home country cultural influence on international campus choice, the study needed to have flexible approaches and research instruments that would allow relevant data, if any, to be expressed by subjects. Such flexibility was a property of qualitative or mixed methods approaches.

## Research Design and Procedures

Having established that mixed methods were the appropriate approach, the question then concerned which design within those methods was the most

apposite. Johnson (2014) and Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, and Hanson (2003) advanced that various mixed methods designs existed with each being suitable for different research questions and different phenomena under investigation. The three primary mixed methods models identified by Creswell (2014) were (1) convergent parallel mixed methods, (2) exploratory sequential mixed methods, and (3) explanatory sequential mixed methods. The convergent parallel model collected quantitative and qualitative data concurrently and merged the two sets with the purpose of establishing a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon. The exploratory sequential model had two phases where the first phase collected qualitative data that helped to build a quantitative instrument for the second phase. Similarly, the explanatory sequential model employed two phases, yet the researcher here started with quantitative data collection then sought to validate or explain their findings through a second qualitative phase. While exploratory mixed methods designs were more suitable for new areas of inquiry, explanatory designs had a stronger focus on the quantitative phase and were best suited for studies within established strands of research that had a quantitative orientation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Since the study of factors influencing choice had an already established quantitative research tradition, and since there was already existing quantitative instruments that could serve the objectives of the study – discussed below – the

most suitable model for this study was the explanatory sequential mixed methods design, Figure 3 below.

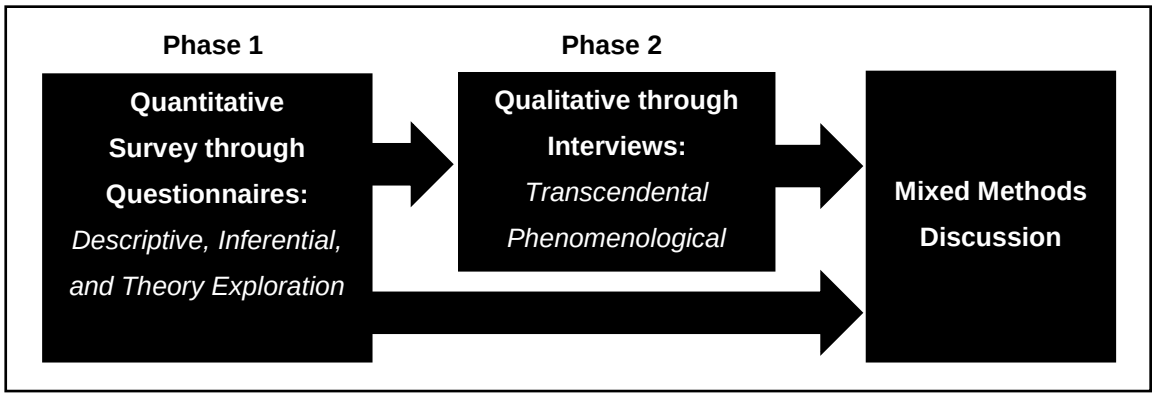


Figure 3. Research Design

As illustrated in Figure 3 above, the study comprised two distinct phases that were done in a sequential manner: The first phase was quantitative, and the second phase was qualitative. Findings of the first phase informed the second phase, and results from both phases provided the grounds for the final mixed methods discussion.

Phase One: The Quantitative Study

The quantitative study employed a survey design to investigate international students' opinions on the importance – or weight – of factors that influenced their decision to study abroad at particular destinations. This design was deemed helpful due to its flexibility, its economy, and its quick data collection turnaround (Babbie, 2010; Creswell, 2012a; Fink, 2016; Fowler, 2009; Muijs, 2011; Salant &

Dillman, 1994). Furthermore, a survey design served the descriptive, inferential, and theory exploration purposes of the study. Creswell (2014) recommended a descriptive-inferential approach to quantitative survey studies where the researcher started with, “writing descriptive questions […] followed by inferential questions or hypotheses” (p. 147). Accordingly, the central inquiry of the study was developed into five quantitative subquestions that described phenomena, explored theory, and investigated inferences. The first four research subquestions were as follows:

Within the context of CSUSB,

RQ 1 (Quantitative Descriptive):

What are international students’ ratings of the importance of variables that influence their decision to leave their home country and study abroad?

RQ 2 (Quantitative Descriptive):

What are international students’ ratings of the importance of variables that influence their decision to select the United States of America as their study destination?

RQ 3 (Quantitative Descriptive):

What are international students’ ratings of the importance of variables that influence their college choice?

RQ 4 (Quantitative Theory Exploration):

What are key factors that influence international students' decision to leave home country, select the United States of America, and choose their particular college?

RQ 1, RQ 2, and RQ 3 followed the logic of PPM of three levels of variables influencing international students' choice: leaving home country, selecting a destination country, and choosing a college. While RQ 1 and RQ 2 reported on variables derived mainly from PPM and TPB, RQ 3 covered variables chiefly described in MMM. For answering these three questions, descriptive statistics were used. In contrast, RQ 4 explored theory as it investigated potential new study abroad choice factor model derived from the three theory models at the same time, TPB, PPM, and MMM. For this purpose, EFA was used as a tool to reduce data and study the underlying relationships between choice variables (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2009; Mertler & Vannatta, 2016; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). According to Yong and Pearce (2013), the purpose of factor analysis was, "to summarize data so that relationships and patterns could be easily interpreted and understood. It [was] normally used to regroup variables into a limited set of clusters based on shared variance. Hence, it helped to isolate constructs and concepts" (p. 79). Thus, EFA helped reveal a possible underlying structure of factor matrix that could help reduce data for a better understanding of the dynamics of international students' choice.

Traditional 7Ps MMM assumed 25 relevant, observed variables under seven underlying factors as illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Kotler and Fox's (1995) Traditional 7Ps Variables

| # | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Underlying Factors | Program | Place | Promotion | Price | Process | Physical Facility | People |
| Observed Variables 1 | Reputation of Quality | Campus Location | College Website | Affordability of Tuition | Processing of Application | Study Facilities | Students of Similar Background |
| Observed Variables 2 | Courses within Programs | Study Conductive Environment | Online Ads | Living Costs | Ease of Being Accepted | Recreational Facilities | Campus Ethnic Diversity |
| Observed Variables 3 | Campus Social Life | Weather Around Campus | Prospectus or Brochure | Payment Flexibility | Communication with Staff | Car Parking Facility | Faculty Reputation |
| Observed Variables 4 | Housing Program | Proximity to Home | X | Financial Aid | X | Public Transportation | X |

In addition to the 25 variables identified by MMM, 27 observed variables derived from TPB and PPM were inserted into EFA analysis (total 52 observed variables). These variables were identified by studies such as Chen (2007) and Gatfield and Chen (2006).These could be classified into three levels using PPM cluster sequence: (1) Leaving Home Country Variables, (2) Selecting Destination Country Variables, and (3) Choosing Particular Campus Variables, as illustrated in Table 4 below. The table showed classified observed variables as modified for the context of the study, the U.S. and CSUSB.

Table 4. International Student Destination Choice Variable Levels

| Level | # | Observed Variables Derived from TPB & PPM |
|---|---|---|
| Leaving Home Country Variables | 1 | Rounding of educational experiences through international study |
| | 2 | Studying a program abroad that does not exist at home country colleges |
| | 3 | Difficulty of being accepted in a good program in home country |
| | 4 | Personal fulfilment by studying in a foreign country |
| | 5 | Emigration after completion of international education |
| | 6 | Making connections with people from around the world |
| | 7 | Being away from home |
| | 8 | Parents' encouragement to study abroad |
| | 9 | Not wanting to feel left alone as friends travel for study abroad |
| | 10 | Availability of scholarships offered by a home institution to study abroad |
| Selecting Country Variables | 11 | Employability prospects as a graduate from an U.S. program |
| | 12 | The economic power of U.S. |
| | 13 | Experiencing the U.S. culture |
| | 14 | The quality of U.S. higher education |
| | 15 | Limited racial problems that would concern me in the U.S. |
| | 16 | Opportunities to get part-time work while in the program |
| | 17 | Tolerance of my religious beliefs in the U.S. |
| | 18 | The high status of a degree from the U.S. |
| | 19 | Improving English language |
| | 20 | Work in the U.S. possibility after graduation |
| Choosing Campus Variables | 21 | International to domestic student ratio at CSUSB |
| | 22 | TOEFL waiver option at CSUSB |
| | 23 | CSUSB ranking |
| | 24 | CSUSB staff participation in international education fairs |
| | 25 | The physical appearance of the campus |
| | 26 | Campus support for international students |
| | 27 | CSUSB safety |

TPB, PPM, and MMM built on social (Ivy, 2010; Paulsen, 1990), psychological (Cubillo, Sanchez & Cerviño, 2006; Plank & Jordan, 2001), and economic (Kallio, 1995; McDonough, 1994) models, and the combined total 52 variables accounted for most of the variables discussed in the literature and previous similar studies. Factor analysis was used in three previous studies on international students' mobility. Theory employed, factor solutions, and number of observed variables in those previous studies are illustrated in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Theory Employed and Factor Solution in Previous Studies

| Study | Theory Employed | # Variables Inserted | Extraction Procedure | Factor Solution |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gatfield and Chen (2006) | TPB | 20 | Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin<br>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity<br>Eigenvalue and Factor Loadings<br>Oblique rotation<br>Cronbach's Alpha test for each factor construct | 1. Attitudes to Behavior<br>2. Subjective Norms<br>3. Perceived Behavioral Control |
| Shah and Laino (2006) | MMM | Not Stated | Varimax rotation<br>Cronbach's Alpha test for each factor construct | 1. Assurance and Reliability<br>2. Empathy<br>3. Responsiveness<br>4. Tangibles (campus)<br>5. Tangibles (student resources) |

Table 5 Continued. Theory Employed and Factor Solution in Previous Studies

| Study | Theory Employed | # Variables Inserted | Extraction Procedure | Factor Solution |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman (2012) | PPM | 40 | Cronbach's Alpha of instrument scales<br>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin<br>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity<br>Eigenvalue and Factor Loadings<br>Principal components with Varimax rotation | 1. Convenience<br>2. Country Attractions<br>3. Quality/Employability |

Table 5 above also showed factor extraction and reliability statistical procedures employed in the three previous studies. While limited information was provided in Shah and Laino (2006), Gatfield and Chen (2006) explained their analysis procedure, which differed from Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman's (2012) EFA in terms of the sequence and number of observed variables loaded for Cronbach's Alpha tests, as well as, the rotation employed to extract factors.

The present study used statistical procedures similar to those employed in Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman's (2012) EFA. First, reliability of instrument scales were tested through Cronbach's Alpha with a cutoff point of 0.7. Second, suitability of data for factor analysis was evaluated through Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (cutoff point of 0.7), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (cutoff point 0.05). Eigenvalue was set at > 1 and factor loading at >.30, while Principal Axis Factoring extraction method and Varimax rotation were

employed. Other criteria employed in the test for factor solution were that variance explained by solution had to be > .30, factor loading cutoff point > .30, while dropping variables (items) for cross-loading at > .15. Finally, scales for each factor domain had to be tested for reliability with Cronbach Alpha cutoff point of > .50. Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman collected data on their 40 PPM observed variables at an international college campus in the United Arab Emirates. Their study additionally tested differences between groups using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). This study used similar quantitative procedures for MANOVA, yet it tested data collected from international students at a college in the U.S. while incorporating 52 observed variables extracted from PPM, TPB, and MMM together. Thus, a fifth quantitative research question in this study was as follows:

RQ 5 (Quantitative Inferential):

> Does the degree of importance of choice factors extracted in Q4 differ across groups categorized by (1) gender, (2) home country region, and (3) level of study?

Potential relationships between factors extracted and gender was tested. In addition, factor relationships to three major home country regions were investigated: (1) Asia, (2) the Middle East, and (3) Other; as well as three levels of study: (1) non-degree, (2) undergraduate, and (3) graduate.

The instrument used in the quantitative phase of this study was an amalgamation of two questionnaire instruments both developed by the highly

cited marketing education scholar, Jonathan Ivy (2008; 2010) of the University of Lancaster, England. The first instrument was developed for a study that reevaluated the traditional 7Ps MMM with a student sample in South Africa. It consisted of a highly structured five-point Likert scale questionnaire containing the 25 items that covered the main elements of MMM (Ivy, 2008), also defined in Table 3 above. Reliability tests of Ivy's instrument showed that there was repeated consistency of scales, Cronbach's alpha produced a co-efficient of 0.904 ($\alpha$ = 0.904). The second instrument was developed by Ivy (2010) to investigate factors influencing choice while comparing population subgroups. It also used five-point Likert scale questionnaire and tested variables of which 27 were incorporated for this study. Similarly, this instrument had a high level of reliability with a Cronbach's alpha co-efficient value of 0.912 ($\alpha$ = 0.912). The instrument used in this study combined these two questionnaires and consequently accounted for observed variables identified in TPB, PPM, and MMM. Variables were put in a random order within the broad factor levels, leaving home, selecting country, choosing college.

Consequently, items in the survey in this study investigated the importance of 52 variables that influenced students' enrollment decision as perceived by CSUSB international students employing a five-point Likert scale. Options were coded left to right "5" as "very important", "4" as "important", "3" as "neither important nor unimportant", "2" as "unimportant", and "1" as "very unimportant". Subjects were instructed to leave "not applicable" variables blank.

The questionnaire also collected information on demographic variables. These were age, gender, degree, funding source, country of origin, previous international education experience, application and acceptance into another campus, parents international education experience, people who had the strongest influence on students' choice, and students' country of first choice. While gender, degree, and country of origin demographics were used for inferential testing, data on the remainder variables were collected for sample description purposes, see questionnaire instrument in Appendix A. Finally, data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 23 (Field, 2013; Grotenhuis & Visscher, 2014; Salkind, 2014).

Phase Two: The Qualitative Study and the Mixed Methods Discussion

The second distinct phase of the study design was qualitative, Figure 3 above. Within qualitative inquiry, this study employed a transcendental phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994). Again, the selection of this approach was motivated by conditions relevant to the nature of its population and its central line of inquiry. This study concerned the lived experiences of international students as they made the decision to leave their home countries and travel to a foreign country to pursue education. Within these experiences, students made decisions to select a particular campus as their study abroad destination. These decisions were shaped while students were affected by numerous sources of influences, the understanding of which was the main purpose of this study. According to Creswell (2006), "a phenomenological study

describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 57). In this study, the investigation concerned the phenomenon of international students' study destination choice, with an attempt to find out about commonalities among students who lived the collective experience of selecting one college campus abroad, CSUSB.

The transcendental phenomenological approach helped find out about the 'universal essence', as Creswell (2012b) put it, or 'the very nature of the thing', as van Manen (1990) suggested, of international education choice. Moustakas (1994) proposed that the objective of the phenomenological approach to research was to develop, "a composite description of the essence of the experience for […] individuals. This description consists of "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it" (p. 58). Hence, these two broad problems, what and how, informed the development of the qualitative research questions, as well as the data analysis in this study. The first RQ was broad allowing data to emerge freely on what and how, while the second question was aimed at seeking participants' explanations of findings from the quantitative phase of the study. These qualitative research questions were as follows:

Within CSUSB context,

RQ6 (Main Qualitative Question):

What are common sources of influence that shape international students' decisions to leave their home countries and choose their country and college destinations?

RQ7 (Qualitative/Mixed Methods Question):

How do international students make sense of the findings of the questionnaire that preceded the interviews?

These research questions were investigated using semi-structured interviews consisting of ten questions (See Appendix B, Interview Protocol and Interview Questions). Seidman (2012) suggested that qualitative questions should be broad so as to avoid leading participants to particular statements. Accordingly, the interview questions did not impose assumptions from TPB, MMM, PPMs, or the factor solution extracted from the quantitative phase into the wording of the research questions or the derived interview questions. Rather, the interview questions were designed to help see if relevant information on “what” and “how” would emerge freely, with the purpose of building on the two constructs of what is experienced and how that experience was lived. The second qualitative RQ above was intended to inform a mixed methods discussion section, which sought to discover how qualitative results obtained through interviews with international students could help explain results from the initial quantitative phase of the study.

Interviews were recorded and they were manually transcribed. Afterwards, data were coded in one cycle using theme analysis methods (Saldaña, 2009), while following Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenological data analysis procedure that consisted of six steps. The first step concerned bracketing out the researcher’s position and impressions about the phenomena

being studied. The second involved studying participants' statements for significant descriptions of their experiences, where each non-repetitive, non-overlapping keyword was recorded as a meaning unit. The third step was to study the meaning units within their contexts with the purpose of relating and clustering those units into themes. While studying meaning units, data coding employed Ryan and Bernard's (2003) procedure of theme identification where the researcher approached participants' responses while posing the following question: "What was this expression an example of?" (p. 87). Themes were then examined for their commonality amongst participants, and themes were embraced when they were common for at least six of the 11 participants in this study. The fourth step was synthesizing the themes that were relevant to the description of the textures, or 'the what', of the experiences, while using verbatim examples. The fifth step also used verbatim examples as it constructed the themes that constituted the structural description, or 'the how those experiences where influenced'. The final step was to combine the textural and structural elements to construct a composite textual-structural description of the meanings and the essence of influence in participants' experiences.

According to Ryan and Bernard (2003), "themes come both from the data (an inductive approach) and from the investigator's prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (a priori approach)" (p. 88). Hence, the priori themes corresponded to the study abroad choice factor solution that was advanced by the EFA in the quantitative phase of the study. In addition,

bottom up thinking looked for any additional and freely emergent themes. Thus, inductive and deductive thinking were employed (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013), while trying to make sense of data and build the themes of international education destination choice. Using NVivo 10 for Windows (Richards, 1999), analysis used color codes to mark expressions or meaning units that were relevant to the themes suggested in the factor solution. In addition, meaning units that were beyond those themes were underlined; then, through 'cutting and sorting' processing technique, they were grouped into themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Study Population and Sample

The population in this study was international students at CSUSB. These were defined, for the purpose of this study, as CSUSB on-campus students on J or F visas. In the academic year 2015-2016, there were a total of 1,440 international students at CSUSB: 447 of these students were studying in non-degree programs, 737 were studying for undergraduate, and 256 were studying for graduate degrees. Non-degree programs included: (1) CSUSB English Language Program, which prepared degree-prospective students for college admission; (2) Study Abroad in the USA Program, through which visiting international students could take one or several terms of undergraduate or graduate courses without admission by means of CSUSB Open University system; and (3) Other International Extension Programs that included specially designed programs with partner international institutions that extended for two or

more weeks. In contrast, undergraduate students were distributed amongst four of CSUSB colleges: 6% of the population was studying at the College of Arts and Letters, 64% at the College of Business and Public Administration, 16% at the College of Natural Science, and 5% at the College of Social and Behavioral Science. In addition, 9% of these students were at University Studies, as they had not declared a major yet. Population distribution was similarly uneven at the graduate level. These, however, were dispersed among five colleges with the addition of the College of Education: 3% of the population was studying at the College of Arts and Letters, 41% at the College of Business and Public Administration, 25% at the College of Education, 29% at the College of Natural Science, and 2% at the College of Social and Behavioral Science, as per CSUSB Institutional Research counts. The College of Education at CSUSB offered five bachelor's degree programs that did not have international students at the time of the study. Probably, this was because those programs were designed in terms of courses and objectives primarily for domestic students.

In order for a survey study to be able to generalize and draw inferences to the population as a whole, a number of probability sampling methods existed (Creswell, 2014; Fink, 2016; Fowler, 2009). For instance, simple random sampling gave all population members exactly the same chance to participate in a study. Conversely, stratified random sampling and quota sampling helped in obtaining a meaningful sample size from a particular segment of a population, when otherwise could be underrepresented. Cluster sampling normally collected

data from an entire population of a randomly selected nested environment such as a college campus. Finally, multistage sampling employed cluster sampling for nested environments then another sampling method within the selected environment (Fink, 2002; Salant & Dillman, 1994).

While there were numerous sampling techniques suitable in different contexts (Gall, Gall & Borg, 1999), Muijs (2011) suggested that in some studies, “it may not be necessary to sample at all [since] it may be possible to survey the whole population” (p. 37). This technique was referred to as ‘census’, which was the most powerful survey procedure because it avoided potential sampling biases (Babbie, 2010; Fowler, 2009). Due to the relatively small population size in the case of this study, census technique was employed, and the entire CSUSB international student population (N = 1,440) was invited to participate in the survey through questionnaires.

While the quantitative phase in this explanatory sequential mixed methods study employed census, the qualitative phase employed purposeful sampling within a volunteer population (Creswell, 2012a; Hesse-Biber, 2010). The questionnaires used in this study included an item in which participants willing to take part in follow-up face-to-face interviews could volunteer to provide their email addresses for the researcher to arrange interviews. Creswell (2014) suggested that explanatory mixed method studies should employ, “rigorous quantitative sampling in the first phase and with purposeful sampling in the second, qualitative phase [where data were collected from] extreme or outlier

cases, significant predictors, significant results, or demographics" (p. 224). Hence, within the volunteer population, participants that satisfied the following methodological and practical conditions were identified and interviewed:

(1) participants compared colleges before they selected to study at CSUSB

(2) two participants were male, two were female, and one participant did not specify gender;

(3) at least one participant was self-funded, one was funded by family, and one by scholarship;

(4) one participant was assisted to select their country and college destination by family, one by friends, one by an educational agent, one by an academic advisor, and one participant was independent and made the choice completely by themselves;

(5) at least two students were from Asia and two students were from the Middle East;

(6) at least one student marked a country other than the U.S. as their top choice for study abroad;

(7) at least one student was studying for an undergraduate degree, one graduate, and one non-degree;

(8) participants confirmed that they had advanced English language skills to be able to freely express themselves in interviews; and

(9) participants responded to an email requesting interview arrangement and confirmed availability within a week from the date the invitation email was sent.

Creswell (2012b) and Polkinghorne (1989) recommended that qualitative studies employing a phenomenological design should interview five to 25 subjects once or multiple times. As the purpose of the qualitative phase of this study was to triangulate and explain a previous quantitative phase, eleven interviews with eleven different participants were deemed sufficient. Hence, numbers were assigned to participants who had provided their email addresses, and draws were repeated until a group of eleven qualified participants were identified.

## Data Collection

Three different CSUSB departments administered programs and activities for the campus international students: (1) Center for International Studies and Programs (CISP), (2) International Extension Programs at the College of Extended Learning (IEP), and (3) Office of Student Engagement (OSE). Amongst a number of services, CISP was responsible for visa, admission, and orientation of international students seeking degree programs. IEP provided programming and housing, as well as other services similar to CISP, for non-degree seeking international students. One of IEP's large international programs offered English language instruction in preparation for admission to CSUSB degree programs. This program was primarily for international students who had been conditionally

admitted to CSUSB's degrees. Finally, OSE provided support to CSUSB student clubs and organizations that included a number of international student associations. Every effort was made to recruit participants as early as they joined the campus when their choice experiences were fresh.

Two dominant procedures to collect survey data were pen-and-paper questionnaires and online methods (Creswell, 2012a; Muijs, 2011). This study employed pen-and-paper to collect its quantitative data, as it was informed by a previous similar project at CSUSB (Darby, 2015). In that study, Darby employed online surveys, which were sent out to students through CSUSB list-serve with weekly reminder emails, after which there was a total of about 5% response rate. Consequently, in an attempt to obtain a higher response rate, pen-and-paper questionnaires were employed, and the researcher in this study personally visited international student gathering locations. The researcher hand-distributed the hard-copy questionnaires to international students in orientations and classrooms, as well as during major international student events. The researcher shared the objectives of the study with participants, explained that participation was voluntary, and had consent forms signed.

Qualitative data were collected through the study's semi-structured interviews. There were a total of eleven 30-minute interviews that were all held on campus at Starbucks coffee shop. The setting was purposefully selected due to its convenience as an on-campus location. Furthermore, Starbucks provided a friendly public setting where the participants were expected to feel more

comfortable to meet with the researcher and share their stories. The researcher incentivized participants to confirm partaking in the interviews by inviting them for a coffee of their choice. Additionally, the researcher was intentionally dressed casually during interviews with the purpose of enhancing a friendly atmosphere (Seidman, 2012). Volunteering participants were randomly selected based on the criteria set in the previous section. They were given the option to choose the date and time of the interviews outside their class and study hours as per their convenience. At the beginning of the interviews, the researcher explained again that there was audio recording and had Consent Forms signed by participants, Appendix C.

Finally, CSUSB admitted international students to degree programs in fall, winter, and spring terms. Hence, the quantitative survey was longitudinal where data were collected during 2015-2016 academic year at international student orientations, as well as, during international student events and clubs. After quantitative data collection and analysis were completed by the first two weeks of spring, qualitative data were collected in the second half of the same term. Although non-degree students could additionally be admitted in summer, data from summer students were not included so as to avoid skewing the sample.

## Reliability, Validity, Trustworthiness, Limitations and the Role of the Researcher

The questionnaire employed in the quantitative phase of this study was a combination of two different questionnaires. This new instrument was shared with

the researcher who developed the original instruments, Jonathan Ivy, who participated in reviewing the new instrument and confirmed validity. In addition, the internal consistency of the new instrument was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha which produced a value of 0.869 ($\alpha$ = 0.869), confirming that scales entertained 'good' level of reliability (Cronbach, 1951; Field, 2013).

Nonetheless, limitations of the quantitative study related to its sample. While the study employed census technique and attempted to collect data from the entire CSUSB international student population, there were subjects who were not reached, as they were unavailable during data collection. Other participants were available, yet they did not complete and return the questionnaires. The ratio of returned usable questionnaires to the population total number was 43%. Creswell (2014) suggested that response rates above 30% were generally considered acceptable. However, no participation poses a potential source of bias since subjects who participated may have extreme opinions about the phenomena under investigation, and there was not a way in which it could be made certain that those who did not take part in the study would have similar responses (Muijs, 2011). Finally, this study did not claim to have generalizability beyond the context in which it was conducted. Colleges similar to CSUSB might find results and discussions useful; however, the nature of the sampling technique used did not allow for assertions beyond the particular context of CSUSB.

While the quantitative phase of this study employed questionnaires as its tool, the qualitative phase had an interview protocol with the researcher as the key instrument. Creswell (2014) and Lichtman (2013) advanced that qualitative inquiries were subjective and reflexive by definition since not only did researchers engage in describing participants' experiences and interpretations, but also researchers were the means through which those interpretations were 'decoded' and 'recoded'. Gall, Gall, and Borg (1999) described qualitative research as, "intensive inquiry into instances of a phenomenon in its natural context, from both the researchers' (etic) perspective and the research participants' (emic) perspective" (p. 336). Nonetheless, Moustakas (1994) argued that in the transcendental phenomenological approach within qualitative inquiries, researchers needed to distance themselves since the phenomena under investigation and the data to be analyzed needed to be, "perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (p. 34). This posed a fundamental paradox for which Freebody (2003), Mason (2002), Maxwell (2013), and Merriam (2009) recommended that researchers could focus on describing rather than interpreting data while researchers tried to set aside their own previous experiences with the phenomenon.

Creswell (2014) suggested that, "the inquirer needs to reflect about how their role in the study and their personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations" (p. 186). The purpose of such reflection was to attempt to 'bracket out' the researcher's position of the

phenomena under investigation, as well as share with readers potential sources of bias. Creswell (2012b) advanced that to avoid such a source of limitation, researchers could describe, “their own experiences with the phenomenon and bracket out their views before proceeding with the experiences of others” (p. 60).

In fact, the researcher in this study experienced being an international student in a number of contexts. The first was for three years during his kindergarten and elementary school years. The researcher was born in Morocco to a Syrian family. The researcher’s parents were foreign educators and had selected the researcher’s schools based on reputation and proximity to their residence. The second experience of the researcher in international education was for his Master’s degree at the University of Leicester in England. The researcher was funded by his parents and selected this college based on its ranking in the international league, the academic activity of its faculty, the courses within his selected program, and the location of the campus. An additional significant motivator for the researcher’s choice was an offer made by the college he selected: The college offered a free-of-charge four-week pre-master’s study skills program. The third experience of the researcher as an international student was through an online certificate program at the University of Oregon. The researcher was recruited by email to apply and he was offered a merit-based full scholarship. The researcher also participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) funded by the U.S. Department of State, which was partly held at Columbia University, New York. The researcher was not

involved in the selection of the colleges where IVLP was held as it was a pre-designed program contracted between a number of colleges and the U.S. Department of State. Finally, an international study experience of the researcher was during conducting this study. The researcher was an international student in a doctoral degree in educational leadership program at the college where this study was carried out. The researcher's choice of this college for his doctoral degree was mainly influenced by convenience and the reputation of some of its faculty.

In addition to the researcher's experiences as an international student, the researcher educated international students, as well as administered a number of international programs. The researcher taught Arabic to cohorts of students from Texas A & M University studying abroad in Syria. He also taught English and communication skills to international students studying at colleges in England, Syria, and Turkey. These were Leicester College, Damascus University, and Özyeğin University respectively. Finally, the researcher administered international student programs for Asia Institute and Alpha International Consultancy & Training in Malaysia, Syria, and Turkey. Finally, the researcher was a Senior Program Coordinator at CSUSB College of Extended Learning, where he developed and administered international programs.

Having 'bracketed out' the researcher's own position, background, and previous experience with the phenomena above, the researcher additionally attempted to limit possible biases through employing a descriptive approach to

the qualitative data. The researcher endeavored to restrict to a descriptive analysis, rather than interpretive or reflective method, while he discussed subjects' own perceptions of the phenomena. Hence, the researcher's role was to report participants' own stories and accounts of their own international education choices, as well as, report on participants' explanations of the quantitative findings from the previous phase of the study.

One additional technique used to enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative data were 'member checking' (Cho & Trent, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). After the interviews were transcribed and descriptions of experiences were constructed, participants were invited to review and confirm the accuracy of transcripts, as well as, the relevance of the descriptions that were composed from those transcripts. Participants were given the option to erase or modify their statements as they saw appropriate to best express their stories and views. Lastly, feedback to ensure credibility was solicited from two peer debriefers, who had experience in qualitative research. One of these debreifers was an international student himself and the other was familiar with international students' issues as she had advised international students and administered international programs at a comprehensive college. The debriefers and the researcher discussed the structural and textural descriptions in four 45-minute sessions.

## Ethical Considerations

In the planning and the execution of this study, a number of steps were taken to protect the rights and welfare of participants. First, participation in both study phases, the survey through questionnaires and the interviews, was voluntary. Participants were given the option of opting out of the study at any time. To protect participants' identities, the questionnaire did not ask participants to provide their names, and there was no attempt to link any particular participant to any specific response. As for reporting on the data from the interviews, the specific programs in which participants studied were blinded and pseudonyms were used. Participants were given the freedom to select the interview setting on-campus and outside their class times as per their convenience. Participants in the questionnaire phase and the interview phase signed consent forms confirming they were over 18 years old and that they accept to participate in the study. Interview consent forms additionally explained that interviews were recorded. Member 'checking procedure' was employed to allow participants to review, verify, and confirm transcripts were consistent with their intended opinions (Cho & Trent, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Finally, the research protocol was submitted to, and was approved by, CSUSB Institutional Review Board, Appendix D.

Two other types of approvals were sought before conducting this study. The first was from the researcher, Jonathan Ivy, who developed the original instruments used in the quantitative study, Appendix E. Jonathan helped and

reviewed the new instrument, confirmed validity and consented its use. The second type of approvals sought were from CSUSB directors of CISP, IEP, and OSE responsible for international students programs. The study purposes and procedures were explained, and permission to access cites and collect data was obtained.

## Summary and Conclusion

In a more than ever competitive global education market, educational and cultural intentions, as well as globalization and economy conditions, were encouraging colleges to engage more forcefully in recruiting international students. More resources were invested to attract these students by community colleges, comprehensives, research universities, among other higher education providers from all over the world. Nonetheless, little was known about factors that stimulate these students to leave their home countries and influenced their country selection and college choice. The literature review established that the amount of theoretical work and the number of available empirical studies did not match the prominence of the associated phenomena.

The study reported here filled some of the gap in the literature. It was conducted in the U.S. context, where there were only two studies published in peer reviewed journals by the date of this study. Both of those studies were conducted at research colleges allowing this study to have a significant contribution as it reported on the phenomena from a four-year comprehensive, teaching-focused college. Furthermore, this study attempted to engage with a

theoretical discussion as it examined data for a possibly more suitable international education choice factor model.

The study adopted a mixed methods approach where a pragmatic position to knowledge and truth was held and findings were triangulated. The design employed was explanatory sequential mixed methods, which was the best fit for the study purpose, line of inquiry, and context. The first phase of the study was quantitative where survey through questionnaires helped find descriptive answers to the importance of choice factors. Quantitative data also abetted the advancement of a new underlying factor model for the understanding of international students' study destination choice. Furthermore, the factor solution was tested for relationships with demographic categories. The second phase of the study was qualitative. Here, a transcendental phenomenological approach was utilized and data on what international education choice was and how such experience was lived was collected through semi-structured interviews.

This study had limitations yet it entertained a number of strengths. Limitations concerned the quantitative sampling, which limited the generalizability power of this study to the context within which it was conducted. Hence, although this study engaged with theory exploration, resulting theory suggestions might apply only to the college studied. Only random sampling on an international scale, or alternatively, a number of replica studies in other contexts with similar findings, could help make strong theoretical claims. Another source of limitation of this study was relevant to the paradoxical position of phenomenological

approaches to the role of the researcher. While qualitative inquiries were subjective by nature, phenomenology theorists advanced that researchers should distance themselves from their subjects' experiences and approach stories as if heard for the first time.

A number of techniques were used to enhance the strength of this study and the trustworthiness of its data and propositions. In the quantitative phase, a big sample was obtained, validity of instrument was attained, and reliability of scales was reported by means of statistical testing. For solidifying the qualitative phase, descriptive rather than interpretive approach to data analysis was adopted, random sampling within a volunteering population was employed, and member checking and debriefing were utilized to enhance trustworthiness and credibility. It was hoped that the strengths of both phases of the study, together with the fact that these phases triangulated, would compensate for some of the limitations. The ultimate objective of this study was to help the field become closer to understanding international students study abroad choice phenomenon.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# RESULTS

The objective of the mixed methods research study reported here was to explore reasons (motivations, variables or factors) that explained international students' decisions to leave their home countries and choose to study abroad in a specific foreign country and at a specific college campus. In simple words, the study aimed at understanding what made international students choose to study where they were studying. The study assumed that by answering such a question, colleges that were interested in attracting international students could derive insights that would help them improve their offerings and other marketing activities through meeting these students' needs and aspirations.

The specific research questions advanced in this study were informed by previous similar research studies where three groups of variables that affected or influenced study abroad destination choices were reported: (1) reasons for leaving home country, (2) reasons for selecting particular countries, and (3) reasons for selecting particular college campuses. These three groups of variables were derived from three overlapping theoretical frameworks, namely TPB, PPM, and MMM. In total, there were 52 variables that were incorporated into the quantitative phase of this study. In addition to reporting on the weight of importance of these variables as perceived by participating subjects

(international students at a four-year comprehensive college in southern California), the present study engaged with theory through exploring if these variables could be reduced to a smaller set of factors through EFA procedures. The extracted factor solution was afterwards examined using three sets of one-way MANOVA for differences in the degree of importance across population groups categorized by gender, home country region, and level of study. These cross-group comparisons were aimed at providing discernments for college strategic marketing. They would help the college where the study was conducted, as well as similar colleges, find out about which marketing activities could be tailored for different student segments, as to potentially achieve college capacity and diversity goals.

The present study did not limit itself to quantitative methodology. The study took a pragmatic epistemological position where it complemented, validated and explained its quantitative findings through a transcendental phenomenological qualitative study. Thus, the design employed was a sequential mixed methods one, where a second phase, qualitative study investigated common sources of influence that shaped international students' decisions to leave their home countries and choose their country and college destinations. The second phase also sought participants' explanations of the findings of the first quantitative phase to inform its mixed methods discussion. The following organizes and presents the findings in three sections: findings from the quantitative study, findings from the qualitative study, and mixed methods

discussion.

## Findings from the Quantitative Study

This study incorporated descriptive and inferential statistical analysis to help answer its questions. The sections below start with sample description. Then, descriptives, factor analysis, and multivariate analysis findings are presented.

### The Sample

The entire international student population at the college campus in southern California where this study was conducted consisted of 1,440 students. There were 618 returned usable questionnaires, for a response rate of 43%. Questionnaires were deemed usable if they had less than 20% missing values. In the usable returned questionnaires, missing values on the five-point Likert scale items, which investigated the importance of choice variables, were replaced by means of those items.

The following table, Table 6, illustrates sample demographic characteristics that pertain to gender, level of study, and home country region of the participants.

In addition, further participant profile characteristics are provided in Table 7, which follows.

Table 6. Participant Demographics 1

| Characteristic | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| *Gender* | | |
| Female | 304 | 49.2 |
| Male | 297 | 48.1 |
| Not Stated | 17 | 2.8 |
| *Study Level* | | |
| Non-Degree | 247 | 40.0 |
| Undergraduate | 262 | 42.4 |
| Graduate | 107 | 17.3 |
| Missing | 2 | .3 |
| *Home Country Region* | | |
| Asia | 306 | 49.5 |
| The Middle East | 217 | 35.1 |
| Other | 95 | 15.4 |

*Note: n = 618*

Table 7. Participant Demographics 2

| Characteristic | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| *Source of Funding* | | |
| Family | 326 | 52.8 |
| Scholarship | 171 | 27.7 |
| Personal Savings | 41 | 6.6 |
| Other | 80 | 12.9 |
| *Student Had Previous International Education Experience* | | |
| Yes | 463 | 74.9 |
| No | 155 | 25.1 |
| *Student Applied to More than One Campus* | | |
| Yes | 371 | 60.0 |
| No | 247 | 40.0 |
| *Student Accepted in More than one Campus* | | |
| Yes | 340 | 55.0 |
| No | 277 | 44.8 |
| Missing | 1 | .2 |
| *Student Compared Colleges* | | |
| Yes | 519 | 84.0 |
| No | 99 | 16.0 |
| *Second Generation Internationally Educated* | | |
| Yes | 170 | 27.5 |
| No | 446 | 72.2 |
| Missing | 2 | .3 |
| *People Who Helped in the Decision* | | |
| Family | 142 | 23.0 |
| Friends | 130 | 21.0 |
| Education Agent | 150 | 24.3 |
| Academic Advisor | 68 | 11.0 |
| A Combination of Family & Friends | 34 | 5.5 |
| Made Their Own Decision | 57 | 9.2 |
| Other | 37 | 6.0 |
| *Most Favorable Country Destination for Study* | | |
| Home Country | 50 | 8.1 |
| Australia | 63 | 10.2 |
| Canada | 59 | 9.5 |
| The United Kingdom | 70 | 11.3 |
| The United States | 350 | 56.6 |
| Other | 26 | 4.2 |

*Note: n = 618*

Descriptives: The Degree of Importance of Each Choice Variable

Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations for each of the 52 items are presented in Table 8 below. Table 8 shows participating international students' ratings of the importance of variables that influenced their study abroad choices. These were leaving home country variable, selecting the U.S. variables, and college choice variables.

Exploratory Factors Analysis (EFA): The Key Choice Factors

Cronbach's alpha for the 52 items was .87 (52 items; $\alpha = 0.87$). In order to explore the underlying factor structure of the 52 items that represented possible motivations for study destination choices, EFA using Principal Axis Factoring with orthogonal, Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization[a] was conducted. Criteria set was Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test (KMO) > .70; Bartlett test of Sphericity Sig < .05; variance explained by solution > .30; factor loading cutoff point > .30; and dropping variables (items) for cross-loading > .15.

Employing the above set criteria, EFA results revealed a four-factor solution, which recaptured 31.72% of the variance with a total of 19 items out of 52 that loaded on the factors. For this factor solution, KMO produced a value of .72 indicating that the sample size of 618 was adequate. Bartlett test of Sphericity value was .00 ($p = .00$), and it indicated that the data had a high enough degree of correlation making it suitable for EFA.

Table 8. Means and Standard Deviations of Choice Variables

| Observed Variable | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| *Leaving Home Country Variables* | | |
| Rounding of Education | 3.83 | .99 |
| The Program is Unavailable at Home | 3.18 | 1.17 |
| Acceptance is Difficult at Home | 3.23 | 1.11 |
| Personal Fulfilment | 3.90 | .97 |
| Possibility to Emigrate | 3.24 | 1.17 |
| Networking with Internationals | 3.57 | 1.24 |
| Being Away from Home | 3.31 | 1.08 |
| Parents Encouragement | 3.34 | 1.27 |
| Wanting to Do Like Peers Do | 3.12 | 1.12 |
| Availability of Scholarship from Home | 3.22 | 1.25 |
| *Selecting the US Variables* | | |
| Employability as a Graduate for the US | 3.91 | .94 |
| US Economic Power | 3.59 | 1.06 |
| Experiencing US Culture | 3.70 | 1.08 |
| Quality of US Higher Education | 4.20 | .94 |
| Limited Racial Problems in the US | 3.39 | 1.07 |
| Work Part-time During Study | 3.30 | 1.20 |
| Tolerance of Religious Beliefs in the US | 3.25 | 1.19 |
| Proximity to Home Country | 2.42 | 1.32 |
| High Status of US Degrees | 3.92 | .94 |
| Improve English Language | 4.03 | 1.17 |
| Work in the US after Graduation | 3.61 | 1.14 |
| *Campus Variables* | | |
| Campus Website | 3.61 | 1.20 |
| Campus Reputation of Quality | 4.08 | 1.00 |
| Quick Processing of Application | 3.48 | 1.09 |
| Ease of Being Accepted | 3.52 | 1.19 |
| Domestic to International Ratio | 3.50 | 1.09 |
| TOEFL Waiver | 3.36 | 1.23 |
| People of Similar Background on Campus | 3.32 | 1.16 |
| Campus Ranking | 4.05 | 1.07 |
| Campus Location | 3.41 | 1.23 |
| Study Facilities | 3.67 | 1.20 |
| Recreational Facilities | 3.51 | 1.05 |
| Courses within Program | 3.80 | 1.10 |
| Car Parking Facilities | 2.53 | 1.34 |
| Campus Social Life | 3.52 | 1.16 |
| Public Transportation to Campus | 2.57 | 1.35 |
| Study Conductive Environment | 3.66 | 1.18 |
| Staff Participation in International Fairs | 3.05 | 1.41 |
| Campus Ethnic Diversity | 3.38 | 1.12 |
| Campus Physical Appearance | 3.28 | 1.17 |
| Support to International Students | 3.78 | 1.31 |
| Accommodation Facilities | 3.35 | 1.25 |
| Effective Communication with Staff | 3.69 | 1.15 |
| Affordability of Tuition Fees | 3.35 | 1.18 |
| Weather in the Campus Location | 3.63 | 1.20 |
| Affordability of Living Costs Around Campus | 3.54 | 1.15 |
| Faculty Reputation | 3.80 | 1.12 |
| Online Advertisements of Programs | 3.00 | 1.24 |
| Campus Safety | 3.62 | 1.27 |
| Prospectus and Brochures | 3.08 | 1.20 |
| Flexibility in Paying Tuition | 3.24 | 1.27 |
| Financial Aid Availability | 3.25 | 1.31 |

*Note 1: n = 618*
*Note 2: Measured on 5-point rating scale where "5" was "very important", "4" was "important", "3" was "neither important nor unimportant", "2" was "unimportant", and "1" was "very unimportant".*

The four-factor solution together with variable loadings are presented in Table 9 below. The items in each factor were examined so that each factor could be named. Hence, Factor 1 was named Access, Factor 2 was named Affordability, Factor 3 was named Quality, and Factor 4 was named Peace.

Table 9. Rotated Factor Matrix[a]

| | Access | Affordability | Quality | Peace |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Networking with Internationals | .741 | | | |
| The Program is Unavailable at Home | .536 | | | |
| Public Transportation to Campus | .516 | | | |
| Car Parking Facilities | .478 | | | |
| Staff Participation in International Fairs | .457 | | | |
| Improve English Language | .433 | | | |
| Parents Encouragement | .398 | | | |
| Campus Physical Appearance | .332 | | | |
| Flexibility in Paying Tuition | | .717 | | |
| Financial Aid Availability | | .665 | | |
| Affordability of Tuition Fees | | .543 | | |
| Affordability of Living Costs Around Campus | | .494 | | |
| Quality of US Higher Education | | | .683 | |
| Campus Reputation of Quality | | | .561 | |
| Campus Website | | | .380 | |
| High Status of US Degrees | | | .362 | |
| Tolerance of Religious Beliefs in the US | | | | .630 |
| People of Similar Background on Campus | | | | .449 |
| Limited Racial Problems in the US | | | | .426 |

*Note 1: Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.*

*Note 2: Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.*[a]

*Note 3: Rotation converged in 5 iterations.*

The Access subscale consisted of eight items ($\alpha$ = 0.72), the Affordability subscale consisted of four items ($\alpha$ = 0.71), the Quality subscale consisted of four items ($\alpha$ = 0.56), and the Peace subscale consisted of three items ($\alpha$ = 0.55). Finally, the combined ratings of the observed variables, the factors, revealed that Quality was the most important (M = 3.95, SD = .67), followed by Affordability (M = 3.35, SD = .90), then Peace (M = 3.32, SD = .82), and finally Access (M = 3.19, SD = .73).

Comparing Participating Groups

To investigate differences between groups on factors affecting international students' study abroad choices, three sets of one way MANOVA were performed. The first MANOVA tested differences between non-degree, undergraduate, and graduate students (level of study); the second examined differences between students from Asia, students from the Middle East, and students from Other Regions; and, the third investigated differences between male and female participants. While before conducting EFA test above missing data were replaced by means, prior to conducting all three sets of MANOVA, data were additionally explored for outliers and fulfillment of test assumptions.

On the combined dependent variables of Access, Affordability, Quality, and Peace, there appeared differences between groups. These differences are detailed in the subsections below.

Level of Study and Choice Factors. Total cases included for the analysis of the different groups characterized by level of study was 616. There were 247 non-degree students (40%), 264 undergraduate students (43%), and 107 graduate students (17%). Table 10 below illustrates these together with the means and the standard deviations of ratings on the factor solution.

Table 10. Level of Study and Choice Factors Descriptives

| | Type of Program | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor 1: Access | Non-Degree | 3.61 | 0.58 | 247 |
| | Undergraduate Degree | 2.94 | 0.72 | 262 |
| | Graduate Degree | 2.85 | 0.61 | 107 |
| | Total | 3.19 | 0.73 | 616 |
| Factor 2: Affordability | Non-Degree | 3.21 | 1.00 | 247 |
| | Undergraduate Degree | 3.57 | 0.78 | 262 |
| | Graduate Degree | 3.11 | 0.79 | 107 |
| | Total | 3.34 | 0.90 | 616 |
| Factor 3: Quality | Non-Degree | 3.99 | 0.68 | 247 |
| | Undergraduate Degree | 3.91 | 0.68 | 262 |
| | Graduate Degree | 3.99 | 0.60 | 107 |
| | Total | 3.96 | 0.67 | 616 |
| Factor 4: Peace | Non-Degree | 3.16 | 0.86 | 247 |
| | Undergraduate Degree | 3.46 | 0.81 | 262 |
| | Graduate Degree | 3.37 | 0.70 | 107 |
| | Total | 3.32 | 0.82 | 616 |

MANOVA found differences in factors affecting choice, dependent variables, based on participants' level of study, independent variable, ($F$ (8, 1220) = 33.46, $p \leq .00$; Wilk's $\Lambda$ = .672, partial $\eta^2$ = .180); hence, further

investigation was warranted. The omnibus ANOVA revealed that international students grouped by level of study differed in their ratings of importance for Access ($F$ = 85.88, $p \leq .00$), Affordability ($F$ = 15.21, $p \leq .00$), and Peace ($F$ = 8.80, $p \leq .00$). Hence, post hoc analysis using Least Significant Difference (LSD) was performed. Results showed that Access was more important to non-degree students compared to undergraduate students, ($p \leq .00$). Access was more important to non-degree students compared to graduate students, ($p \leq .00$). Affordability was more important to undergraduate students compared to non-degree students, ($p \leq .00$). Affordability was more important to undergraduate students compared to graduate students, ($p \leq .00$). Peace was more important to undergraduate students compared to non-degree students, ($p \leq .00$). Finally, Peace is more important to graduate students compared to non-degree students, ($p \leq 0.03$).

World Regions and Choice Factors. The number of cases used for world region comparisons were 618. Of these, there were 217 from the Middle East (35%), 306 from Asia (50%), and 95 from other regions (15%). Descriptives are reported in Table 11 below. The table shows means and standard deviations for these groups on the four-factor solution.

MANOVA results indicated that there were differences in factors affecting choice based on world regions where participants came from, ($F$ (8, 1224) = 16.22, $p \leq .00$; Wilk's $\Lambda$ = .817, partial $\eta^2$ = .096). Omnibus ANOVA showed that international students in this study grouped by world regions differed in their

ratings of importance for Access ($F$ = 10.96, $p \leq .00$), Affordability ($F$ = 27.55, $p \leq .00$), and Peace ($F$ = 18.16, $p \leq .00$). Post hoc LSD for pairwise comparisons found that Access was more important to Asian students compared to Middle Eastern students, ($p \leq .00$). Access was more important to Other Regions students compared to Middle Eastern students, ($p \leq .00$). Access was more important to Other Regions students compared to Asian students, ($p$ = .01). Affordability was more important to Asian students compared to Middle Eastern students, ($p \leq .00$). Affordability was more important to Other Regions students compared to Middle Eastern students, ($p \leq .00$). Affordability was more important to Other Regions students compared to Asian students, ($p \leq .00$). Peace was more important to Middle Eastern students compared to Asian students, ($p \leq .00$). Peace was more important to Middle Eastern students compared to Other Regions students, ($p \leq .00$).

Table 11. World Regions and Choice Factors Descriptives

| | Home Country Region | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor 1: Access | The Middle East | 3.04 | 0.79 | 217 |
| | Asia | 3.23 | 0.65 | 306 |
| | Other Regions | 3.44 | 0.79 | 95 |
| | Total | 3.19 | 0.73 | 618 |
| Factor 2: Affordability | The Middle East | 3.07 | 1.01 | 217 |
| | Asia | 3.39 | 0.78 | 306 |
| | Other Regions | 3.85 | 0.75 | 95 |
| | Total | 3.35 | 0.90 | 618 |

Table 11 Continued. World Regions and Choice Factors Descriptives

| | Home Country Region | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor 3: Quality | The Middle East | 3.99 | 0.62 | 217 |
| | Asia | 3.93 | 0.66 | 306 |
| | Other Regions | 3.96 | 0.80 | 95 |
| | Total | 3.95 | 0.67 | 618 |
| Factor 4: Peace | The Middle East | 3.58 | 0.73 | 217 |
| | Asia | 3.16 | 0.83 | 306 |
| | Other Regions | 3.24 | 0.87 | 95 |
| | Total | 3.32 | 0.82 | 618 |

Gender and Choice Factors. Of the total 601 cases included for gender comparison, there were 304 female participants (51%), and 297 male participants (49%). Descriptives are reported in Table 12 below. The table shows means and standard deviations for male and female students on the four factor domains advanced, Access, Affordability, Quality, and Peace.

Table 12. Gender and Choice Factors Descriptives

| | Gender | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor 1: Access | Male | 3.20 | 0.78 | 297 |
| | Female | 3.19 | 0.69 | 304 |
| | Total | 3.19 | 0.73 | 601 |
| Factor 2: Affordability | Male | 3.38 | 0.91 | 297 |
| | Female | 3.32 | 0.88 | 304 |
| | Total | 3.35 | 0.90 | 601 |
| Factor 3: Quality | Male | 4.01 | 0.67 | 297 |
| | Female | 3.89 | 0.67 | 304 |
| | Total | 3.95 | 0.67 | 601 |

Table 12 Continued. Gender and Choice Factors Descriptives

| | Gender | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Factor 4: Peace | Male | 3.36 | 0.80 | 297 |
| | Female | 3.28 | 0.85 | 304 |
| | Total | 3.32 | 0.83 | 601 |

MANOVA suggested that there was no significant main effect difference in factors affecting choice based on gender ($F$ (4, 596) = 1.43, $p < .22$; Wilk's $\Lambda$ = 0.99, partial $\eta^2 = .01$). With the purpose of avoiding type II error, and since the independent variable, gender, was a nominal one consisting of two categories, further investigation was conducted using one-way ANOVA for the four dependent variables, Access, Affordability, Quality and Peace. Results showed that the two genders differed only on their ratings of Quality ($F = 4.65$, $p \leq .03$). These findings were additionally tested using four sets of independent $t$ tests. Results showed that Quality was more important to male students compared to female students, ($t$ (599) = 2.16, $p \leq 0.03$); while there were no significant differences between the two genders on Peace, Access, and Affordability.

Summary and Conclusion to the Quantitative Findings

The above presented findings from the quantitative phase of the present study. The investigation concerned variables and factors affecting international students' choices to leave their home countries, select the U.S. as their destination country, and choose the particular campus where they were studying. The sample, 618 participants, was described and descriptive and inferential data

analysis results were presented. The findings provided an inventory of choice affecting variables as per the ratings of the importance of these variables. EFA revealed an underlying metrics by which observed variables operated. EFA solution consisted of four factors that explained over 30% of the variance: Quality, Peace, Access, and Affordability. Finally, results from group comparisons were presented, as some differences between groups characterized by gender, level of study, and home country region were found. Quality was found to be more important to male students. For level of study comparisons, Access was more important to non-degree students compared to undergraduate and graduate students. Affordability was more important to undergraduate students compared to non-degree students and graduate students. Peace was more important to undergraduate and graduate students compared to non-degree students. For home country regions, Access was more important to Asian and Other Regions students compared to Middle Eastern students. Affordability was more important to Asian students compared to Middle Eastern students and Other Regions students. Peace was more important to Middle Eastern students compared to Asian students and Other Regions students.

## Findings form the Qualitative Study

After the quantitative data were collected and analyzed, further investigation was conducted using transcendental phenomenological qualitative methods. The specific research questions that informed this part of the

investigation was as follows: What are common sources of influence that shape international students' decisions to leave their home countries and choose their country and college destinations?

In this study, international students sought information about study abroad destinations (countries and colleges) from the Internet, as well as from other people including family, friends, acquaintances, international education agents, and education advisors. While the methods which these students used to seek information might be regarded as pertinent and constituted what other studies had described as 'word of mouth' and 'online communication channels', this was not the focus of this present study. Rather than concentrating on 'where' or 'how' information was sought, this study, as per its research question, was dedicated to the investigation of 'what' information, attitudes, motivations, and/or beliefs influenced and shaped international students' choices. Furthermore, some of the participants' parents in the present study were involved in making their children's, participants in this study, international education decisions. Again, questions related to 'who' made decisions were excluded with the purpose of allowing this present study a concentrated focus that would expound overriding domains that influenced choice.

The following subsections present the findings as they epitomize the themes that were clustered from the meaning units identified in the data. While reporting on commonalities, the first section below, after the sample description, is the textural description, which presents the themes that elucidated what it

meant for international students to choose to study somewhere abroad. Then, structural description demystified the common sources, or domains, of influence that shaped participants' study abroad destination choices. Finally, structural-textual description combined all themes and presented a composite passage that reported on the essence of international education destination choice.

## The Sample

Data in this qualitative study was obtained from 11 in-depth interviews with 11 international students. There were six female and five male international students. Three participants were from Mainland China, two from Saudi Arabia, one from Brazil, one from Libya, one from Russia, one from South Korea, one from Taiwan, and one from United Arab Emirates. Five participants were graduate students, four undergraduates, and two were studying in non-degree programs. Degree seeking students were studying in five different colleges, Arts and Letters, Business and Public Administration, Education, Natural Sciences, and Social and Behavioral Sciences. One non-degree student was studying in the English language program and one was studying in the Study Abroad in the USA program. Eight students were self and/or family funded, and three students received funding for their studies through home country employer or government scholarships. The following used pseudonyms.

## Textural Description

Two broad themes represented what it meant for international students to choose to study somewhere abroad: (1) Becoming Somebody, and (2) Moving

from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar. While the first theme chiefly related to extrinsic motivations and sources of influence shaping international students' decisions to study abroad somewhere, the second was mainly intrinsic, as subjects expressed aspirations to fulfill personal desires relevant to change, discovery, and experience of new things.

International Education as Means for Becoming Somebody. Meaning units that made up this theme were 'somebody important', 'proud', 'society', 'higher', 'something important', 'confidence', 'power', 'respect', 'encourage', 'satisfy', 'better job/employment', 'become better/competitive', 'potential', and 'more success/successful'. Commonalities suggested that international students sought a shift from one social and/or economic status, which was how they perceived they were without international education, to a higher one that was mediated by such education. In other words, for international students, international education represented an opportunity to better themselves. It allowed them to potentially obtain better employment with higher compensation, as well as gain higher social status. In describing how a degree from the U.S. would affect his life back in his country, United Arab Emirates, Abdullah provided the following reflection:

> To be a graduate from the United States is very prestigious, yes to have a degree from here. This is for job and in society. I mean in front of my friends and family, it is something. Not everybody has such degree, only the top class people, the elite, get education from Europe or the USA. I will be proud of my education, you know, and my parents and brothers will be

> proud of me. […] I will be proud with my degree when I go back to my country. When I work in a company people will say that he is a graduate from so and so. I will feel more confident and more powerful (Abdullah, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Perceived attitudes to the positive consequences of international education, similar to Abdullah's, were common to participants. Their statements helped highlight how international education provided two mechanisms for Becoming Somebody. The first was that international education itself was a means to upgrade socially, since obtaining such education enabled them to climb social ladders. The second mechanism related to better employment these students would obtain due to an international education. Participants associated international education with higher positions in employment settings and earning higher salaries resulting in better economic conditions and consequently higher social status. In other words, better financial conditions were perceived to be a means for upgrading social status. Ying, for instance, explained how competitive it had become to find a job with a good salary in her country, Mainland China. She said she did not want to have a normal job with a normal salary. She needed an international education to make her future job applications standout and allow her to get employment that would provide her with a better salary and a better life. Similar to Ying from Mainland China and Abdullah from the Middle East, international students from other parts of the world consistently expressed associations between international education, employment, and betterment of

socio-economic status.

Relatedly, two key elements in international students' statements were that (1) the perceptions of others were important, and (2) international education positively influenced such perceptions. International students were influenced to select to study abroad as they described that by obtaining such education they could become somebody in the eyes of others. Such belief in the consequences of international education was reiterated constantly by participants in this study. For example, Fatima, stated the following:

> […] I always wanted to be a university professor. My cousin, she is a university professor and I always dreamt of becoming like her. It is very prestigious in my country to teach at the university. People respect you and listen when you speak. I could do masters and PhD in my country but the universities are not very strong there, and their degree is not good enough […] I mean if you do not have a degree from England or the United States maybe the university will not give you a job as a professor. […] yes, I wanted to be a university professor, and since I was in high school, I was dreaming about this (Fatima, Personal Communication, May 2016).

An interesting notion expressed within Fatima's statement above was that she was inspired to pursue international education by somebody else who has done it before and was successful in obtaining social gains for which she aspired. Her cousin had lived that experience where international education had

empowered her and made her successful and respected in her society. Such concept of following the path of role models was also expressed by other international students in this study, where students told stories about how they were inspired to study abroad by relatives or friends. Jihoo, nonetheless, was inspired by somebody who he had never met. His role model was a politician from his country. In the following statement, Jihoo voiced how he was influenced to study abroad in the U.S.:

> […] one of my motivations to come to the US is because there is a politician in Korea that I admire. He wrote his autobiography where he talked about his experience here in the US where he studied at Harvard. It was really interesting and that made me really think! It totally changed my life. After reading that book all I was thinking about was to study at Harvard if there would be a chance or at least study abroad somewhere in the United States (Jihoo, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Relevant to Becoming Somebody through learning from a role model, a notion advanced by one of the participants in the study, Mohammed, was that the desire to study abroad is virtually never triggered independently, but rather it is a consequence of observations of and listening to stories from other people who had lived international education experiences and had been successful. Mohammed stated the following:

> I would say no one, or most of students would not be encouraged to do it [study in a foreign country] unless somebody else they admire […]

> inspired them. This is like my situation. Then, after that it becomes a personal thing, a personal fulfillment matter. I mean personal fulfilment is very important, and it is normally motivated or started by some kind of inspiration, an inspiration from somebody around us who did it before (Mohammed, Personal Communication, August 2016).

In Mohammed's case, he was inspired by his cousin who had left his country, Libya, and studied in the U.S. Those people were admired because they were able to achieve status, social and/or economic gains, while they were able to satisfy external societal and economic requirements and conditions.

To conclude, Becoming Somebody textural element appeared to be relevant to intrinsic motives (e.g., personal fulfilment); however, a close examination of international students' descriptions of their experiences suggested those motives were initially conceived by extrinsic conditions. International students were influenced to leave their home countries and study in the U.S. and the particular campus in this study, as they wanted to better their socio-economic status. Employers and societies seemed to value internationally educated individuals, a belief which influenced students to pursue such education. Finally, the Becoming Somebody motive seemed to be triggered by students' observations of other people who had received international education and had been successful.

International Education as Means for Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar. Similar to Becoming Somebody theme, Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar theme comprised numerous meaning units. These included ‘different’, ‘new life/experience/world/people/friends/things’, ‘change’, ‘dream’, ‘live/experience change’, ‘adventure’, ‘excitement’, ‘enjoy’, ‘unalike’, ‘other life/culture’, ‘space’, and ‘independence from family’.

Data analysis suggested that international education meant an opportunity for international students to depart from their familiar contexts to unfamiliar ones. International students lived certain cultural, environmental, relational, and societal conditions in their home countries. These conditions shaped where international students lived, who they were, what they did, and how they acted and interacted with other people around them. International education represented a possibility to move somewhere else, become someone else, and adventure into new cultures, social relationships, and ways of life. A powerful statement which illustrated this source of influence to study in a foreign country was provided by Fang, from Mainland China. She did not want to conduct her life in a familiar context that would result in a predictable life. She stated the following:

> […] I wanted change. I wanted to change my life. If staying in China, I can see the end of my life. It is easily predictable. I will find a normal job, get a normal day habits, find a normal person, get married and maybe get one or two children, and then I retire and it is the end of life. It is not exciting! It

> is boring. And I do not like it. I want some surprises. I want some change. Here every day there is a challenge. There is something new (Fang, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Fang did not want to accept that she would know what was coming next, (e.g., normal job, normal marriage, one or two children, then retirement, and finally death). For her, international education was an opportunity to move away from her familiar context, where life events and life sequence was predictable, to another one that brought dissimilar and unpredictable experiences. Correspondingly, Abdullah voiced similar motives to leave his home country and study in a foreign country. For Abdullah, international education was a means for living an exciting experience where he could have more personal freedom, make international friends, and live a dissimilar culture. He stated the following:

> The decision to leave my home country is complex. I mean there are a lot of reasons. First, it is an adventure. Yes, it is exciting to go and live somewhere else different from home, to experience culture, to make friends from all over the world. I thought that I will enjoy education in another country way more than education in my country. Yes, basically I wanted something different in my life other than normal life. So, here I do not have my family around me all the time. I like them but here I have more space, some freedom to do what I like. Yes, this is one of the most important reason. I wanted to try to see how I can manage my life on my own (Abdullah, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Analysis of commonalities in participants' statements, Abdullah, Fang, and other participants, suggested that while expressing their desires to move from familiar contexts to unfamiliar ones, international students primarily brought up three relevant needs: (1) to obtain more personal freedom; (2) to establish friendships or relationships with international people; and, (3) to experience a different culture and/or education. For international students, leaving home, where they commonly lived with parents, and moving to another country to study provided space these students aspired for to be able to exercise more personal freedom. Wei, for instance, explained that, for him, not only was international education about related possibilities of academic attainment, but also such education concerned being able to experience different ways of life, where he had more control and space. He stated the following:

> […] to try to live on my own and control my personal life was one of my motivations to study abroad. The second, I think, is that not all the time in life you have the opportunity to go and live overseas and experience the cultures of other countries, look at the culture of America, life in here, and learn about the world from different people. I wanted to see something different in the world together with receiving education […] studying abroad is like starting a new journey in life, because it is not only that you pursue your academic goals, but also you have also personal goals. It is about taking control of your personal life and the whole thing. In China, I lived with my parents and they are all the time around me, doing things for

> me, but here I have to take care of everything myself. So, this is a new challenge added to the academic challenge. So, one reason why I wanted to study abroad was to be on my own, live on my own and manage life I want on my own (Wei, Personal Communication, July 2016).

Wei's statement above, as well as Abdullah's, revealed international students aspired to derive increased personal freedom while they were studying abroad. They wanted to be able to conduct their lives in ways that might not have been absolutely possible in their home countries and within their families' and societies' rulings and expectations. International education meant an opportunity to live by their own rules and experiment if they could manage life of their own, while living in ways they wanted to live.

An additional component of Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar theme related to differences between the cultures of learning and teaching in international students' home countries and destination countries. Participants described that classroom interaction, how study materials were approached, and what learning was perceived as and how it was assessed in the U.S. was an inviting source of influence for them to leave their home countries and to seek education in the U.S. Hui-chun from Taiwan, for example, told her story where she went to an international school to learn English in addition to her regular schooling in Taiwan. She was able to compare her two educational experiences. She liked what she described as the American style of education which she experienced in her international school, and it became an objective of hers to

study in the U.S. She stated the following:

> […] so, I learnt English in a very free environment, like American style you can say so. But as in elementary, middle school and high school, it was totally different atmosphere in the school classroom. It was more like other Asian classroom system. They teach us for test only. So it was like we learn only to do the test. That is all, and I did not like it because it was a lot of pressure. So, I always, always wanted to study abroad because I know and I like this kind of learning and its atmosphere (Hui-chun, Personal Communication, August 2016).

As expressed in the statement above, Hui-chun was dissatisfied with the focus of Taiwanese education on tests and test results. She described such focus or orientation resulted in pressure that she wanted to leave her home country and seek ‘American style’ education.

Similar to Hui-chun, other international students reflected on notions relevant to less study related pressure, while they were receiving their education in the U.S. This suggested that Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar theme, as a source of influence relevant to deciding where to study abroad, extends from out-of-class experiences to in-class experiences. That is, students did not only seek personal freedom, different friends, and dissimilar ways of life; but also they needed an educational experience different from what they received at schools and universities in their home countries.  A statement by Jihoo expressed the complexity and intersectionality of elements which together

construct the Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar theme. He shared that for him, international education in the U.S. meant an opportunity to escape from his context, where he was under the constant pressure of the South Korean educational system, as well as his parents' pressure to achieve. Not only did international education mean an escape from pressure, but also it was an opportunity to experience a new culture, earn more personal space, make new friends, and try to live a different way of life. Jihoo stated the following:

> […] my decision to leave Korea and study abroad was complicated. Maybe 50% of my decision was affected by my family and about 50% I would say my personal desire to go outside my country and earn new experiences, meet new people, and start a new life, because I was tired of the Korean education system. What I mean by 50% my family is that I wanted to get away from them in order to get more personal space. Usually, those who are born and raised in Korea would agree with me as parents or family there choke on you to study more and more and your goals are already set by them and what we have to do is to meet their expectation. When I am studying abroad now I have my own life and I satisfy them (Jihoo, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Jihoo's statement above summarized and expressed much of the quintessence of Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar theme. For international students, international education meant an opportunity to exchange, in Jihoo's case it was even to escape, social, cultural, and educational conditions

these students lived at their home countries. These students expressed desires to move to international education destination countries where they could exercise more personal freedom, while being educated differently and while being able to experience a different culture and make international friends.

To conclude the textural description, analysis in this study identified two common elements that made the meaning of international education: Becoming Somebody and Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar. International students chose to study in destinations that would help them achieve their desires in improved economic conditions and elevated social class upon their return to their countries. Additionally, international students chose destinations that would allow more personal freedom, where students experience different in-class and out-of-class cultures and make international friendships. Such beliefs of the positive consequences of international education pushed international students from their countries and pulled students to education elsewhere. International students' mobility intentions are amalgamations of intrinsic and extrinsic motives, where conditions and requirements in international students' home countries shaped international students personal desires and aspirations.

Structural Description

Analysis of data showed that while international students pursue their Becoming Somebody and Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar desires, these students' selections of destination countries and college choices were qualified by four broad domains of influence: (1) Quality, (2) Affordability, (3)

Access, and (4) Peace. These four themes are presented below and constituted the elements of the structural description in this present study. The naming of these four domains followed that which was used in the preceding quantitative study, and it is discussed in the Mixed Methods Discussion section below. The construction of these themes primarily followed top down reasoning based on findings from EFA in the quantitative study.

Quality. Notably, results suggested that the educational quality of the destination country in general, and desired college in particular, were highly common and highly influential in shaping international students' destination choice decisions. Scanning for key word frequencies from interview data using NVivo found participants frequently brought up quality related sources of influence as they were explaining reasons for their choices, Figure 4: Word Cloud, below.

Meaning units that made the Quality theme were 'quality', 'ranking', 'good/better/best education/program/campus/degree/professors', 'reputation/reputable', 'famous', 'status', 'real/true education/campus', 'prestigious', and 'accreditation'. Analysis of commonalities in participants' statements suggested Quality was mainly relevant to ideas of high recognition of degree and perceived educational attainment that was expected upon international students' completion of their studies in a foreign country. That is, for international students in this study, Quality meant superior education and degrees that were of eminent value in these students' home countries. Thus,

Quality and Becoming Somebody themes intersected and related to each other, as data suggested participants described that choosing countries and colleges of Quality made Becoming Somebody possible.

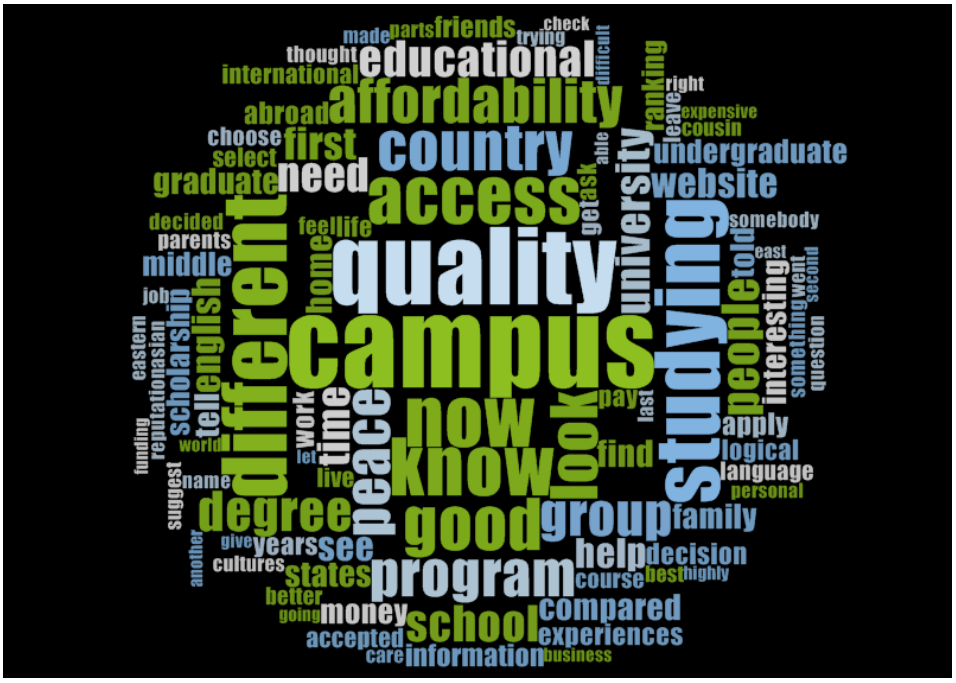


Figure 4. NVivo Generated Word Cloud for Qualitative Data

Participants shared they were attracted to the U.S., which had a reputation of high quality of higher education in their home countries. Then, these students looked for different college options and commonly started by comparing the quality of education of these colleges before they compared other college aspects. Statements by participants illustrated the precedence of quality in considering study destination choices. Jihoo, for instance, stated: “Yes, definitely

students select the US mostly because of its reputation of quality of university education […] When you say “higher education”, the United States is the top, the first country that comes to mind” (Jihoo, Personal Communication, May 2016). Similarly, Hui-chun provided a reflection where she explained how international students additionally compared the quality of different colleges. She stated:

> Honestly, the United States, people consider America as very, it is a top country. Most people look up at this country. I think that is the reason why they believe that studying in the US is the best choice. They believe that education in the United States is the best quality in the world […] After they decide to come to the United States to study, the most important thing for students, yes the more important thing to choose a campus and before they look at other things is quality, of course. This is what we look at first. Honestly, the degree must have high respect and value when we go back. This is the most important thing (Hui-chun, Personal Communication, August 2016).

Hui-chun shared that the U.S. was perceived as a ‘top country’ in Taiwan. This notion explained how choosing a destination of Quality was the means for Becoming Somebody. International students reported that Quality of a campus was reflected by its rankings. For example, Fatima used The Times Higher Education World University Rankings to select the colleges to which she wanted to apply. She attempted to apply to higher-ranking campuses first before she moved down in her list based on admission decisions.

> I know that the most important thing for us is quality and ranking. This is what I did when I made my applications. I applied to […] universities and I choose those from ranking list by The Times ranking. I think that ranking is the most reliable. I mean it is good to see what people say and reviews from other people, but ranking is official. So yes, many of us use that to decide where to apply (Fatima, Personal Communication, May 2016).

In her statement above, Fatima associated quality with ranking, and she voiced her opinion that college ranking was a trustworthy source of information for her to find out about college quality. She described that ranking was more reliable than word of mouth and reviews about colleges on the Internet. Such perception of the reliability of ranking was similarly shared by other participants. Abdullah, for instance, assessed his college ranking through a Google search before he made his final decision. His goal after his bachelor's degree was to do a Master in Business Administration, and he was influenced by his college ranking in European CEO Magazine rankings, where his college was listed as one of the 'top tier one' colleges in the world, according to European CEO Magazine website. He described that, "[…] ranking made it very clear that this couldn't be the wrong campus" (Abdullah, Personal Communication, May 2016). For Abdullah, rankings was a validation that he was making the right college choice.

To summarize the Quality theme, international students evaluated the quality of higher education in potential destination countries. Their evaluations

were primarily influenced by how their potential destination country is perceived by people, including employers, in these students' home countries. Next, international students evaluated the quality of college options and seemed to depend heavily of rankings for such evaluation. The Quality theme intersected with the Becoming Somebody theme as results suggested international students described they would not Become Somebody unless they study in destinations of Quality.

Affordability. Analysis of data suggested that compared to Quality, aspects related to Affordability were less powerfully brought up by participants. This was the case since three participants were funded by scholarships from their home countries which did not have limits for tuition fees, and two participants were funded by their families, which they described as affluent where, to use Hui-chun words, 'costs were not of a concern'. Hence, Affordability was found to be a less common source of influence in international education destination choice in the context of this study.

Meaning units which constituted this theme included 'fee', 'tuition', 'loan', 'borrow', 'lend', 'expense/expensive', 'afford/affordability', 'cheaper', 'price', 'installment', 'pay/payment', 'money', 'fund/funding', 'scholarship', 'hardship', and 'financial/finance'. Participants shared that elements related to affordability which influenced their decision to leave their home country, select their destination country, and their particular college were (1) accommodation and living expenses in the area around their desired college campus, (2) tuition and other campus

fees, and (3) payment flexibility.

Mohammed's college transfer story exemplified two of the Affordability theme elements: how international students considered flexibility of payment; and, how they evaluated accommodation and living expenses in the area around a college campus. Mohammed studied at a college campus in southern California for ten months before he transferred to another college also in southern California, although the latter was located in a more affordable area. Mohammed provided the following statement:

> […] I transferred here because it is an affordable area. When I say affordable area, I mean the cost of living. So, if you are trying to live near my previous campus, you are looking at $1000 to $1200 a month for one room. I mean out of campus. But here, I pay $420 which is for my own room 0.8 miles from school in a very nice house. So, this is another reason especially with the economic situation in my country now […] and also what we see in some schools is that students have to pay [tuition fees] two or three months in advance, and what students think, is that this is difficult. As you know international students' situation, we need time to transfer money from our country. So, this is an important point to keep students in a campus. I mean flexibility of payment. Things happen. This is also a reason when students learn about this for students to transfer to this campus. They know that the school will understand their problem, will care and support them and be patient with them (Mohammed, Personal

Communication, August 2016).

In his statement above, Mohammed shared his transfer helped him save about 60% for his accommodations, which was one reason to choose the college to which he transferred. Mohammed referred to the then current economic conditions in his country, as currency there had dropped against the dollar. This created a need for him to move to where he could afford expenses, otherwise international education would have been impossible. Mohammed further expanded his, as well as other international students', needs for flexibilities in paying tuition fees. He described international students received their funds from other countries and unexpected inconveniences or delays were possible to happen. He reported international students would be attracted to colleges that provided considerate, flexible payments rather than required rigid advanced payments that needed to be deposited months before international students' programs start dates.

Another statement which illustrated the influence of Affordability on college choice was provided by Wei. Wei shared his story about how he made his destination choices while he was in his home country. He explained he was assisted by an international education agent who provided him with a number of college options. Wei was planning to come to the U.S. to study in a preparatory program through which he could improve his GPA and GRE scores before he would be able to apply to a top tier research college for his graduate studies. He provided the following statement:

> The agent gave me options to choose from and I compared those universities. The agent told me about an option [program] at a research university to prepare for admission, but it was less expensive here. So, I choose this campus because it is hard to know how many courses and how many terms I will need to get ready and start my graduate program at a research university and it might be very expensive. So why do not I save money and come here first (Wei, Personal Communication, July 2016)?

Wei made his college choice based on differences in tuition fees between different college options. He chose to take his preparatory program at the more affordable comprehensive college, where this study was conducted. He reported his decision was mainly influenced by the fact that he was unsure about the expenses he would incur if he had done his preparatory program at a research college, since he did not know how long it would take him to be admitted to his desired graduate program.

To conclude the Affordability theme, elements which made up this theme and constituted sources that influenced international students' destination choices were living expenses, tuition fees, and payment flexibility. Results suggested international education costs, or Affordability, were a less common source of influence compared to Quality since students could come from well-off families or they could be funded by scholarships from their home countries which would not have specified limits for tuition fees.

Access. Meaning units which made up the Access theme were ‘able’, ‘difficult/easy process’, ‘admitted/admission’, ‘facility’, ‘communicate’, ‘network’, ‘available/unavailable’, ‘transportation’, ‘satisfying parents/family’, ‘TOEFL’, ‘GRE’, ‘GPA’, ‘accept/acceptance’, ‘reach’, and ‘visa/I-20’. While the Quality and Affordability themes provided simpler concepts to understand, the Access theme consisted of two distinct yet relevant dimensions or subthemes which incorporated sources that influenced international students’ study destination choices. These were international students’ beliefs and experiences concerning how difficult/easy access to study somewhere was, ‘Access Prospect’, and what access studying somewhere gave, ‘Access What’. These are elucidated below respectively.

Access Prospect, or difficulty/easiness of accessing international education in destination countries and college campuses, influenced international students’ choices. International students in this study told their stories where they collected and evaluated information about their desired countries and desired campuses through online searches, as well as through seeking advice from international education agents, academic advisors, family, friends, acquaintances, and potential future international college staff. Relevant to Access Prospect as defined here, analysis of commonalities in participants’ responses suggested such information concerned (1) the difficulty and likelihood of being able to obtain visas to study in international students’ desired destination countries, (2) college admission requirements, and (3) programs start dates.

Results revealed student visa requirements and procedures deterred or encouraged international students' choices. Ekaterina, for instance, shared her story where she almost did not study in the U.S. due to visa regulations and processes. Ekaterina was in the U.S. on a visitor visa when she made her decision to study at college. To be able to do so, she had to go back to her home country, Russia, and apply for a student visa. She also explained that students from Russia were not motivated to study in the U.S. because they perceived student visa to the U.S. was difficult to obtain. Ekaterina shared:

> At the beginning, I was not on F1 visa so I wanted to change my status but Homeland Security said no come back to Russia and apply for student visa there. So, I travelled back and I spent two months. They write me very strong letter to immediately go back and I did. I was scared. I went to the embassy and they gave me F1 visa and came again here. It was a long process, scary, but college staff helped me so much, the visa advisor explained all. I would not be studying here without help with visa information […] a lot of students from my country do not come here because they think that the visa is impossible. This is related to visa politics of the United States. I think this is the reason. In my country, it is very difficult to get a visa because you need to show that you have enough money to pay for one year living, one year eating, one year tuition and education. In my country, it is difficult because you need to show a lot of money at the bank, and even if you have it, you do not get visa

(Ekaterina, Personal Communication, August 2016).

Similar stories about the difficulty of obtaining student visa to the U.S. were shared by participants from Brazil, China, and Libya.

In addition to visa barriers, international students' choices were controlled by admission requirements at potential destination colleges. Participants shared their experiences where their college choices were substantially influenced by colleges' international admission requirements for Grade Point Average (GPA), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and Graduate Record Examinations (GRE). Fatima, for instance, wanted to study at a top tier research college; however, her applications were denied based on her GRE scores. She eventually had to choose from other less selective campuses which accepted her applications. Fatima provided the following narrative about her choice experience, where admission requirements of destination colleges limited her options:

> I applied for 12 different campuses at the same time […] top ranking campuses […] did not accept me; it was because of my GRE score. They required this test although I am not a native speaker. My TOEFL score is excellent but not GRE. It is really strange how these campuses do not understand that even the math we study at school is different and uses different words and logic to solve math problems. The verbal part is also not logical. It requires that you are familiar with uncommon vocabulary. Those words you learn as you read science books in English but in my

> university in Saudi we study in Arabic. I have to learn English and the familiar words first before other words. It is a foreign language to me. Anyway, I thought that the GRE was very unfair for me as an international student […] My GPA for my bachelor was really good. I graduated the top 4 in my department which was about 300 students but this was not good enough for them. Can you believe? Anyway, they did not accept me and I had to choose a campus from those who accepted me (Fatima, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Fatima shared that the GRE was designed for domestic students and was geared at assessing language and math attainment from education in colleges in the U.S.; hence, it was an unfair evaluation of her college success potential. In fact, all graduate students interviewed reported on the influence GRE requirements had on their college choice. Hui-chun and Mohamed, for instance, did not choose, or even attempt to apply to, campuses or programs which required GRE scores. In Hui-chun's case, she shared her choice experience where she started with identifying her desired field of study. Then, she identified college campuses and programs which did not require GRE scores for admission, and she applied only to those. Similarly, Mohamed shared his story where he needed to avoid going through GRE testing. In his case, he chose to study at a particular college; then, he selected a master's in public administration program rather than a master's in business administration program since the latter required GRE scores for admission. For him, the GRE requirement was so

deterring that he selected a program that would help him avoid needing to take it.

Similar to how international students perceived GRE testing as an unfair evaluation, and how these students attempted to avoid having to take it, participants shared their stories where they selected colleges in the U.S. based on the availability of conditional admission and TOEFL waiver programs. International students shared that they were motivated to select colleges that gave the option of learning English at those colleges, while those students were in a conditional admission status until they successfully completed their English language programs, and without needing to take the TOEFL test.

The last element of the difficulty/easiness of accessing international education Access sub-theme, Access Prospect, which was found to be common amongst participants, was relevant to programs start dates. More specifically, international students reported their college choices were influenced by whether or not their potential choice colleges were offering rolling, rather than non-rolling, admissions. Participants attributed their need for such flexible and accommodating admissions and program start dates to (1) the possible differences between academic calendars in their home countries and destination countries including their expected graduation dates from their home colleges and program start dates in destination colleges, (2) the uncertainty of dates by which these students were able to obtain a student visa to the U.S., and (3) the fact that many international students came to the U.S. for English language training or certificate programs before their degree programs, while these students were

uncertain of their graduation dates from such English language training or certificate programs. One representative story of this third condition is that of Ying, who started her international education at one college in the U.S. then transferred to another one after her certificate program. She needed to start her degree program in Winter term while the college at which she had studied for her certificate program did not offer such a program start date option. She stated:

> There is key reason for selecting this college. The program at [my previous college] is just open applications to start program in fall quarter while I finished my certificate on December 5. That meant that I had to wait for about 9 months to be able to join the program there. So, if I wanted to apply for the program there, I cannot stay that long in the US. I would have to go back to my country and maybe I apply from there. So, personally I did not want to wait long time especially because I was wondering that if I go back to my country, that is not good to continue study. Maybe I have to look for a part time job while I wait for my application and I thought that is not good to me. So I looked for a college where I can start without waiting (Ying, Personal Communication, July 2016).

Ying's story above exemplified complexities of international students' conditions and their need for rolling-admissions. Ying chose a college that provided her with conveniences relative to program start term she needed. She wanted to save time and avoid having to go through the U.S. student visa

application one more time.

Moving to the second Access subtheme, Access What, results revealed international students assessed difficulty/easiness of accessing international education somewhere against what they perceived as advantages or benefits of their choice. The textural description presented above revealed international students sought to study at countries and colleges that would help them improve their socio-economic status, as well as move from their familiar contexts in their home countries and adventure into different contexts in colleges abroad. These conceptual or abstract domains represented international students' perceived positive consequences of international education, and they seemed to motivate international students' country and college choices. In addition to these, relevant immediate, or more tangible or concrete, benefits and advantages motivated international students to make particular destination choices. These constituted the 'Access What' subtheme, which related to immediate advantages that influenced international students to make particular destination choices.

Relevant to Access What subtheme, analysis of meaning units and commonalities in international students' choice experiences suggested the following three elements that seemed to consistently, and in many cases jointly, influence international students' choices: (1) program and education related influences, (2) campus location and facilities related influences, and (3) social influences. Program and education related advantages concerned international students' desires to receive education and skills that were not available in their

home countries. In fact, most participants reported they chose to study abroad as they aspired to study in advanced fields, specializations, or majors that were not offered, or at least were not as up-to-date, in their home countries. For example, Fatima shared her story where she wanted to focus on a specific field within psychology for her graduate studies that was not available in her college or other colleges in her home country. She shared the following:

> […] I could do masters and PhD in my country but the universities are not very strong there, and their degree is not good enough, too general not really specialized or advanced fields. They do not have many specializations for Master's and PhD like what I want to do after my Master's in psychology here (Fatima, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Other participants also brought up advanced education related skills which they believed they would obtain as a result from their international education. The most common concerned these students' choice of the U.S. as a destination country and was English language. International students shared English language was the most important language in the world, which was key to accessing knowledge and international corporations and businesses, as well as to be able to communicate with other people around the world. Participants described that English language education in their home countries was not as good as learning English in context in an English speaking country like the U.S. Jihoo, for example, stated the following:

> I majored in English in my home country but it was not good enough to speak and write fluently. During education in the US, and this is very important, one can get degree and at the same time improve English language, which is the most dominant language for business and science. Germany […] is good but I will have to learn a new language only for my study there. After that I do not use it. It is a waste. I will forget it. Who wants to study there (Jihoo, Personal Communication, May 2016)!

Jihoo compared English language education in his home country to learning English while studying for a degree program in the U.S. He shared that by studying in the U.S., he could obtain a degree and advance his English language skills at the same time. He also described that non-English speaking international education destination countries were disadvantaged. He shared they were less likely to be the desired destinations for international students since these students would have to learn a language that would not be of a later use.

The second element of Access What subtheme concerned campus location and physical facilities related advantages. International students reported their choices were influenced by where a campus was located (surrounding weather, city or urban location, proximity to major cities and/or attractions, and public transportation services) and the quality of facilities campuses offered (classrooms, libraries, dormitories, recreational, and car parking). While international students who made their destination choices while

they were in their home countries used the Internet to evaluate these aspects, students who were already in the U.S. were likely to additionally visit destination campuses before they made their transfer decisions. Abdullah, for example, shared his story making his decision to transfer from his previous college in Philadelphia. He stated:

> […] although I have already decided to come here, I saw pictures and read about the campus online, but I can change my mind if I come here and I do not like the campus. You know, many students even start study then transfer to another university if they are not happy. So, I checked myself and things looked good to me. The campus was beautiful and the buildings seemed nice. I, err, even when I was in the College of Education, I wanted to ask a student but I was shy. I wanted to ask: Did they just finish building this college? It was clean, new and modern and I thought yes, this is where I want to study. Yes, I like the campus so much […] the car parking, the library, the dorms. I needed all these and they were good for me (Abdullah, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Abdullah shared tangible advantages that influenced his evaluation and consequent college choice. He started by looking at campus pictures from the college website, and he read about the different campus facilities that were available. Then, he physically visited the campus and found the campus offered the quality facilities he aspired for including dormitories, library, car parking, and classrooms. He was particularly impressed with the design and the up keeping of

one of the buildings he visited, the College of Education building, which seemed to have had a strong influence on his choice to transfer to his new campus.

The third and final element of Access What subtheme concerned social advantages subsequent to particular country and college choices. This element intersected strongly with another one within Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar theme, where a described motivation to study abroad was making different kinds of friends. Relevant to Access What subtheme, participants shared they compared different college options based on the potential of those colleges to provide environments and activities that would facilitate networking with other international students, as well as domestic students, which were from the U.S. in the context of this study. Aspects international students in this study evaluated were domestic to international student ratios, social and recreational activities provided by the campus, and other educational and community building opportunities such as types and nature of living learning communities within the campus dormitories. Gabriela, for instance, voiced the following:

> Networking [with internationals] is important. My point is that it is not easy for South American, for instance, especially if I think about Brazil to be able to make international connection while you live in Brazil. It is a very huge country and it is hard to interact with people from other countries. We simply do not have many of them and there are no possibilities. I was looking for a campus that provided these possibilities. Yes, I looked at the student ratios and I wanted to see what kind of people were there. I also

looked at what the campus has, activities and like these (Gabriela, Personal Communication, May 2016).

To summarize Access as a source of influence that shaped international education destination choices, data in this study suggested that this domain could be divided into two subthemes: Access Prospect and Access What. Access Prospect concerned how easy/difficult it was to study somewhere, and it entailed study visa requirements and likelihood, college admission requirements, and programs starting dates. Access What, nevertheless, concerned immediate or tangible benefits that international students evaluated for making their choices. These were comprised of advantages relevant to programs offered, campus location (including whether it was in an English speaking country), campus facilities, campus ethnic composition, and campus social activities.

Peace. Structural descriptions in the present study included reflections on how participants sought safe and peaceful experiences while studying abroad. These helped construct the theme Peace, which meant on-campus and out-of-campus environments which provided international students with safe and welcoming experiences. Peace included campus and area around campus level of safety, as well as campus and community around campus conviviality. Meaning units that made the Peace theme comprised ‘friendly’, ‘safe/safety’, ‘tolerant/tolerance’, ‘peaceful/peace’, ‘welcoming’, and ‘secure/security’.

In essence, in addition to Quality, Affordability, and Access, international students who participated in this study made their international education

destination choices, while they were influenced by notions relevant to how peaceful they expected their international education experiences would be. A representative story of how Peace influenced destination choices is that of Fang. Similar to the cases of other participants in this study, parents were involved in making destination choices. Fang had applied and was accepted to a number of colleges in California and on the east coast of the U.S. Fang's parents, however, gave Fang only two options. The first was not to study abroad and the other was to go to one campus in California close to where one of her older cousins lived. Her parents told her she would be unsafe completely on her own in a foreign country. Fang shared the following story:

> You know, living in China and coming here is different, totally different. In China, I cannot imagine what it is going to be like here. I was afraid and my family wants me to be safe. You know Hollywood movies… In China, we think that Americans are big, and dangerous, and have guns in their cars. I am sorry for the stereotype but this is how we think […] I chose another campus at the beginning […] That university was in Florida but my parents did not like that one […] my parents wanted me to be safe close to my cousin (Fang, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Fang's story above exemplified how Peace influenced where international students studied. A relevant notion within Fang's statement above was how Peace related perceptions were formulated in countries outside the U.S. through media, Hollywood movies in Fang's situation. In fact, participants commonly

brought up that much of their ideas of what the U.S. was like were conceived, as they learnt about the country through media, particularly news media and Hollywood movies.

Statements from participants suggested Peace extended beyond the limits of concerns about physical safety. Analysis of commonalities amongst participants' statements revealed international students additionally evaluated their psychological well-being during their international education. For example, Abdullah, Ahmad, Ekaterina, Fatima, Gabriella, and Hui-chun shared they selected to come to California for their international education because of stories they heard about Californians being welcoming to people with international backgrounds. A powerful statement which demonstrated the relevance of the social embracement element of Peace to destination choice was provided by Fatima:

> […] the information that I collected, all of it, told me that England is a better option than the U.S., but then I changed my mind because of the so many stories of bad experiences people from Saudi have there when they go to study. I want to do a master's then a PhD and I will need five to eight year of my life to finish these and I want to have good experience. It seems that they do not like us at all there. I mean, you know, I am a Muhajaba [Muslim headscarf] girl. Everybody can see that I am Muslim and people from my country who have studied there, I mean England, felt hated. They told me. They found it difficult or really impossible to

> communicate with local people there. People avoid us! My friends told me that they had interaction with only other international students, who even sometime joined the negative attitude about us. I have so much pride, really. I love myself and my religion and I cannot accept to be looked at like that. I thought about this for so much time, but then I decided I will give up England and come here. The USA is a better place for this because people here come from all over there world. Yes, I selected California because it is especially like that and it is known to have kind and accepting people and this is very important for me because of who I am and what I look (Fatima, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Fatima shared that her social experiences in California would be more positive, where people were more welcoming and accepting. Fatima described that Peace was very important for her because of who she was. She was a Muslim female who dressed differently from non-Muslims, as she wore Hijab. She expressed she did not want to be isolated, singled-out, alienated and lonely, while she had more sensitivity, feelings of insecurity, and anxiety due to her identity and religious beliefs. Fatima had pride and did not want to live an international education experience where she would not be treated respectfully.

International students shared that their objectives of Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar, including personal freedom and making international friends, were facilitated by open, flexible or friendly cultures in international education destination countries. In the context of this phenomenological study,

students shared that the U.S. provided such a culture, where they could achieve their moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar objectives. In fact, statements by participants consistently illustrated international students' positive impressions about culture in the U.S. Ying, for example, compared cultures in different major international education destination countries including Australia and the U.K. She stated the following as she shared her belief about the culture in the U.S.:

> […] however, I think that the culture of the US is best and is more suitable to me, and that is what I experienced here, because everyone has freedom and focuses on their personal life. And I love this very much. I think that is very reasonable. And I think that I learnt this while I was in my country that the US culture like a melting pot, and it is very friendly and is open to all kinds of other cultures. So, I thought I would be very comfortable if I come to this country and live the way I want (Ying, Personal Communication, July 2016).

Ying described that in the U.S., she could live her own way with little to worry about what others think, since others were focused on their own lives. She shared that this was suitable for her as an international student.

One final component of Peace which emerged and intersected with one of the Access What elements concerned participating international students' evaluations of the composition, or diversity, of student populations in potential colleges. In other words, international students in this study commonly investigated domestic students' ethnicity ratios, as well as whether there were

other international students of similar backgrounds on campus. Nevertheless, statements were inconsistent and did not allow for a conclusion of any commonality except that international students took such population considerations. Some participants shared they preferred to study at campuses where there were ample international students of similar background, which gave them a strong sense of security or Peace. In contrast, other participants feared larger numbers of similar students defeated some of their Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar study abroad objectives. Consequently, they were motivated to select campuses with less students of national origin similar to their own.

To conclude this theme, this study found international students qualified their choices based on what they perceived as Peace related advantages of such selection. Peace consisted of on-campus and out-of-campus environments that provided physically safe and socially welcoming experiences. For some participants in this study, student populations on their campus was relevant, as they shared that having bigger numbers of international students with similar backgrounds to their own enforced Peace. Contrariwise, other students expressed that they had stronger desires to adventure into campuses that would provide more foreign experiences.

Structural-Textural Description: The Essence

This study found international students' mobility was shaped by desires to improve their economic conditions, to elevate social status, and to exchange

ways of life in home countries with different ones situated in foreign counties that provided different cultural and social dynamics and opportunities. These desires were qualified by a second layer of sources of influence consisting of four domains that were identified as quality, peace, access, and affordability. First, international students sought quality country and college destinations, since education of distinguished quality was the means for achieving their objectives of economic and social improvement. Second, these students sought feelings of excitement and adventure, which they aspired to derive by moving to study away from their home countries, although considerations of safety and social embracement within and around their destination campuses seemed to control the extent to which they pursued their adventure desires. Third, international students made their country and college choices based on their access related perceptions and experiences. These were students' experiences of and beliefs about whether they were able to go to study where they wanted to study, as well as these students' evaluations of the immediate advantages they would access by making their specific destination choices. Finally, international students, although less commonly in the context of the present study, evaluated financial costs of their international education, and they made their choice decisions to go to destinations where they could afford tuition fees and living expenses.

Summary and Conclusion to the Qualitative Findings

The present transcendental phenomenological qualitative study complemented a first-phase quantitative study that aimed at investigating

variables and factors that affected international students' mobility choices. Following, explanatory sequential mixed methods procedures, a sample that consisted of 11 international students were interviewed. Data from in-depth interviews were analyzed, and findings suggested six common sources of influence that shaped international students' decisions to leave their home counties and select their country and college destinations. These were Becoming Somebody, Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar, Quality, Affordability, Access and Peace.

The invariant textural elements, or themes, were Becoming Somebody and Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar. Participants in the present study were influenced to study in a foreign country because they perceived that such study was means for improving their socio-economic status upon their return to their home countries. Furthermore, participants were influenced to study in a foreign country, the U.S. in the context of the present investigation, because they perceived such education as an opportunity to earn more personal space away from their families, as well as experience cultures and social relationships that were different from those they had experienced in their countries.

Data suggested that the two textural elements that constructed what it meant to choose to study abroad were controlled by and partly intersected with four structural elements, or themes. While attempting to pursue their Becoming Somebody and Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar objectives, participants evaluated choice options based on aspects related to Quality, Affordability,

Access, and Peace. Participants selected to study in their destination country and chose their colleges, while they hoped that their education would be of prominent value upon their return to their countries. They selected destinations, where these students could afford study and living expenses, while hoping that their campuses provided some flexibility in paying tuition if needed. Additionally, participants evaluated Access, as they investigated their prospects to obtain visas to their desired destination country, as well as their prospects of being admitted to their desired colleges and programs. Access also included elements related to international students' perceived immediate advantages relevant to their choices. These students evaluated different college options based on what access those colleges offered including aspects such as campus facilities, campus location, and public transportation. Lastly, international students aspired to study somewhere where they could Move from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar, while they would still be able to have Peace. International students' choices seemed to be controlled by these students' desires to have safe and socially welcoming experiences.

## Mixed Methods Discussion

This section presents findings in regards to the final research question of this mixed methods study: How do international students make sense of the findings of the questionnaire that preceded the interviews? For this question, an explicit tool was created and was employed for the last part of the semi-structured interviews. The tool summarized results, and it used graphs to

visualize the findings of the quantitative study (See Appendix F, Explaining Quantitative Findings Tool). The purpose behind discussing the quantitative findings with participants was to validate and explain quantitative findings while giving data the voice of the participants themselves. The sections below start with presenting findings relevant to the order of importance of study abroad choice variables, leaving home country variables, selecting the U.S. variables, and college choice variables. Then, participants' feedback on the four-factor solution is shared. Finally, participants' explanations of differences between groups on the factor solution are presented.

Overall, participants expressed agreement with the findings from the quantitative study. Such agreement is referred to in the sections below; nevertheless, more space is given to statements that expressed incongruity or variation where existent in the data, as well as explanations of the findings.

The Importance of Choice Variables

Quantitative results for level of importance showed that the most important leaving home country variables were Personal Fulfillment, followed by Rounding of Education, and then Networking with Internationals. After these came Parents' Encouragement, Being Away from Home, Possibility to Immigrate, Acceptance is Difficult at Home, Availability of Scholarship, the Program is Unavailable at Home, and Wanting to Do Like Peers Do, respectively. The weight and the order of importance of leaving home country variables are illustrated in Figure 5 below.

Participants generally agreed that these weightings, ratings, and rankings

were logical. For example, based on his evaluation of leaving home country variables, Wei provided the following statement as he examined Figure 5 below: “Yes, I agree since personal fulfillment is the most important reason one would want to leave home” (Wei, Personal Communication, July 2016). Jihoo said: “It is a logical order and makes sense to me” (Jihoo, Personal Communication, May 2016). Hui-chun similarly stated the following: “I feel the same thing. Yes, it is like I want to fulfill myself and reach a high level of education. I agree with that. Yah. The order looks good” (Hui-chun, Personal Communication, August 2016).

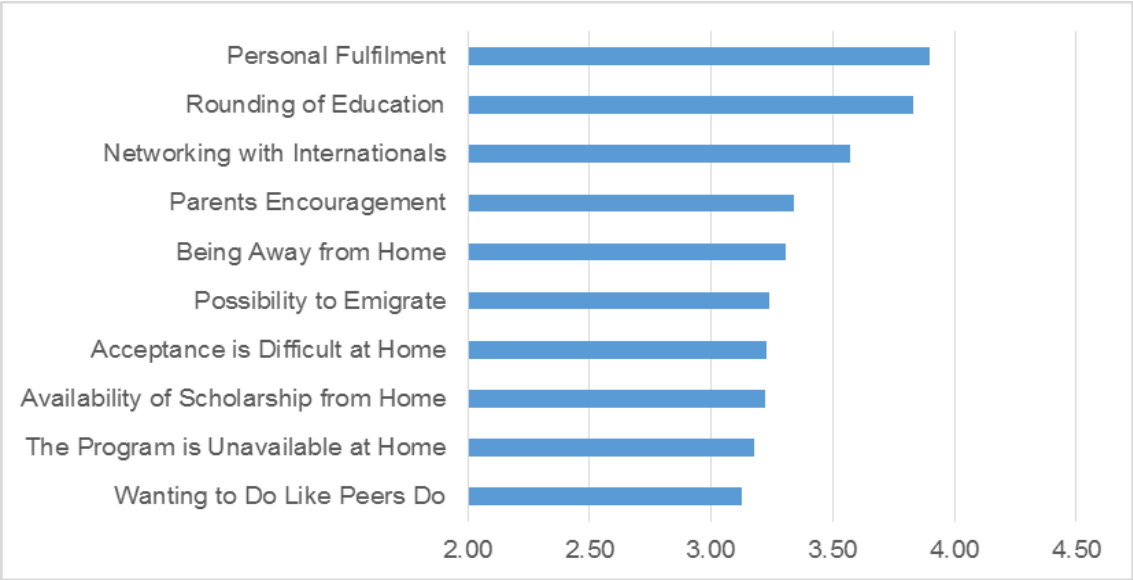


Figure 5. Ranking of Leaving Home Country Variables

Mohammad agreed with the order as it represented his ratings, but he proposed that different types of international student populations would have

dissimilar motivations. He stated the following: “[…] yes, this looks logical. But different groups would, yes, have a completely different order for these” (Mohammed, Personal Communication, August 2016). In fact, one of the participants, Ying, provided a statement in which she expressed that she had different weights of importance for leaving home country variables. She stated the following:

> Parents’ encouragement is important to me. The most important in all my decisions in life. I give you an example: When I selected English as my undergraduate major, actually, I was interested in archeology. That was my goal and expected major but my parents strongly recommended English as my major. […] and in China, there are no scholarships and the government does not support students to study abroad. So this is in the bottom for us. We have to pay tuition ourselves and maybe sponsored by our parents. That is why they are important. Mmmm… The order of reasons, the first four are common. Maybe I do not agree with the order because for me rounding of education and parents’ encouragement are the most important reasons to leave my home country and of course, I want to achieve my personal goals (Ying, Personal Communication, July 2016).

Similar to participants’ evaluations of the importance of leaving home country variables, participants’ statements on selecting the U.S. items supported the quantitative findings. Quantitative results for these suggested that the most

important variable was Quality of US Higher Education. The following is how the remainder of variables ranked as per their order of importance: Improving English Language, High Status of US Degrees, Employability as a Graduate from the US, Experiencing US Culture, Work in the US after Graduation, US Economic Power, Limited Racial Problems in the US, Work Part-time During Study, Tolerance of Religious Beliefs in the US, and Proximity to Home Country. Figure 6 below illustrates these.

Statements from participants supported the findings with regards to the level of importance of the different choice of the U.S. variables. Again, participants expressed their opinions that individual students and different student segments may have different motivation priorities. For example, Gabriela voiced the following:

> Yah. I mean. OK. The quality of US higher education is good but back home I went to a very good school too. So, it would not be my first option, but I that it may appeal to others it is a fact. Mmm, improve English, yes, work, yes. For me, in the TESOL program, work during the program or after would be more appealing now because I used to teach English as a foreign language and here I could have the experience of dealing with English as a second language, which is exactly what I am studying. So, improving English and work after study are the most important for me (Gabriela, Personal Communication, May 2016).

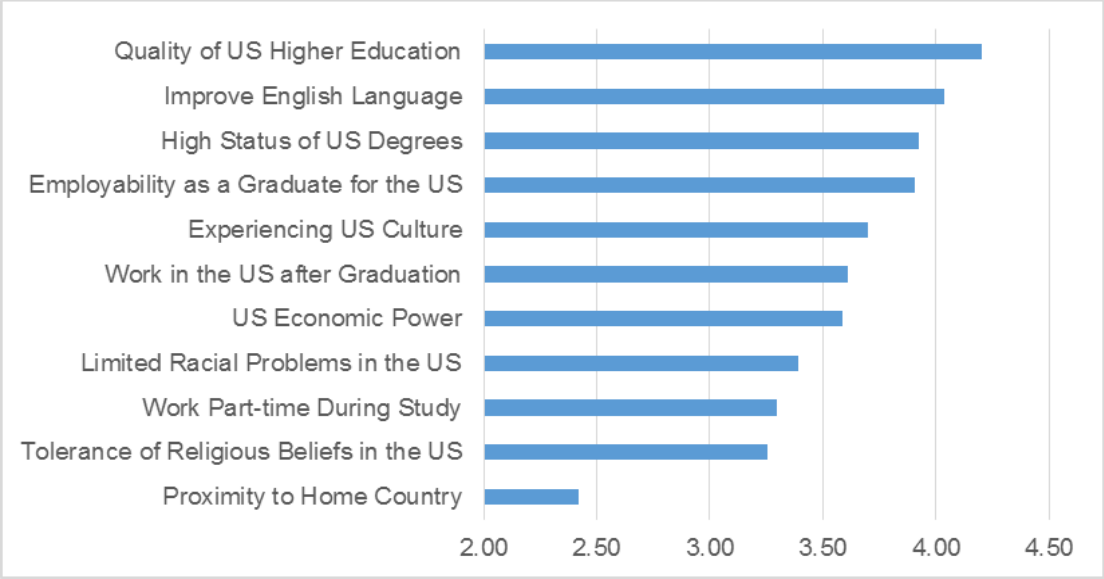


Figure 6. Ranking of Selecting the United States Variables

Finally, quantitative findings suggested that the most important campus choice variables were Campus Reputation of Quality, Campus Ranking, Courses within Program, Faculty Reputation, and Support to International Students. The least important were Car Parking Facilities, Public Transportation to Campus, Online Advertisement of Programs, Staff Participation in International Fairs, and Prospectus and Brochures. These, together with other campus variables investigated in the quantitative study, are illustrated in Figure 7 below.

Similar to findings from leaving home items and choosing the U.S. items, participants' stories in the qualitative study supported findings from the quantitative one with regards to college choice. Some supportive statements

were, “this is very good order. The ranking and the quality is the most important reason students select a campus to study”, (Wei, Personal Communication, July 2016); and, “[…] yes, the order is logical to me. I think that this is what I selected in the questionnaire. Campus ranking and reputation of quality is the most important reason to select where to study”, (Jihoo, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Ying, nonetheless, agreed with findings as suggested by the quantitative study, but she expanded that different students would have different needs and aspirations. These were based on where international students came from and what they were looking for. She stated the following:

[…] some students look for a campus located in an area with good weather. If I mind this, I would not select here because it is hotter here than where I come from in China. International students come from different countries and they are used to the weather in their home. They prefer to go to study in campuses where weather will be similar to where they are from. This is of course not true if they come from too hot or too cold countries. So, these reasons depend on different students. For some, quality and reputation are number one reason; for others, tuition is the most important. So it depends. Maybe for most students the most common thing to care about when choosing is ranking, campus reputation of quality, courses within program. That is the most common factor for students when applying to any campus: You have to consider campus ranking of course. This is related to the future career because if you graduate from a reputable

famous university, that will be an advantage when you apply for a job because you will have more opportunity when you are competing with others. So, I think my order is very close to the order here (Ying, Personal Communication, July 2016).

Figure 7. Ranking of Campus Choice Variables

The Four-Factor Solution

Having established the international students' mobility four-factor solution through the quantitative study, the qualitative analysis of interviews data showed that sources of influence that shaped international students' destination choices as expressed by participants could be classified under similar typology: Affordability, Access, Peace, and Quality. These constituted the structural description of the phenomenological transcendental explanation of participants' experiences, and they seemed to control two elements that formed the textural description: Becoming Somebody and Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar. Data suggested that there was considerable amount of intersectionality and dependency between textural and structural elements, especially Quality and Becoming Somebody, as well as between the different elements of the textural description. In addition, data revealed that Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar was particularly qualified by participants' considerations and needs for Peace.

Participants' statements in the qualitative study were further analyzed to help name the factor domains and explain how observed variables happened to group together. To begin with, EFA analysis suggested that Flexibility in Paying Tuition, Financial Aid Availability, Affordability of Tuition Fees, and Affordability of Living Costs around Campus observed variables formed a single metric and could be grouped under one factor. The name that was selected for this choice influencing domain was Affordability. Qualitative data as reported in the

Affordability theme above, nevertheless, showed that participants brought up ideas relevant to these together, although participants reflected on only one type of Financial Aid, which was scholarships. In international students' situation, they described that they were not eligible for the various financial aid options from which domestic students would be more likely to benefit.

Moving to the second group of variables that were found by EFA to form a single metric, these were Tolerance of Religious Beliefs in the US, People of Similar Background on Campus, and Limited Racial Problems in the US. Qualitative data revealed participants' need for social embracement during their international studies. Participants brought up notions relevant to these students' choices of study destinations and campuses, where they would be able to live during their studies in welcoming environments characterized by acceptance and tolerance. A statement by Ahmed exemplified international students' need for peaceful international education experiences. He suggested that this domain of influence was named Peace:

> I selected the US first of all because it is a freedom country, not a racist country. So, I am a Muslim and it is not easy to live or study anywhere in the world because, you know, the US is a freedom country and there are people over here who are friendly and I can talk to them. And it is important for me to look for less trouble because I am a learner. I feel weaker that I am not a native speaker and I have to learn English. That is why. That is the main reason to select the US. And here in California and

> this campus, there are people like me. […] I think it is a good name [for observed variables making up the Peace factor] because it is about Peace. International students want to be safe and they choose to go where there is less risk they are victims, like crimes or something. They do not want problems, or trouble, headache, or insecurity, or intolerance. They want to do what they came here for, study, and go back home safe (Ahmad, Personal Communication, August 2016).

Ahmad expressed how he incorporated considerations relevant to two elements of Peace into his destination selection, physical safety and psychological well-being. He chose to study in the U.S., which he perceived as tolerant and diversity-embracing one, where he would not face issues of racism, as well as cultural and religious intolerance. He described that he, as well as other Muslim international students, specifically weighed such Peace related issues, while they make their country destination and college choices. Ahmad felt California and his selected college were peaceful locations for his international study, since in addition to that people there were friendly, there were also other people of similar backgrounds to his. Ahmad's statement disclosed two of Ahmad's vulnerabilities, making Peace important factor affecting choice for him. The first was related to his religious beliefs, as he seemed to presume potential prejudices and bigotry against Muslims in different countries around the world. The second source of susceptibility was linguistic. Ahmad's statement helped clarify that not only Muslims, but all international students, who study in countries

that speak languages other than those students' own language, were likely to feel weakened due to their possible linguistic limitations.

While Peace and Affordability were easier factor domains to understand and name, EFA analysis suggested a single group for seven seemingly unrelated observed variables: Networking with Internationals, The Program is Unavailable at Home, Public Transportation to Campus, Car Parking Facilities, Staff Participation in International Fairs, Improve English Language, Parents Encouragement, and Campus Physical Appearance. Nonetheless, examination of qualitative data suggested a main theme, Access, under which, two subthemes existed: Access What, and Access Prospect. Access What represented immediate benefits participants perceived as a subsequent of their particular mobility choices. It partially related to Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar in areas relevant to making new friends, as international students assessed campus life and campus organized activities. It additionally intersected with elements within Becoming Somebody as participants seemed to have combinations of immediate, mid-term, and long-term objectives and aspirations. This perspective on the qualitative data helped clarify how linkage existed amongst observed variables revealed by EFA. As illustrated in the qualitative findings section above, participants selected the U.S. because they knew some English language, which made this country more accessible than studying in other non-English-speaking international education destinations. In addition, participants perceived English as a global language, which provided access to

global business, as well as access to networking with other people around the world, networking with internationals. International students wanted to access social networking opportunities through their campus life. Hence, they evaluated what campuses had to offer in terms of campus physical facilities and campus activities, as well as access to public transportation through which international students could access off campus activities. Moreover, participants perceived staff participation in international education fairs or exhibitions, a matter of access, since it represented an opportunity to access information about their desired study destinations and colleges, which in turn improved their access prospects. Finally, by travelling to study in countries other than theirs, international students accessed programs that might not have been available at home. Such access was made available while they were, in many situations, dependent on their parents and their parents' encouragement. Jihoo reflected that through international education he was able to access his Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar objectives, while he was also able to access satisfying his parents, "[…] when I am studying abroad now, I have my own life and I satisfy them [my parents]" (Jihoo, Personal Communication, May 2016). Jihoo's statement exemplified how international students were influenced by multiple access related forces simultaneously. Consequently, by looking at both data at the same time, Access as a domain that affected international students' mobility and destination choices as suggested by EFA, as well as Access as a structural

element of the transcendental phenomenological findings, Access represented notions and aspects that made needs and or desires attainable.

Finally, Quality was found to be the most suitable domain name for the group of variables that included Quality of US Higher Education, Campus Reputation of Quality, Campus Website, High Status of US Degrees. Data suggested that High Status of US Degree was an element of Quality, since they intersected in a parallel way to notions related to how Quality and Becoming Somebody themes in the qualitative data did. In other words, international students in this study perceived High Status of US Degree as a constituent of Quality, which helped these students obtain education and degrees of recognition upon their return to their home country. Campus Website initially appeared to be an unfitting element. Nonetheless, participant's statements helped clarify that it was a relevant component of Quality, since a college website was perceived by participants as an expression and a reflection of quality. Gabriela stated that "people think that university website is a reflection of its quality, because websites are how people get to know the university" (Gabriela, Personal Communication, May 2016). Ekaterina further explained that a college website is "[…] the first impression people get about a campus. It is an impression or you can say a meeting with the campus. And if the website is of good quality, then it is a good impression" (Ekaterina, Personal Communication, August 2016). Similarly, Fang provided an analogy in which she assimilated a

college to a person and the college website was the face of this person. She stated the following:

> Maybe the campus website is like the face of the person. If I want to know this person, at first I look at their face then I want to talk with them and exchange information to know them better. So, a campus website is like a person's face if it is beautiful then I would be interested in knowing more about it (Fang, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Gabriela's, Ekaterina's, and Fang's, as well as other participants' statements, helped explain that international students' knowledge and evaluations of a college quality were partly formed through these students' impressions of the college website. This was so since some international students were learning about their potential future college, while they were in their home countries; and a college website was their source for building their impressions of their future college quality. A powerful statement about the perceived relationship between a college website and a college quality was provided by Fatima. She stated the following while she was telling her story of her college options search:

> […] quality campus website is, err… tells you about campus quality. When we look at it, we can check the quality of the campus. I mean really if it is a bad website then for sure it is bad campus. So, it tells you really a lot of things. You know, it is like when you are surfing the Internet and sometimes you are looking for some information about something. Then

> you open a website and it looks ugly, I mean bad design, or the information is not organized. You close it immediately. And you try to find what you need in a different website. The same thing for campus website, really. If you were looking for a place to study and you are searching online, you will close the pages for the campus that have bad website. This is honestly what I did when I was looking (Fatima, Personal Communication, May 2016).

The story provided by Fatima above helped highlight that international students' attitudes and reactions to college websites could be similar to those of other Internet surfers, where websites' organization and designs influenced desires to spend more time looking into those websites. Fatima's qualifying of campuses which she wanted to look further into and select from was partly based on her impressions of the design of the college websites, which she perceived as a display of college quality.

Differences between Groups on the Four-Factor Solution

The final mixed methods investigation concerned the examination of qualitative data for statements that helped explain quantitative findings from group comparisons on the four-factor solution suggested in the EFA procedure. Between-group comparisons revealed significant differences on ratings of the importance of factors affecting choice based on participants' gender, level of study, and home country region. These are summarized into nine statements that are listed within the subsections below, and relevant available explanatory

qualitative data are presented.

Explaining Differences Based on Level of Study. There were four statements relevant to significant differences on factors affecting choice as per international students' ratings of the importance of these factors in the quantitative study. The following mixes these with explanatory qualitative data.

1. Access is more important to non-degree students compared to undergraduate students and graduate students.

On the relatively higher importance of Access for non-degree students Ekaterina described that, "undergraduate students and graduate students have more experience […], but when you are non-degree, you are more like children. It is like the start of their study and you need to have access to a lot of things" (Ekaterina, Personal Communication, August 2016). Ekaterina's and other participants' statements helped explain that non-degree students were mostly in the U.S. on English language programs, which were typically shorter than undergraduate or graduate programs. When international students first arrived in the U.S., they frequently started non-degree study before they progressed to degree programs. Consequently, these students valued aspects such as public transportation, an Access element, more than other students did, since non-degree students were less likely to buy their own cars given the shorter duration of their programs. These notions were expressed by Jihoo, who stated the following:

Because when you are graduate or undergraduate student, you will need

> to study and live for two or more years. So you can say it is like being settled, but language program is not long enough to buy a car or something because they stay here for three months or less than a year. So you do not really buy a car […] That is why access including transportation is more important for these students (Jihoo, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Statements from other participants further helped elucidate that non-degree studies were generally preparatory programs for students aspiring to access degree studies. Furthermore, Access was more important to these students, since it comprised improving English language, which degree-seeking students had normally already achieved prior to their studies. Abdullah provided the following explanation:

> Yes, I think that most international students who study non-degree study abroad to access something. You know, they come to learn English like in the university English language program. This will help them be accepted at the university. And like we discussed English itself is Access since these students will be able to use the language to speak with others, communicate and the internet. So, yes Access is more important to non-degree (Abdullah, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Abdullah's statement helped explicate that non-degree study could primarily be viewed as an access enabler.

2. Affordability is more important to undergraduate students compared to

non-degree students and graduate students.

Analysis of statements from participants in this study revealed that Affordability was more important to undergraduate students mainly on the account of the length of undergraduate programs compared to non-degree and graduate programs. Participants explained that undergraduate study was for a duration of four or more years during which considerable amounts of funds were needed to cover tuitions and living expenses. However, non-degree and graduate programs could be shorter. A statement by Mohammed explained the higher importance of Affordability for undergraduate students:

> These [non-degree students] are just here for shorter time. So they can afford to pay expenses, but undergraduate they are here for four or five or six years until they graduate. You know, they need like to spend a lot of money. Yes, so they need to be in an affordable place, I mean campus and around that campus to be able to finish their degree. In fact, in order for students to get visa, they need to prove to the American embassy that they have enough money. So, sometime students choose to apply to schools that ask them for money in the bank that they have. It needs like to be enough for one year or something. This is of course for all students but this is what undergraduate students have to think of for all the years they will need to spend, you know. Now Affordability for graduate students is less important because there are more available graduate scholarships than undergraduate. Yes, and graduate students can more easily find jobs

> to help them pay during their graduate study. I believe that a lot of graduate students find something, like work or something to help them during their study. Graduate students may also have worked in their country before they come here and they saved money. These are older students, you know (Mohammed, Personal Communication, August 2016).

3. Peace is more important to undergraduate students compared to non-degree students.

Similar to ideas discussed above, participants in this study attributed differences on Peace between different levels of program groups to the length of those programs. Participants described that undergraduate students sought Peace more than non-degree students, due to the fact that undergraduate programs were longer. A statement by Jihoo illustrated this justification:

> Same thing, undergraduate students study for longer time so the environment and the safety becomes important […] students are so excited to leave their country and they may not worry much about peace, but when undergraduate students go to study abroad, they think like I am going to live there but non-degree students think like I am going to visit there. I think that this is the difference between these two types of students and why their views of the importance are different (Jihoo, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Other statements by participants on the importance of Peace to undergraduate students also helped expound that these students were

potentially younger than those in non-degree programs, where there could be mixtures of students preparing for undergraduate and graduate studies. Participants explained that younger students could be selecting their study country and campus destinations with the help of their parents, who would typically have peace and safety of their children as priorities. Fang's college choice story, which was discussed in the Peace structural description above, exemplified such parental involvement and influence on choice.

4. Peace is more important to graduate students compared to non-degree students.

While the higher rating of the importance of Peace in the case of undergraduate students compared to non-degree students was attributed by participants to the length of program and the younger age of undergraduate students, participants' narratives on the importance of this factor to graduate students brought additional perspectives. Participants' statements confirmed that Peace was more important to graduate students compared to non-degree students, since graduate students were more likely to have their spouses and children with them during their international education. Such students would have stronger desires to choose destinations where they could feel their families would be safe. A statement by Mohammed illustrated this source of influence:

> […] many, I mean really many, of graduate international students, they come here with their family, live with wife or husband and kids. Peace is important for these. They want to know that their kids are safe if they go

> out and they are not like, you know, treated with disrespect or even attacked, insulted because of their color or religion. You do not want something bad to happen to your kids and you think more about Peace, I mean, are people going to accept me and my family, the campus the neighborhood where I will live? All these matter for these students (Mohammed, Personal Communication, August 2016).

Mohammed's statement elucidated the higher sensitivity of graduate students who felt responsible to select safe locations for their accompanying dependents. Similar to Mohammed, Hui-chun provided the following statement:

> It is because graduate students are more cautious and they may worry more about their safety. I think that as they become older and a lot of grad students have families with them, so they care more about that. They want to protect themselves and their family. They want to be out of trouble and they do not want risks (Hui-chun, Personal Communication, August 2016).

Finally, while the pursuit of Peace in the case of undergraduate students was partly attributed to these students' potentially younger age, Hui-chun's statement above suggested that students' age could also have an opposite direction. That is, older students might also have desires for Peace, as these students matured and departed from interests in risky situations and risky behaviors. This notion was expressed by other participants such as Ekaterina who shared that, "non-degree students have not faced Peace problems yet and they do not know it is important yet" (Ekaterina, Personal Communication, August

2016). Similarly, Gabriela explained the increased importance of Peace for graduate students in terms of maturity. The more mature those students were, the more they would seek Peace. She stated the following:

> I would say it is […] maturity of the students, because grad students tend to be older and a lot of international students in the English language program are 18 or 19. So, maturity will make them seek more peaceful environment. Grad students are more aware and they may have more worries (Gabriela, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Peace was more important for those students who were closer to either end of the younger and the older spectrum.

Explaining Differences Based on Students' Origin. Students' from different regions of the world, Asia, the Middle East, and Other Regions, differed on some of their ratings of the importance of the four factors reported in this study. The following are four statements that summarize significant differences together with qualitative data that helped explain some of the foundations of these differences.

5. Access is more important to Asian students compared to Middle Eastern students.

Participants' statements helped expound that Asian students' had higher ratings for Access as these students had stronger aspirations to learn English, which they perceived as key for international business. Wei, for instance, explained that big industries and corporate businesses in his country, Mainland China, were increasingly requiring English skills for employment. Wei also

expanded that international education was a means for learning about other countries' people and building networking that would also improve work and business related perspectives. Fang, moreover, alluded to English and explained the role China was performing in global business including import and export of Chinese products. Finally, Ying stressed the importance of Access for students from Mainland China including Parents' Encouragement, an Access element, as she described that these students needed family support:

> […] Access is very important for students from Asia. For example, for me, my parents' encouragement is very important because I need their financial support. So even before I make my decision, I have to communicate with my parents the clear reason that I need them to pay my tuition. So, this is about the Chinese culture. We have to consider family when we make some decisions. And like, improve English language, this might be the first reason a lot of students from my country come to the U.S. to study (Ying, Personal Communication, July 2016).

6. Affordability is more important to Asian students compared to Middle Eastern students.

Statements from participants helped reveal that many students from the Middle East received scholarships from their governments to cover tuition and living expenses of international study. Their scholarships had fixed amounts for living expenses, yet they were not restricted with regards of tuition fees. Furthermore, participants from the Middle East shared that even in the situation

of the absence of scholarship funds; they were comfortably able to afford international education. Contrariwise, students from Asia were mostly family funded and Affordability considerations were more relevant to them in their college choice. These students primarily evaluated tuition fees of colleges, and living expenses in the areas around those colleges. Wei, for instance, shared the following:

> The Middle Eastern students, their government pays for them. They have scholarships and they do not have to worry about the expenses when they choose where to study because they are covered for them. And for these students it is easier to get scholarship but for Chinese for example we get money from our family, so it becomes more important to consider expenses (Wei, Personal Communication, July 2016).

Abdullah from the Middle East provided a supportive statement sharing that Affordability was not an important factor in his, or other similar students', country destination or college choices. He stated the following:

> Yes, yes, I know this. Students from the Middle East like my country United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, all these countries have scholarship programs. Most students from these countries are very rich also, and even if they do not have scholarship, they can afford education anywhere, and affordability comes last, honestly. I know that my Asian friends have to pay tuition themselves and these can be really expensive so it is important for them (Abdullah, Personal Communication,

May 2016).

7. Affordability is more important to Other Regions students compared to Middle Eastern students and Asian students.

As discussed above, participants' accounts helped identify the grounds for lesser importance of Affordability for students from the Middle East. That was compared to Asian students who were typically financially dependent on their families. As for students from Other Regions, participants' statements suggested that these students were more likely to be independent and self-funded; hence, Affordability was even more important. Gabriela, a self-funded international student from Brazil, shared the following:

> I think it [the importance of Affordability] depends on who is paying the tuition fees. For me, it matters because I am paying. People in different countries have different ways of funding. In Brazil, I know that our programs and some people told me here that there are some Brazilian students who come through a governmental scholarship program offered there. These students are only few and would not worry about fees. […] Yeah… I think it is a matter of how students are paying for their tuition. Because if they are paying out of pocket they need flexibility, they need aid, lower costs, and other help. It is a little bit less important if it is their family, I think. Yeah… It is mainly about their source of funding (Gabriela, Personal Communication, May 2016).

8. Peace is more important to Middle Eastern students compared to

Asian students and Other Regions students.

As presented in the Peace structural element above, statements by international students from the Middle East showed that these students were more sensitive to issues related to safety, racism, and intolerance. These students gave higher eminence to Peace considerations in their international education mobility decisions. Furthermore, Gabriela suggested that such increased Peace needs extended to other international students who looked like Middle Eastern students. She shared the following story:

> Yah… Unfortunately, yes. I mean yah. It is the world as it is now. Well… Ok… I will tell you a personal story. Personal because it is about my brother. My family background is Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. But I do not know how, but depending who and how people look at us, we may look like Middle Eastern. My brother in the 1990s, he lived in Italy, and he worked for an airline company and he came here to Phoenix to take a course, like a month course, and go back to Italy, and on the day of the flight, he, for whatever reason, he was tired and at that time he had a mustache and a beard and it was in the middle of the crises of the first Gulf war. That is 1992 or 1993. He had the worst time every flying and it was before all the security measures went up. Because people judge by appearances. And he was like! I am Brazilian!!! Guys!!! They took him to a personal check. Like I said, he was hired by an Italian company at that time. I do not know what happened. They wanted to know everything. Why

> are you Brazilian? Why do you work for an Italian company? So, so, many things my brother went through! Ah… So, feeling safe and accepted is important to international students. This is funny, people feel threatened by something they do not even know […]. It is the racial profiling, I think, and unfortunately some people do that. And it is a story that stuck with me because growing up in Brazil […]. My brother was like really shocked. What is going on? And he did not expect and there are many similar stories like this. I am sure, that feeling safe, feeling part of the community is really important for any international student. So having these sensations that you are welcome and you are part of the community is a top priority really especially for people who look like from the Middle East (Gabriela, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Gabriela described international students needed a welcoming social environment where they feel included rather than alienated.

Explaining Differences Based on Gender. Statistical analysis in the quantitative study reported above showed that there were no significant differences between female and male students on three factors affecting choice, Affordability, Access, and Peace. Nonetheless, the two genders differed on their ratings of the importance of Quality. The following highlights participants' voices as they explained gender differences.

9. Quality is more important to male students.

Analysis of participants' statements suggested cultural and psychological

roots for the differences of female and male international students' perceptions of the importance of Quality as a factor affecting choice. Participants from Asia and the Middle East explained that they came from cultures where males were financially responsible for supporting their families. Females, in contrast, could choose to work or not to work, as both options were accepted in those societies. This made Quality more important for male students, since Quality education was the means for potentially better employment and higher salaries. How female and male roles were in the families from Asia was shared by Ying who stated that, "[…] for male students, they become husbands in the future. In their families, they have to show their earning income to support their families. So, quality as I mentioned, is very important when you are hunting for a job" (Ying, Personal Communication, July 2016). Similar explanations were shared by students from the Middle East. Mohammed, for instance stated the following:

> Still in my culture, men have different roles and different types of responsibilities. They are like the responsible for bring the income, the money for the home. They are responsible and they have to go to work and everything. Females can work but it is not really their responsibility. […] it is males who should work and as you know, work is related to qualification. I mean males need to have high quality education to be able to get good jobs and bring money to support their family. So, for females really it is more like a social thing. It is for her to say that she has a degree and they do not really care about quality. It is not a big deal for them. But

> for males, this is what I believe, it is important, very important for their future and job (Mohammed, Personal Communication, August 2016).

Ying and Mohammed's, as well as other participants', statements helped clarify that females and males had different social, or more specifically different familial roles in different cultures. Males in Asian and Middle Eastern cultures perceive Quality as more important since quality education was key to better employment and consequently needed financial gains.

Jihoo from South Korea brought up an additional explanation for male international students' higher interest in Quality. He described males from Asia were more goal-driven, where their goals were higher social status and better financial conditions. Jihoo stated the following:

> From an Asian perspective, because I was born and raised in Asia, in our perspective, male or man are more goal driven. They do not care as much about risks. They are more able to accept more danger or risk to achieve their goals; and the best way to achieve goals in this situation is to put quality as the top priority when they choose where to go. I would say males can be perceived as more greedy, ambitious and materialistically driven. They want to achieve social and economic status and quality education can help them achieve their goals (Jihoo, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Jihoo's statement helped explicate that male students' increased needs for Quality were not only externally imposed by social norms and social

expectations from males, but also these needs were empowered by male intrinsic desires to achieve financial and social status objectives. This explanation was partly related to explanations from participants from other countries including Russia and Brazil. These participants did not think that their societies and cultures had such distinctions between female and male roles. Rather, they attributed differences between the two genders to their different psychology or mindset. Gabriela provided the following explanation:

> […] quality is more important for male students because it is a logic. I mean they think more using logic. And you guys are all about logic. I mean male students use more logic in their choice. Women go more for the emotional side of things (Gabriela, Personal Communication, May 2016).

Similarly, Ekaterina attributed the difference between the two genders on the importance of Quality to the two genders' different mindsets. She provided the following statement:

> […] it is male nature to be more logical. Because women, for example, wear very high-heel shoes and this is not logical to wear and go out with such shoes, but men never do it. It is, I think, the same situation, or perspective on things, because in real life, quality is more important, not how it looks. For men, quality is always more important especially in education. They need to see value and future, like how good this education will be for their job and future work. Yes, actually female students can be less logical in their decision and they will give more

importance to other things and their international education experience in general (Ekaterina, Personal Communication, August 2016).

## Summary and Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the present explanatory sequential mixed methods study. The study investigated factors that affected international students' mobility choices. The first section of this chapter presented the findings from the quantitative study. The sample was described and the weight of importance as per 618 participants' ratings of 52 related observed variables was reported. Next, EFA was employed to reduce the 52 observed variables to a smaller set of factors. The solution advanced consisted of four factors, Quality, Peace, Access, and Affordability. Next, the factor solution was examined for differences between groups of international students characterized by gender, home country region, and level of study. Analysis reported some significant difference between the groups.

The second section of this chapter presented the findings from the qualitative study. The study employed transcendental phenomenological methods, where textural, structural, and structural-textural elements were identified. These constructed six intersecting themes that represented sources of influence that shaped international students' mobility choices. Becoming Somebody and Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar were the textural elements. These were the main objectives international students wanted to achieve from international education, and they were controlled by four broad

source of influence, Quality, Access, Peace, and Affordability.

The third and final section of this chapter presented the mixed methods discussion where qualitative data were used to validate and explain quantitative findings. Quantitative and qualitative data were mixed, while Participants' feedback and explanations of the findings from the quantitative study were presented.

In the light of the findings presented in this chapter, the next chapter, Chapter Five, discusses theoretical and practical implications. The chapter starts with an overview of the study, where findings from the present study are summarized and contextualized within other empirical literature. Next, theoretical implications are put forward, as TPB, PPM and MMM models are discussed, and a combined model based on findings from EFA and transcendental phenomenological analysis is advanced. Then, recommendations for international education leaders are presented. Finally, limitations to the present study are discussed, and directions for future research are suggested.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study used an explanatory sequential mixed method, which investigated the reasons that motivated international students' choices to study in a comprehensive college in southern California. The first section below is an overview of the findings from the present study. It uses the research questions (RQs) to organize its structure, and it discusses and contextualizes the findings within other empirical literature. The second section is dedicated to a discussion of frameworks that were used in previous studies, the TPB, the PPM, and the MMM, in light of the present findings; and it presents and discusses the combined model that is proposed by the present study. Next, implications for practice that can assist international education specialists and higher education leaders in strategic internationalization initiatives, as well as, strategic enrollment management are discussed. The final section below shares the limitations of the present study, and it suggests directions for future research.

## Overview

The investigation of the present study was motivated by the increasing significance of globalization and its associated internationalization of higher education on the one hand (Altbach, 2016), and the inadequate available research into factors affecting international students' mobility on the other (Gong & Huybers, 2015). Influenced by neoliberal socio-economic philosophies,

governments around the world approached higher education as a service in the market (Schuetze, Kuehn, Davidson-Harden & Weber, 2011), particularly with regard to international students' recruitment and enrollment (Alfattal, 2016a). The tuition and other student fees international students paid constituted significant sources of revenues that met schools' aspirations for entrepreneurial undertakings (Naidoo, 2010). Nevertheless, colleges were engaged in competition-reactive activities rather than informed strategic marketing and internationalization planning (Childress, 2009). This could be attributed to the lack of relevant research informing international marketing and enrollment management practices of colleges (Bohman, 2014; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). The present study partially addressed this gap.

As stated in the literature review, a systematic review of the literature identified 19 relevant studies. While there were inconsistencies in the findings across the 19 studies, 11 studies reported quality of education of destination countries, including colleges' reputation of quality, and after graduation work prospects were amongst the most important motives for international students' mobility choices. Other than these, however, there was little agreement in prior research findings. These discrepancies could be ascribed to use of overlapping theoretical models (TPB, PPM, MMM), and/or they were conducted in different contexts/countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, the U.K.). None of those 19 previous studies were conducted at a comprehensive college in the U.S., the context of the present study.

In this study, survey data from 618 international student participants were obtained. These results were triangulated with qualitative results, which employed transcendental phenomenological techniques. In-depth interviews with 11 international student participants invited them to share their stories about their motives to study in a foreign country, as well as, sources of influence that affected their international education country and college destination choices. The following subsections contextualize the present study within the literature, while they report findings relative to the RQs of the study. Qualitative study explanatory RQs (RQ6 and RQ7) are embedded within the discussions of the first five primary RQs.

The Level of Importance of Mobility Variables

The first three RQs sought to investigate the level or degree of importance of choice affecting motives or variables. The first RQ was as follows:

RQ1: What are international students' ratings of the importance of variables that influence their decision to leave their home country and study abroad?

Quantitative results revealed international students were motivated to leave their home countries for international education most strongly by their desires for personal fulfillment (M = 3.90, SD = .97) and rounding of their education (M = 3.83, SD = .99). Findings from the qualitative analysis supported the prominence of personal fulfillment and rounding of education as main motives. Findings explained that international education was a means for

‘Becoming Somebody’, as these students desired to elevate themselves socially and improve their economic conditions on account of international education. Findings of the present study supported Chen and Zimitat (2006) and Gatfield and Chen (2006), who found the decision to leave home country to pursue international education was triggered by students’ attitudes to behavior. In other words, for students, international education had valuable advantages and positive consequences; hence, these students were motivated to leave their home countries for education elsewhere. However, the present study elucidated the most influential aspects of attitudes to behavior were personal fulfillment and its associated socio-economic advances expected as consequences of international education.

International students had to select the country where they would pursue international education. There were several sources of influence that affected country destination choice, addressed in RQ2. .

RQ2: What are international students’ ratings of the importance of variables that influence their decision to select the United States of America as their study destination?

A similar question was investigated by McMahon (1992), who suggested international students came to the U.S. mainly from countries that had ‘weaker’ economies and ‘weaker’ educational systems; consequently, McMahon concluded international students were motivated to select U.S. colleges by the quality of U.S. education and strength of U.S. economy. The present study

intended to update these results since the demography of international students had changed substantially since McMahon's study. While in the 1990s international students mainly came from developing countries, Institute of International Education (2016) reported among the major countries of origin of international students in the U.S. in 2015-2016 academic year were Canada, China, Germany, Japan, and South Korea. These countries were ahead of the U.S. in some aspects of their economy and education. In fact, according to the 2014-2015 Competitiveness Report, Canada ranked 11$^{th}$ and Germany 12$^{th}$ internationally in higher education quality, while the U.S. ranked 27$^{th}$. Furthermore, according to the same report, Japan and South Korea were ahead of the U.S. in math and science education quality.

The present study found international students were no longer strongly attracted to pursue education in the U.S. on the account of U.S. economic power, (M = 3.59, SD = 1.06). This rated seventh amongst the 11 U.S. choice attributes. Nonetheless, despite advances in higher education in international students' countries of origin, findings reconfirmed the prominence of quality as the most important motivation for international students to select the U.S. for education (M = 4.20, SD = 0.94). The status of U.S. degrees and employability ranked as the third and fourth most important reasons effecting destination country choice respectively, (M = 3.92, SD = .94; M = 3.91, SD = .94). Qualitative results explained there was a continued perception that higher education in the U.S. was of the highest quality compared to any other education in the world, and

international students still perceived degrees from the U.S. to be associated with status and elitism. These findings, contradicted Shah and Laino (2006), who suggested that quality of U.S. education was not amongst the important motives that affected international students' destination country choice. Conversely, the present findings supported previous findings on international students' mobility in non-U.S. contexts. For instance, Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010), Mazzarol and Soutar (2002b), Pimpa (2005), and Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor (2005) reported that Australian reputation for higher education quality was the primary trigger for international students to select to study in Australia. Similar findings were reported by Chen (2007), Chen and Zimitat (2006), and Wilkins and Huisman (2011b), in Canada and the U.K.

The second most highly rated motivation to select the U.S. was the opportunity to improve English language skills during international education (M = 4.03, SD = 1.17). This supported Bodycott (2009), Foster (2014), and Perkins and Neumayer (2014), where international students were motivated to select to study in English-speaking foreign countries. Findings from interviews showed that international students perceived English as an important means for accessing science and knowledge, as well as global business and social communications. Furthermore, stories shared by participants revealed international students were aware of other quality options of study abroad destination in countries, such as Germany and Japan, which provided programs taught in English. However, international students were discouraged from those

selections as they indicated English would most improve through non-study-related experiences and interactions in English speaking countries. Additionally, participants indicated studying foreign languages other than English was inconvenient and irrelevant.

The fifth most important reason international students selected the U.S. was the opportunity to experience U.S. culture (M = 3.70, SD = 1.08). In Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002b) study in the Australian context, this ranked as second most influential. Cultural exposure and cultural learning were also found important by Foster (2014) in the U.K. and Massey and Burrow (2012) in Canada. Those studies found international students' attitudes to international education had evolved from limited concepts associated with knowledge gained and degree obtained, to desires associated with international educational experiences, particularly being exposed to different cultures. The present study supported these findings as for the participants, international education meant an opportunity to experience new cultures and experience new ways of life. The decision to pursue international education was motivated by international students' desires to obtain knowledge and skills through classes or within-campus activities in a foreign country, and aspiration to learn from and engage in off-campus and non-study-related experiences. Furthermore, participants reported they were attracted to the U.S. as they were influenced by media-constructed and anecdotal positive impressions about U.S. culture. International students wanted to experience U.S. culture, which they heard about from other

people or watched on TV or the Internet.

Less important country choice attributes were connected to safety related conditions, as well as, the availability of work in the U.S. during study and after graduation. Work in the U.S. after graduation ranked sixth (M = 3.61, SD = 1.14) and work part-time during study ranked ninth (M = 3.30, SD = 1.20). This suggested international students did not perceive availability of work during study opportunities to be as important as quality, culture, and English language. Similarly, country selection consideration such as limited racial problems in the U.S. ranked eighth of 11 country choice variables, (M = 3.39, SD = 1.07); and tolerance of religious beliefs in the U.S. ranked tenth, (M = 3.25, SD = 1.19). This was contrary to Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010), Chen (2007), and Gong and Huybers (2015) in Australian and Canadian contexts. Their participants selected destinations perceived as safe and socially embracing. This discrepancy could be attributed to different contexts since the present study was conducted in a campus in San Bernardino, which could be perceived as a less safe international education destination.

Finally, the least important consideration related to selection of the U.S. was proximity to home country. This was in line with Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) and Wang and Ho (2014), yet contradicted Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor (2005). Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor investigated international students' motivations to select an Australian college located in Perth, Western Australia. The authors found proximity was the most important choice variable, while their

participants came primarily from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, which were countries closer to Western Australia. In contrast, the present study, which was conducted at a college in southern California with international students who had more diverse profiles, suggested international students did not perceive proximity as an important destination country variable.

RQ3: What are international students' ratings of the importance of variables that influence their college choice?

31 college attributes were investigated. The ratings of these variables as perceived by international student participants were illustrated in Table 8 in the previous chapter. Results on the prominence of a college reputation of quality (M = 4.08, SD = 1.00) and ranking (M = 4.05, SD = 1.07), as well as, faculty reputation (M = 3.80, SD = 1.12) and courses within the program (M = 3.80, SD = 1.10), supported Chen (2007), Gong and Huybers (2015), Joseph and Joseph (2000), Lee (2008), Mazzarol and Soutar (2002b), Perkins and Neumayer (2014), Pimpa (2005), and Wang and Ho (2014). Qualitative findings showed that participants consulted rankings to determine college's quality. The participating college was a comprehensive, non-ivy league; consequently, it was not listed within international college rankings such as QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education World University Rankings, or Academic Ranking of World Universities (also known as Shanghai Ranking). Nevertheless, participants' college choice stories suggested rankings influenced choice, although participants were not aware of the rigorous, validated, or reliable

ranking systems. Participants expressed rankings were key in their college choice, even though it was sufficient for them, for example, to Google search and find their prospective college ranked highly somewhere.

After program quality, reputation, and ranking, came considerations relevant to international students' services. These included support to international students and effective communication with staff, which were rated fifth and sixth respectively, (M = 3.78, SD = 1.31; M = 3.69, SD = 1.15). Bodycott (2009) found amongst the most important international students' needs and expectations were social and emotional support, which translated into positive relationships with campus staff and faculty, as well as, engaging on-campus academic and social activities. Connectedly, Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002b) found international students required effective communication with staff and faculty and needed academic and administrative support during their application and admission processes. Present study qualitative findings concurred with Wang and Ho (2014), who suggested international students' college choice was most sensitive during the application process, and they were more likely to select to enroll in colleges with which they had effective application and inquiry communications.

Finally, while a college website was a relatively highly important attribute affecting international students' choices (M = 3.61, SD = 1.20), other college promotional activities had notably low ratings. Printed materials, prospectus and brochures ranked 27$^{th}$ (M = 3.08, SD = 1.20); staff participation in international

fairs ranked 28th, (M = 3.05, SD = 1.41); and online advertisements of programs ranked 29th, (M = 3.00, SD = 1.24). These findings were consistent with prior research studies including Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010) and Lee (2008). International students were more dependent on college websites and the Internet, did not expect to learn about colleges through printed materials, and did not need to participate in international education fairs to learn about college options. Despite international students' stronger dependency on the Internet, participants described they were not strongly influenced by online advertisements of programs which they thought were commercial and triggered their feelings of suspicion about the integrity of colleges. Lastly, the lowest rated college attributes were public transportation to campus and car parking facilities. These ranked 30th and 31st respectively, (M = 2.57, SD = 1.35; M = 2.53, SD = 1.34). These findings were in line with Chen (2007). Participants in the interviews explained that international students typically made their college choices while they were in their home countries, and they did not commonly investigate these attributes.

Key Factors Affecting Choice

The specific RQ that aimed at exploring the key factors that affected international students to leave their home countries, and choose a particular destination country and a particular college for their international education was as follows:

RQ4: What are key factors that influence international students' decision to leave home country, select the United States of America, and choose their particular college?

Findings from EFA that employed Principal Axis Factoring suggested a four-factor solution that recaptured over 31% of the variance and had 19 observed variables that loaded on the solution. The factors were named Quality, Affordability, Peace, and Access (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Key Factors Affecting Study Abroad Choices

Definitions of the four factor domains were based on the observed items which loaded on those factors, as well as, insights and explanations provided in

the qualitative study. Quality was the degree of excellence and distinctiveness of education and degrees. Quality was constructed primarily through college reputation, brand, and recognition, as well as, the overall country reputation for quality higher education. Choices of Quality were connected to international students' abilities to achieve their 'Becoming Somebody' goals, including status attainment and socio-economic elevation. Affordability, nonetheless, meant the extent to which costs associated with international education were in comparison to how much international students were able to pay, as well as, in comparison to costs in other international education countries and college destination options. Affordability comprised tuition fees, costs of living around campus, availability of financial aid options, and flexibility of payment. International students evaluated Affordability in comparison to Quality, which established concepts related to value for money, although international students were more induced to prioritize quality international education options rather than affordable ones.

The third factor domain found was Peace, which was defined as international students' desire to have physically safe and socially embracing experiences during their international education. Peace related to limited racial problems in destination countries and colleges, as well as tolerance of religious beliefs; and it was supported by the presence of other people on and around campus who had similar cultural, ethnic, linguistic, national, racial, religious, and/or sexual orientation backgrounds. International students needed peaceful experiences and support from people with similar backgrounds, although these

students also sought to derive feelings of change and adventure from their international education.

Finally, eight observed variables loaded on the Access factor. Structural descriptions from the qualitative data helped reveal that this factor domain could be understood in terms of two sub-elements: Access Prospect and Access What. Access Prospect was defined as attributes that made international students able or eligible to study in their desired destination country, college, and program. Access Prospect included parental support or encouragement, visa processing and likelihood, colleges and programs admission requirements, availability of suitable program or study start dates, and support in application and admission through meeting with college staff during international education fairs. Access What were immediate benefits international students considered in relationship to their specific where-to-go choices. These included whether programs in international destinations and colleges were distinct from programs available in international students' home countries. They also comprised accessing English language improvement and networking with U.S. students and other international people during international education experiences in general and through campus activities in particular. Access What entailed additional aspects relevant to campus facilities and campus location in relationship to how it was accessible to out-of-campus life and activities.

Three previous studies attempted data reduction techniques to explore key factors affecting international education choices (see Gatfield & Chen (2006),

Shah & Laino (2006), and Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman (2012)). These previous studies, as well as the present one, found different factor solutions. In comparison with Gatfield and Chen's (2006) model, the present solution did not group observed variables into perceived value motives (attitudes to behavior), status attainment motives (subjective norms), and perceived ability attributes (behavioral control). Items relevant to perceived value were distributed amongst Quality, Affordability, and Access domains. Status attainment items were within Quality and Access factor domains; and behavioral control items were within Access. In comparison to Shah and Laino's (2006) five-dimension solution, broadly, Assurance and Reliability related to Quality in the present study, Empathy to Peace, Responsiveness to Access Prospect, Tangibles to Access What, with Affordability as a distinct factor domain in the present study. Finally, in comparison with Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman (2012), items within Convince in their model were within Access, Affordability, and Peace in the present solution. Country Attractions were within Quality and Access. Quality/employability was largely similar to Quality factor domain in the present study except for transportation to campus and networking with other students as these grouped with Access here.

Degree of Importance of Key Factors for Different Groups

The present study included between group comparisons to investigate differences in the degree of importance of choice affecting factors. The specific RQ that guided this part of the investigation was as follows:

RQ5: Does the degree of importance of choice factors extracted in RQ4 differ across groups categorized by (1) gender, (2) home country region, and (3) level of study?

Differences on the strength of motivators or factors between groups of international students categorized by level of study was investigated previously by Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman (2012). They found no differences between undergraduate and graduate students on their three choice factors, Convince, Country Attractions, and Quality/employability. However, the present study found some differences between the three groups studied: non-degree students, undergraduate students, and graduate students. Consideration of Access was more important to non-degree students compared to undergraduate ($p \leq .00$) and graduate students ($p \leq .00$), (Non-Degree: M = 3.61, SD = .58; Undergraduate: M = 2.94, SD = .72; Graduate 2.85, SD = .61). Affordability was more important to undergraduate students compared to non-degree ($p \leq .00$) and graduate students ($p \leq .00$), (Non-Degree: M = 3.21, SD = 1.00; Undergraduate: M = 3.57, SD = .78; Graduate 3.11, SD = .79). Insights provided by the qualitative data helped find non-degree students typically studied pathway programs that helped them access degree programs; hence, items within Access (such as improving English language for admission to degree programs) were more important for these students. As for Affordability, undergraduates were more sensitive to costs as their programs lasted longer and required more funds. Peace was more important to undergraduate ($p \leq .00$) and graduate ($p \leq 0.03$)

students compared to non-degree students (Non-Degree: M = 3.16, SD = .86; Undergraduate: M = 3.46, SD = .81; Graduate 3.37, SD = .70). Participants' responses in the qualitative phase of the study helped clarify that non-degree programs were normally shorter than degree programs. Consequently, non-degree students accepted more risk, as they perceived their non-degree international education as a transitory stage. After their non-degree study, they could reevaluate their choices and potentially transfer to other colleges for their longer study duration for their degree programs. Furthermore, participants suggested graduate students commonly had accompanying dependents; thus, they perceived Peace to be of higher importance, as they needed to place their dependents in safe environments.

Concerning comparisons between students from different home country origins, findings partly supported those of previous studies. Similar to Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor (2005) and Wilkins and Huisman (2011b), attributes relevant to Access were more important to Asian students compared to Middle Eastern students (Asian: M = 3.23, SD = .65; Middle East: M = 3.04, SD = .79; $p \leq .00$). Nonetheless, the present study found that Affordability was more important to Other Regions students compared to Asian students (Asian: M = 3.39, SD = .78; Other Regions: M = 3.85, SD =.75; $p \leq .00$) and Middle Eastern students, (Middle East: M = 3.07, SD = 1.01; $p \leq .00$). Furthermore, while Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor (2005) advanced that safety was most important for Asians, it was found here to be most important for Middle Eastern students compared to Asian

students (Asian: M = 3.16, SD = .83; Middle East: M = 3.58, SD = .77; $p \leq .00$), as well as, Other Regions students (Other Regions: M = 3.24, SD =.87; $p \leq .00$). It is worthy of mentioning that data in the present study were collected during what was described as the 'Arab Spring', and it coincided around and shortly after the December 2nd San Bernardino shooting incident, where 14 people were killed by two people associated with Muslim extremism. Qualitative data expounded that the higher importance of Peace as perceived by students from the Middle East, was due to these students' feelings that they could be victims of hate crimes if they chose country destinations and colleges that were intolerant of Muslim and Middle Eastern backgrounds.

Finally, with regard to gender categories, out of the four factor domains, only Quality was more important to male international students (Female: M = 3.89, SD = .67; Male: M = 4.01, SD = .91; $p \leq 0.03$). Compared to females, male students significantly placed more importance on Quality as they selected their destination countries and colleges. Although this contradicted with previous findings by Wilkins and Huisman (2011b), statements by participants supported the present conclusions. Participants' responses suggested that female and male international students had different priorities due to cultural and psychological reasons. International students commonly came from cultures where males had to provide for their families. Participants explained that Quality was more important for male students since quality education and quality degrees were means for better career prospective and opportunities. International students

from Western cultures (or societies that were more equalitarian) described psychological distinctions across genders. They reported male students were more ‘rational’ decision makers, while they had stronger intrinsic desires to achieve financial and social status objectives. They were more likely to prioritize Quality international education, which was perceived to be the means for such objectives. Rational versus emotional decision-making were discussed in economic and behavioral theories and are elaborated on in the Theoretical Implications section below.

## Theoretical Implications

As discussed in some detail in Chapter Two above, although PPM derived most of its rudiments from status attainment theory, and although TPB and MMM were principally built on economic philosophies, all three frameworks were described as combined models. The models incorporated aspects relevant to rational thinking and decision-making, while acknowledging and integrating variables relative to social dynamism in shaping behaviors and decisions. These variables accounted for how social expectations shaped human actions and reactions. Similar to how TPB, PPM, and MMM attempted to comprehensively account for the phenomena associated with study abroad choice by combining econometric and status attainment models, the present study explored if constructs described in TPB, PPM, and MMM could be incorporated into a single more inclusive model.

Findings suggested a model that consisted of two layers. The first layer,

Essence, comprised of the principal motives that triggered desires to pursue international education, Becoming Somebody and Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar. The second layer, Controllers, was formed of four domains that qualified choice decisions: Quality, Affordability, Peace, and Access. These are illustrated in Figure 9 below.

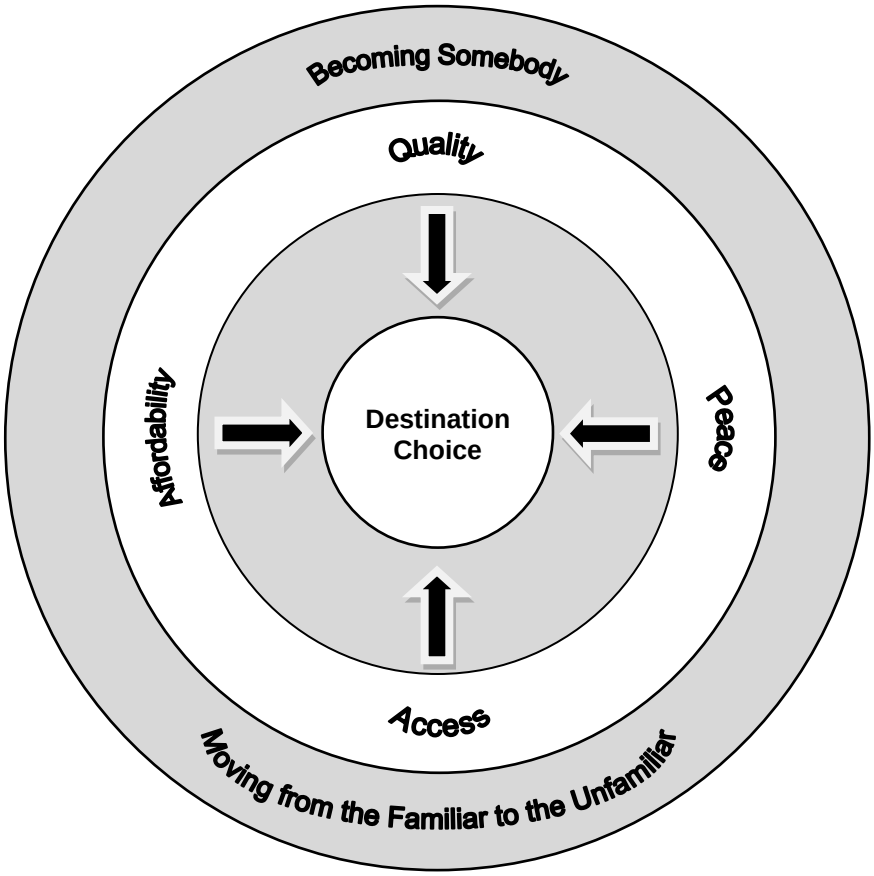


Figure 9. Essence-Controllers Choice Model

Essence was an amalgamation of intrinsic and extrinsic motives which

initiated international education desires including leaving home and home country for education elsewhere. These desires were classified in two categories that conjointly or singly drove decisions. The first category, Becoming Somebody, was partly similar to Gatfield and Chen's (2006) attitudes towards behavior, as it incorporated students' aspirations to achieve economic and/or social progresses. However, the present hypnotized model suggested that although decision makers, international students, perceived their progress desires as intrinsic motivations or matters of self-fulfillment, these desires, in fact, were formulated through interactions with social and economic contexts. In other words, international students' statements showed that aspirations of Becoming Somebody were imposed by the social and the economic settings in which they were formed. Consequently, success in achieving such aspirations were dependent on and defined by the contexts to which they belonged. For example, international students became somebody successful, important, rich, educated, or wise in comparison to others and/or in the eyes of others, as well as, in relationship to social, including family, expectations. Hence, Becoming Somebody element combined choice affecting forces described in two TPB domains, attitudes towards behavior and subjective norms (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). Furthermore, in some cases, this element additionally incorporated a socially and economically independent facet represented by international students' inclinations to pursue education for the love of learning and knowledge. This motive drove students to pursue education in foreign countries if relevant

access to such education was not available at home countries. In such cases, international students endeavored to become somebody in their own eyes. Thus, Becoming Somebody element of the Essence did not fit TPB, or even Chen's (2007) PPM and Kotler and Fox's (1995) MMM. It dictated pull-and-push intrinsic and extrinsic forces relative to home and destination countries and colleges conditions and associated opportunities.

As suggested by the qualitative findings, the second category or element of the Essence, Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar, was more intrinsic or more innermost in nature in the sense that it constituted drives that were not associated with fulfilling social expectations or status attainment. International students were pushed from their home countries, as they aspired to experience new lives and/or be exposed to different social, environmental, educational, and cultural elements of life. Dependent on international students' home country cultures and experiences, these students were able to, for instance, experiment themselves while they had more personal freedom, and while they and their actions, interactions, and behaviors were delimited and demarcated by different relational and socio-cultural compulsions. Having in mind that international students could come from societies, cultures, educations, and localities that were particularly similar or widely dissimilar to those of host countries, Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar was a matter of gradation rather than absoluteness, let alone it was dependent on students' attitudes and preferences, as discussed in Controller domains below. Hence, an aspect that influenced international

students' study abroad choices in the present hypothesized model was the degree to which those choices involved moving to familiar/unfamiliar contexts. This element related partly to Kotler and Fox's (1995) People and Place mixes, where culture in study destinations and other students' backgrounds were suggested to influence choice. In comparison to the other two models, while Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar could be viewed as a component of TPB's attitude to behavior, it did not fit PPM dimensions since it comprised push and pull forces at the same time.

Participants' choice stories showed that Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar, as well as Becoming Somebody, motives did not operate independently. These were qualified by, and partially in intersection with, international students' perceptions that were constructed by information gathered and experiences lived in relationship to destination country and college options. Four broad Controllers were identified: Quality, Affordability, Peace, and Access. Participants reported that these Controllers functioned after the Essence was established, and they directed and redirected choice as per students' actual and/or perceived needs, desires, aspirations, expectations, attitudes, personal preferences, and/or capabilities. In this sense, Controllers in the present hypothesized model had a role similar to that of Ajzen and Fishbein's (1975) perceived behavioral control. A substantial difference, however, is that Controllers extended beyond self-perception of capabilities to include externally imposed requirements.

Although all Controller and Essence elements seemed to frequently operate together to shape choice decisions, the actuality of all elements at the same time was not certain. For instance, it was possible that students made international education destination choices without Peace or Affordability considerations. Furthermore, the strengths of the different elements in affecting choices were context dependent. Context here meant aspects such as international students' gender, country of origin, and desired program.

To summarize, in comparison to the previous models, the six domains or elements in the present model represented destination countries' and colleges' push and pull forces, where Becoming Somebody mainly incorporated TPB's attitudes to behavior and subjective norms. Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar could be approached as a constituent of attitudes to behavior, although it was not defined as such in previous models. Finally, TPB's perceived behavioral control and MMM's components were chiefly properties of Quality, Access, Peace, and Affordability.

## Implications for International Education Leaders

Many colleges have the objective of transforming lives through education as one of their primary missions. Support to the importance of concepts relevant to transformation was lent by findings from the present study. An essential desire that triggered international students' mobility was relevant to these students' aspirations to Become Somebody by elevating their socio-economic status. In fact, the most important finding of the present study was that international

marketing for higher education was mainly an academic function rather than a commercial or a promotional one. College reputation of quality, college ranking, courses within programs, and reputation of faculty were found to be the most important attributes that attracted international students. These findings together with other ones from the present study informed two related areas, namely internationalization strategy and strategic international enrollment management. These implications are discussed below in relationship to the college in southern California where the present study was conducted, although similar colleges would also find helpful insights in these implications.

At the time the present inquiry was conducted, California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) did not have an internationalization strategy. The campus operated while it drew on two broader strategy guidelines (i.e., CSUSB strategic plan 2015-2020 and the College of Extended Learning (CEL) strategic plan 2012-2017). The latter plan set growth and diversification goals, as it aspired to increase the number of international students in its international extension programs (e.g., international pathway programs), as well as, increase the number of countries of origin from where these students came. The CSUSB strategic plan incorporated an assertion of the campus desire to internationalization itself. CSUSB's mission statement indicated one campus objective was to provide education that would help students and other campus constituents to be able 'to thrive in and contribute to a globally connected society'. Nevertheless, the CSUSB strategic plan did not have associated goals

and objectives, which would help detail how global competencies were to be delivered by means of actionable tactics or activities.

Findings suggested courses within programs was an important attribute that shaped international students' college choice, and that international students evaluated the relevance of curricula in college options and compared knowledge and skills learned in courses to their needs and contexts. These suggested that internationalization efforts within curriculum development would positively affect the recruitment of international students. Hence, while CSUSB invests in further internationalization of its curricula, it, at the same time, will be able to attract bigger numbers of international students to its programs. Hence, a CSUSB internationalization strategy should include curriculum objectives to support its enrollment objectives.

International student recruitment must be orchestrated by a strategic international enrollment management plan that could derive much of its insights from the findings from the present study. This strategy should have at least four broad goals: (1) Quality, (2) Affordability, (3) Peace, and (4) Access. Findings informed comprehensive colleges that Quality was the most influential factor domain that affected international students' choice, followed by Affordability, then Peace, and finally Access. It is recommended more emphasis must be directed at Quality. A college must brand itself as a high quality, rigorous one without being stressful, since many international students are deterred from higher education in their home countries, which they perceive as taxingly exam-focused

without delivering applicable skills or valuable degrees. Hence, colleges can attract more international students by communicating their current teaching and assessment methods, which must not be solely focused on students' performance in final exams. A college must communicate how its approach to teaching and learning supports students to attain the knowledge and the skills for which students aspire.

Detailed insights on the importance of the 52 variables that affected international students' choices were provided in the previous chapter. Using these, decision makers should assess opportunities in relationship to costs associated with investments in those variables. For instance, support to international students and effective communication with staff ranked relatively high. Hence, depending on budgets and the overall direction of the college, decision makers would find investment in these two variables, i.e. providing relevant communication, support, and services to international students, more feasible than engaging in program quality enhancement relevant to improving campus ranking and hiring internationally reputable faculty.

In this study, there were three college choice variables that could be regarded as less likely to be controllable by the comprehensive college where the study was conducted, since it did not have plans to open additional campuses. These were weather in the campus location, affordability of living costs around campus, and campus location. Information about such variables, however, informed the content of communication messages that the college needs to

employ to speak to its prospective students. For instance, good weather and affordability of living costs in the area around campus ranked relatively high, which suggested that messages about such variables were likely to influence international students' choices. Thus, a comprehensive college would benefit from referring to these variables, while the college was communicating, for example, with hesitant applicants who were considering other college options located in less moderate climates and/or more expensive areas to live.

Actually, findings from the present study informs the engineering of communication messages that would be relevant to different stages of international students' study abroad decision-making, as well as, relevant to different contexts where such messages were communicated. In situations where a college would communicate with international students who had not made the decision to study abroad yet, e.g. high school international students in target international markets, the college could mainly emphasize massages relevant to international education as means for personal fulfillment, rounding of education, and networking with internationals. In addition, a college can encourage students by communicating messages relevant to how study at the college would help fulfill socio-economic elevation desires. For instance, while international students were influenced to follow role models, colleges would benefit from sharing testimonials and stories about their international alumni who, as a result of education at those colleges, achieved distinguished successes.

Not only could colleges motivate prospective students' decisions to study

abroad, but also it could encourage these students to select the U.S. as their country destination. In fact, most major international education student fairs, e.g. CEE China Education Expo and IECHE Saudi Arabia, had colleges from all over the world represented. In such highly competitive contexts, a U.S. college should distinguish itself as a college in an English speaking country. In competing with other colleges from English speaking countries, U.S. colleges will mainly benefit from highlighting notions relevant to the quality of U.S. higher education, high status of U.S. degrees, and employability as a U.S. graduate.

The findings for the present study could also inform the design, the content, and the structure of colleges' website and promotional materials. These could be created in a way that speak to international students about colleges in some or all of the six decision-influencing elements/domains illustrated in the hypothesized model above. Furthermore, notions related to some elements can be put forward jointly. For instance, a college can attract international students by communicating ideas related to feelings of adventure and change derived from international education experiences (Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar), while, at the same time, the college shares with prospective students that the college provides a safe environment to experience such adventures (Peace). Not only can colleges communicate their safety ranking, but also they can share information about the background of their international students, as well as, on-campus (or campus managed) student engagement and socialization activities and opportunities.

Moving to implications from between group comparisons, international student diversification could help colleges achieve two objectives. The first is pertinent to matching recruitment efforts to campus capacities for different program levels (non-degree, undergraduate, and graduate), and the second is relevant to augmenting college classes with varied international perspectives offered by international students from different genders and different regions around the world. Concerning capacities, comprehensive colleges would be able to increase their non-degree international students more than degree seeking students if colleges focused their investment on variables related to access. Conversely, further investment in campus safety and peaceable educational experiences would increase degree seeking international student enrollment numbers rather than non-degree seeking ones. Affordability was most important for undergraduate students compared to graduate and non-degree seeking students. These students' programs were longer and required more funds to cover tuition and living expenses over four or more years. For increasing the number of undergraduate international students, colleges should invest in making tuition fees more affordable, while providing some sort of flexibility in payment and financial aid. Also, investment in affordable campus-managed housing will help attract these students.

As for diverse international perspectives, further investment in quality of education related variables at colleges would attract more male student enrollments rather than female ones. Quality, nevertheless, was important to all

international students from different regions around the world with affordability and access being more likely to attract students from Asian countries and safety and peace being more likely to attract students from the Middle East.

The main recommendations for education leaders from the present study are listed below:

- Focus on quality of education
- Internationalize the curriculum
- Improve communication with prospective students during application
- Support international students with services and communicate these support programs
- Highlight distinguished international alumni
- In addition to communicating notions relative to quality, affordability, peace, and access in the college website and other marketing materials, express how, because of education in the campus, students will have opportunities to improve their socio-economic status and live exciting experiences different from home
- Attract non-degree students by improving Access and undergraduate students by Affordability
- Attract Asian students by improving Affordability and Middle Eastern students by Peace

To conclude the implications for practice section, findings from the present inquiry provided recommendations for internationalization strategy and strategic international enrollment management. It was recommended that if a college invested more in the internationalization of its curricula, not only could it provide internationally functional education, but also the college could simultaneously improve its potential to attract more international applicants and enrollments. International marketing for higher education was mostly a property of academic affairs rather than a promotion endeavor, as it was found that international students' mobility and destination choices were more strongly triggered by quality of education in destination country and college options. In addition to quality, and although less influential, three other factor domains were identified, namely affordability, peace, and access. These, as well as quality, could be broad goals that would guide a strategic international enrollment plan that incorporates growth and diversification objectives. For detailed actions and activities relevant to growth objectives, the present quantitative findings reported on the degree of importance of 52 variables that affected choice. These together with notions derived from the qualitative findings informed what areas colleges should invest in so as to attract higher volumes of international students most cost effectively. Findings also helped recommend different messages that were more likely to attract different types of international student populations to achieve international students' diversification objectives.

## Limitations and Directions for Future Research

A limitation of the present study was relevant to the fact that the theoretical implications were by no means conclusive, and the combined model advanced in the present study could best be viewed as a first stage exploration for future research that could collect data from a number of contexts including different types of colleges within and beyond the U.S. In fact, it is suggested that such multi-context future research into factors that influence international students' mobility decisions is done, while it employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques, with the purpose of (dis)confirming the model advanced in the present study. In addition to examining the generalizability of the factor domains, such future research could test whether there was a moderating relationship between the Controller domains (Quality, Affordability, Peace, and Access) and the Essence domains (Becoming Somebody and Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar) that were inferred from the qualitative findings, and that were built into the new combined model suggested. In fact, the present study could have randomly divided its sample into two, one could have been used for an EFA and the other could have been used for an SEM confirmatory factor analysis. However, for practical reasons, this design was not employed in this dissertation.

Another source of limitation in the present study is relevant to the percentage of variance (31.72%) that was recaptured by the four-factor solution that was advanced by the EFA results, since the solution could entertain higher

goodness of fit if it could recapture more variance. In fact, additional tests on the data showed that when a specific group of the international student population sample, namely non-degree seeking students, was excluded from the analysis, recaptured variance notably increased. Such data exclusion and comparisons, however, were not pursued in the present study. These were saved for future investigations that could test different factor models that could be better fits for degree seeking students v. non-degree seeking students.

## Conclusion

This chapter presented the conclusions and recommendations of the study reported in this dissertation. The study was an explanatory sequential mixed methods one that consisted of a quantitative first phase and a qualitative second phase. The quantitative phase investigated the weight of importance of variables and key factors that affected international students' mobility decisions. Three pertinent questions were answered, as to the ranking of variables relevant to leaving home country, variables for selecting the U.S., and variables that influenced these students' specific college choices. The three most influential leaving home variables were personal fulfilment, rounding of education, and networking with internationals. The three most influential selecting the U.S. variables were quality of U.S. higher education, improving English, and high status of U.S. degrees. Lastly, the most influential college choice variables found in the context of the present study were campus reputation of quality, campus ranking, and courses within the program.

In addition to investigating the weight of importance of choice variables, EFA procedures were employed to identify key factors that affected choice. A four-factor solution was advanced, and it was constructed as Quality, Affordability, Peace, and Access. The degree of importance of these factors as perceived by different international student populations was compared using MANOVA techniques. It was found that male students were more likely to be attracted by notions related to educational quality, non-degree seeking students were more likely to be attracted to destinations of more access, and degree seeking students were likely to be influenced to select safe or peaceable destinations. Comparisons of international students as per the regions of their countries of origin showed that Asian students had increased requirements for affordability and access, while Middle Eastern students needed more peace in their selected countries and colleges.

The first phase quantitative study was followed by a qualitative one where a triangulation of data was achieved, and explanations of quantitative findings were provided. Quantitative findings supported the four factor domains advanced in EFA, yet they added two broader essence domains that helped explain motives that triggered international student mobility from home countries and to specific study destinations. These were termed Becoming Somebody and Moving from the Familiar to the Unfamiliar elements and they represented the Essence of choice that was hypothesized to be moderated by the four Controller factor domains, namely Quality, Affordability, Peace, and Access. This was the

international student mobility choice combined model that was advanced in the present study. This model built on, and it was derived from, three earlier econometric and status attainment combined models, namely TPB, PPM, and MMM.

Implications of the present study for practice illustrated what could be relevant internationalization strategies and strategic international enrollment activities in which the college where the study was conducted should engage. It was advanced that success in the international higher education market could mainly be achieved by education quality enhancement and related reputation, branding, ranking, and program profile building. Furthermore, recruitment activities could engage in communicating messages with different contents targeted at the different needs and aspirations of the different groups of prospective international students.

Finally, limitations of the present study were shared and directions for future research were recommended. For the purpose of the investigation in the present study, it was accepted that an EFA solution that recaptured more the 30% of the variance was a good fit. Future research could attempt to set 50% or 70% as its criteria, while it tests two separate factor solutions, one for non-degree seeking students and one for degree seeking ones. Also, future research could employ SEM to (dis)confirm the Essence-Controller model advanced in the present study, as well as, to statistically investigate if there was a moderating relationship(s) between the Controller and the Essence elements of the new

conceptual model that was proposed in this study.

# APPENDIX A

# QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUMENT

[The following instrument is an amalgamation and expansion of previous instruments by Ivy (2008, 2010)]
If you are willing to participate in a follow up face-to-face interview with the researcher, please provide your email address:

_____

1. **How old are you?** ……
2. **What is your gender?** ……
3. **Please indicate from the list below the type of program you are studying in now.**
   English language program ☐ Study Abroad Program ☐
   Undergraduate Program ☐ Other Program (please specify) ……..
   Graduate Program ☐
4. **How are you funding your study? Mark all that apply.**
   Family support ☐ Scholarship from my home country ☐
   Personal savings ☐ Other (please specify) ……..
5. **Where are you from?**
   Saudi Arabia ☐ Japan ☐ Mexico ☐
   China ☐ Vietnam ☐ Germany ☐
   Other (please specify) …….
6. **Is your program at this campus your first international education experience?**
   Yes ☐ No ☐
7. **Did you apply to more than one campus before you decided at which campus you would enroll?**
   Yes ☐ No ☐
8. **Were you accepted at more than one campus abroad? Please state how many.**
   Yes ☐ No ☐ How many? ……..
9. **Did you compare different campuses before you decided at which campus you would enroll?**
   Yes ☐ No ☐
10. **Has any of your family had an international education experience in the past?**
    Yes ☐ No ☐
11. **Has one or more of the following influenced your study destination choice? Mark all that apply.**
    Family ☐ Education agent ☐
    Friends ☐ Academic advisor ☐
    Other (please specify) ……..
12. **If you could attend any university in any country you wanted (with no limits imposed by family, academic requirements, visas, costs or location), which country would be your first choice?**
    Home Country ☐ The United Kingdom ☐
    Australia ☐ The United States of America ☐
    Canada ☐ Other (please specify) ……..
13. **Your Decision to Study Abroad:** Where 1 is "very unimportant", 2 is "unimportant", 3 is "neither unimportant nor important", 4 is "important", and 5 is "very important", please indicate your belief on the following items.

| | Item | *Please indicate how important each of the following items were in your decision to study abroad. Please leave items that do not apply blank.* | Very Important | Important | Neither | Unimportant | Very Unimportant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Why Study Abroad? | 1 | Rounding of educational experiences through international study | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 2 | Studying a program abroad that does not exist at home country colleges | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 3 | Difficulty of being accepted in a good program in home country | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 4 | Personal fulfilment by studying in a foreign country | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 5 | Emigration after completion of my international education | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 6 | Making connections with people from around the world | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 7 | Being away from home | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 8 | Parents' encouragement to study abroad | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 9 | Not wanting to feel left alone as friends travel for study abroad | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 10 | Availability of scholarships offered by a home institution to study | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**14. Factors that influenced your choice to study in America and you decision to select CSUSB:** Where 1 is "very unimportant", 2 is "unimportant", 3 is "neither unimportant nor important", 4 is "important", and 5 is "very important", please indicate your belief on the following items.

| | Item | *Please indicate how important each of the following items were in your selection of the country you have chosen and the campus in which you have enrolled. Please leave items that do not apply blank.* | Very Important | Important | Neither | Unimportant | Very Unimportant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Why America? | 1 | Employability prospects as a graduate from an American program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 2 | The economic power of America | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 3 | Experiencing American culture | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 4 | The quality of American higher education | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 5 | Limited racial problems that would concern me in America | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 6 | Opportunities to get part-time work while in the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 7 | Tolerance of my religious beliefs in America | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 8 | Proximity to home country | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 9 | The high status of a degree from America | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 10 | Improving English language | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 11 | Work in America possibility after graduation | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Why this Campus? | 12 | Campus Internet website | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 13 | CSUSB overall reputation of quality | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 14 | Quick processing of my application to the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 15 | Ease of being accepted for a program at CSUSB | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 16 | International to domestic student ratio at CSUSB | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 17 | TOEFL waiver option at CSUSB | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 18 | The presence of people of similar background to me at CSUSB | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 19 | CSUSB ranking | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 20 | CSUSB location | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 21 | CSUSB study facilities | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 22 | CSUSB recreational facilities | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 23 | The courses within CSUSB program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 24 | Car parking facilities | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 25 | The social life at CSUSB | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 26 | Access to CSUSB via public transportation | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 27 | Study conductive environment | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 28 | CSUSB staff participation in international education fairs | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 29 | The ethnic diversity at CSUSB | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 30 | The physical appearance of the campus | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 31 | Campus support for international students | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 32 | CSUSB accommodation facilities | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 33 | Effective communication with CSUSB staff | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 34 | Affordability of fees | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 35 | The weather in California | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 36 | The cost of living around CSUSB | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 37 | The reputation of the campus faculty | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 38 | Online advertisements of CSUSB programs | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 39 | CSUSB safety | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 40 | Campus and program prospectus/brochure | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 41 | The flexibility of payment arrangements of tuition fees | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 42 | Financial aid availability | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

# APPENDIX B

# INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(The following was developed by the author of this dissertations.)

A. Establish Rapport with Subject (5 minutes)

1. Greet and break ice!
2. Make sure the subject is fine with time and location.
3. Explain to the subject the interview procedure and have the informed consent singed.
4. Ask to start recording.

B. Interview Questions (20 minutes)

*What is experienced*

1. What is it like to choose a college campus for study abroad?

*How students experienced their choice*

2. How did you make your decision to come to this campus?
3. To how many campuses did you apply? And how many of those campuses accepted your application?
4. How did you compare campuses?
5. What information did you look for?
6. Did you evaluate and compare campuses in general or the particular programs within the campuses, and why?
7. Where did you get your information from?
8. How do you make sense of the findings of the questionnaire that proceeded this interview?

*How comprehensive was the questionnaire instrument*

9. Have there been any other reasons that influenced your choice other than the ones discussed in the questionnaire?
10. Do you want to tell me anything else about your choice of this campus experience?

C. Conclude the Interview (2 to 5 minutes)

Stop the recording, thank the subject and tell them that you will have a second meeting with them in a week time to share the transcript and do a member's check for validity.

# APPENDIX C

# INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

College of Education
*Office of the Dean*

California State University, San Bernardino
Institutional Review Board Committee
APPROVED 10/29/15 VOID AFTER 10/28/16
IRB# 15015 CHAIR [illegible]

# Informed Consent: Interviews

This 30-minute interview is for the purpose of collecting data on why international students choose a particular campus as their study abroad destination. It follows a previous phase in which questionnaire data was collected and attempts to validate and explain the findings. The study is conducted by Eyad Alfattal, graduate student graduate student in the CSUSB Ed.D program, and supervised by Dr. Jay Fiene, Education Administration Department. Participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you can opt out at any time during the interview. You may choose not to answer one or more questions. In addition, information you will give will be transcribed and shared with you for your approval before it is incorporated into the text of the study. You will be able to withdraw any of your responses within one week after the transcripts are shared with you. The research has been approved by CSUSB IRB.

All of your responses will be confidential. This consent form and the voice recording files will be placed in a locked drawer at the researcher's home. One copy of this consent form is for you to keep for your records. The paper(s) to be written will report on your age, gender, program of study, and perceptions of factors that affected your college choice; however, the researcher will use pseudonyms and will not reveal your identity. If you have questions or require further information, contact the researcher at ealfattal@csusb.edu.

By signing below, I confirm that I have been informed of the study and understand its purpose and nature. I confirm that I am at least 18 years old, and I freely give my consent to participate and be recorded.

I understand that the interview is being recorded. (Please check the box.) ☐

Signature: _____ Date: _____

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

College of Education
*Office of the Dean*

## Informed Consent: Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been designed to collect data on key factors that influence your choice of the American campus at which you study. Filling in this questionnaire will take about 10 to 15 minutes. The questionnaire is anonymous, and no attempt will be made to associate you specifically with any answers given in the survey. This consent form together with your responses will be placed in a locked drawer at the researcher's home. One copy of this consent form is for you to keep for your records. The paper(s) to be written on the data will report on your age, gender, program of study, and perceptions of factors that affected your college choice; however, the report will not reveal your identity. The research has been approved by CSUSB Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The study is conducted by Eyad Alfattal, graduate student in the CSUSB Ed.D program, and supervised by Dr. Jay Fiene, Education Administration Department. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you can opt out at any time. You may choose not to answer one or more questions. Please leave blank any item that you do not understand. I would be most grateful if you would spend some time on answering the questions. The questions merely measure your opinion, which cannot be considered wrong.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, you can provide your email address if you choose to participate in a follow up fact-to-face interview with the researcher. The researcher may contact you to set a 30-minute interview at a later time. If you have questions or need additional information, contact the researcher at ealfattal@csusb.edu.

By signing below, I confirm that I have been informed of the study and understand its purpose and nature. I confirm that I am at least 18 years old, and I freely give my consent to participate.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

California State University, San Bernardino
Institutional Review Board Committee
APPROVED 10/29/15 VOID AFTER 10/28/16
IRB# 15015 CHAIR _____

909.537.5600 • fax: 909.537.7011
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

The California State University • Bakersfield • Channel Islands • Chico • Dominguez Hills • East Bay • Fresno • Fullerton • Humboldt • Long Beach • Los Angeles
Maritime Academy • Monterey Bay • Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • San Bernardino • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus

# APPENDIX D

# INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

Academic Affairs
*Office of Academic Research • Institutional Review Board*

3 November 2015

Mr. Eyad Alfattal and Dean Jay Fiene
Department of Education Leadership and Education Administration
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

**CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**
Expedited Review
IRB# 15015
Status
**APPROVED**

Dear Mr. Alfattal and Dean Fiene:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Globalization, Internationalization, and Marketing Higher Education: Factors Affecting International Students; College Choice" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The attached informed consent document has been stamped and signed by the IRB chairperson. All subsequent copies used must be this officially approved version. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. **Your application is approved for one year from October 29, 2015 through October 28, 2016. One month prior to the approval end date you need to file for a renewal if you have not completed your research. See additional requirements (Items 1 – 4) of your approval below.**

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

1) **Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,**
2) **If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,**
3) **To apply for renewal and continuing review of your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,**
4) **When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.**

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

*Judy Sylva*

Judy Sylva, Ph.D., Chair
Institutional Review Board

JS/MG

909.537.7588 • fax: 909.537.7028 • http://irb.csusb.edu/
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

The California State University • Bakersfield • Channel Islands • Chico • Dominguez Hills • East Bay • Fresno • Fullerton • Humboldt • Long Beach • Los Angeles
Maritime Academy • Monterey Bay • Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • San Bernardino • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus

# APPENDIX E

# CONSENT TO USE THE INSTRUMENT

**From:** Ivy, Jonathan
**Sent:** Thursday, September 17, 2015 8:50 AM
**To:** Eyad Alfattal
**Subject:** Re: Hi from California
**Importance:** High

Dear Eyad,

Apologies for the delay in replying to this email. I have been aboard.

I have had a look at the instrument you have sent me and totally comfortable with you using the sections of my instrument in your questionnaire.

I wish you all the very best of luck in your research.

Best wishes,
Jonathan

**Dr Jonathan Ivy**
Senior Teaching Fellow
Management Development Division,
Lancaster University Management School, room number 89,
Lancaster, LA1 4YX | T: +44 (0)1524 593877
Adobe: https://lancasteruni.adobeconnect.com/r53167651/

Lancaster University
MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

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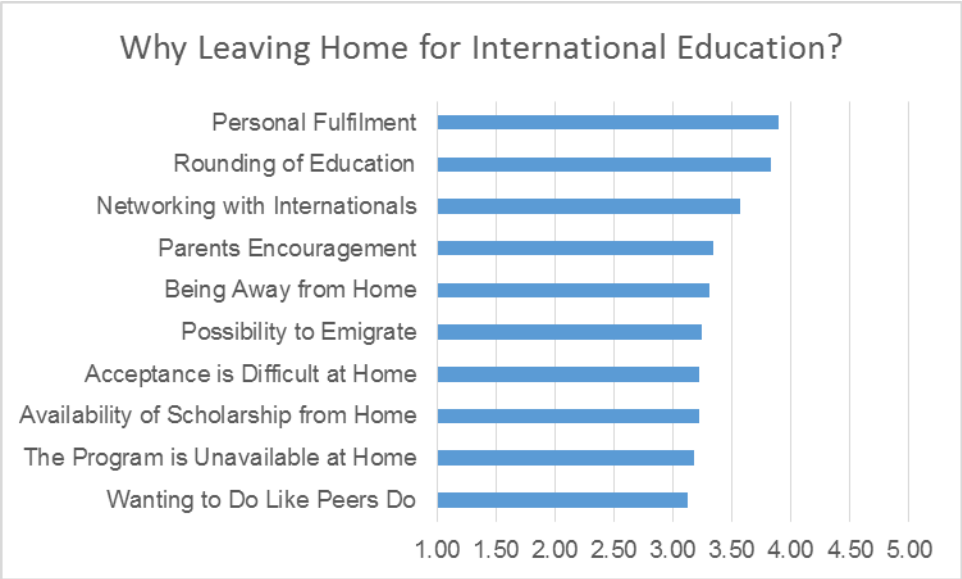
THE AWARDS 2012 WINNER Business School of the Year

# APPENDIX F

# EXPLAINING QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS TOOL

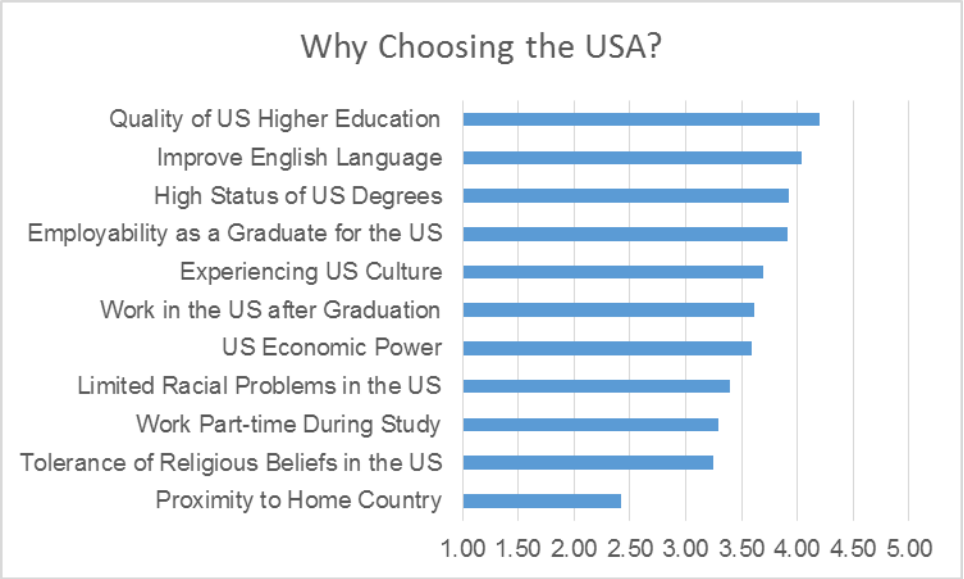
Developed by: Eyad Alfattal

1. **Why are variables in this order of importance?**



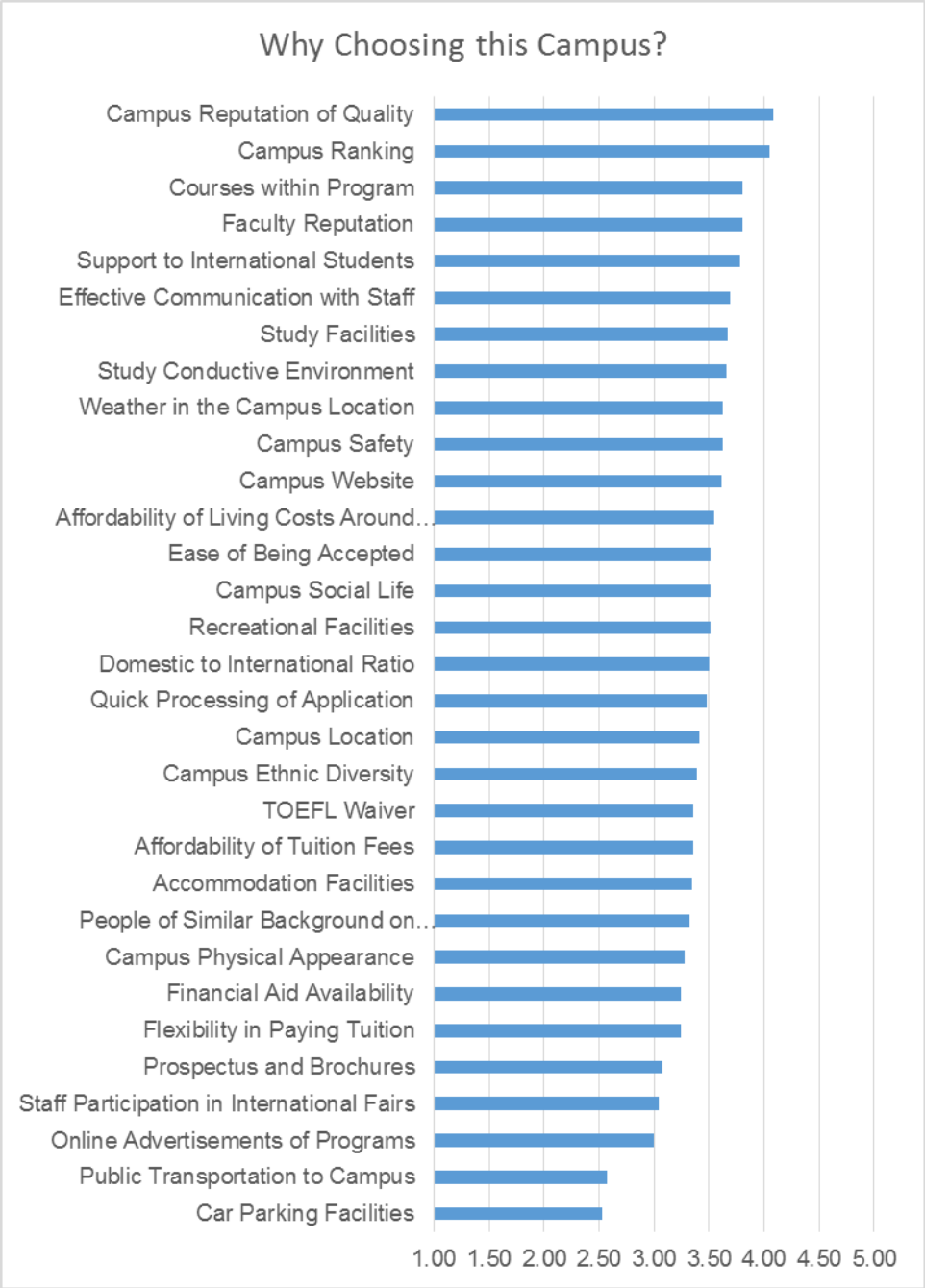

***Notes:***

2. **Why are variables in this order of importance?**



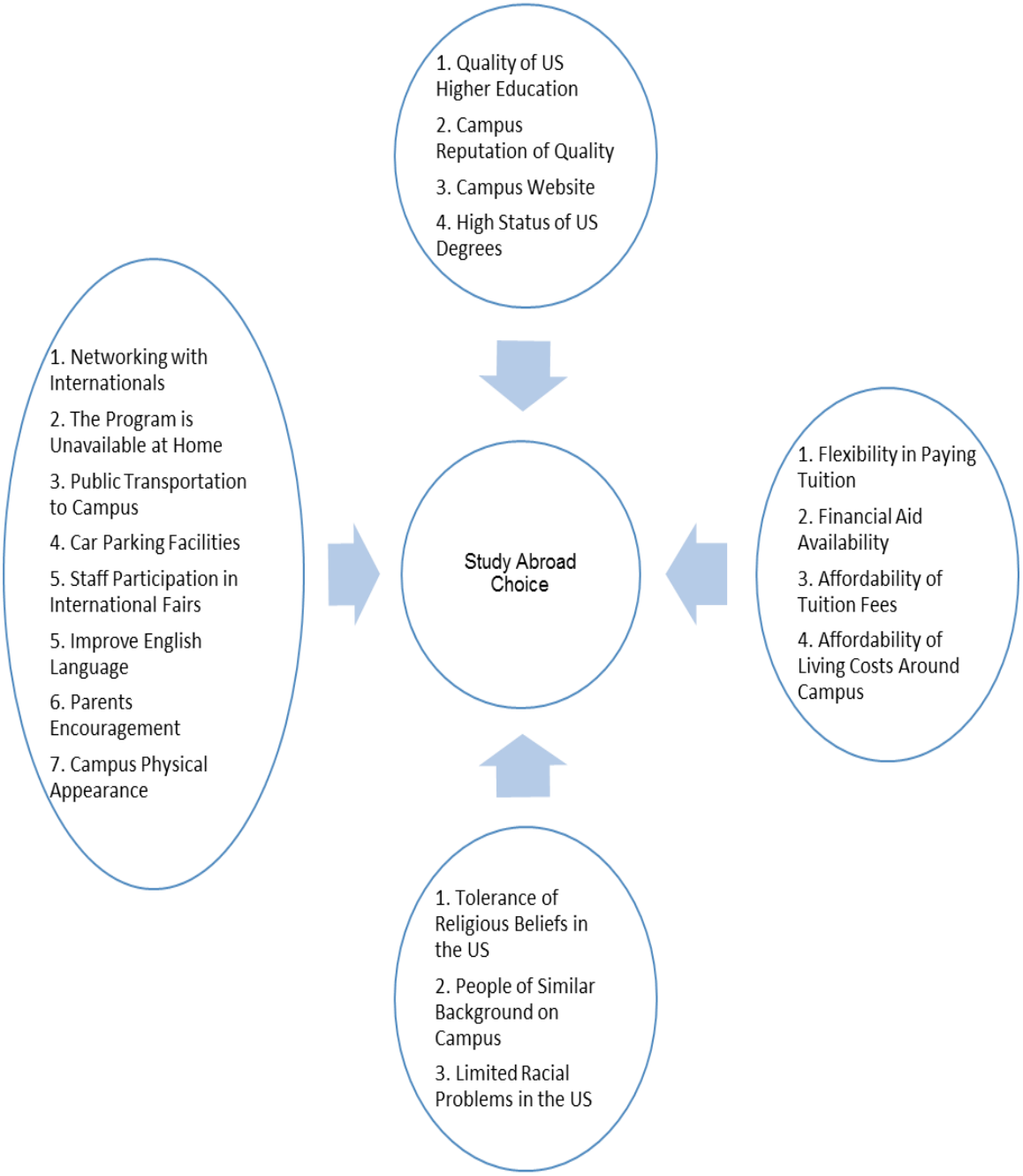

***Notes:***

3. **Why are variables in this order of importance?**




***Notes:***

**4. Why are these variables related? What are they best called and why?**



5. **Is the following terminology meaningful?**

6. **Is this order meaningful?**

| Importance | Factor |
|---|---|
| 1 | Quality |
| 2 | Affordability |
| 3 | Peace |
| 4 | Access |

## 7. Why?

- Quality is more important to male students.

- Access is more important to non-degree students compared to undergraduate students and graduate students.

- Affordability is more important to undergraduate students compared to non-degree students and graduate students.

- Peace is more important to undergraduate students compared to non-degree students.

- Peace is more important to graduate students compared to non-degree students.

- Access is more important to Asian students compared to Middle Eastern students.

- Access is more important to Other Regions students compared to Middle Eastern students and Asian students.

- Affordability is more important to Asian students compared to Middle Eastern students.

- Affordability is more important to Other Regions students compared to Middle Eastern students and Asian students.

- Peace is more important to Middle Eastern students compared to Asian students and Other Regions students.

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